

# PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN LIFE: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE VIRUS OF NEGATION OF INALIENABLE RIGHTS AND ITS ANTIDOTE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Jeff Koloze

## I. INTRODUCTION

Like a viral infection, a powerful and vicious anti-life "strain" is evident in the national literature of the United States from colonial times to the present, fatal only to those human beings who have been legislatively or judicially removed from the definition of human personhood. Fortunately, however, while the United States has always been infected by an anti-life philosophy, there has also existed a pro-life "antidote" to this anti-life tendency.

Structurally, this paper consists of the two main features of the American dehumanization process: the first, how animal metaphors were used to devalue Native Americans and slaves; the second, the role that race played in the process. I will then illustrate how these two factors joined to permit an action whereby the United States came dangerously close to having Nazi-like death camps. Finally, I will discuss the role that the Declaration of Independence played in civil rights movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## II. NATIVE AMERICANS DEHUMANIZED AS "BEASTS"

To document the origin of the anti-life philosophy in the literature of the United States, we must begin with the archival evidence of the colonial period. Continuously, the colonists likened Native Americans to animals, not only because of the Native Americans' unique lifestyle, but also because it would be morally easier to possess as much of the new land as possible if the original inhabitants were not equal to the English. As William Brennan documented in his *Dehumanizing the Vulnerable: When*

*Word Games Take Lives*, "Removal of individuals from membership in the human community and re-classifying them as animals has the effect of consigning them to a lower level of existence where their victimization can be more easily rationalized."<sup>i</sup> The animal metaphor would become a constant factor in the American dehumanization process.

This colonial disregard of the humanity of Native Americans is best illustrated in the account of the killing and butchering of the most famous Native American leader of the time, Metacomet (called "King Philip" by the colonists). Metacomet orchestrated an uprising of the Wampanoag nation against British colonists in 1675. Benjamin Church's 1716 narrative of Metacomet's killing and eventual butchering was meant to delight the colonists, who would, of course, be overjoyed that such an enemy to their way of life had been killed.<sup>ii</sup> Church's description of the killing is worth examining in detail:

Capt. *Church* ordered his body to be pull'd out of the mire on to the Upland, so some of Capt. *Churches Indians* took hold of him by his Stockings, and some by his small Breeches (being otherwise naked), and drew him thro' the Mud unto the Upland, and a doleful, great, naked, dirty beast, he look'd like. Capt. *Church* then said, *That for asmuch as he had caused many an English mans body to lye unburied and rot above ground, that not one of his bones should be buried.* And calling his old *Indian Executioner*, bid him behead and quarter him. Accordingly, he came with his Hatchet and stood over him, but before he struck he made a small Speech directing it to *Philip*; and said, *He had been a very great Man, and had made many a man afraid of him, but so big as he was he would now chop his Ass for him*; and so went to work, and did as he was ordered.<sup>iii</sup>

Church's narrative continues, relating not only that Metacomet's head but also his "remarkable hand" were shown to those who would pay to see it.

This one passage contains within it several elements of the dehumanizing tendency which would repeat themselves in the following centuries. Metacomet is specifically dehumanized when he is equated with being a "beast." The string of adjectives further compounds the dehumanization. Not only is Metacomet a mere beast; he is a "dirty" beast. Since he had only the most essential clothing on, he is described as "naked" as an animal would be. The fact that he is described as "great" pertains not to

his stature within Native American society, but to his dimensions and further adds to the glory of his death, much as a sportswoman might marvel at the size of a wild animal she has trapped. Finally, there would be no concern over the desecration of a corpse since the person whose body has been chopped to pieces has been likened to an animal. Note, too, that Church records a speech in which the body is synecdochically reduced to the name of one of the least esteemed parts.

Mary Rowlandson, a colonist whose captivity occurred during the war instigated by Metacomet, had this to say about her capture by the Native Americans: "I had often before this said, that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than be taken alive but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous beasts, than that moment to end my days...."<sup>iv</sup>

### III. SLAVES DEHUMANIZED AS "CRITTERS," "SWARMS OF VAGRANTS," AND "LOCUSTS"

As Native Americans were dehumanized with animal imagery, so also were the nineteenth century's other victims of the anti-life philosophy, slaves. A century and a half after the animal metaphor was used to dehumanize the subjugated Native Americans in New England, a slave trader in Harriet Beecher Stowe's fictionalized account of slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, suggests to Mr. Shelby, the original owner of Tom, that black slaves can overcome the emotional trauma of losing the sale of their children because "these critters an't like white folks."<sup>v</sup>

This fictional character may have been repeating a concept first clearly enunciated by one of the Founding Fathers of the nation. In writing his famous *Notes on the State of Virginia* Thomas Jefferson describes slaves not as human beings, but as though they are subjects for his scientific examination:

They secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odor.... They are more ardent after their female; but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation.... In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than

reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from their diversions, and unemployed in labor. An animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course. Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.... Religion, indeed, has produced a Phyllis Whately; but it could not produce a poet.

The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism.<sup>vi</sup>

It is difficult to believe that the man who authored the famous clauses of the Declaration of Independence about the "inalienable rights" with which "all men are created equal" would have harbored such opinions about African American slaves. Not even Benjamin Banneker's remonstrance with Jefferson, urging him fully to implement the words of the Declaration, persuaded the future president to alter his views on slavery or the black race.<sup>vii</sup>

To compound the animal imagery used to dehumanize slaves further, pro-slavery writer Albert Taylor Bledsoe does double damage to African American slaves, hinting at criminality as well as animality when he compares the slaves in Virginia to "a swarm of vagrants more destructive than the locusts of Egypt."<sup>viii</sup>

The resolution of the question regarding the political status of slaves contributed to a civil war. Already we can see that the inalienable clause of the Declaration was used in the war of words which preceded the first gunfire.

#### IV. THE FACTOR OF "RACE" AS A DEHUMANIZING PRINCIPLE; OR "WISE CHARITY," AMERICAN STYLE

The late nineteenth century United States saw burgeoning capitalism transform the nation into an economic powerhouse. It is at this time that a change in philosophy can be documented toward the care of the poor. Andrew Carnegie's 1889 essay "Wealth" became a foundational document for the new view on charity toward the poorer citizens. No longer would mere charity be a goal; "wise" was prefixed to the noun, thereby enabling

Americans of the last decades of the nineteenth century to distinguish between assistance to the justifiably needy poor and wasted donations to an unmerited underclass. The poor were seen to lack four essential virtues to elevate themselves: courage, frugality, industry, and wise charity. Bizzell and Herzberg summarize the philosophy well in one complex sentence: "If getting rich was the result of virtue, poverty must be the result of vice."<sup>ix</sup>

Carnegie's essay makes several references to the term "race" which, viewed neutrally, can mean only a given class of human beings. Viewed negatively, "race" assumes more its modern connotation of the superiority of one ethnic group over another. Carnegie is concerned with "the progress of the race," how "the race is benefitted," what "is best for the race," "essential for the future progress of the race," and he denigrates certain economic theories by stating "the race has tried that."<sup>x</sup>

We who are pro-life now know that the social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century contributed to the views of Margaret Sanger and others who thought that the economic lower classes, especially immigrants, were a different type of human being, almost subhuman. I believe that the demarcation created between the deserving and the undeserving poor assisted in the dehumanization process of the United States, a process which would lead ultimately to an internment of an entire ethnic group.

#### V. INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE ALIENS AND CITIZENS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY: THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS OF THE UNITED STATES

Before the era of legalized killing which began in 1973, perhaps no other activity perpetrated by the United States government is more shameful than the incarceration of Japanese aliens and American citizens of Japanese ancestry during World War II.<sup>xi</sup> As Nazi Germany had its concentration camps, so too did the United States herd over 110,000 of its own people for the ostensible purpose of neutralizing the "Jap" threat against the western states.<sup>xii</sup> The forced removal of the Issei (the term used to designate the original Japanese immigrants) and the Nisei (the term to denote their children) occurred despite the fact that both major groups of human beings of Japanese heritage had proved themselves to be not only respectful citizens, but also persons who had made the areas in which they

settled highly productive.

The concentration camps to which the Issei and Nisei were shuffled were comparable to those of Nazi Germany. First, advocates of the internment used words which mirrored Nazi ingenuity in distorting language. Mike Masaoka, leader of the Japanese American Citizens League during the internment, writes:

Sometime during the early part of February 1942, John H. Tolan, an obscure Democratic congressman from Oakland, California, announced formation of what was grandiosely called the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration.... As it turned out, its primary function was not to investigate "migration" but to provide a platform for those advocating the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.<sup>xiii</sup>

Similarly, the United States government used a variety of Nazi-like euphemisms for the internment camps themselves. Michi Nishiura Weglyn, herself an internee whose work on the internment was one of the first written, provides several examples of this euphemistic language:

A theme widely exploited by U.S. propaganda channels, including the Army's own public relations setup, was that relocation centers were wartime "resettlement communities" and "havens of refuge," so it is little wonder that the public—and even those who ended up in them—were easily misled. Assembly center internees resentful of searchlights, machine-gun-manned watchtowers, and other repressive paraphernalia were generally reassured that it was all "a temporary measure," that their freedom would be largely restored to them after the move to civilian-controlled "permanent camps" in the hinterland.<sup>xiv</sup>

The very existence of the camps was based not on objective facts and verifiable military threats, but on logically-distorted suppositions and conjecture steeped in racist ideology. Prominent early twentieth-century racist Montaville Flowers wrote in his 1917 book, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion*: "Race mixture has been not only a fundamental cause of war, involving as it does internal convulsions and external complications, but the crossing of races has always resulted in a change of civilisation and lowering of the rank of higher civilisations."<sup>xv</sup>

This racism is echoed in the military's justification for internment. One of the documents contained within the U.S. Department of War's *Final*

*Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942* asserts emphatically that: “The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted.”<sup>xvi</sup> To respond to any doubt about the need for internment of the Japanese beyond racial concerns, and, after analyzing the population patterns of Japanese immigrants, the Department suggested the following as further justification for the internment:

Such a distribution of the Japanese population appeared to manifest something more than coincidence. In any case, it was certainly evident that the Japanese population of the Pacific Coast was, as a whole, ideally situated with reference to points of strategic importance, to carry into execution a tremendous program of sabotage on a mass scale should any considerable number of them have been inclined to do so.<sup>xvii</sup>

The use of subjunctive constructions and ambiguous pronouns makes the justification for internment “certainly evident” that it was groundless.

Ultimately, on the command of Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, the racist commanding officer of the Western Defense Command, with the approval of President Roosevelt, whose Executive Order 9066 authorized the internment, 110,000 human beings were herded into camps hastily built to accommodate the suspect race. Besides receiving approval from the Commander-in-Chief, and encountering little opposition, DeWitt’s decision “was also supported by many citizens’ groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union.”<sup>xviii</sup>

The speed with which the Japanese were forced out of their homes and businesses is reminiscent of Nazi tactics to remove Jews from occupied countries: “The army moved people out of their homes with no more than a few days’ notice, collected them in grimy ‘assembly centers’ at such places as fairgrounds and racetracks, and then shipped them by train to shabby ‘relocation centers’—in reality detention camps—in desolate areas of California, Arizona, Utah, and other states.”<sup>xix</sup> Like their Jewish victims, once the Japanese internees were at the camps, they were identified not by their names but by an administrative numbering system. One survivor recalls that “Someone tied a numbered tag to my collar and to [my] duffel bag (each family was given a number, and that became our

official designation until the camps were closed).<sup>xx</sup>

Of course, such deportation to concentration camps could have only come about after a dehumanization process had been well established. Threats of the "yellow peril" had been promoted by persons like Flowers for several decades before the internment. Perhaps more importantly as a step toward the internment, as one survivor stated, "You cannot deport 110,000 people unless you have stopped seeing individuals."<sup>xxi</sup>

## VI. THE PRO-LIFE ANTIDOTE: THE USE OF THE DECLARATION

### A. NINETEENTH-CENTURY DECLARATIONS

Although an anti-life tendency has afflicted American literature since colonial times, over the course of the nation's two centuries those who opposed the anti-life philosophy have advocated the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness of all human beings by using a distinctively American contribution to the world's political literature, the "declaration." The purposes of a declaration are several: first, it is used to recount abuses of an oppressive power; second, it is used to argue for justice—political, economic, or other; finally, it is used as a device to liberate the oppressed group from the tyranny of the oppressor. Of course, Thomas Jefferson's "Declaration of Independence" became the model for future declarations for the oppressed within United States society.<sup>xxii</sup>

Although Jefferson is credited with writing the Declaration of Independence for the ostensible political purpose of justifying the American colonies' separation from British rule, other powerless individuals and groups used the declaration device as a means of stating their grievances against the government. Specifically, the listing of inalienable rights has been retained by a diverse number of oppressed groups and has been the foundation for their pressure for equal rights.

For example, one of the earliest abolitionist documents to rely on the listing of inalienable rights is William Lloyd Garrison's "Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Convention" of December 6, 1833. Garrison's version appropriately capitalizes the most significant word for which abolitionists fought:

The corner-stone upon which [the signers of the Declaration] founded the Temple of Freedom was broadly this—"that all men are created

equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>xxiii</sup>

Garrison was able to use accusatory as well as polite language when referring to the chasm between the ideals of the Declaration and the nation's slavery policy. A month before the American Anti-Slavery Society adopted its declaration, in a speech before the Great Anti-Colonization Meeting in London (November 9, 1833), Garrison used a long string of "I accuse" phrases in parallel to indict the United States: "I accuse her [the United States], before all the nations, of giving an open, deliberate and base denial to her boasted Declaration, that 'all men are created equal; and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'."<sup>xxiv</sup>

Nineteen years later Frederick Douglass used the Declaration as the basis for his argument against slavery. In his 1852 essay "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (one of the most famous in the "Fourth of July sermon" genre), Douglass sternly rebukes his listeners for permitting the intentional legal schizophrenia between a document which espouses that "all men are created equal" and a government which enslaves African Americans:

[The Fourth of July] is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God.... What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? ... What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth

guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.<sup>xxv</sup>

I have extensively quoted from this speech to illustrate two elements in it: first, reliance on the Declaration of Independence; and, secondly, the use of second-person pronouns at crucial points for the purpose of making the speech sound as accusatory as possible. Such a fiery speech has validity for today: substitute "unborn child" for "slave" and the enumerated paradoxes and contradictions demonstrate that the ideals of the Declaration are still words in contention.<sup>xxvi</sup>

As abolitionist demands increased, so too did demands for the other American slaves, women. Nineteenth-century feminists used the Declaration as a model for their "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention. Its language would make the contemporary anti-life feminist uncomfortable, for, while it adds the word "women," it maintains the listing of inalienable rights: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...."<sup>xxvii</sup>

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was not content to have the women merely proclaim their equality. Much as Douglass chastised his audience, when Stanton spoke before the Judiciary Committee of the New York State legislature in 1860, she combined ancient rhetorical accumulation of questions with the tripartite nature of the inalienable rights clause:

It is declared that every citizen has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Can woman be said to have a right to life, if all means of self-protection are denied her—if, in case of life and death, she is not only denied the right of trial by a jury of her own peers, but has no voice in the choice of judge or juror, her consent has never been given to the criminal code by which she is judged? Can she be said to have a right to liberty, when another citizen may have the legal custody of her person; the right to shut her up and administer moderate chastisement; to decide when and how she shall live, and what are the necessary means for her support? Can any citizen be said to have a right to the pursuit of happiness, whose inalienable rights are denied; who is disenfranchised from all the privileges of citizenship; whose person is subject to the control and absolute will of another?<sup>xxviii</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the Declaration was often invoked tangentially to combat the growing divergence between rich and poor. In his 1894 *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, Henry Demarest Lloyd uses a phrase at the end of the Declaration to advance his case: “All follow self-interest to find that though they have created marvelous wealth it is not theirs. We pledge ‘our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor’ to establish the rule of the majority, and end by finding that the minority—a minority in morals, money, and men—are our masters whichever way we turn.”<sup>xxix</sup> Another writer opposed to the “Gospel of Wealth,” Henry George, writing in his 1879 *Progress and Poverty*, used the explicit wording of the inalienable rights clause to argue against private ownership of land:

All men to her [Nature] stand upon an equal footing and have equal rights.... The laws of nature are the decrees of the Creator.... The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in this world and others no right. If we are all here by the equal permission of the Creator, we are all here with an equal title to the enjoyment of his bounty—with an equal right to the use of all that nature so impartially offers. This is a right which is natural and inalienable.... [He then proceeds in a footnote to blast Malthus's philosophy.] And so it has come to pass that the great republic of the modern world has adopted at the beginning of its career an institution that ruined the republics of antiquity; that a people who proclaim the inalienable rights of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness have accepted without question a principle which, in denying the equal and inalienable right to the soil, finally denies the equal right to life and liberty; that a people who at the cost of a bloody war have abolished chattel slavery, yet permit slavery in a more widespread and dangerous form to take root.<sup>xxx</sup>

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when capitalist oppression of workers reached fever pitch, the Workingmen's Party of Illinois responded with their own version of the Declaration, also titled “Declaration of Independence” (July 4, 1876). Although this declaration omits references to the divine source of rights, it specifically retains the pro-life language of the inalienable rights clause: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable

rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the full benefit of their labor.<sup>xxxix</sup>

To summarize this section, what is most significant about nineteenth-century declarations is that the inalienable rights language is almost universally maintained, even though the various declarations may highlight a specific right. This summary statement can be quite useful for the purposes of determining legislative history.<sup>xxxii</sup>

## VI. THE PRO-LIFE ANTIDOTE: THE USE OF THE DECLARATION

### B. TWENTIETH-CENTURY DECLARATIONS

The twentieth century saw continued publication of declarations, most with an ostensibly political purpose, some serving a primarily didactic function. Since the specific ones I will consider were generated by United States involvement in the Vietnam War, I will discuss how opposition to the war generated two important versions of the Declaration, one of which expressly retained the inalienable rights clause.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The "Declaration of Conscience Against the War in Vietnam" (1965) modifies the rights clause slightly: "We believe that all peoples of the earth, including both Americans and non-Americans, have an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the peaceful pursuit of happiness in their own way...."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Except for the title, the other important version I would like to mention (Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam") bears little resemblance with Jefferson's document.<sup>xxxv</sup> King urged black Americans to disavow involvement in the Vietnam War.

As a further break against the rhetorical tradition of the Declaration, it is within this document that King utters what would in today's post-abortion era vocabulary be an apparent pro-life reference. He compares the amount of money financing the Vietnam war to "some demonic, destructive suction tube"; he continues his jeremiad, saying that he "was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such."<sup>xxxvi</sup> Moreover, we in 1997 must recall that the vocabulary describing the technology of abortion in the late 1960's was not as diverse as today. The "curette" and "suction tube" were often metonymies for the one method which was synonymous with abortion, dilation and curettage.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

As with their nineteenth-century counterparts, what is most significant about twentieth-century declarations is that the inalienable rights language is almost universally maintained, even though the various declarations can be concerned with issues not directly connected with the right-to-life issues of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

#### VII. CONCLUSION

Many strategies and means were used to fight the dehumanization which affected certain groups of people since the founding of the colonies over three centuries ago. Perhaps no better antidote to the anti-life virus could have been found than a declaration affirming one of the contested inalienable rights. And yet, although the historical record demonstrates that various oppressed groups have utilized and altered Jefferson's words to accommodate their concerns, there is no declaration which summarizes the views of the American pro-life movement and which argues forcefully that attention must be given to the first of the inalienable rights, the right to life. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that pro-lifers have been too busy working for protective laws and supportive candidates. Perhaps this indicates that pro-lifers in the United States have made the fatal assumption that such a declaration is not needed, that it is a mere academic exercise and not important to advance the movement.

Especially after the re-election of someone who made it into the White House on a plurality vote (again), today's pro-lifers may feel as marginalized as three other groups: rap singers, "angry white males," and ordinary voters. Pro-lifers may feel as disgusted with American society as rap singers who sing about oppressive poverty and worthless government school education. Pro-lifers may feel as oppressed as those who have been victimized by affirmative-action policies which have crippled their chances for employment. Finally, pro-lifers may be as turned off by their government as the electorate in general, the size of which continues to diminish. If the 1996 elections saw the lowest rate of voters since 1924, then the government of these United States is at a crisis point: it has lost the confidence of its people.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Perhaps the dissolution of the current anti-life government is not far off; things get worse, supposedly, before they can get better. Douglass's nation

of slavery for collapsed after nearly a half-century of agitation induced by appealing to the ideals of the Declaration—and a civil war. Stanton's nation of slavery for women fell with the passage of the voting rights amendment. Oppression of Native Americans may decrease as they discover that they can achieve something much more powerful than political power (namely, economic power) by opening gambling casinos on their reservations.

It is easy for pro-lifers to be just as angry at the United States as abolitionists and women's suffrage activists were, and as Native American activists are. It is easy to hope that the country would split apart so that the power of what Martin Luther King called "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" would dissipate.<sup>x1</sup> It is, after all, not a necessary tenet of the pro-life movement that we must believe that the fifty states should continue as a unified nation in the next century.

It is necessary, however, that we attack the anti-life, dehumanizing virus which has taken over the country, and we can do that by using the same strategies which were used by oppressed groups in the past. We who are now nurtured in a nation which is the greatest threat to peace in the womb, peace in the nursery, and peace in the nursing home can restore the first inalienable right to life by following the examples of history. And if the government does not change, then, as the Declaration asserts, "it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government." Whether this means that the separatists of Texas, who are today's outlaws, will be tomorrow's heroes; or whether this means that the United States will go the way of its former challenger to imperial hegemony, the Soviet Union; or whether this means that the nation will stay intact and not split apart like the former Soviet Union, is our challenge for the twenty-first century.

NOTES













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i. William Brennan, *Dehumanizing the Vulnerable: When Word Games Take Lives* (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1995) p.89.

ii. It would be left to William Apes's 1836 *Eulogy on King Philip* over a hundred and fifty years later to write a more balanced biography of Metacomet.

iii. Quoted in Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, eds. *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677* (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1978), pp.451-52. The famous Puritan divine Increase Mather expressed the killing and butchering in similarly glowing language: "Thereupon he [Metacomet] betook himself to flight, but as he was coming out of the Swamp, an Englishman and an Indian endeavoured to fire at him, the Englishman missed of his aime, but the Indian shot him through the heart, so as that he fell down dead.... This Wo was brought upon him that spoyled when he was not spoyled. And in that very place where he first contrived and began his mischief, was he taken and destroyed, and there was he (Like as Agag was hewed in pieces before the Lord) cut into four quarters, and is now hanged up as a monument of revenging Justice, his head being cut off and carried away to Plymouth, his Hands were brought to Boston. So let all thine Enemies perish, O Lord!" Quoted in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *Negotiating Difference: Cultural Case Studies for Composition* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996) p.61.

iv. Slotkin and Folsom, p.325. A different printing of her autobiography states that Rowlandson used the word "Bears" to describe her captors. Cf. Mary Rowlandson, "A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" in *Classic American Autobiographies*, ed. William L. Andrews (New York: Penguin Books, 1992) pp.20-69. Whether this version is due to copyists' or printers' errors or not, Rowlandson's devaluation of the Native Americans as human beings is obvious.

v. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (orig. 1852; New York: Modern Library, 1985), p.8.

vi. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Thomas Perkins Abernethy (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) pp. 133, 135.

vii. Recent scholarship claims that Banneker "was a primary symbol of the self-

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evident truth that all men are created equal." See Sidney Kaplan and Emma Nogrady Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*, rev. ed. (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1989) p.132. More importantly, even though Banneker defended "black dignity against the aspersions of Thomas Jefferson" and had "achieved transatlantic fame... Jefferson never really forgave the sable scientist for speaking out" against slavery and refuting Jefferson's charges about the inferiority of African Americans (Kaplan and Kaplan, p.132).

viii. E. N. Elliot, *Cotton Is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright, On This Important Subject* (orig. 1860; New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968) p.324.

ix. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.419. Another element of dehumanization made possible in the whirling industrial development of the United States is the reduction of a human being to a synecdoche. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps documents a prime example in her novel, *The Silent Partner: A Novel* (orig. 1871; Westbury: Feminist Press, 1983), p.71: "If you are one of 'the hands' in the Hayle and Kelso Mills—and again, in Hayle and Kelso—you are so dully used to this classification, 'the hands,' that you were never known to cultivate an objection to it, are scarcely found to notice its use or disuse. Being surely neither head nor heart, what else remains?"

x. Bizzell and Herzberg, pp.451-54.

xi. Internment of persons who were viewed less than human seems to have been practiced early on in the founding of the United States. During the time of Metacombet's war against the English colonists in 1675, for example, Daniel Gookin reports in *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (orig. 1674, New York: Arno Press, 1976) that: the Indians of Natick and other places, who had subjected themselves to the English government, were hurried down to Long Island in the harbour of Boston, where they remained all winter, and endured inexpressible hardships" (p.88). One can argue also that the numerous efforts to guarantee that Native Americans could have their own "reservations" were similar efforts to control where the population of an inferior or unwanted race would reside.

xii. A cursory glance over wartime documents reveals that only the Japanese were often designated by a pejorative abbreviation ("Jap"). In official government material Germans and Italians were not called any of the variety of derogatory names used to refer to their ethnicity (such as "kraut" or "dago") in the same way

that the Japanese were referred to by their pejorative term.

xiii. Mike Masaoka, with Bill Hosokawa, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: William Morrow, 1987) p.85.

xiv. Michi Nishiura Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: the Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*, updated ed. (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1996) p.89.

xv. Montaville Flowers, *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion* (New York: George H. Doran, 1917) pp.209-10. Although a cause and effect relationship cannot be established between the two authors, a case for the similarity of racist ideas between Flowers and Hitler can be made. These words in Hitler's first volume of his *Mein Kampf* (published in 1925) approximate Flowers's summary condemnation of the Japanese: "The result of all racial crossing is therefore in brief always the following: (a) Lowering of the level of the higher race; (b) Physical and intellectual regression and hence the beginning of a slowly but surely progressing sickness. To bring about such a development is, then, nothing else but to sin against the will of the eternal creator. And as a sin this act is rewarded." Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, tr. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971) pp. 286-87; typographical conventions merged into one quote.

xvi. Quoted in Bizzell and Herzberg, p. 640. Cited as an appendix to the report, the title of the document is "Final Recommendation of the Commanding General, Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, Submitted to the Secretary of War."

xvii. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.632.

xviii. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.613.

xix. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.614.

xx. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience during and after the World War II Internment* (New York: Bantam, 1974) p.13.

xxi. Houston, p.114. Fortunately, the internment did not match the function of the Nazi death camps. One example of how such subjugation of a race can make it

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easier to begin killing occurred only about twenty years after World War II. One of the most horrifying examples of how the dehumanization process blinds the perpetrator to the humanity of another human being, especially if the victim is of a different race, occurred during the Vietnam war. Documenting U.S. soldiers' abuse of Vietnamese villagers, Harold Bryant, an African American soldier, describes how he and two of his fellow soldiers saw "three black pajama bodies start runnin' away from us"; later, after the Vietnamese civilians were killed, one of the American soldiers, a white man, raped one of the dead women. Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984) p.29.

xxii. As used throughout this paper, "Declaration" will be the abbreviation for Jefferson's document, which argued for political liberation from Great Britain. When lower case, "declaration" refers to any manifesto which embodies the criteria for this American rhetorical trope.

xxiii. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.271.

xxiv. Truman Nelson, ed., *Documents of Upheaval: Selections from William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator, 1831-1865* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) p.74.

xxv. John W. Blassingame, ed. *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Vol. 2: 1847-54* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1982) pp. 360, 367, 371.

xxvi. Pro-slavery writers were quick to demonstrate the inconsistencies of the Declaration's universal assertions of rights and the practice of slavery in the new nation. After discussing various arguments about the Declaration's "all men are created equal" clause, pro-slavery writer Elliot argues that "Mr. Jefferson was not only opposed to allowing the negroes the rights of citizenship, but he was opposed to emancipation also, except on the condition that the freedmen should be removed from the country. He could, therefore, have meant nothing more by the phrase, 'all men are created equal,' which he employed in the Declaration of Independence, than the announcement of a general principle, which, in its application to the colonists, was intended most emphatically to assert their equality, before God and the world, with the imperious Englishmen who claimed the divine right of lording it over them. This was undoubtedly the view held by Mr. Jefferson, and the extent to which he expected the language of the Declaration to be applied" (Elliot, p.44). Elliot thus neutralizes the impact of scholarship which demonstrates that Jefferson adopted this principle from ancient Greek

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writings and Roman codification of natural law. The ancient Romans, like the United States government, allowed slavery, but recognized that even the slave can claim that he is equal to his master according to natural law — cf. Edward Dumbauld, *The Declaration of Independence and What It Means Today* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1950) pp.56-58.

Similarly, another prominent pro-slavery writer, George Fitzhugh, directly challenged the ideals of the Declaration in his *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of a Free Society* (orig. 1854; New York: Burt Franklin, 1965), saying: “It is, we believe, conceded on all hands, that men are not born physically, morally, or intellectually equal—some are males, some females, some from birth, large, strong, and healthy, others weak, small, and sickly—some are naturally amiable, others prone to all kinds of wickednesses—some brave, others timid. Their natural inequalities beget inequalities of rights. The weak in mind or body require guidance, support, and protection; they must obey and work for those who protect and guide them—they have a natural right to guardians, committees, teachers, or masters. Nature has made them slaves; all that law and government can do, is to regulate, modify, and mitigate their slavery“ (pp.177-78). Immediately before this section justifying slavery, Fitzhugh accounts for the presence of the inalienable rights clause of the Declaration by saying that, since they were written in revolutionary times, "men's minds were heated and blinded when they were written" (p.175).

xxvii. Diane Ravitch, ed., *The American Reader: Words That Moved a Nation* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991) p.83.

xxviii. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.359.

xxix. Bizzell and Herzberg, p.503.

xxx. Bizzell and Herzberg, pp. 521, 523, 525.

xxxi. Philip S. Foner, ed., *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Women's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829-1975* (Urbana: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976) p.100.

xxxii. According to primary documents gathered by Foner, other declarations of the period which retain all three of the inalienable rights include: "The Working Men's Declaration of Independence," dated December 26, 1829 (p.48); "Declaration of Rights of the Trades' Union of Boston and Vicinity," dated June 12, 1834 (p.53); "Declaration of Rights by Equal Rights Advocates and Anti-Monopolists of New York," dated September 1836 (p.57); Lewis Masquerier's

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"Declaration of Independence of the Producing from the Non-Producing Class," dated September 28, 1844 (p.66); "Declaration of Rights of the Industrial Congress" dated June 21, 1845 (p.72); "A New Constitution for the United States of the World, Proposed by Victoria C. Woodhull for the Consideration of the Constructors of Our Future Government," dated February 1872 (p.181); "Declaration of Principles and Bill of Grievances of the Internationals of the United States of America," dated February 14, 1874 (p.85); "Declaration of the Rights of Man by the Rocky Mountain Division, International Working Men's Association" dated April 12, 1884 (p.121); "The American Wage-Worker's Declaration of Independence by the Federated Trades of the Pacific Coast," dated July 3, 1886 (p.131); and "A Declaration by the Representatives of the Wage-Workers of the United States of America in Congress Assembled," dated July 4, 1886 (p.137).

xxxiii. Although the Communist version of the Declaration does not fit into this study of the foundational principles of American life, it is interesting that the avowed enemy of the United States during the war used Jefferson's document to advance the cause of Vietnamese liberation from France. In fact, Ho Chi Minh's formulation of the "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (September 2, 1945) begins by expressly quoting Jefferson's crucial rights language almost verbatim: "'All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.' This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free." Quoted in Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, eds., *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. revised and enlarged (New York: Grove, 1995) pp.26-27.

As with the Rowlandson entry above, where "translation" of a difficult-to-read script is necessary, another edition of Ho's Declaration has slightly different punctuation and terminology: "'We hold truths that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.' This immortal statement is extracted from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. Understood in the broader sense, this means: 'All peoples on the earth are born equal; every person has the right to live to be happy and free'." Quoted in Bizzell and Herzberg, p.804.

xxxiv. Gettleman *et al.*, p.306.

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xxxv. The strongest parallel to Jefferson's wording is embedded in King's "deem(ing) it of signal importance to try to state clearly" his reasons against the Vietnam War, an echo of Jefferson's "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation." Martin Luther King, "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" in *Two, Three... Many Vietnams: A Radical Reader on the Wars in Southeast Asia and the Conflicts at Home*, by the editors of *Ramparts*, with Banning Garrett and Katherine Barkley (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1971) pp.206-15 at p.206.

xxxvi. King, p.207.

xxxvii. In Charles J. McFadden's 1967 *Medical Ethics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1967), the primary example given for abortion is the use of the curette: "In cases of *direct* abortion, *the very nature of the surgical or medical procedure is aimed at getting rid of the fetus (ex gr., curettage of the pregnant uterus)*" (p.122, emphasis in original). The dominance of the curette method of killing the unborn child reigned well into the decade after King's declaration. In his 1977 book *This Curette for Hire* (Chicago: ACTA Foundation, 1977) Eugene F. Diamond documents still only three methods of abortion: "When abortion is done at twelve weeks, it is done by the method of dilatation (*sic*) and curettage.... Between the sixteenth and the twentieth week, the preferred abortion procedure would be hysterotomy.... Between twenty and twenty-four weeks gestation, the preferred method of abortion is by the saline amniocentesis or 'salting out' method" (pp.77-78). And, as today, so in the 1970's "most abortions [were] performed between the eighth and the twelfth week of pregnancy" (p.77).

xxxviii. Again, Foner's collation shows that the following other declarations of the twentieth century retain all three of the inalienable rights: "A New Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress of Workers and Farmers," dated May 1933 (p.156); "Black Declaration of Independence by the National Committee of Black Churchmen," dated July 3, 1970 (p.164); "A Declaration of Independence: an American Response to New Global Imperatives by Henry Steele Commager for the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia," dated October 1975 (pp.203-04); and "A Declaration of Economic Independence by the People's Bicentennial Commission," dated 1975 (p.171). Finally, the text of Russell Means's "declaration of independence" for the Oglala Sioux Nation, while referred to in at least one Native American sourcebook, could not be obtained to determine if the inalienable rights language is maintained. Cf. Vine Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1985) pp.77-78.

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xxxix. A *Congressional Quarterly* article analyzing the last presidential election reports that “Fewer than 96 million ballots were cast, according to an estimate by the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate (CSAE), which represented just 48.8 percent of the voting-age population. It was the lowest turnout rate since 1924 and the second lowest since 1824.... The rate of presidential-year turnout has been on a steady decline since the closely fought election of 1960... which drew 63 percent of the voting-age population to the polls. The turnout rate stayed above 60 percent through the 1960's, before falling to 55 percent in 1972.... And it has continued to fall since then, with the exceptions of 1984 and 1992, when there were upticks in voter participation that proved only temporary.” Rhodes Cook, “Clinton’s Easy Second-Term Win Riddles GOP Electoral Map: but both parties claim victory, as voters make historic choice for further split government” in *Congressional Quarterly* (Nov. 9, 1996) pp.3189-94 at p.3194.

xl. King, p. 208.