HUMILIATION: FINDING THE SILVER LINING

KYELEE FITTS

Why do we eschew being humiliated? For the same reason we might avoid spoiled milk or fresh roadkill: it makes us *feel bad*. At first glance, Wayne Koestenbaum, in his essay "The Jim Crow Gaze," agrees. He seems to denounce humiliation through an entirely antipathetic analysis of different scenarios of humiliation. Throughout the essay, Koestenbaum uses powerful and aggressively hostile language to describe both the perpetrators of humiliation and how humiliation makes him feel. He calls the face of the humiliator the Jim Crow Gaze, one of "coldness, deadness, nonrecognition" that sees a human as only a "scab" (33). He describes Gertrude Baniszweski, his "archetype of moral imbecility," as having a "thin, watchful . . . cruel face," one of "living deadness" (34). Witnessing humiliation, even on TV, makes him feel nauseated. He says it's "horrifying" and "impossible to watch" (29). He even defines humiliation as analogous to rape: an unwanted penetration into the human body (28-29).

However, a glaring problem arises when one compares the criticizing language that Koestenbaum has cultivated throughout the essay towards humiliation, to the project that he tries to fulfill. In one section, Koestenbaum raises a question that serves to illustrate this tension:

> Why am I trying to figure out who felt humiliated, as if this were a psychology experiment? Instead, I should argue for the worldwide eradication of humiliating situations. Writing, I occupy a humiliated position: the voice on trial. When someone speaks, or writes, that person's voice is held captive by the laws of language, and by the demands of the listener. (28)

Here Koestenbaum asks himself a fundamental question: why doesn't he simply argue for humiliation's end? Any human will identify with the terrible feelings that humiliation can evoke. Once Koestenbaum has identified the Jim Crow Gaze, why doesn't he assure us that we should work to remove it?

The answer lies in recognizing the experiences that we as readers bring to Koestenbaum's essay. When I first read this essay, I was convinced that by introducing the Jim Crow Gaze, Koestenbaum was attempting to call upon society to recognize it and eradicate those horrible instances of humiliation. I soon realized that this conclusion is only the byproduct of my *own* painful experiences with humiliation. I wanted to see Koestenbaum's essay as a denunciation when in fact it is not. In this realization of how my own societal constructs influence my view of the essay lies the heart of Koestenbaum's project: recognizing the intense negativity surrounding

humiliation, he challenges our natural instinct to rid ourselves of humiliation, instead illuminating how it can be both horrible and necessary, nauseating and useful. It is human to shy away from being humiliated. However, Koestenbaum shows that it is more human still to question society's visceral flight from being humiliated.

Returning to the passage at hand, Koestenbaum questions his own project, comparing what it *is* (an analysis of who is being humiliated) to what it *should be*—that is, a call to eradicate humiliation. He recognizes that our own innate repulsion to being humiliated leads to an obvious desire to eliminate the feeling altogether. However, instead of exploring his project's failure to denounce humiliation, Koestenbaum ponders how writers are inherently humiliated by the nature of their craft. Writing is not inherently bad—it is a useful and transformative aspect of the human identity; Koestenbaum is himself writing to address the issue of humiliation, after all. However, writers are always held to the judgment of their readers and the "laws of language," both of which if not appeased will cause the humiliation of the writer. By illuminating the humiliation inherent in writing, Koestenbaum suggests that an end to humiliation should not be our goal, that being humiliated in writing, at least, is both necessary and useful. Just because we want to shy away from humiliation doesn't mean we should.

In other instances in the essay, amid the critical language towards humiliation, Koestenbaum advances the case that humiliation is inevitable. When Koestenbaum points to electroshock as a conduit for humiliation (after all, it is the unwanted "intrusion" of electricity into a defenseless body), he makes sure to qualify his observations: "I'm not adjudicating the value or toxicity of electroshock—for that verdict, ask a psychoneurologist" (29). Koestenbaum admits here that as a treatment electroshock's positive or negative value is not his focus. Rather than considering whether electroshock should be eliminated as a treatment, Koestenbaum focuses on the fact that as a treatment it inevitably causes humiliation. In the same way, when Koestenbaum discusses technology as a humiliating force, he asserts that today's new technology "secretly work[s] to deaden, or desubjectify, the human voice." Elsewhere, however, he contextualizes that observation: "The same could have been said about the telegraph. Or the typewriter" (31). Although he calls technology a humiliator, he admits that technological progress—and its accompanying humiliation—is inevitable. There is no outright condemnation of electroshock therapy or technology. In both instances, his critical language about humiliation is balanced by his grudging acceptance of the fact that being humiliated—by writing, by electroshock, by technology—is inevitable and human.

As difficult as might be, if Koestenbaum is arguing for the necessity of the humiliated, he must also be arguing for the necessity of the Jim Crow Gaze, that monstrous, deadened face that causes humiliation in its victims by refusing to recognize their humanity. He recognizes this fact when he declares quite suddenly that he "want[s] to hit the topic—humiliation—head-on, rather than deflect it by listing instances of humiliation" (35). It is here that we gain a clue to Koestenbaum's motive

for writing. He doesn't just want to observe instances of humiliation, he wants to "stare into those [Jim Crow] eyes" (35). He wants to understand the humiliators, and why humiliation's inevitability must lead to the perpetuation of such a monstrous gaze. He questions what kind of person—"the Nazi? The near Nazi?" (35-6)—would allow themselves to peer through the Jim Crow Gaze and humiliate. And he offers a clue, quietly inserted in the form of a parenthetical: "(One needn't be a mass murderer to be a humiliator)" (36). In other words, those who cause humiliation are not necessarily evil people—the inevitability of the Jim Crow Gaze does not mean the inevitable creation of monsters. The Jim Crow Gaze may be necessary, and it may or may not be necessarily evil.

If those with Jim Crow Gaze are not inherently monsters, then the results of the humiliation from the Jim Crow Gaze do not have to be monstrous. A few pages later, Koestenbaum shows how humiliation necessarily occurs—and perhaps even provides utility—in a paradigm that almost every member of his audience has encountered: the classroom. He demonstrates how the Jim Crow Gaze can manifest in someone vividly human, grappling with uncertainty, but certainly not a monster: himself, the teacher. The passage begins with the provocative question "Is education possible without humiliation?" and then goes on to ruminate about what humiliation in the classroom could mean for different students (38). Finally, he comes to the troubling conclusion: "Fact: I probably humiliate my students every day without knowing it" (38-9). Asking whether education (fundamentally a good thing) would even be possible without humiliation begs the answer "no" because any grade, whether an F for a mediocre student or a B+ for a perfectionist, can be humiliating, according to Koestenbaum (38). A teacher must grade her students according to ability, choose which students to call on, impose "gentle discipline" on a class—any such scenario able to evoke the "corrosive sensation" of humiliation (38). A teacher cannot choose not to grade her students without losing her job, so students can (struggle to) learn without the motivation of humiliation. In this instance, Koestenbaum has shown not only that humiliation is inevitable in a classroom, but also that it is necessary and useful for students to experience. He has shifted our perspective of humiliation—and the Jim Crow Gaze—so we perceive them not as forces to be eradicated, but as tools with utility.

Returning to the fundamental question Koestenbaum himself asks: why does he construe his subject, humiliation, so antagonistically, yet never come to denounce it? The natural human instinct would be to rid ourselves of such a terrible sensation. But in refusing to condemn humiliation, Koestenbaum is questioning society's impulse to eliminate humiliation because it makes us *feel bad*. By staring into the eyes of those with the Jim Crow Gaze when all others would look away, directly comparing the most horrifying acts of cruelty with the most everyday acts, such as writing, learning, and using technology, Koestenbaum shows us that the cold, deadened mask will not ever go away. The best we can do is recognize its inevitability and try our best to find the

utility in the moral deadness. By definition, the humiliated are unhuman, desubjectified in the eyes of those with the Jim Crow Gaze. However, when the desubjectified learn to not avoid humiliation and instead recognize its inevitability and utility, perhaps they can be resubjectified. By embracing that horrifying feeling rather than running away from it, we affirm that we are writers and students. Transcending the visceral and societal instinct to run away from humiliation and find the silver lining . . . that is the mode for being human.

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UPROOTED: JAMAICA KINCAID'S ANTI-HISTORY

MATTHEW WAYLAND

In its opening lines, Jamaica Kincaid's essay "In History" announces that its project will be to interrogate not only the definition, but also the personal stakes of history. Kincaid's vantage as an Antiguan-American, dislocated from ancestors who had been "emptied" from their homeland by disruptive European imperialism, is essential to establishing her perspective in this endeavor (7). But at the first level of analysis, it seems that Kincaid's postcolonial critique has merely mimicked the same process of deracination performed by her two white male poster children of the globalist West, Christopher Columbus and Carl Linnaeus. Thus, the reader is presented with a trio of thematically related "emptyings": in Linnaeus's case, it is the separating of plants from their folk names that informs Kincaid's gardening interest, and in Columbus's, it is the severing of indigenous peoples from their lands and cultures that informs Kincaid's past, and finally in the case of Kincaid's own essay, it is that detachment of narrative from traditional history that she intends to inform her present.

Yet the essay's presumed structure, evoking a Venn diagram that tightly sandwiches Kincaid between Linnaeus and Columbus, is complicated by the presence of one distinct passage that seems to upend it. This particular passage gestures both explicitly and implicitly towards a very divergent reading of Kincaid's true intent in "In History." Primarily, it affirms that Kincaid is not merely performing the same task as Columbus and Linnaeus, but it is also actually challenging her reader to develop the same skeptical approach that generates her anti-historical reasoning.

The outlying passage that informs this new understanding of "In History" both blatantly acknowledges the initial inconclusiveness of Kincaid's writing and motivates the reader to wade in and perform new analytical work:

> And even as a relationship exists between George Clifford's activity in the world, the world as it starts out on ships leaving the sea ports of the Netherlands, traversing the earth's seas, touching on the world's peoples and the places they are in, the things that have meant something to them being renamed and a whole new set of narratives imposed on them, narratives that place them at a disadvantage in relationship to George Clifford and his fellow Dutch, even as I can say all this in one breath or in one large volume, so too then does an invisible thread, a thread that no deep breath or large volume can contain, hang between Carolus Linnaeus, his father's desire to give himself a distinguished name, the name then coming from a tree, the Linden tree, a tree

> whose existence was regarded as not ordinary, and his invention of a system of naming that even I am forced to use? (7).

What immediately jumps out is Kincaid's use of the metaphor of the "invisible thread," which functions as a wink to her reader, an artful gesture that there is a tacit key to correctly reading her essay. With this move, Kincaid is both drawing her readers in, encouraging them to engage in a kind of detective work to unspool the thread, and pushing them away, denying that the twisty, serpentine nature of this thread could ever be contained in an oral or written tradition—"even as I can say all this in one breath or in one large volume." Already, Kincaid has established an inherent restriction within the field of history—this unaccounted-for thread.

Beyond introducing the thread, this passage also serves as a rhetorical critique of conventional notions of authority and credibility, formatted in such a way that it erodes a reader's prior assumptions. History is often painted in broad strokes as a cascading series of cause and effect. This framing device for historical inquiry is useful because it moves beyond a rote recitation of commonly understood truths and begins to shape the discipline as loam that can be fertilized by critical thinking. But Kincaid's first hint that she aims to break down this understanding and assess its uses and limits is the run-on quality of this passage, which is after all only one sentence. This construction is meant to subtly disrupt the governing logic of English syntax. This mirrors the key problem Kincaid identifies in conceptualizing history as chains of causality, namely that they, like grammar, are not free of a privileging system; they have narratives attached to them, narratives which through the very nature of the events they hope to describe were and continue to be inequitable. Her example in this passage then directly articulates this by comparing the prejudiced state of the native peoples with the partiality shown by history books to the Dutch and other European colonial conquerors. While this passage serves as a workable encapsulation of Kincaid's own emptying, it is not her only mission.

Kincaid has performed this separation of the narrative from history not only to serve her own sense of reparative justice but also to raise further questions about her topic. She indicates this by suspending the invisible thread between the poles of Linnaeus, as a social entity, and the linden tree, a natural feature, an ambiguous connection that in no way echoes the relative simplicity of the Venn diagram-like structure that defines her essay as a whole. Kincaid is not just interested in showing the gross inequalities that can manifest within the telling of history, she is interested in demonstrating how its appearance is an abstraction—making it unreliable as a medium for articulating identity.

The conclusion to this passage references "a system of naming that even I am forced to use," another meta-flourish that extends the essay beyond the limits of its author's own emptying. Its effect is to slyly induce the audience to re-read with an eye for moments in which Kincaid has subtly pushed her reader to think skeptically about

how unseen systems frame one's means of self-expression. "In History" is not going to be thrilling reading for everybody, precisely because of the degree of difficulty of the task that Kincaid has set for herself. To the reader who is less than willing to extend the same respect for Kincaid's personal experience that she herself allows Columbus and Linnaeus, the essay will register as frustratingly opaque. This is partly due to the linguistic limitation imposed on Kincaid by her project; she often uses fairly simple adjectives or scrambles the meaning of common words, in order to avoid the familiar connotations that accompany words like "discover," "green," and "New World" when used in relation to the historical events that are being examined. But more importantly, Kincaid is making a purposeful effort to keep the reader at arm's length by not being overly straightforward about her goal. Otherwise, she would be guilty of the same "simplicity of . . . beliefs" that she affixes to Columbus (4). She seeks to make her argument more complicated to provoke her reader to consider the matter as skeptically as she does.

With this in mind, it becomes crucial to note where Kincaid has planted the seeds of anti-historical reasoning within her essay, because they serve a didactic function for her reader. In hyper-specific asides that break the rhythm of the essay, Kincaid brings up minutiae that serve as her most concrete examples of anti-history. She chooses to interrupt her lengthy biography of Linnaeus suddenly, confronting the reader with the stark observation, "Linnaeus' father had a garden. I do not know what his mother had" (5). The use of the word "had" is fascinating because it urges the reader to consider not just patriarchal systems of property ownership, but the kind of inner life that would have animated a woman who, in the standard historical account, is voiceless. With this approach, Kincaid is becoming a retributive analogue for the Dutch ships setting out or Linnaeus in the greenhouse, flipping on its head the notion "the things that have meant something to them being renamed." It is clear that her anti-history is not a new order, it is a purposeful disorder, akin to an uprooting. Her reader is intended to grapple not with the literal consequences of gardening, but its metaphoric significance: that history is not the well-tended garden that it appears, but a disarrayed wilderness strewn with fallen and triumphal growths locked in a Darwinian struggle for survival.

Another example of this kind of anti-historical reasoning is when Kincaid references what must be a trivial moment in Linnaeus' story, a photograph of him wearing the "costume" of the indigenous Laplander peoples (or cultural appropriation in modern parlance). Kincaid uses it to meditate on the possibility of other histories that she herself cannot understand: "Suddenly, I am made a little uneasy, for just when is it that other people's clothes become your costume? But I am not too uneasy, I haven't really entered this narrative yet, I shall soon, in any case I do not know the Laplanders, they live far away, I don't believe they look like me" (6). In making clear her own limitations in reconstructing the personal experience of the Laplanders who are rendered as easily caricatured props in Linnaeus's narrative, she is anticipating the

difficulties that her readers will have in interpreting her own effort. Yet, as this seemingly innocuous detail testifies: one's particular history should be their own wound to bear. Others may be able to see it, even empathize, but they are incapable of truly feeling its pain. If Kincaid can demonstrate this complexity to her readers, perhaps they can then perform their own uprooting.

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GENDER (AND SPECIES) SUBVERSION IN BOWIE'S "DIAMOND DOGS"

INGA MANTICAS

In "Acting in Concert," the introduction to her book *Undoing Gender,* theorist Judith Butler argues that humans "perform" gender in order to gain social recognition. She cites the Hegelian notion that "it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us becomes constituted as socially-viable beings," adding that "recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced" depending on the "recognizability" of its race, sex, and morphology (Butler 2). Under these systems of categorization, certain humans are recognized as less than human, or, if deemed entirely "illegible," not human at all (Butler 5).

Legendary musician David Bowie's career reads as an exercise in this social illegibility. From the 1960s to 80s, Bowie simultaneously perplexed and fascinated audiences with the ambiguity of his sexual and gender identities—donning androgynous costumes and making vague, often contradictory statements about his sexual orientation. At times, too, he seemed to blur the lines between human and nonhuman—portraying an alien with piercing yellow cat eyes in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and an evil elf king in *Labyrinth.*

Bowie took both this species and gender ambiguity to the extreme with the gatefold cover of his 1974 album *Diamond Dogs.* In the image, a nearly photo-realistic painting by the Belgian artist Guy Peellaert, Bowie is naked and stretched seductively across a stage, staring directly at his audience. His upper body, pictured on the front of the record, exemplifies his famously gender-bending aesthetic; his feminine jewelry, striking makeup, and long, dyed hair contrast with his harshly masculine bone structure and skeletal frame. This blending of gender roles is already grounds for the social illegibility (and therefore social unviability) that Butler describes. However, on the back side of the record, Bowie subverts species divisions as well: his deformed torso morphs into the haunches of a hound. Above, a shadow obscures his genitals. This juxtaposition of gender, species, and sex ambiguity questions the relationship between gender and species categorization. While we could read the image simply as a metaphor for Butler's notion that schemes of social categorization cast deviants as less than human, I argue that the image also pushes the connections between gender and species divisions one step further: gender binaries actually stem from human's attempts to differentiate themselves from animals and the natural world. Thus, I propose, a rethinking of gender necessitates a rethinking of the way we relate to the nonhuman.

The creature on the cover of *Diamond Dogs* escapes total recognition by its audience due to the improbable coexistence of supposed "opposites" within its body. From one end of Bowie's body to the other is the contrast between the structured, angular arms of the man and the relaxed, open legs of a dog, and yet the artist unites these

contrasting elements seamlessly through the uniform color, texture, and shine of the hybrid body. This uncanny synthesis likely provokes confusion or even disgust for the viewer—the creature subverts their methods of recognizing and categorizing the "human" as distinct from the "animal" at the same time as its feminine upper-body collapses the distinctions between "man" and "woman." Beyond physical differences, this pairing of man and dog is also associated with a host of philosophical dichotomies: man as domesticator, dog as domesticated, man as civilization and dog as wildness, man as intelligence and dog as instinct. These value distinctions further parallel the "power differentials embedded in the construction of the category of the 'human'"—differentials between the categories of male and female, white and black, able and disabled (Butler 13). Both those who fall on the less powerful side of these binaries, as well as those who can't be identified under either category, are *lowered* to the status of "inhuman" or "less than human," a designation that alone signals the anthropocentrism embedded in human social categorization.

Butler herself challenges this anthropocentric thought in her discussion of anti-abortion activists' use of the term "human life," a term that, she notes, we often use to privilege human lives over those of other animals (12). She points out the paradox in the use of the term: "For the human to be human, it must relate to what is nonhuman, to what is outside itself but continuous with itself by virtue of an interimplication in life . . . so that the human exceeds its boundary in the very effort to establish them" (Butler 12). *Diamond Dogs* is a physical manifestation of this "interimplication," shocking audiences with the coexistence of the "human" and its supposed opposite, the "inhuman" or "animal," within one body. The image offends the viewer because the "human" is devalued by its interimplication with the animal—a collapse of the neatly distinguished power hierarchy between man and beast. By challenging these distinctions in an image in which he also blurs gender lines, Bowie's image also draws a connection Butler never explicitly makes: like the terms "human" and "non-human," which also share a root word, the concepts of "female" and "male" only exist through a division that simultaneously links the two, as each depends on the other for meaning. The shared basis of gender and species divisions lies in an attempt to assign power and meaning to a discrete identity by establishing an opposite, an identity which is the "other," but which ultimately cannot be entirely separated from the "self." Binary categorization—especially as a tool of exclusion—therefore denies this "interimplication," an acknowledgement of which would provide a more inclusive framework for valuing lives.

The causal relationship between natural and social hierarchies can also be observed in society's obsession with reproductive capabilities, a topic that *Diamond Dogs* provokes through the ambiguity of Bowie's genitals. A common justification for the enforcement of gender and sexual binaries comes from the reproductive necessity of complimentary sexual organs—after all, as Butler points out, "sexual difference is an essential part of any account a human may come up with about his or her origin" (10).

The biological separation of "species" is likewise determined by which animals can mate with each other and which cannot. Thus, the survival and persistence of a "species" as a cohesive and continuous and discrete unit, separate from other wild and "subhuman" creatures, depends on the reproductive capability and therefore sexual binarism of its population. As Butler notes, non-reproductive people—such as gays and lesbians—as well as people who don't match the sexual binary, are thus considered "less than human" because they aren't able to contribute to the narrative around, or the physical proliferation of, a separate and superior human species (10). Similarly, the ambiguity of Bowie's genitals in *Diamond Dogs* renders him even *less* human and more perplexing. How does he mate? Who does he mate with? Who mated to produce him? The reproductive boundaries of species are disintegrated, to the confusion and revulsion of his audience. This intolerant reaction suggests that in order to replace constraining conceptions of gender and sex, we must rethink our conceptions of what separates the human from the inhuman, adopting an attitude that embraces an overall "continuum," an "interimplication," rather than division, of life.

This radical vision for inclusion seems impossible under our current conceptions of species, and is therefore akin to the utopian "potentialities" of performance that Jose Muñoz discusses in his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. While Butler probes the everyday performance of normative gender roles, Muñoz's work explores the opportunities for gender transgression possible in literal, staged musical performances. In the chapter "Stages," Muñoz analyzes images of queer and punk clubs, scouting for details that suggest "potentialities"—possibilities that "do not exist in present things," and which have a temporality he calls "futurity" (99). Through the enactment of potentialities, stages become "utopian rehearsal rooms," where individuals can "work on a self that does not conform to the mandates of cultural logics" (Muñoz 111)—selves that are, as Butler would put it, "illegible" under current, dominant identity frameworks and which thus transcend the social "recognition" Butler discusses. Muñoz therefore offers a solution to the seemingly "impossible" project that Butler identifies—of changing our entire ontological positioning toward the natural world.

The creature of *Diamond Dogs* embodies the temporality of Muñoz's potentialities. Bowie disturbs our notions of temporality with the setting of the image, through what Muñoz calls "a use of past decadence to critique the banality of our presentness" (111). In the image, Bowie is laying on a freak show stage, backed by a banner that reads "Strangest Living Curiosities." During their heyday, freak shows epitomized the exploitation of "deviants" who didn't fit into normal somatic and social codes, and who as a result were treated as less than human. However, in *Diamond Dogs,* the Bowie creature doesn't appear manipulated or the object of cruelty; rather, he dominates the stage with his radiance and beauty, staring confidently back at those who might gawk at him. The temporal setting of *Diamond Dogs* is not clear—is the image from the past, as the old-fashioned carnival stage suggests? Or from the future, where creatures like

this are powerful and revered? Bowie thus juxtaposes an archaic and oppressive setting with his radical, species-subverting "potentiality" in order to question the inevitability and naturalness of our present notions about species divisions. After all, we no longer consider freak shows sensitive—will there come a day when "freaks" are actually celebrated? When species and gender divisions are no longer enforced? The liminal temporality of the image—mirrored in the liminality of a body that hovers between human and animal, recognizable and unrecognizable—suggests this "potentiality," even as it seems unlikely or even impossible under our current essentialist conceptions of species.

The creation of this utopian potentiality is politically powerful in and of itself, but if we consider the financial success of *Diamond Dogs,* we may also be able to spot the beginnings of its actualization. Audiences, fascinated by the image, made the album a best-seller. This wasn't simply a modern-day freak show, either; these audiences admired and respected Bowie for his "freakishness," and enriched him because of it. The appeal of this image comes, in part, from its clear sexuality—its suggestive pose and golden muscle contours are reminiscent of traditional pin-up calendars or strip club ads. The image's sexuality thus becomes a site for utopian realization when we consider that, despite being recognizably *sexual*, the creature is not recognizably *human;* furthermore, it has no apparent reproductive capability. The creature has no potential to further the human species—and yet it still provokes desire or at least suggests the *potential* for a sexual encounter—a sexual "interimplication." By inviting his audience to be *desirous* of a body that is not recognizably human, Bowie creates a "potentiality" for a "time and a place where their desires are not toxic," just like the punk clubs Muñoz explores (105). We can imagine a time where sex and gender need not be defined by human reproduction, where the non-reproductive can still be recognized, accepted, empathized with. Thus, the sexuality of the image results in a mental realization of potentiality—a moment of utopia in which we are continuous with the nonhuman, and it feels good. It feels exciting.

The image thus forces us to re-orient our interaction with things that disgust us on the basis of not being "human enough"—and therefore to reorient our interaction with the criteria that defines gender and sexuality. Even if we aren't able to actually, physically, blend ourselves with animals, it is the creation of a mindset that acknowledges our "continuity" with them that is important in creating a more inclusive and humane present for all people and beings. As Butler writes in the introduction to her book *Undoing Gender*, "there is a certain departure from the human that takes place in order to start the process of remaking the human" (3-4); Muñoz offers a strategy and a locale for this transformation when he writes "utopian performativity suggests another modality of doing and being that is in process, unfinished" (99). Bowie, like Muñoz's subjects, brings this process to the stage, where he can exist comfortably in a "futurity" in which the boundaries between human and animal are dissolved. *Diamond*

Dogs thus departs from the human in order to remake the way we conceive the human at all, opening up a radical "potentiality" for inclusion.

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Tin Can Transmission:
Using Corned Beef to Talk About Cultural Change

MIRANDA SIMES

Michel Tuffery produced *Pisupo Lua Afe (Corned Beef 2000)*, an entirely metal artwork, in 1994 for an exhibit in Wellington, New Zealand. The piece is one of several metal bulls Tuffery has created; another, *Povi Christkeke,* Tuffery created to be included in a parade that included Samoan drumming and dancing, a celebration that involved several such bulls moving on wheels down the streets. Lights and fireworks also illuminated the works in a simulated "bullfight" (Hay 2). Both works stand life-size, bulls made completely of red and yellow flattened metal cans. The labels on the cans read "Corned Beef" and Tuffery has aligned the silver metal lids to outline the bull's face and hooves. The word *pisupo* arose from the initial tinned product brought to New Zealand mid 20th century, pea soup, but the word now specifically implies canned meat. The tinned food is sometimes given as a gift at celebrations (Lythberg 3). Tuffery, a New Zealander of Samoan, European, and Rarotongan ancestry, has worked in the past to synthesize traditional tapa cloths, sculptures or carvings, with contemporary drawings and figuring.

In her writeup for the Christchurch Art Gallery in New Zealand, where *Povi Christkeke* resides, Jennifer Hay interprets Tuffery's piece as a "wry socio-political message" concerning the place of foreign imported goods in Samoa as part of the larger presence of colonialism in the Pacific Islands (2). The introduction of canned foods contributed to a change in the diet of Pacific Islanders, and Hay describes a resulting "decline in indigenous cooking skills" (Hay 2). She states that *Povi Christkeke* also touches on the "impact of global trade and colonial economics imposed upon the Pacific Island culture and environment" (Hay 2). Hay closely ties dietary and economic changes to a loss of traditional culture. While Hay's interpretation makes the power dynamic clear, *Povi Christkeke* is not so explicit. In using the literal cans of beef, Tuffery may be depicting a change in the dietary lifestyle, but he does not provide us with answers to what it means on a cultural level. Tuffery's subtlety propels us to examine the relationship between the pre-colonial Samoan culture and influence of foreign colonialism.

In "Arts of the Contact Zone," Mary Louise Pratt explores what happens when cultures intersect, whether on a linguistic, colonial, or ethnic level. She draws on examples that vary as widely as her son's discovery of the world through baseball cards to a seventeenth-century letter written by an indigenous Andean to King Philip III of Spain. Pratt pulls these disparate sources together to define contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (34). Guaman Poma's 1613 letter, modeled on a typical Spanish "*Nueva coronica* 'New Chronicle'" of conquest, delivers, in a

European colonial genre, a novel trajectory of the story of the Creation of the world. Poma seeks to rewrite the history of the Christian world, but with "Andean rather than European peoples at the center of it—Cuzco, not Jerusalem" (Pratt 34). Poma also alternates between Spanish and his native Quechua. Throughout the piece, he replicates, substitutes, reverses, and creates anew. Poma grapples with how colonialism has attempted to define his world, as he stands at a crossroads of cultures.

Just as Poma's letter is undeniably a purposeful culmination of components, so too are Tuffery's bulls. *Pisupo Lua Afe* and *Povi Christkeke* are themselves contact zones. Their multi-layered construction forces us to consider their different parts—the physical tins themselves, their spatial arrangement, *Povi Christkeke*'s dance through the parade—in their own right, but also in the narrative of Samoan history. In synthesizing a new form of communication, Poma sought to redefine the order of the colonial world. Pratt discerns that it is not merely the content, but also the *structure* of Poma's letter that enabled him to speak so clearly of reconstructing history to include indigenous Andeans. By using the Spanish genre of the chronicle as a vehicle for his own original content, Poma comments on what this genre means in itself. Pratt asserts that Poma's letter is autoethnographic, "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (35). Poma responds to a genre that, up until this point, was a one-way depiction of the colonized world by the colonizer. Now he works within this medium itself to push back against this colonial characterization, creating a two-way dynamic.

What then is Tuffery's purpose in arranging his multi-dimensional pieces? Can we consider the tin cans of Tuffery's bulls as themselves a language, one that began as cheap, processed products for consumption? Tuffery uses a well-known object as his 'genre,' but expresses something new. By using cans of corned beef in the bulls and in the parade, Tuffery is asserting that these foods now have a place in the realms of boisterous celebration. Is it therefore appropriate to see the canned food as parallel to Poma "using the conqueror's language" (Pratt 35)? By considering the bulls in this light, we imply corned beef in Samoa is representative of some unequal balance of power because it was in a way indirectly 'forced on' the Samoan people. Before we commit to seeing Tuffery's works through Pratt's lens, we need to consider what exactly changed with colonization. Applying Pratt's idea would require distinguishing what authentic elements of Samoan culture exist in their own right, before being subjected to foreign influence. Perhaps we need to consider what this line means before we draw it.

Yet how can one trace cultural change if not through the categorization of 'before colonialism' and 'after'? In "The Case for Contamination," Kwame Anthony Appiah provides a way of distinguishing change that does not rely on considering cultures as finite, bounded entities. Appiah is wary of the concept of "culture" and, rather than pursue a static set of group characteristics, chooses to examine the decisions individuals make within the group. By thinking of cultures as "peoples" instead of

people, or individuals, we risk engaging in broad judgements about what makes their cultures authentic. Pratt's argument is grounded in language, and she defines authenticity in the differences between Quechua and Spanish, and Andean and European artistic design. Tuffery's work, on the other hand, provides no means of separating "Samoan culture" from that of foreign influence. His bulls are purposefully a novel synthesis, both literally, in the fused metal tins, but also in the way *Povi Christkeke* moves along with the dancers as one mass in the parade.

Maybe we shouldn't try to pick apart Tuffery's art, strip by strip. Appiah considers seeking cultural authenticity a fruitless act. It is unrealistic to try to pinpoint one exact moment with which to define tradition because "trying to find some primordially authentic culture can be like peeling an onion" (Appiah 7). Culture is composed of layers of change over time, rather than a consistent uniformity. Moreover, what we think of as traditions—foods, clothing, raw materials—may at one point have actually been themselves imported or traded by foreign empires. One cannot fit the nuances of a tradition in a box. Trying to define authentic Samoan culture in order to save it from foreign products perhaps "amounts to telling other people what they ought to value in their own traditions" (Appiah 7). Thus Samoan "culture" as an abstract concept is impossible to define for the purposes of tracing colonial hierarchies and therefore assigning cultural meaning to new food products. Instead, it is more fruitful to look at how individuals respond to change.

Pratt and Appiah's philosophies themselves converge when they consider how individuals create and respond to culture in the midst of a contact zone. Pratt calls this "transculturation," stating that "while subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own [culture] and what it gets used for" (36). Poma actively chose visual elements he incorporated from the European tradition, what Andean spatial symbols to use, and when to speak in Spanish or Quechua to form a cogent response to Spanish colonialism. Likewise, Appiah highlights the agency an individual has when confronted with cultural difference. He believes that regarding cultural consumers as passive vessels, or "blank slates on which global capitalism's moving finger writes its message . . . is deeply condescending" (Appiah 35). Individuals may use products in ways that no longer resemble their original purpose; consumption is an active, not a passive process.

In incorporating corned beef in their diets, Samoans were not blind recipients of foreign colonialism. Health concerns about processed food aside, the mere existence of corned beef in Samoa did not immediately or directly cause Samoans to become less "Samoan." Distilling a culture to one characterization is further rendered impossible when considering individuals' variety of tastes, opinions, and consumer decisions. One could argue that introducing this new protein-based ingredient into Samoan cooking offered many individuals more options for preparing satisfying meals. Today, a search on an online recipe collection for "traditional Samoan recipes" yields

a range of dishes, from those with corned beef and cabbage to others with coconut milk and taro leaves. Clearly, the use of corned beef has evolved beyond its mere novelty as processed meat in a can. Rather than erasing Samoan cooking traditions, corned beef has *become* a part of it.

It may seem at first that Appiah fails to account for the power imbalances inherent in colonization, in a way that Pratt does when she contrasts Quechua and European Spanish, but Appiah is not arguing that settlement and violent change did not occur. Instead he is urging us to distinguish between colonization itself and its *meaning* for the colonized people on a cultural level. We can consider the cultural implications of foods like corned beef from the perspective of what it means to Samoans today without evaluating whether violent change should have occurred at all in the Pacific Islands.

As a living descendant of Samoan ancestry, Tuffery situates himself in contemporary society in which individuals decide for themselves how they will incorporate corned beef into their lifestyles. Tuffery is not challenging or affirming the food as legitimate, but rather depicting it as a timeline of change. His work and the incorporation of his work in the parade demonstrate a commitment to viewing culture as a dynamic, ever-changing reality. In *Pisupo Lua Afe* and *Povi Christkeke,* Tuffery proposes that today, corned beef is as much a part of Samoan society as the drumming and dancing that existed long before it. One is not more indicative of "Samoan culture" than the other—today, the tins are fused to the bull in more than just their physical composition. Art like Tuffery's bulls helps us understand such contact zones not just in regards to the Pacific Islands, but in the broader scope of colonization and commercialization.

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FORFEITING MORALITY: SYSTEMIC EVIL UNDERLYING THE ABU GHRAIB SCANDAL

JOSEPH BELL

Abu Ghraib, an Iraqi prison outside of Baghdad, came under possession of the United States military in April of 2003. By the following autumn, Abu Ghraib held thousands of detainees, ranging from innocent Iraqi civilians to dangerous leaders of insurgency. Led by General Janis Karpinski, thirty-four hundred inexperienced army reservists were tasked to supervise Abu Ghraib inmates possessing entirely different language and cultural values (Hersh 21-22). In the first months of the prison's US operation, conditions for detainees were nothing short of horrific. Besides an abundance of problems related to hygiene, overpopulation, and miscommunication, detainees were subjected to appalling and sickening criminal abuses by soldiers, including, but not limited to, torture, humiliation, rape, and sodomy.

The written descriptions of detainee treatment are obscene, upsetting, and difficult to accept. Yet, the photos taken by soldiers are the most indisputable evidence for the merciless and savage nature of their actions. Perhaps more haunting than the abuses themselves is the fact that the American soldiers appear so proud and unaffected by their actions; in his review article, "Bad Apples, Dead Souls: Understanding Abu Ghraib," author Alex Danchev characterizes the photographs as "almost triumphal" (1272). Many of the released images depict American soldiers grinning as they raise their thumbs up, jokingly posing for the camera next to piles of naked prisoners with empty sandbags on their heads. Some photos show naked detainees piled on top of each other, others show them forcefully arranged in sexually obscene positions, covered in excrement, attacked by military dogs, or beaten by soldiers. One of the most famous photos from the scandal appears on the cover of the May 2004 edition of *The Economist*: a prisoner with the nickname "Gilligan" stands upon a wooden box covered in black cloth, dead electrical wire attached to both hands. He was told by U.S. prison guards that he would be electrocuted if he fell off (Gourevitch and Morris).

After a military specialist came across a number of the soldiers' photos in January of 2004, the first investigation of soldier misconduct at Abu Ghraib went underway. Just three months later, Major General Antonio Taguba gave a detailed report of the investigation to military superiors, and later to the media. On April 28, 2004, days before the Taguba Report was made accessible to the public, graphic photos from the scandal were broadcasted on an episode of *60 Minutes II* ("Iraq"). Accompanying these photos were statements from soldiers and various military officials, including one from Mark Kimmitt, Brigadier General under the Bush Administration. In response to interviewer Dan Rather, Kimmitt comments:

> The first thing I'd say is we're appalled as well. These are our fellow soldiers. These are the people we work with every day, and they represent us. They wear the same uniform as us, and they let their fellow soldiers down . . . So what would I tell the people of Iraq? This is wrong. This is reprehensible. But this is not representative of the 150,000 soldiers that are over here . . . I'd say the same thing to the American people . . . don't judge your army based on the actions of a few. (Qtd. in Leung)

The rhetoric Kimmitt employs is not only ambiguous, but blatantly contradictory. On one hand, Kimmitt acknowledges that the men and women behind the scandal are "fellow soldiers." They were raised in American towns and cities, taught in American schools, and sent to war by American government. The environments they grew up in shaped their identities, and the U.S. is partially responsible for how they acted as a result. Immediately following this claim, however, Kimmitt revises his position, and decides that the Abu Ghraib soldiers are actually "not representative of the 150,000 soldiers that are over here." Because their crimes were so atrocious in nature, arguing that they stand for the U.S. and its moral values would taint America's reputation in the global community. As a result, Kimmitt attempts to belittle the influence the American environment had on the Abu Ghraib soldiers, arguing that the soldiers were merely disobedient and acted out of their own evil intentions—and thus deserve the majority of the blame.

Kimmitt's statement is problematic because he tries to adopt two explanations that cannot logically coexist. Classifying the soldiers as U.S. citizens inevitably makes the military and government an accessory to the scandal, as they are responsible for having placed the soldiers in positions of authority. For Kimmitt to then argue that the soldiers in Abu Ghraib do not represent the U.S. and its institutions is thus factually incorrect. Kimmitt tries to have it both ways: he tries to preserve America's reputation without completely deflecting responsibility on the soldiers alone, but instead leaves his audience without an intelligible conclusion. At the same time, the confused nature of his statement allows for a crucial fundamental question about the displacement of responsibility to surface: is the Abu Ghraib scandal the sole responsibility of a few corrupt soldiers, or does blame extend to the people who educated them, gave them orders, and indirectly encouraged them?

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States government was in a state of panic, frenzy, and paranoia. Seymour M. Hersh, author of *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, describes the intelligence community in the weeks following *9/11* as "confused, divided, and unsure about how the terrorists operated, how many there were, and what they might do next" (73). Hersh notes that as a result of this uncertainty, plus fear and lack of preparedness, the government developed a reliance on "eye-for-an-eye retribution" (46), a desire to inflict the same pain, trauma, and loss their country endured upon the foreign nations that bred the cold-blooded terrorists. America was fixated on crushing terrorism, on

gaining crucial information by any and all means necessary. Hersh believes that the scandal has its "roots" in such an aggressive, emotional anti-terrorism policy, not in the "criminal inclinations of a few army reservists" (46). The soldiers' actions were prompted and encouraged by the bitter, violent, and vengeful mentality of the U.S. government and military, regardless of what might have been the soldiers' personal sentiments and inclinations.

There is clear, substantive evidence for Hersh's conclusions. Lawyers Karen J. Greenberg and Joshua L. Dratel compiled nearly fifty official documents and reports that gave U.S. government and military officials permission to use coercive and intimidating interrogation tactics on terrorists. Their book *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* includes what has become known to the public as the "Torture Memos," a series of controversial legal memoranda that encourages the violation of international law by essentially authorizing the use of torture under certain circumstances. In his introduction to *The Torture Papers*, journalist Anthony Lewis describes the memos as "an extraordinary paper trail to mortal and political disaster" (Greenberg and Dratel xiii), believing they played crucial roles in allowing scandals in Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, and Abu Ghraib to take place. Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo, lawyer in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel Robert J. Delahunty, and Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee, who are key figures in the torture memos, justify the cruel treatment of war criminals through loose interpretation of international law and appeals to the urgency of the situation (Greenberg and Dratel xiii-xvi).

A common feature of the "Torture Memos" is the assertion that Abu Ghraib prisoners were not entitled to the protections that had been set forth in international law. The principles of international law that are specifically concerned with the nature of the Abu Ghraib abuses are found in the 1980s human rights treaty, "The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, or "UNCAT." Established with the purpose of protecting humans around the world from violent and systemic mistreatment, this treaty not only provides a detailed definition of what constitutes torturous action, but also requires that each signatory country make government actions that fall under that definition illegal. The treaty reads, "Each State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offenses under its criminal law. The same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture" ("Convention"). By signing and ratifying the treaty, then, the United States explicitly agreed to these conditions.

However, for the authors of the torture memos, the treacherous nature of the post-*9/11* world seemed to justify the use of harsher interrogation tactics (which would perhaps fall under the UNCAT's definition of torture) on foreign enemies. In a memo sent to William J. Haynes II (General Counsel, Department of Defense), John Yoo writes, "Al Qaeda is merely a violent political movement or organization and not a

nation-state. As a result, it is ineligible to be a signatory to any treaty" (Greenberg and Dratel 38). By understanding that the UNCAT applies only to established countries and nation-states, Yoo relies on a flimsy and literal reading of the treaty in order to justify excluding Al Qaeda (and the countries associated with it) from the document's protections. His true intentions, to make coercive interrogation and torture seem legally permissible against foreign terrorists, are more clearly revealed in a letter written to Counsel to the President Alberto R. Gonzales. Yoo writes, "If anything, the interrogations are taking place to elicit information that could prevent attacks on civilian populations" (Greenberg and Dratel 221), justifying prisoner coercion and harassment by citing the potential benefits of such extreme actions.

Authors of the torture memos also assume literal and relaxed interpretations of the definitions of torture set forth in the UNCAT and in the U.S. Code, allowing for a more extreme range of offenses to theoretically take place before violating international law. In a memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzales in August 2002, Jay Bybee writes, "We further conclude that certain acts may be cruel, inhuman, or degrading, but still not produce pain and suffering of the requisite intensity to fall within Section 2340A's proscription against torture" (Greenberg and Dratel 172). Referencing the section of the U.S. Code which defines torture as acts "specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering" (Greenberg and Dratel 574-575), he reconciles that the use of more severe interrogation techniques, no matter how evil and dehumanizing those techniques may be, can still be construed as legally permissible. Indeed, Bybee certainly takes advantage of the interpretive room that is built into the rhetoric of the U.S. Code. Bybee reasons that for a psychological offense to truly cause "mental pain" its effects must be "long-term" (Greenberg and Dratel 183), affecting the victim's normal and everyday functioning. The abuses at Abu Ghraib could have certainly fallen beneath Bybee's threshold for qualifying torturous action, and thus could have been considered acceptable tactics for interrogating and gaining information from prisoners.

Philip Zimbardo, a psychology professor at Stanford University, would certainly agree with Lewis and Hersh in placing considerable responsibility on the U.S. government (and perhaps the torture memos specifically) for inspiring the scandal at Abu Ghraib. The memos created an environment where torture became not only a means to achieve a certain goal (i.e., gaining valuable information from terrorists) but also something lawful, encouraged, and normalized within the ranks of the military. As the details of the Abu Ghraib scandal became accessible by the public, Zimbardo began to see distinct parallels to an experiment he conducted just decades prior. In the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo assembled a group of twenty-four participants, of whom Greg Miller, author of a *Science Magazine* feature on Zimbardo, describes as "healthy young men with no history of psychological problems, drug abuse, or run-ins with the law" (Miller 530). He randomly assigned the participants into two equivalent groups, one to fulfill the role of "prisoners," and the other to fulfill

the role of "guards." Over the course of the two-week prison simulation, Zimbardo was to carefully observe the behaviors and actions of both groups in the prison environment. Each subsequent day, however, the experiment got more out of hand as guards began verbally and physically abusing prisoners; Miller explains that guards "forced prisoners to do pushups, limited their access to the toilet, and used psychological tactics to break down solidarity" (Miller 530). When a number of prisoners began to exhibit genuine psychological breakdowns on the sixth day, Zimbardo put a stop to his experiment.

The conclusions Zimbardo derived from his experiment speak to the power of environment and group dynamic, to the manner in which situational or environmental factors can drive individual action in unexpected and perhaps uncharacteristic ways. Reflecting upon the Stanford Prison Experiments twenty-five years later, Zimbardo and psychologist Craig Haney discuss the dramatic, rapid personality changes that came over the participants after merely being assigned to the roles "prisoners" and "guards." They write:

> The environment we had fashioned in the basement hallway of Stanford University's Department of Psychology became so real for the participants that it completely dominated their day-to-day existence (e.g., 90% of prisoners' in-cell conversations focused on "prison"-related topics), dramatically affected their moods and emotional states (e.g., prisoners expressed three times as much negative affect as did guards), and at least temporarily undermined their sense of self (e.g., both groups expressed increasingly more deprecating self-evaluations over time). (Haney and Zimbardo 710)

The basement in which Zimbardo held the experiment was a neutral environment; nothing within the participants' direct vicinity was remarkably stimulating, nothing with potential to provoke dramatic changes in personality or behavior on their own. Haney and Zimbardo are thus able to account for the outcome of the prison experiment by concluding the prison setting is a "psychologically powerful" place in itself (718). Merely telling participants to imagine themselves in a prison scenario was enough to begin significant transformations to their personalities, leading some seemingly normal men to act with maliciousness and cruelty, and others to go down the path of severe self-deprecation and depression.

James Dawes, in his book *Evil Men*, describes a different experiment Zimbardo conducted on the "anonymity of group action" with a group of female college students, and the psychological inferences drawn from this experiment provide valuable insight into the outcome of the Stanford experiment (52). Dawes references the phenomenon of "deindividuation" that results from association with a group, which he describes as "a state in which a person loses sense of herself as a separate individual, in which self-focused attention or self-consciousness is reduced" (52). The

prison guards in the Stanford experiment, just like the college students in the other Zimbardo experiment Dawes describes, became so absorbed in their roles, so transfixed by the need to follow the commands of their superiors, that they sacrificed their sense of identity and acted almost robotically out of their "collectivized identity" (53). On a deeper level, the guards (like the college students) also experienced what Dawes defines as "intra-individuation," a phenomenon "in which the moral self is psychically subdivided" (53). Their relationships with themselves became entirely overwhelmed by their specialized role; they came to rationalize and justify their evil actions by understanding them as necessary steps to carrying out their responsibilities.

The Abu Ghraib scandal differentiates itself from Zimbardo's experiment in that soldiers were subject to a more complex network of environmental and social influences within the prison environment. The transformation that occurred within soldiers was so dramatic and intense because of the acute stress brought about by the disproportionate ratio between prisoners and guards and the overpopulation of prisoners. In addition, Miller notes that the language barrier between soldiers and prisoners "made prisoners seem anonymous" to guards (531). To the soldiers, the prisoners were envisioned to be worthless objects, not human beings with free will and emotion. As a result, they were easy targets for injury, subjects onto whom the soldiers could project their darkest, most vulgar, and most suppressed thoughts.

At the same time, many of the conclusions derived from the Zimbardo experiment are observable within the Abu Ghraib scandal. Hersh notes that influence of power and group dynamics within the community of Abu Ghraib soldiers was particularly influential. There was certainly a strong motivation not to question the orders of one's military superiors, but merely follow in blind obedience. As a result, many soldiers who may have had moral objections to the criminal abuses of prisoners were silenced, coerced into thinking they were almost doing the morally right or necessary thing. Hersh relates staff sergeant Ivan L. Frederick II's perspective in *Chain of Command*, writing, "at one point, Frederick told his family, he pulled aside his superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Phillabaum, the commander of the 320th M.P. Battalion, and asked about the mistreatment of prisoners. 'His reply was 'Don't worry about it'" (27). The difficulty of controlling prisoners for the first time combined with his inability or fear to speak up for his morals likely elevated Frederick's stress to new levels; it made him more susceptible to both peer pressure and pressure to obey, and it drove him to act with excess cruelty and brutality. This example speaks to the "deindividuation" theory Dawes describes of the Zimbardo experiment. Frederick certainly had the individual willpower to act upon his own ideas of morality and put a stop to the cruelty against prisoners, but he was so tangled within the web of authority that he sacrificed his personal identity and acted entirely through his collectivized identity instead.

The patterns of evil represented in the photos and written reports of the criminal abuses appear incredibly specific and directed, with the goal to target and humiliate the prisoners as much as possible. Hersh notes that so many of the criminal abuses

Major Antonio M. Taguba described in his report are sexually charged; nearly every example involves some degree of nudity, primarily male. Naked men are stacked in a pyramid-formation on top of each other, forced to masturbate in front of each other, and forced into sexual positions, to name a few. Besides the obscenity of these humiliating punishments, there were a number of deeper implications behind these targeted abuses. He writes, "Homosexual acts are against Islamic law and it is humiliating for men to be naked in front of other men,' Bernard Haykel, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at New York University, explained. 'Being put on top of each other and forced to masturbate, being naked in front of each other—it's all a form of torture"' (Hersh 23-24).

The excessive, targeted cruelty of the soldiers reflects the phenomenon of "intra-individuation" that Dawes describes of Zimbardo's conclusions. It is not characteristic of ordinary, moral people to inflict such horrific and traumatic injury on those who never did anything to harm them directly. For the soldiers to be able to commit those excessive acts of cruelty upon the Iraqi detainees, they must have completely dissociated themselves from their identities; it is one of the only logical ways they could have believed what they were doing was under any circumstances permissible. Everything that once made them unique human beings of free will was poured into their specialized prison guard role. In the same *60 Minutes II* episode that Kimmitt appears, Attorney Gary Myers speaks to the truth of this phenomenon in defending the case of Ivan L. Frederick II. He says, "The elixir of power, the elixir of believing that you're helping the CIA, for God's sake, when you're from a small town in Virginia, that's intoxicating" (Leung). No matter how evil or atrocious Frederick's actions may have appeared to others, Frederick himself rationalized them as essential steps to both fulfilling his duties and contributing to a greater purpose. Becoming a prison guard meant that Frederick could break free from his ordinary lifestyle and make an impact on the future of America's security; for Frederick, these prospects were "intoxicating."

The images taken by soldiers have remained shameful reminders and symbols of the horrific events of Abu Ghraib scandal. The issue with these photographs, however, is that they do everything short of pointing fingers, of placing responsibility and blame entirely on the soldiers that appear in the frames, rather than provide a complete picture of all parties accountable. In his review article, Danchev comments on the problems associated with ascribing too much value to the soldiers' photographs. He writes, "[The photos] expose wrong-doing—crimes—by incriminating those who took them and those who solicited them or appeared in them. In other words, they serve to localize and to limit. They cover up the wider issues: command responsibility, political chicanery" (Danchev 1276-1277). While the soldiers were the ones directly responsible for abusing detainees and violating international law, the role of the U.S. government and military cannot be ignored. They created an environment that authorized torture and coercive interrogation tactics for the purposes of gaining information and defeating terrorism; they placed inexperienced soldiers in an

unfamiliar, stressful, and chaotic environment, and expected them to remain honest and upstanding citizens. The tortures of Abu Ghraib should not be viewed as an isolated instance of human evil, but rather serve as an example for what trauma and circumstance can do to a person.

A greater awareness of the systemic evil behind the Abu Ghraib scandal demands substantial revision of Kimmitt's statement. Indeed, the army reservists who ran the Abu Ghraib prison represent America; their actions reflect upon the U.S. military and all the soldiers who were stationed in Iraq during the war. It is impossible to quantify the impact the different psychological and environmental factors played in the torture scandal; we can never truly know how much the evil came from within the soldiers and how much was a result of the situations they were placed in. What we know for certain is that placing responsibility and blame on just one factor is unreasonable and incorrect. There is no evidence to suggest the soldiers' had a strong internal predisposition for evil in the same way there is no evidence to indicate environmental factors entirely drove their behavior.

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#(DON'T)CLOSErikers

JACOB NAIMARK

The United States criminal justice system is antiquated and ineffective. Racial discrimination, mental illness, sexual and physical assault, high recidivism rates, and brutality among correctional officers and inmates alike plague our nation's jails and prisons. Shamefully, the Rikers Island jail complex here in New York City stands as an embodiment of many of the failings pervading this derailed institution.

To address this problem, Mayor de Blasio, Governor Cuomo, and a coalition of criminal justice reform activists have expressed support for various efforts to close the Rikers Island jail complex, which include the #CLOSErikers campaign and the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, hoping that such a decisive measure can empower NYC to lead the nation in criminal justice reform. However, as a weekly volunteer at Rikers, and a staunch prison reform advocate, I have trouble envisioning the current plan as anything but a distraction from other solutions that must be implemented in order to achieve sustainable improvements.

Proponents of the Independent Commission's plan support the reduction of NYC's incarcerated population from ten thousand down to five thousand, so that proposed replacement facilities can have lower inmate capacities than Rikers Island. The Independent Commission put forth a report in late March 2017 outlining the replacement of Rikers Island with new facilities in each borough, hoping to dramatically reduce transportation costs and increase operational efficiency. The campaign's aspirations to reduce inmate populations and cut long term costs would indeed resolve two important challenges. However, the exorbitant and time-consuming plan ($10 *billion* over ten years) addresses these concerns at the expense of so many other pressing issues.

To be clear, I am not inherently against the shutdown of Rikers Island. Instead, I criticize the Independent Commission's current effort to do so because it prioritizes a symbolic victory, by means of physical relocation, above the alleviation of deep-rooted, cultural insufficiencies, that must be addressed regardless of where NYC's jails are located.

The Independent Commission's plan *does* acknowledge concerns related to insufficient mental health treatment, excessive amounts of pre-sentenced inmates, and brutality in the criminal justice system. It clearly communicates its desire "To advance the fundamental values of dignity and respect" for both inmates and correctional officers. Nonetheless, mitigating these concerns is not contingent upon the shutdown of Rikers Island.

Current campaigns to close the jail complex, including #CLOSErikers and the Independent Commission, overlook the fact that the system it hopes to reform is comprised of individuals who will continue to experience real, tangible suffering in the interim period before their needs can even *begin* to be adequately addressed in new facilities. If the campaign hopes to deliver justice to the criminal justice system, human beings cannot be afterthoughts to buildings. Therefore, we need a reform plan that not only focuses on long-term restructuring, but one that recognizes and seeks to improve the well-being of individuals. The daily pain of both inmates and correctional officers is a poison to their personhoods, not merely an anecdote or statistic indicative of a broken system.

New York City faces a pandemic of injustice. In the Rikers Island jail complex, foty percent of inmates have been diagnosed with mental health concerns. Astoundingly, prisoners at Rikers wait an average of fifty-nine days for trial, which in certain cases has stretched to several years. Moreover, according to a report by the Independent Commission, nearly ninety percent of NYC's incarcerated population is black or Hispanic, while the US Census Bureau reports that these demographic groups constitute only 54.1 percent of the city's total population. Within the Rikers Island confines, countless incidents of sexual and violent assault have been recounted. The brutality has not been limited to inter-prisoner interactions, as many correctional officers have filed lawsuits against abusive prisoners, while others have been accused of perpetrating or encouraging violence towards prisoners themselves. Perhaps the most disheartening statistic is that forty-two percent of inmates in NYC are re-imprisoned within three years of their release.

The data speaks for itself.

Mental illness.

Delayed trials.

Racial discrimination.

Sexual molestation.

Physical abuse.

Astronomically high rates of recidivism.

The victims of Rikers Island are in need of mercy.

Rebuilding facilities and transporting many of the same correctional officers and inmates to new locations will not reinvent a culture rooted in fear, misunderstanding, and aggression. It would be ill-advised to invest ten years of time and $10 billion to a cause that leaves so many other challenges unresolved upon its completion. The intentions of the campaign are noble, yet its ranking of priorities is negligent.

The grave problems plaguing NYC's incarceration culture require as much attention and as many resources as our city's community can allocate. Mental illness must be addressed through improved access to mental health treatment and destigmatization efforts. The right to a speedy trial must be ensured by regulating a court system that currently has little incentive to organize itself and grant defendants

this constitutional right. Racism in criminal justice is a deep-rooted and challenging issue, but increased funding for education in marginalized communities and efforts to reduce discriminatory police practices will go a lot farther than the relocation of a jail. Sexual molestation and physical abuse are also complex issues, yet they undoubtedly could benefit from new training programs for correctional officers that seek to foster less confrontational environments. Lastly, recidivism stands as a blatant manifestation of the reality that the criminal justice system is failing to prepare inmates to re-enter society as contributing citizens, and desperately needs to be overhauled.

So while closing Rikers may represent the acknowledgement of an infectious disease, it also diverts far too much time, money, and passion to a cause that fails to repair wounds that will continue bleeding not only while the construction occurs, but long after new facilities are erected.

New Yorkers: if we genuinely hope to tackle the toxicity and ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system, we need a plan that prides itself on much more than a bulldozer.

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