

SGS HISTORIAN

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Villain OR **Victim?**

Misrepresentation
in History



Written by Lower Sixth

Cover & Edited by Maya Anderson

Note from the teaching staff—

In choosing to look at stories, individuals and episodes from history through the lens of misrepresentation, this year's SGS Historian team have chosen to challenge the accepted dogma and, through revisionism, test the accepted narrative on some key moments in history! They have embraced this chance to break free from the narrow confines of the A Level specification and, for some, seized this opportunity to return to the exploration of the past; making connections with interests in other disciplines. It has been fascinating to watch this year's team in action and each contributor can be very proud of their part in crafting the seventh issue of this magazine. Well done to all! - Mr D J Stone

Note from the writing team—

As a group, we chose to do misrepresentations in history as it's a topic we all found to be interesting and relevant to many current topics and thought it would be fascinating to delve deeper into some of history's many stories. We found the topic allowed us to get stuck into the history that we aren't taught here at school and also allowed us to see the real truth within the web of misrepresentation that is history. The research and putting together of this piece was a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding process for us writers and we hope you enjoy what we have created! - Harry Wilkinson

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Challenging Appeasement:

By Mr D J Stone

the goalkeeper who took a stand against Hitler's Antisemitism in the 1930s.

Historians still debate the extent to which Hitler's anti-Semitic policies and the Holocaust was pre-determined, yet in the years leading up to the Second World War, Britain was not alone in appeasing Hitler as first, Stanley Baldwin, and more infamously, Neville Chamberlain, saw Hitler's demands as being reasonable and focussed on the domestic agenda; harbouring a strong desire to avoid a European war at all costs to enable economic recovery from the Great Depression and allowing Britain to concentrate on the maintenance of its empire. This at a time when Hitler had already shared openly his racial theories and rabid anti-Semitism in *Mein Kampf* and had begun to implement policies to marginalise, separate and denigrate Jews in Germany, culminating in the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 and the Kristallnacht pogrom of 1938.

History has painted a narrative that marks out Winston Churchill as a lone voice within domestic politics, arguing from the fringes of the mainstream that war was inevitable, and Hitler should be challenged at the earliest opportunity. Churchill's motives certainly weren't

driven by any kinship or sympathy for the plight of

Germany's Jewish population, but it is inaccurate to suggest that he alone had the foresight to call out the forthcoming conflict and, indeed, the genocide that accompanied it.

Indeed, it was in the mid-1930s that we can look to some examples of actions undertaken by Britons that are at odds with the narrative of Britain as a nation of appeasers. In May 1938, the England football team went on a tour of Europe, which began with a match in Berlin against Germany. Stanley Matthews, the 21-year-old outside right for Stoke City, was the star player in the England team. He later described what happened before the game:



Fig 1: Stanley Matthews playing for Stoke in 1938

"An FA official visited the dressing room and instructed the players to give the Nazi salute – an order which caused every one of us to stop what we were doing and look up with some alarm." The FA official explained to the players that many Germans had been offended when the British athletics team had not given the Nazi salute at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936.

Infamously, the England players gave the Nazi salute, which many observers have presumed was an action taken voluntarily by the players. Matthews's account challenges this narrative. After the war, Stanley Matthews said "Whenever I glance through my scrap-book and gaze on that infamous picture of the England team lining up like a bunch of robots I feel a little ashamed."

The 1938 photograph is a very famous one, but four years earlier in 1934, Derby County were invited by the German Football Association to take part in a four-game tour of the country. On the pitch, the tour was not very successful as Derby didn't win a game! The tour was, however, more notable for the actions of the team's goalkeeper, Jack Kirby.

Hitler and the Nazis had been in power for over a year, and the Night of the

Long Knives had provided Hitler with the pretext to create the role of Fuhrer, consolidating his absolute power. The Derby team were ordered to give the Nazi salute before each match started. One of the players George Collin later explained what happened: "We told the manager, George Jobey, that we didn't want to do it. He spoke with the directors, but they said that the British ambassador insisted we must. He said the Foreign Office were afraid of causing an international incident if we refused. It would be a snub to Hitler at a time when international relations were so delicate. So we did what we were told. All except our goalkeeper, Jack Kirby."

It is easy for us, today with the power of hindsight, to look back and be critical of the decisions made and the actions taken at a time of incredible pressure internationally, as a world still scarred by the impact of the First World War grappled with the Great Depression. We know what went on to happen in the 1940s and we are familiar with the horrendous effects that this act of genocide had on humanity. It is easy for us to be critical of Baldwin, Chamberlain and the politicians of the age for their sympathetic stance towards Germany.

Yet any avid fan of the Peaky Blinders will know that, much like America now,

there was polarisation and division within pre-war Britain. A policy of appeasement towards Hitler was unfolding alongside a contradiction in imperial policy that saw the white-dominions being prepared for self-government and possibly independence, while agitation in India for similar advances was suppressed at all costs by a government keen to retain the jewel in the crown. Even the arch-critic of appeasement, Winston Churchill, was vehemently opposed to any form of Indian self-government; especially if it was to be led by Gandhi. Churchill, still yet to become the hero of World War Two, was not the lone voice speaking out against or taking a stand against Hitler, Nazism, and antisemitism.

Yet we must not overlook the instinctive reactions of the footballers from Derby County and England, with both groups uneasy about being asked to perform the Nazi salute and, even in the face of official instructions, Derby County goalkeeper Jack Kirby refusing to do so. Others, such as novelists Ida and Louise Cook, and banker Nicholas Winton, took principled and practical stands. To me, it is encouraging to reflect on the fact that for

the few rather than the many, in the 1930s, the British values of individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs were clearly in evidence in relation to Nazi Germany's anti-Semitic policies.



Fig 2: Jack Kirby refusing to give the Nazi salute in 1934

The Erasure of Black Britain:

misrepresentation of black experiences following the Empire Windrush's arrival to Britain

By Maya
Anderson

On June 22nd, 1948, the HMT Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in South-east England introducing 1027 passengers, 802 of which gave their original origin as somewhere in the Caribbean (majority from Jamaica as well as Bermuda, Trinidad, British Guiana etc). This followed the end of the Second World War, and the arrivals were invited by the British Government to assist in rebuilding the economy and were granted full British citizenship as members of the Commonwealth. The most common areas that men from the Caribbean found work were manufacturing, construction, and public transport, almost all had previously worked in skilled positions and possessed excellent qualifications. Many women found jobs in the NHS as nurses. However, they found it difficult to find work and came up against racism and bigotry and initially accepted jobs that they were over-qualified for. The term 'Windrush generation' was coined from this initial emigration and is used in reference to people who came to work or join family in the UK between 1948 and 1973, particularly from Caribbean countries



Fig 1: HMT Empire Windrush

Many were not aware of this generation of people until subsequently successive UK governments set about restricting immigrant rights of some British citizens, more specifically through race – targeting Black and Asian people and the British Nationality Act 1981 outlined British citizenship, many Commonwealth citizens ceased to be British subjects nor citizens. Biometric resident cards were introduced by the Home Office from November 2008 without informing or assisting

already settled people, and as acts such as the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 imposed compulsory immigration checks for access to various rights and services such as healthcare, social assistance, employment, banking, and renting accommodation. In June 2009, the UK Border Agency approved the disposal of millions of paper records, including landing cards (registry slips) that evidence the UK length of stay which could help those threatened with deportation despite decades of residence. This scandal prompted an independent review published 19th March 2020 by Wendy Williams – an independent adviser of the Home Office in which she states in the executive summary: “despite the scandal taking the Home Office by surprise my report sets out that what happened to those affected by the Windrush scandal was foreseeable and avoidable”. She then continues on to summarise that she had “serious concerns that these failings demonstrate an institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation; which are consistent with



some elements of the definition of institutional racism”.

One of many victims of this scandal was Sarah O'Connor, an article by The Guardian [19 Sept 2018] tells her story, she moved to Britain from Jamaica when she was 6 years old and in 2017 the benefits agency challenged her presence in the country legally. O'Connor was unable to provide documentary evidence to prove this and she was unable to take up new work and additionally was refused unemployment benefits, selling her car and clothes to make ends meet. According to the article she “lived in the UK for more than half a century, attending primary and secondary school here, working continuously, paying taxes and national insurance, holding a driving licence, and voting in general elections; having been married for 17 years to someone British and having had four children here (all of whom have British passports)”



Fig 2: Sarah O'Connor

and yet her legitimacy as a citizen was questioned. O'Connor stated that "I can't get another job without proving I'm legal and I can't get the documents to do that. The stress of it is making me ill. When the doorbell goes I worry if it's not the debt enforcers it's going to be the immigration people, telling me I don't belong here and trying to send me back to a country I don't know." Sarah O'Connor died aged 57, her legacy as an activist spreading awareness resonates with her daughter, Stephanie O'Connor, who said "She wanted to help other people in her situation. She wanted to raise awareness. I felt like the old mum was coming back."

Chief Executive, Sally Daghliah, of Praxis Community Projects (a charity for migrants and refugees) which has helped several people in positions similar to Sarah O'Connor, Daghliah explains the burden of proof, with individuals needing a minimum of one, but ideally 4 documents for every year they have been in the UK. Documents from decades ago need to be sought out from official sources, most of which no longer have such records. As non-immigration specialists need to check immigration status before serving, such as doctors, landlords and civil servants, Daghliah says how "this inevitably leads to discriminatory requests for pass-

ports, as judgments are being made on the basis of colour, accent, ethnicity and can result in racist practices." This constant questioning of status as a Black British citizen further fuels the need to constantly prove who they are, commonly asked "where are you really from?"

Education on such topics, not only to students but education professionals is sorely needed. In a National Curriculum draft (February 2013) consulted by the Department for Education (DfE) it outlined that Key Stage 3 students should be taught "the Windrush generation, wider new Commonwealth immigration, and the arrival of East African Asians; society and social reform, including the abolition of capital punishment, the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, and the Race Relations Act." However, a second round of consultations by DfE generalised this in the second national curriculum (December 2014) to "social, cultural and technological change in post-war British society." It is important for students of all ethnicities and backgrounds to learn how Britain truly developed, however it remains a watered-down topic within the curriculum and has yet to be changed. The government declared June 22nd as national Windrush Day to celebrate the Windrush Generation

and its descendants, which is incredibly important in raising awareness and prompting discussions. Efforts have been made to address and tackle these issues, but as a nation it appears to be one step forward, two steps back, with the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 in its final stages and is now an act of Parliament (law), another document singling out immigrants and numerous requirements to reside in the UK or seek asylum.



Columbus: Great Explorer or Ruthless Exploiter

By Harry Wilkinson

Christopher Columbus is known and celebrated as a great explorer, who discovered America as well as proving that the earth is round. Many people throughout Latin America and the USA celebrate Columbus on "Columbus Day", however, was he really the great explorer that brought the two worlds together like many know him to be or was he a ruthless, exploiter who brought death, colonialism and slavery and did he even discover America in the first place?

To many Westerners, Christopher Columbus is the man attributed to discovering America and the holiday 'Columbus Day' celebrates this, however this is clearly untrue as there were millions of natives already living across the Americas for centuries. He is also falsely claimed to be the first European to set foot in America, which is untrue as Leif Erikson, a Norse explorer, had made a settlement in coastal North America called Vinland almost 500 years prior to Columbus landing in Hispaniola. Whilst Columbus' landing in Hispaniola on 5th December 1492 did start a rush of Euro-



peans heading towards the Americas, Columbus never set foot in America, only onto the land of modern-day countries of Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Panama and briefly onto Venezuela, bringing chaos everywhere he went.

The myth that Christopher Columbus was the great explorer of his time is a misinterpretation by many today as well. Columbus had never intended to discover the Americas when he wanted to set off, instead he believed that if you sailed west you would eventually get to India. Columbus had visited many different monarchs around Europe to convince them to fund a trip westward to open a new spice route as the race to find new spice routes back to Europe

was becoming increasingly important for European monarchs due to the riches they could gain. The king of Portugal, Joao II, rejected Columbus' plan as much of Columbus' research and maths was faulty. Columbus believed the Atlantic was much smaller than it was, unlike many of his contemporaries, and rejected all the research that suggested otherwise. His attempts to do this expedition relied on selective research and conning monarchs into believing him and whilst Joao II was unimpressed by Columbus' proposal, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile were reluctantly willing to fund an expedition of only 3 boats and 90 people showing how little faith they had. Columbus' idea of sailing west to land in east Asia has also been used to suggest he was one of the first people to prove the earth is round. Many people think that it was the 'great' explorer Columbus who thought of the theory when it had been a working theory around Europe ever since the ancient Greeks at around 500 BC and Eratosthenes even devised a way to find the circumference of the earth in 240 BC.

Christopher Columbus is still seen by large segments of society as a hero and

talented explorer and whilst his seafaring skills were commendable his exploration was lacking. Christopher Columbus left Spain with his 3 ships, The Santa Maria, The Pinta and The Niña, on August 3rd 1492 and saw land in October that turned out to be Cuba. Columbus, due to his limited knowledge of the Asian continent, thought that Cuba was China and was convinced the much smaller Hispaniola was Japan. When Columbus and his men landed on Hispaniola, he also thought the native Arawak people were Indian.

Columbus' actions from when he landed on Hispaniola and beyond are why his legacy is becoming more and more stained amongst people; however, he is still celebrated as a great explorer



and leader by many throughout the Americas and seen as one of the best explorers and admirals of our known history. Some of the atrocities kick-started by Columbus challenge whether he should be such an influential historical figure as his actions show his clear racism as well as almost complete destruction of whole populations of native Americans. When Columbus first met the natives of Hispaniola, the Taino people, who were a smaller subgroup of the Arawaks, the Chief of the Taino people on Hispaniola gave Columbus a gold mask and they were very friendly towards the visitors. Columbus became obsessed with the small pieces of gold in many of their ears and lured them into his ship before arresting them and demanding them to tell him where the gold was from. Columbus saw the Taino as lesser people and less developed, writing in his journal that 'they would make fine servants' as well as suggesting that they were stupid peoples. Columbus decided he would enslave 500 of the Taino and send them back to Spain as a gift for Isabella of Castille. Columbus' effects on the Taino people was devastating as in just 2 years their population halved to 125000 due to suicide, starvation and murder during many of the rebellions that took place on Hispaniola.



After first seeing the gold that the Taino people wore in their eyes and around their necks, Columbus returned to Spain, with his new 'Indian' slaves and told Ferdinand and Isabella of 'rivers of gold and spices' and asked for greater financial help and he would provide as much gold and slaves as they needed. On his return to Hispaniola, he needed to live up to the promise of gold so he forced the Taino people to bring him as much gold as he could in exchange for a necklace – those who didn't bring the required gold got one of their hands cut off. Actions like this, as well as forcing the Taino to work on plantations until they starved meant that by 1542, only 50 years after Columbus first arrived, there were only 200 Taino people left living on the island. They had either died, starved, commit suicide or become enslaved and forced to continue Columbus' fruitless search for gold throughout the rest of what he th

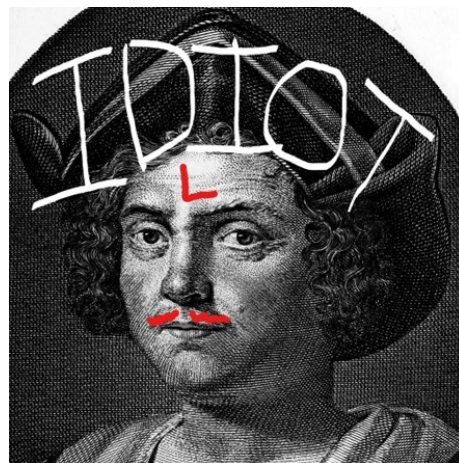
Columbus kick started the precedent of Natives Americans being lesser people which has led to them being enslaved, murdered and pushed out of their natural homes over the centuries, resulting in 90% of all natives either being enslaved or killed by Europeans. His growing greed was apparent even before they landed in Hispaniola, as he offered a yearly pension of 1000 maravedis to whoever sighted land, when land was sighted, Columbus claimed he saw it earlier that day and took the pension for himself. It was Columbus' greed in finding more and more gold to grow not only the King and Queens fortune but also his own that led to such horrific genocide

genocide and loss of life of the Natives.

Columbus after many voyages of discovery, died in Spain in 1506 after amassing a lot of wealth and land in Hispaniola. His legacy to many is seen as a brave and daring explorer that set out to prove the world was round and joined the new world to the old one by many, however his actions of exploitation proved to be so damaging to the people that it's impossible for me to feel that he has

been misrepresented and interpreted over the years as a great explorer, when in reality he was a ruthless, greedy exploiter of the lands he stumbled onto. Luckily, over the last 50 years public opinion on Columbus is edging away from the brave explorer representation and in some states of America, Columbus Day has been renamed to Native American day or Indigenous Peoples Day showing that there is some, albeit limited, progress.

Sometimes a hero in one era becomes a villain in the next.



Napoleon:

Villain or Visionary?

By Alex
Beer

An often villainised and misrepresented character in history, due to the British propaganda of the time, Napoleon rarely receives credit for his great military prowess and impactful reform, which contributes directly to today's government, legal and military structures. The Emperor of the French had humble beginnings on the island of Corsica, born into a family of lower nobility, he joined the military but struggled to ascend the ranks due to the nepotistic system in place, despite displaying great tactical



knowledge, and wouldn't begin his rapid movement up the ranks until the French Revolution in 1789 where he could display his loyalty to the revolution by putting down royalist uprisings.

Soon after his successful military cam-

paigns against the Austrians in Northern Italy he was deemed a national hero and embarked on a greater political journey. In 1799 Napoleon overthrew the government of France in a coup, taking power as the first of three consuls. From this position he was able to lead France to a victory in the War of the Second Coalition and from then on dominate the European continent with his strategic superiority in boots on the ground battles. Napoleon would then go on to achieve many victories, such as the Battle of Austerlitz and the Battle of Wagram. Many times, beating far larger forces in battle, capturing huge numbers of soldiers and advancing deep into enemy territories.

This brings us to the first point over Napoleon's misrepresentation, the British painted him as an evil dictator that wished to conquer the world, using various forms of propaganda and giving us the Napoleon complex (a domineering or aggressive attitude perceived as a form of overcompensation for being physically small or short).



Firstly, Napoleon was often portrayed in caricature as a diminutive and extremely thin person, leading to the nickname of "boneyman", which has influenced today's idea of the Napoleon complex. The propaganda was obviously incorrect, Napoleon was around average height for the time and was not the skinny, frail character portrayed. However, this still led to the Napoleon complex which has impacted the view that many have on the tactical genius, dismissing his incredible battle tactics and military innovations.

Carrying on from this idea, Napoleon was rarely the aggressor in Europe and often worked to protect France's revolution from the anxious monarchies of Russia, Britain, Austria and Prussia. The propaganda suggested all Napoleon wanted

was to take over the world, however, he wanted to create a strong and united continent to provide a buffer to the ever advancing and aggressive British Empire, which at the time had vast wealth, monopolies on trade and sea superiority. Not to mention that Britain was behind all seven coalitions against France whilst Napoleon only declared war twice, showing a clear imbalance. To further this point, Napoleon sold major territory in the United States to focus efforts on Europe. If he was the ambitious world conqueror people claimed him to be, why would Napoleon give up such valuable land in an overseas territory that would have helped his supposed world domination efforts?


Secondly, many people do not recognise the innovations that Napoleon was instrumental in, many of which shape our lives and the political systems we see today. For example, over a 5-year period Napoleon made over 200 reforms to areas such as the economy, infrastructure and legal system. Today, a president of France might see 3-5 reforms across the same period, a successful and productive term in power. Napoleon introduced housing numbers into Paris and eventually all of France,

vastly increasing the efficiency of postal systems. He also improved the economy, opening a national bank and improving welfare systems. Most importantly, Napoleon introduced the Napoleon Code in 1804 which streamlined the legal system into the style we see today. Previously, many regions and jurisdictions would overlap, creating confusion over who had power, the Napoleonic Code clearly defined state law, where provincial districts had power and the general order of the legal system. This was one of his greatest reforms which is rarely recognised, most countries and regions in Europe and even into Asia and the Middle East adopted this style of legal system. Is it fair to call someone who was such an effective ruler and pivotal in modern day society a villain?

Another area in which Napoleon could be classed as a great visionary over a wicked villain would be in his advancements in military strategy. He famously won many battles against larger forces as previously mentioned, this was due to several unique tactics used at the time. Firstly, he was close to and had the respect of his troops, making them loyal and willing to make great sacrifices to him. Secondly, he used the power of deception and surprise to



trick enemies into assuming movements he might make and do the opposite, for example in 1800, he moved his entire forces across the alps to surprise the Austrians at the siege of Genoa, cutting off their supply lines in Milan and then meeting the enemy force at the Battle of Marengo, leaving victorious and exposing Vienna, causing the Austrians to shortly sue for peace. This is one of the many great examples of Napoleon's tactical genius. Finally, Napoleon created the corps system which split large forces into smaller sections that had their own infantry, cavalry and artillery, allowing them to act independently and move at great speed. Large distances could be traversed without supply chains, allowing the French to out manoeuvre enemies, isolate them and take them out.



This form of lightning warfare and decisive victories allowed him to stave off five coalition wars without failing.

Overall, Napoleon, when working at his best, was both a genius military strategist and effective ruler. This is exemplified by both the victories taken in battle and the spread of the French revolutionary ideas due to the strong governance of Napoleon. In terms of whether he was a villain or a visionary, I would argue that he is a misrepresented visionary, with his great strength on and off the battlefield shrouded in belittling propaganda that villainised him. Sadly, Napoleon's great feats may never be fully appreciated, but hopefully you now know the impact he has had on the modern world and the true visionary he really was.

What was the true effect of the Dangerous Dogs Act of 1991?

By Talia
Zelhof

The Dangerous Dogs Act was an act of parliament that was passed in 1991 in response to an incident in Bradford where a pit bull terrier mauled a 6 year old child who was taken to hospital with severe injuries, as well as several other horrific dog attacks that had occurred that year. The Act bans the ownership of four breeds of dogs that were deemed the most violent and aggressive towards people as well as being the breeds that were responsible for the majority of the attacks: Pitbull terrier, Japanese tosa, Dogo argentino and Fila brasileiro.

The Act was passed by the government with the intention of benefitting society by preventing dog attacks whilst still permitting people to own dogs. It was seen in a positive light by a large amount of the population at the time as it was advertised as an increase in government awareness and caring of the safety of population, especially children. However, did it achieve the effect of reducing the number of dog attacks it intended?

From 2005-2018 there have been 37 fatalities due to dog attacks as well as

roughly 8000 hospital admissions linked to dog bites. Furthermore, research data from the British Health and Social Care Information Centre claims there to have been a 76% increase in dog attacks from 2014-2015. This information suggests that the effect of the Dangerous Dogs Act, if there has been any, was short-lived. And so, the Act, rather than protecting people from vicious dogs, has had no such effect but simply bans people from owning a breed of dog they may wish to own and so the Act is futile.

These statistics also show that we cannot judge the level of violence a dog will show by its breed. The recent dog attacks have not been by the four breeds of dogs that were labelled as aggressive in the 1991 Act, yet they still took place, which highlights that it is not a specific breed or type of dog that is the issue as these attacks were done by several different dogs of different breeds. In my own opinion, it should be the owner who is banned for a period of time from owning dogs if a dog they own attacks a person,



as it is the owner's responsibility to train the dog to not be vicious or to keep them on a leash if they are. This would be more suitable as it would only punish individuals for their own dog's actions and not all people, some of whom may be skilled in training dogs, who wish to own a dog of a prohibited breed.

A main issue with the Dangerous Dogs Act that was protested by several dog and animal welfare groups is that if a dog of one of the four prohibited breeds is found in the UK, it is subject to mandatory destruction orders. This means that the dog will be killed as a safety measure as it has the potential to cause harm to humans.

Clearly this is incredibly problematic and disturbing to dog owners as these animals are facing a punishment of death due to their breed regardless of whether or not they have been aggressive or

harmed any individual in the past. Rather, it is decided by a judge who has the power to issue a destruction order based on their own opinion that the dog in question has potential to cause harm and so should be killed to prevent this possibility.

To add to this, these orders are near impossible to fight in court which means that this act gives individual judges, who may be biased against dogs, power to send to their death any dog of a prohibited breed they wish, which is clearly morally wrong and demonstrates maltreatment of animals.

Secondly, simply owning a dog on the prohibited breeds list can be punishable by fines or even a prison sentence which again can still be enforced even if the dog has not actually caused any harm to anyone but is based on the idea that the dog has the potential to do so. This extent of punishment is simply disproportionate to the crime and is immensely unfair. This adds to the mound of evidence that suggests that the Dangerous Dogs Act was not a good and beneficial act of parliament but rather an unfair and cruel act that has negatively affected society.

In conclusion, the Dangerous Dogs Act of 1991, although intending to create a safer environment for all people and particularly children, primarily in parks, showed no effect in decreasing the number of dog attacks that occurred per year. On the whole the Act caused more issues than it resolved and therefore despite the fact that it was originally seen in a positive light, I believe that this was a misrepresentation and the Act was in fact a much less good than it was intended to be.

Thank you for reading :)



Henrietta Lacks: a pivotal lesson in medical science, ethics and race

By Kate
Horsley



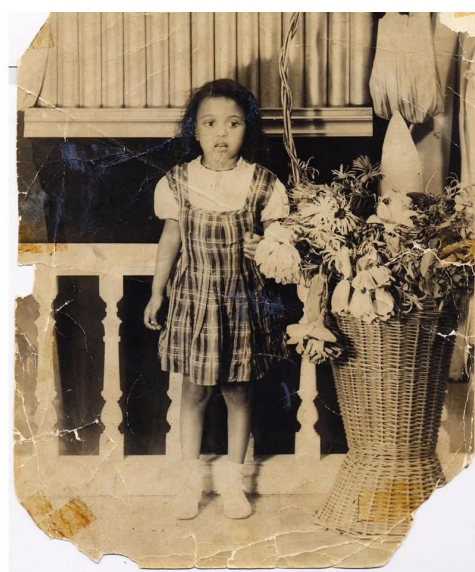
On October 4th, 1951, a young mother of five named Henrietta Lacks passed away after a debilitating battle with cervical cancer. However,

weeks before her death and without the permission of Lacks or her family, Lacks' doctor had removed a sliver of her tumour and preserved it. Whilst the body of Henrietta Lacks retired to an unmarked grave, trillions of her cancerous cells can be found today in almost every biomedical lab across the world.

Henrietta Lacks, née Loretta Pleasant, was born on August 1, 1920, in Roanoke, South West Virginia. In 1924, two months after her fourth birthday, Henrietta's mother died during the birth of her tenth child. Lacks' father became unable to support the family alone and moved with his 10 children to Clover, Virginia, where the children were split

amongst relatives to be raised.

Henrietta was taken in by her grandfather to be brought up alongside her cousin David, known as Day. In 1935, Henrietta and Day welcomed the birth of their first child, Lawrence, when Lacks was only fourteen years old. Four years later, in 1939, Lacks gave birth to her first daughter, Elsie, and the couple were later married on April 10, 1941. Encouraged by a cousin, the newlyweds, Henrietta and Day, decided to move further north to Maryland to escape the poverty of tobacco farming. Day began working for Bethlehem Steel at Sparrows Point Mill, which was booming with the demand generated by World War II.



Henrietta and the couple's children soon joined Day at Turner Station, Maryland, a community outside Baltimore where many of the African American steelworkers lived. A few years later around 1950, Lacks complained to her female cousins of feeling as though there was a knot was inside of her, though she did not seek medical attention. Within a week, Lacks became pregnant with her fifth child yet after the birth of her son Joseph, Lacks found it increasingly difficult to care for her second child Elsie, who had developmental disabilities. Doctors established a diagnosis of "idiocy" and recommended sending Elsie to Crownsville State Hospital, the third asylum in the US designed to house only African Americans. This so-called "hospital" was in truth a dumping ground in which was described by the 'Baltimore Sun' as a place where "sex-offenders, ex-prostitutes, epileptics, and idiots are thrown together with young children who are only feeble-minded". The story of Henrietta Lacks is riddled with tragedy, and there her daughter Elsie lived, in wretched conditions, subject to neglect, abuse, and involuntary experimentation.

In 1951, two months after the birth of Joseph, Lacks continued to feel a knot inside her, and in combination with atypical vaginal bleeding and a lump on

her cervix, she decided to seek medical attention. Lacks visited the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland and was referred to the gynaecology department, where in February 1951 a biopsy indicated the presence of a cervical tumour that had been undetected by doctors both at the birth of her son on September 19, 1950, and at a follow-up examination six weeks later. Despite the extremity of her pain, Lacks decided to keep her diagnosis private in an aim to deal with the diagnosis herself and prevent her family from worrying.

After further tests, Henrietta received the first of several radium treatments. Under anaesthetic, the doctors cut two tissue samples — one from the cancerous tumour, and another from her healthy cervical tissue — before stitching small glass tubes of the radioactive metal secured in fabric pouches (called Brack plaques) to the inside of her cervix, in an attempt to shrink the tumour. Both cervical samples were removed without Lacks' knowledge and were transferred to Doctor George Otto Gey at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Gey had been continuing a decades-long, so-far unsuccessful, scientific effort to keep human tissues alive in culture indefinitely. Cell culture involves growing tissues or cells outside of the individual from which the cells were derived




and Gey aimed to develop an “immortal” human cell line, producing cells that would continuously replenish themselves in the laboratory. Gey soon discovered that Lacks’ cells were unlike any of the others he had ever seen. Lacks’ family gave no consent and received no compensation for Lacks’ unwitting donation to the world of science.

Like most cancer cells, HeLa cells have more DNA than normal cells yet can also divide forever without the help of scientists. The endless supply of HeLa cells allowed scientists to perform experiments that they couldn’t conduct on humans. The cells revolutionized science, contributing to advances in cloning, in vitro fertilization, chemotherapy, and treatments for Parkinson’s disease, AIDS, herpes, influenza, and polio as well as playing a crucial role in the development of

the COVID-19 vaccines. The HeLa line even travelled into space on one of the first missions and yielded five Nobel Prizes for related research. HeLa cells were the first ever human biological materials to be bought and sold and helped to launch a multi-billion-dollar biotech industry.

Despite her cells contributing so much to so many, Lacks’ family didn’t learn of their existence until a revelation in a scientific journal in 1971 and Johns Hopkins’ subsequent requests for their own blood samples in 1973. This evoked feelings of suspicion and confusion; the Lacks family felt disrespected and angry. Henrietta’s family, descendants of enslaved people, had lived in poverty most of their lives, with many of them unable to afford health insurance. During the 1970s, one of Henrietta’s sons was homeless and living on the streets of Baltimore, meanwhile, his mother’s cells were becoming rapidly commercialized, generating millions of dollars in profit for the medical researchers. Today, the Lacks family have still received no financial compensation and many of Lacks’ family remain living in poverty in Baltimore and Southern Virginia.



Whilst Henrietta Lacks' cells formed the basis for countless significant scientific discoveries, Lacks' case also highlights the prevalence of issues such as racism, consent, and ethics within the world of medicine. The stretch of Lacks' impact reaches far beyond the realms of molecular biology and now, as a result of her case, most countries have specific laws around informed consent. Many researchers attribute the contemporary requirement for documented patient consent for research samples to Lacks' story. Although over 70 years since her death, the cells of Henrietta Lacks continue to live on through the HeLa cell line, impacting the world every day.

Are independent women in ancient literature automatically villains?

By Maddie
Corcoran

When we look back at the classical tales many of us grew up with, the common trope of the monster and the hero is prevalent in a great number of them. As readers we often idolise the heroes in these tales who bring about the defeat of the monsters and subsequently the terror they brought to the literature's ancient world. Despite the enjoyability of these stories, there are often sexist influences weaved into these stories and their modern adaptations. In this essay I will examine the demonisation of self-sufficient and powerful female characters and answer the question of whether these women are fairly represented by ancient and modern literature.

In modern day society we pity the outcast and praise the independent, however this sentiment differs in the times these classic tales originated, particularly with regards to the female characters. Medusa is a character widely known for being an evil force which the world is liberated from by Perseus, a favourite of the gods and idolised hero of both the

widely known classical story but also the modern adapta-

tion in the 'Percy Jackson' film series. The real tale of Medusa however, involves a woman punished by Poseidon following his feelings of entitlement to her body and her beauty and later, her brutal murder at the hands of Perseus. This story of Medusa's scarily echoes real world behaviours exhibited by men towards women and the huge amount of male violence cases that stem from male feelings of entitlement towards women. Medusa's acts of self-defence and specifically her ability to turn people to stone attempt to portray her as the aggressor when in reality it is the men in these tales whom act with aggression and violence. They appear to dislike their lack of ability to control Medusa and misrepresent her justified pushback against their actions as evil, a sentiment which can be found in modern society where women are often told their behaviour is irrational and wrong when fighting back against patriarchal oppression.

Medusa thrived in her time spent banished to the end of the earth with her sisters, demonstrating her self-sufficiency and success when away from the reach of men. The way Medusa's story ends in her being hunted down and killed by Perseus brings question as to why men like Perseus and Achilles wielding their swords are regarded as ancient heroes yet Medusa and her snakes are classified as evil. In my opinion it is the misogynistic perspective of society common at the time of the classic tales creation which distorts the reality of this character's story.

One of my favourite and compelling characters from the ancient world is Circe- to me a layered character who shows the power and self-sufficiency of women in a male dominated world- admirable to women in both modern and ancient audiences. Circe the witch. In today's world many people have different connotations on the label witch- both positive and negative, in my eyes it is a label for independence and resourcefulness. However, we can all agree it confirms characteristics such as "strange" and "unique" a way of isolating somebody different and by different, I mean an independent self-sufficient female. Believed by some as the only ancient character to be independent, isolated on her island of Aeaea using what she

has to sustain and thrive. The men Circe does entertain or encounter on her island are either turned into pigs or are taken as one of her lovers for example Odysseus in book ten of the Odyssey Circe's time with these men were simply a pass time, her encounters transforming men into pigs could however show Circe as barbaric and brutal to enjoy such punishment, not only this but having to be seduced by Odysseus to stop her from turning him into a pig could again show animalistic qualities- questioning how sufficient she is at controlling her emotions. However, having to control her emotions could be insinuating again powerful independent women are barbaric and evil.

When women are rarely portrayed as powerful in ancient story's they are also given the labelled of untrustworthy, evil and barbaric. The amazon tribe- one of the only that fought and survived against the "civilised" Greek male warriors. One reason the amazons could be labelled as barbaric is for one killing any of their babies that are born sons to keep the tribe only women however this has been done throughout history in many different situations and often with babies who are born girls.

Amazons also might not be considered sufficient as they had to rely on men to reproduce however I believe this should count as a biological issue instead of a failure in self-sufficiency- they had to reproduce with men to keep their tribe in shape and a sufficient way of living. Palopatus also wrote that he believed the amazons were not even women and were in fact men a perfect example of a man undermining and taking credit from strong women. This could also be used as evidence for the amazon's self-sufficiency as they must be powerful and dangerous to be compared or mistaken for men. Although I don't view the amazons as evil, they take more of a violent approach to living compared to those like Circe and Medusa who I previously spoke about however to consider them as villains we have to think about other fighters who killed hundreds of thousands more unnecessarily and take into consideration the age they were in and things that would of seemed "normal" in ancient times.

Overall this shows the ancient tales we know and love might have been twisted- possibly due to interpretation or the men who have written the

majority of them. It also makes us question if men are viewed as victims or villains by the same standard and should the lives and fates of these women matter if men for example killed the minitour or won the battle of troy? If historic men are successful in their missions maybe the effected lives of women are just collateral damage we should accept for it has been written in history for thousands of years. Overall I believe the only self-sufficient characters in ancient literature are the women particularly Circe and Medusa and that if we are going to carry on re telling these stories we need to recognise the faults and deep rooted misogyny that the tales contain.

How Vaccines are Misrepresented in Society

By Hayley Collins



During the 18th century a man called Edward Jenner suffered greatly when he fell ill with the disease smallpox. This led to him being deter-

mined to find a cure. He found out that many milkmaids in Britain suffered from cowpox but never got smallpox, cowpox had less severe symptoms than smallpox but seemed to have the same or similar antibodies meaning that if you had cowpox, you were not likely to also fall ill with smallpox. As an experiment, Jenner took the 'puss from the lesions of the cowpox patient, milkmaid Sarah Nelmes and transferred it into his gardener's 8 year old son James Phillips'. Phillips was ill but recovered quickly and afterwards he was injected with the smallpox vaccine and he did not fall ill again. This was the discovery of the first vaccine, it was seen as 'such an incredible gift to mankind' and this vaccine has been used for centuries against small-

pox all around the world.

However, since the 18th century there has been an increase in anti-vaccine movements, this sharply increased in the 19th century after the vaccination of children became mandatory in the UK in 1898, resulting in the Anti-vaccine League expanding in London. People claimed that the vaccine: 'didn't work', 'would make you sick' and 'contained poisonous chemicals' like carboxylic acid, found in the smallpox vaccine. People became displeased when the government raised the law to children 14 and under, resulting in many marches and demonstrations from the public, led by the Anti-Vaccine League, leading to the removal in penalties to the vaccination laws, so children did not have to get vaccinated if their parents did not consent.

In recent years there has been a trend in Western countries of parents refusing to vaccinate children. The most recent opposition has been to the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine since Andrew Wakefield suggested a connection between autism and the MMR vaccine.

This caused an outbreak in measles in Western countries where the virus had been almost completely eliminated following his report, resulting from the MMR vaccination rate dropping from '92% in 1996 to 84% in 2002'. This led to measles becoming an endemic in 2008 in the UK and around the world cases shot up; for example, between 2008 and 2011 France had over 22,000 measles patients. This study by Andrew Wakefield was retracted due to the unethical research methods and lack of data shown, but the damage had already been done and the vaccination rates had declined rapidly. From 2019 the Coronavirus swiftly made its way around the world and resulted in almost every country going into a lockdown at some point in 2020 and early 2021. Companies such as Astra Zeneca, Moderna and Pfizer managed to produce vaccines not previously seen by 2022 'nine vaccines have been approved' or under assessment. Generally, the vaccines have been popular and the take up good. For example, in England the government allowed you to travel abroad if you had had two vaccines, this encouraged people to get vaccinated as they almost saw it as a reward as well as keeping everybody safe.



However, in March 2020 the anti-vaccination groups started to grow rapidly, particularly in the United States of America, as trials for the Coronavirus vaccines had begun. People wanted to voice their reasons behind not wanting the vaccines. Some of these were due to people being scared that they would get autism or that there will be mercury in the vaccines that were under the trial period. There are several reasons why there has been a rise in anti-vaccination beliefs on the basis that 'vaccines cause more harm than benefits to the children who receive them'. There were always ethical issues with the MMR vaccine due to the vaccine containing porcine gelatin, and a few religions were opposed to having the vaccine, for example Judaism Islam and Hinduism, due to the gelatin present in the vaccine. The MMR and rubella vaccine uses aborted foetal tissue cells resulting in Protestant and Muslim communities also not wanting to have the vaccine due to their religious beliefs.

Reasons behind vaccine hesitancy include general distrust towards authority, conspiracy theories or concerns about safety. In some cases, wrongful claims are made that people have died or suffered disabilities as a result of being vaccinated.

News outlets and social media have given platforms for anti-vaccination beliefs. Although useful medical information can be found in on the internet, this can lead to false information being posted and circulated to millions of people online. Groups have used social media as a tool to help gain publicity very quickly, making them more vocal about their ideas, resulting in more protests and distrust against vaccines from 2020.

In conclusion, vaccines have been mislabelled as dangerous and the causes of several other diseases without proper data, but unfortunately the media has helped spread the anti-vaccine message, leading to people becoming more cautious. The problem in the decrease in the take up of vaccines has led to recent outbreaks of diseases that we thought had been eliminated. This poses a great risk to the herd immunity built up around the world as a result of vaccines.

Is the character of Werner Von Ebrennac portrayed as a villain in the movie adaptation of *Le Silence de la Mer*?

By Eloisa
Burton

and
the
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man



This film encapsulates passive resistance. During 1941, France was occupied by Germany so the civilians were personally affected by the war, which is shown in this film by Werner Von Ebrennac relocation into the home of the french civilians who are nameless, and are referred to as the uncle and the niece. This idea of French families' life being punctured by the intrusion of the enemy was common at the time, so the story by Vercors was quickly adapted into the film by Melville in 1949. The film wasn't so successful because the war was still an open wound for the French, but nowadays the film is appreciated from a different perspective. The film informs the audience of the effect of war on the civilians and explains the French pride for their country following the devastation it experienced previously, lastly the film includes many of the philosophical beliefs introduced by Vercors, therefore attracting many readers and audience members. Von Ebrennac expresses his interest in both the French

cultures and thus makes any idealistic comparison. For example he compares his experiences of the winters in the French and German forests. Von Ebrennac describes the french winters as a "sweet season" and the german winters a "harder", he further elaborates this beliefs by further detailing the sweet snowy forests of France. Vercors delves into his idealistic opinion of French trees because Von Ebrennac conveys idealistic thoughts throughout the story, showing that Von Ebrennac possesses idealistic qualities. Another idealistic quality Von Ebrennac expresses is one that he wishes that Germany and France would one day be united like "husband and wife". Another characteristic of Von Ebrennac is his impressive cultural knowledge of both France and Germany. He informs us and the other characters that before he was a lieutenant he was a musician, and his understanding

of French and German composers is vast. Furthermore, Von Ebrennac explains that he is well read by his list of French writers that he is accustomed to. Von Ebrennac further goes on to compare French and German arts by stating that Germany has better composers but the French have better writers. This interpretation of both countries' arts is impressive yet again idealistic because this view implies an equality between the countries, which appears even more absurd considering the time that the soldier discusses this and exaggerates the idea of Von Ebrennac being an idealist. Kenneth R. Morefield pictures Von Ebrennac as a "flawed Human rather than simply a monster", which is convincing because despite him being a nazi, Melville and Vercoeur decide to include his cultural knowledge and philosophical ideas that certainly show idealistic qualities when it comes to international relations and the arts.

Even though Von Ebrennac is attributed as a "flawed human" the adjective victim is often disputed among cinephiles and historians when describing Von Ebrennac. Throughout the film Von Ebrennac's role within the final solution is revealed by a moment by realisation near the end of the film, but it isn't clear if he is depicted discovering the news or this reaction is a revelation. Because of his knowledge and involvement in the concentration camps, Von Ebrennac is immediately pictured as an evil character. Despite this, once the audience is informed on his characteristic away from his job, there is clear evidence that Melville is sympathetic to Von Ebrennac, which suggests he is sympathetic to the Nazi regime, but subconsciously is it because he associated Von Ebrennac with Nazism or does he represent the enemy? Melville also provides evidence that Von Ebrennac isn't the victim in this play because of some stories he retells about his life in Germany. The first of his previous fiancée, who after being stung by a mosquito on a scenic idyllic picnic, proceeded to tear the limbs of the insect. This anecdote represents the cruelty that the Germans supposedly possess. Secondly, Von Ebrennac recounts his interactions with other French people, who never understand



or accept his views of peace of and understanding between the nations, to which Von Ebrennac is surprised by because the according to him all the german girls understand this idealistic view too even his previous fiancée. Therefore Von Ebrennac's naivety and past experiences and role in the final solution dont paint him as the victim but rather the villain of the story.

Therefore Von Ebrennac can be interpreted by many as the monster or the flawed human based of the evidence provided by Melville and Vercors that inform us of his views and actions, that link him to either being a villain or the victim, however personally I believe that Von Ebrennac is depicted as the enemy but not the villain of the story



Cleopatra the last Queen of Egypt:

How pop culture ruined her

By Juliet Shiel

Cleopatra is one of the most recognizable females in history. Her soap opera of a life gave poets and playwrights creative inspiration to write a story to entertain and pop culture has since carried on with this story. As time passed Cleopatra's outstanding intelligence and political skills were ignored and replaced with her beauty and manipulative personality. She was once the richest woman in the world commanding a thriving empire after 30 years on the throne. She lived over 2000 years ago at a time where Romans controlled the narrative with their mass control across the world meaning her true abilities were clouded by Roman hatred after her romances with Caesar and Mark Antony. Due to this many of the accounts told at the time she lived are biased against her deeming her with the nicknames "the snare, the delusion, the seductress."

Since the fall of the Egyptian empire, there have been numerous films, plays and books written about Cleopatra. In all these writings there is an emphasis on beauty and seduction however this is

far from the truth. After Elizabeth Taylor portrayal of her in the 1963 movie Cleopatra, her name has become synonymous with immense beauty however we will never really know if this was true or not. The most accurate adaptation of her looks is from a coin stamped with her face from her rule however this was most likely signed off by her. Accounts from Plutarch the Greek scholar are where most of the evidence on Cleopatra comes from yet Plutarch began his writings almost 100 years after Cleopatra was on the throne. Plutarch described her as having a beauty beyond comparison in contrast to other scholars writing during Cleopatra's lifetime described her as quite average with no outstanding beauty. . Even though there is more evidence to say Cleopatra wasn't the beauty she is made out to be Hollywood particularly chose to ignore this and focus on Plutarch's writings to sell tickets for their film.





It wasn't just modern pop culture that portrayed Cleopatra as this beauty as artists such as Michelangelo have sculpted her face with no real idea of what she looks like and just putting a face to a name. The focus on Cleopatra's so called beauty has completely undermined her strong political mind as her appearance has been focused on so categorically to make her more appealing to the modern audience.

Cleopatra's romances with Caesar and Mark Antony is still to this day one of the most well-known things about her however these romances weren't just a simple love story and were imbedded with mutual benefits on both sides. Cleopatra and Caesar began their relationship after he helped her gain power back from her brother after being forced to flee. Cleopatra was able to raise an army in exile and went to Caesar to help support her


against her brother. Cleopatra knew Caesar wanted to conquer Egypt and join it to the Roman empire so went to him specifically for help as she knew he had the military strength and money she needed. In return, Cleopatra took the throne with her younger brother and soon after had Caesar's child. This contrasts both the 1913 and 1917 films of Cleopatra where she is viewed as an inept ruler whose only skills were seduction and manipulation. Although Cleopatra did use these skills to charm Julius Caesar, her motives behind this was to regain her status that had been previously taken by her brother and his supporters. After becoming Caesar's lover, Cleopatra was in a much higher position and was able to take advantage of her alliance with the Roman empire to cement her role as the Queen of Egypt. This strategic move meant the people who had resented her ascent to the throne were won over and began to support her. The romance between her and Caesar was much more than a simple love story. Cleopatra understood her position clearly and was able to use her diplomatic skills and "irresistible charm" to start a relationship with Caesar.

The movies made fail to represent this side of Cleopatra to make the story more appealing to the viewer and in keep with the gender roles in the early 20th century in which a woman was less than a man and a woman's only way to gain power was to seduce a man. Cleopatra is made to seem like a struggling woman whose only chance of survival was to seduce and fall in love with a strong, powerful man.

Similarly, her romance with Mark Antony was also a strategic move however Cleopatra looked to gain much more than a secure position through Mark Antony than that of Caesar. Although Cleopatra's power in Egypt was more secure than ever before she met Mark Antony, throughout their 9-year relationship Cleopatra regained part of Egypt's eastern empire, gained protection of Egypt and her crown and made Egypt even more economically prosperous. Cleopatra and Mark Antony's relationship was based off mutual benefits even more so than Caesar's. Antony needed Egypt's support constantly throughout their relationship at first defeating Caesar's enemies and then defeating Caesar's adopted son Octavian after his claim to power of the Roman Empire. The Shakespeare play Antony and Cleopatra is the most accurate portrayal of their relationship alt-

though Cleopatra is presented as a woman blinded by love and jealousy whereas it is much more truthful to say that although she did love Antony, the Egyptian empire was her main focus. By supporting Antony, she gained Egypt more territory allowing them to thrive more economically. Although the play gives a more rounded view of Cleopatra, it panders to the audience's Western view of women's place in society at the time and overlooks Cleopatra's military and economic strength.

Cleopatra's legacy is that her name is still well known today however the popularised view is that she is known for beauty and love affairs with powerful Roman leaders. The true picture is that she was incredibly intelligent and well-educated, speaking five languages; she was a queen at 18: she co-ruled for 20 years and was always the dominant ruler. At the height of her power, she virtually controlled the entire eastern Mediterranean coast. She lost her throne, fought to get it back again then lost it again. She navigated her way through a political minefield facing multiple enemies as a result of her affairs. Yet all of these incredible achievements have gone virtually unrecognised by the modern audience.



Cleopatra's legacy has been tarnished by pop culture after portraying her as an inept ruler whose only gift was her beauty and who relied on being saved by a man.

Gandhi:

Historical Hero or a Prejudiced Preacher

By Hadiya
Adam



The Gandhi we all commonly know of, is a political genius who has left his mark on history, as a character of honour and pacifism – employing peace-

ful methods as impactful weapons to free his people from the British colonial rule. His non-violent resistance was enduring and resilient, showing the world that no matter how reluctant a government is to listen to their people, they simply cannot ignore the desperate cries of the determined and fearless activists. However, we are going to examine a microscopic section of his shameful behaviour that is shrouded in his online glorification.

Gandhi arrived in South Africa in 1893 where racial segregation was prevalent ; The White community was separated from the Coloured community of which Indians were a part of. During his stay in South Africa, Gandhi routinely expressed "disdain for Africans," says S.

Anand, the publisher of the book ,*"The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire"*. This is where we start to see Gandhi's hypocritical behaviour, because where most people say that Gandhi fought for racial equality, that was only the case if you were Indian. Gandhi fervently disagreed with this rule, not because it was unjust and degrading, but because Indians were classed as "coloured". He had strong disparaging views towards the Black community and only ever referred to them as "kaffirs" meaning an insulting term for a black African. - this term was so offensive that the use of it would make you, in 1976, subject to being criminally punished. Gandhi even published a newspaper called the "Indian Opinion" ordinarily expressing his racist beliefs and disdain for the Native



Africans in four different languages that include English, Tamil, Gujarati, and Hindi.

Here are some of the derogatory and extremely racist comments Gandhi has made about Black people:

"Indians sentenced to hard labour are in fact kept with the Kaffirs. Kaffirs are, as a rule, uncivilised - the convicts even more so. They are troublesome very dirty and live almost like animals" [My Experience in Gaol March 7 1908]

"They are intellectually backward. They are unlettered and have no arts" [Natal Governor and Indians April 18 1908]

"The British rulers take us to be so lowly and ignorant that they assume that, like the Kaffirs who can be pleased with toys and pins, we can also be fobbed off with trinkets" [Blue Book February 29 1908]

Now, Gandhi was completely fluent in English, so there is no denying what he meant when he made these ghastly comments. What I believe is key to note, is that Gandhi's aim was never to abolish racial segregation; he wanted Indians to be elevated into the same social class as the White Community. Essentially, he wanted to move the Indians from the Coloured Category to the White Category. This desire stemmed from Gandhi's

'Racist' Gandhi statue removed from University of Ghana

13 December 2018

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belief in the Aryan Brotherhood, which is the idea that Indians and Europeans stem from the same racial group. By pursuing this desire by writing letters to the government, this has led many South Africans to despise Gandhi and accuse him of working with the British colonial government to promote racial segregation as he was keen to join in their colonial subjugation.

During the 1980s in the wake of second-wave feminism in India, Gandhi's treatment of women came under the spotlight. As Gandhi grew older he would perform these non-sensical experiments where he would sleep naked with women aged 18-25 to see if he was able to resist his sexual temptation, which is extremely immoral and problematic; he was even


described as “a most dangerous semi-repressed sex manic”, by C.P. Ramasmani, a Prime Minister of one of the states in India. One of the subjects of these experiments was his grand-niece Manu – this shocking behaviour shows us how Gandhi used his higher position to sexually exploit innocent women.



en. When Gandhi's behaviour came to light, many people felt frustrated and infuriated – including his close friends of which some even stopped associating with him. On March 16, 1947, Nirmal Kumar Bose, one of Gandhi's closest associates wrote a letter to another of Gandhi's close colleagues, saying, “When I first learnt about Gandhi's experiment ... I felt genuinely surprised. Personally, I would not tempt myself like that and more than that, my respect for [women] would prevent me from treating her as an instrument in my experiment”. Women were merely

props to persuade him into celibacy. An incident that clearly communicates Gandhi's misogyny is when his resolution to two of his female followers getting harassed in South Africa, was to forcibly cut their hair short to avoid inviting sexual attention to ensure that the “sinners eye” was “sterilised”. He did not even acknowledge the man who was in the wrong under the unjust presumption that women are responsible for male impulses; although, Gandhi believed that men and women were supposedly equal, his was severely lacking in comprehending the concept of female sexuality. Gandhi's view on women also encouraged multiple honour killings for the purpose of upholding family reputation, as he believes that if women were raped, they no longer had value as human. The lack of compassion or sympathy displayed in this belief demonstrates the profound lack of respect or willingness to understand women as victims of sexual assault in these circumstances.

It is most true that Gandhi did play a significant role in freeing India from the British, through non-violent means, however I believe it is important to acknowledge his numerous shortcomings, which I have not fully dived into. Gandhi is known to be addressed



with the title “Mahatma”, meaning saint in Hindi, which connotes righteousness and correct morality, but I personally do not believe that he deserves this title and like many famous figures in history, his good deeds have been oversaturated to overshadow his shady and not so honourable actions.

So, what do you think of Gandhi now?

Thank you for reading.