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Benevolence: How Twentieth Century Historians Approach American Atrocities

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Abstract

This paper examines how shifting racial relations between whites and minorities in the United States affected the conclusions of U.S. historians analyzing racially motivated atrocities committed in the Philippine-American War. This article studies historical literature on the War written between 1900 and 1989 and observes how changing racial relations impacted the ways in which historians were either willing to acknowledge the atrocities U.S. soldiers committed against Filipino fighters and civilians or dismiss them completely as fabrications constructed by the American media. By way of a thorough reading of historical articles and monographs that discuss the Philippine-American War and the atrocities committed during the conflict, in conjunction with research on the racial atmosphere throughout the United States decade-by-decade, the paper shows how social changes impact historical memory. The article concludes that in decades marked by explicit racism, historians who published on the Philippine-American War were less likely to acknowledge that American military men committed ruthless acts of violence against Filipinos, not to mention that U.S. soldiers committed such acts due to race prejudice. During periods in which implicit racism was more common in the United States, historians were willing to acknowledge that atrocities were committed due to racist ideas that convinced American soldiers that the torture and murder of Filipinos combatants and civilians—including women and children—were acceptable practices in war.

War atrocities can be a difficult topic to explore, especially when committed by a nation that touts the basic human needs of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. While many would be hesitant to believe that the United States could commit such acts in the name of democracy, when the far-reaching influences of racism, xenophobia, and hypocrisy are overlooked, others may be compelled to think otherwise. When a thorough and impartial acknowledgement of American promises and practices towards non-white populations is able to take place, one can begin to look at American acts—and American historical memory—in a vastly different light. Well before the arrival of the American military on the Philippine islands, the United States of America were eager to civilize the Filipino people at the dawn of the twentieth century. This putative gift of civilization from one people to another was neither welcome nor well-received, especially given the violence that it accompanied. Racist and ethnocentric beliefs among white American soldiers stationed on the Philippine islands propelled them, while supposedly committed to the spread of democracy under the guise of "benevolent assimilation," to torture and murder their "little brown brothers." To provide historical context, the term *Benevolent Assimilation* refers to the mission of the United States military, as relayed by then-President William McKinley in his December 21, 1898 proclamation. It aimed to im-

pose democracy and western civilization upon the Philippine Islands and its inhabitants in an imperialistic manner. This decision came after—but perhaps while—the U.S. provided the Filipino people with military aid in an anti-colonial revolution against their Spanish colonizers. Following Spain's defeat, Filipinos were designated Americans' "little brown brothers" to connote both the racial and hierarchical relationship between the United States and the Philippines. Thus, American aggression emerged in the Philippines not solely because of the physical threat natives posed to Americans, but largely because of historically racialized perceptions of Filipino savagery.[1]

As societies and cultures change so do the malleable ideas of race through which one is either considered worthy of being included or unlucky enough to be excluded from society and certain social privileges.[2] While these ideas of race shifted markedly from the end of the Philippine-American (Phil-Am) War in 1902 to the end of the twentieth century, so did the ways in which historians interpreted the atrocities of American soldiers towards Filipino combatants and civilians. As explicit racism—the unambiguous prejudiced treatment of a minority racial-ethnic group—became more prevalent in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1960s, and as implicit racism—the subdued discriminatory treatment of non-white citizens—was more common place in the 1900s, 1930s, 1970s, and 1980s, historians looked at American atrocities in the Philippines in drastically different lights, or not at all. Analyzing the presence and degree of explicit or implicit racism in decades when historians published works on Phil-Am War atrocities shows how these two forms of racism in the United States influenced historians to either blame the atrocities on racism or to view them as exaggerations promulgated by the American press.

The Philippine-American war, compared to previous American wars, would possess a large racial component due to it being the first time young white (and black) Americans were fighting someone who looked so dissimilar from most of the American populace. Overwhelmingly, ideas of racial superiority convinced American troops in the Philippines that using excessive force on Filipinos was necessary to suppress their combatants and show American dominance over the natives. However, it would take historians a considerable amount of time to unearth the idea that racism had a heavy hand in convincing American soldiers to carry out such atrocities. Through a deep-reading and in-depth analysis of decades of historical literature on the Philippine-American War, this essay will explore how the shifting of racial tensions among the American people shaped the conclusions of historians who published on war atrocities during this military conflict.

1. The Immediate post-Phil-Am War Period

Closely following the American victory over Filipino revolutionaries in July of 1902, analyses of the "Philippine Insurrection," starting with James A. LeRoy's article titled "Race Prejudice in the Philippines," began to appear. Published in the same month as the war's end, LeRoy's analysis is likely the first that deals with racially charged crimes in the Phil-Am War. The method of using a racialized lens to look at these atrocities would not occur again until the 1960s.

LeRoy contradicts other researchers on the Phil-Am War who might claim that commercialism was why Americans were in the Philippines by stating, "we have carried into the Philippines a petty race prejudice... and we are betraying a ten-

[1]For further information on race and perceptions of savagery, particularly in Oceanic Polynesia, see Brian Hochman, "Race, Empire, and the Skin of the Ethnographic Image," in *Savage Preservation, The Ethnographic Origins of Modern Media Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 115–42, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt1287nkf.7.

[2]For further information about the social construction/malleability of race see Jennifer L. Pierce, "Why Teaching About Race as a Social Construct Still Matters," ed. Ann Morning, *Sociological Forum* 29, no. 1 (2014): 259–64.

dency to swagger under the 'white man's burden,' sometimes in the garb of commercialism."[3] Before the end of the first page LeRoy begins to cite instances of American cruelty which he personally witnessed as a journalist in the Philippines. He also shows his uncommon way of looking at the Filipino by stating that they are "every whit as distinct from the Negro as he is from the European."[4] This opinion contradicts the belief that many Americans had that the Filipinos were just as "savage" as Native and African Americans.

When analyzing the way that Americans from different regions looked at and treated the Filipinos LeRoy says, "some Southern as well as Northern officers rate the Filipino higher than the American negro" which verifies the theory that American soldiers were looking at their enemies in terms of race.[5] LeRoy blames the behaviors of American lieutenants preferring to sit beside a "Filipino mestizo" compared to an African American chaplain on a deep-seated contempt for the African-American, which American soldiers were taught to harbor.[6] However, he does not claim that white soldiers were without cruelty towards Filipinos just because they preferred them to African-Americans. "At least three fourths of the army," writes LeRoy, "entertain a more or less violent dislike for the Filipinos and a contempt for their capacity, moral and intellectual."[7] It is also important to note that this feeling for the native grew as military tensions turned into civil government, implying that as white soldiers saw their power diminish this "increased the hostility of narrow-minded officers to the natives" which LeRoy thinks stemmed not just from racial prejudice but also the guerilla warfare that Filipino combatants initiated in August of 1900.[8] While he does state that Americans only resorted to acts of guerilla warfare in response to the change in tactic on the part of the Filipino combatants, LeRoy's message is clear: Americans make enemies by way of "a studied attitude of contempt, an assumption of racial and individual superiority."[9] What the actions of Americans boils down to for LeRoy is this prevalent idea of racial superiority among American soldiers that they carried with them to the Philippines and thus used to justify their barbaric actions against the Filipino natives.

Contradicting LeRoy and failing to acknowledge that American atrocities occurred is John Holladay Latané's 1907 publication, America as a World Power, 1897-1907. With eighteen pages of the monograph dedicated to the "Insurrection," Latané, an American historian and Johns Hopkins University professor, spends less than two full pages examining American atrocities. When analyzing the widely discussed American actions in the Philippines, Latané describes the guerilla warfare incited by the insurgents as being executed with "great cruelty, treachery, and ferocity. It was something wholly new to American experience."[10] While it may have been true that Americans had never retaliated with this sort of violence in war, Latané suggests that American soldiers were morally superior to the Filipino insurgents when it came to war and implies that fighting against the Filipinos turned our boys into ruthless killers.

The images that Latané conjures in the minds of those who read his glossing-over of guerilla warfare are urged to believe in the savagery of the Filipino who was, according to the author, essentially responsible for this vicious change in tac-

[3]James A. LeRoy, "Race Prejudice in the Philippines," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1902): 100.

[4]Ibid., 101; Phillip Ablett, "Colonialism in Denial: US Propaganda in the Philippine-American War," *Social Alternatives* 23, no. 3 (2004): 25.

[5]LeRoy, 102.

[6]"Mestizo" can be used as slang to define a person of both European and indigenous heritage. In the context of the Philippines, a mestizo was likely of native Filipino and Spanish descent.

[7]Ibid., 104.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., 108–9.

[10]John Holladay Latané, *America as a World Power*, 1897-1907 (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1907), 96.

tic and thus forced the morally righteous American soldier to return in kind. Latané writes at one point "Murder, rape, torture and other crimes were too frequently committed by American soldiers...The reports of these atrocities which were published in the United States were in many cases exaggerated, but the truth was bad enough."[11] Latané's omission of details pertaining to torture used against Filipinos is surprising. He fails to acknowledge the use of the water cure (a precursor to modern-day waterboarding) by Americans against Filipinos, which is a topic that LeRoy repeatedly references. Failing to talk about events such as the Balangiga Massacre in September of 1901 during which General Jacob H. Smith ordered his American soldiers to "kill and burn. . . " is also alarming given that this was a popular story that was covered by *The New York Times* and *The New York Journal*.[12]

Despite these contradicting opinions about the occurrence of American atrocities, Leroy and Latané's analyses both prove that American atrocities must be reckoned with, if not acknowledged as wholly truthful. Analyzing these secondary sources in tandem is telling of the willingness, or lack thereof, of conservative-minded Americans to admit that their sons, acting as deliverers of civilization and democracy, committed atrocities. Given the fact that as congressional hearings on American actions in the Philippines were concluding, historians like Latané still maintained that these cases of torture towards Filipino combatants and civilians were mere examples of yellow journalism. Although contributors to the study of the war like LeRoy are, by 1902, analyzing instances of racial prejudice in the Philippines alongside American attitudes of racial supremacy there is a back-track in the theoretical progress of this study of racism and atrocities moving forward.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Tom Quigley, "The Bells of Balangiga: Time to Finally End the Philippine-American War," *Commonweal*, no. 1 (2015): 1.

2. Silence and Anti-Oriental Racism in the 1930s

To the average American 1920 through 1939 may seem to have been relatively free from racial discord given no heavy acts of protest, but the actions of Americans within these decades were very much driven by explicit racism. Specifically, the Ku Klux Klan rose in prominence across the nation, claiming more than four million members at its peak.[13] Possibly influenced by ideology parallel to the Klan's came the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 which limited the number of immigrants that could enter the United States and completely excluded those coming from Asia.[14] Filipinos, however, were U.S. nationals and thus could travel to the United States without restriction but they were not immune from "anti-Oriental racism" and the accompanying violence.[15] In fact, according to the distinguished legal historian Mae Ngai, "during the fall and winter of 1929-1930 at least thirty incidents of racial violence against Filipinos took place on the Pacific Coast, including two large-scale race riots and several firebombings."[16]

This culture of xenophobia then begs the question: How did this rise of increasingly explicit racism affect the ways in which historians wrote about the atrocities during the Phil-Am War compared to years past? In the 1920s, a period of more explicit racism and xenophobia especially towards Asian migrants, there is virtually no scholarship on the Phil-Am War. This absence in literature on

[13]James Gregory, "KKK: Intro - Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project," para. 2, accessed November 4, 2018, http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/kkk_intro.htm.

[14]For more information on state attempts to legally exclude Filipinos from citizenship and "anti-Oriental racism" see Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 116, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hhr9r.

[15]"The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act)," para. 2, accessed November 4, 2018, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act; Ngai, 109.

[16]Ngai, 108.

racially motivated atrocities shows that during periods of more explicit racism, historians may have been less inclined to discuss racism, and race in general. In the early 1930s, historians failed to spend a considerable amount of time analyzing the actions of American soldiers towards the Filipino people. However, this changes with the commencement of World War II in 1939 during which there is more implicit racism, and thus a greater willingness to talk about the race-based atrocities committed during the Phil-Am War.

Looking at Gertrude Krieger's *A History of the Movement for Philippine Independence* (1931) and U.S. Army Captain William Thaddeus Sexton's *Soldiers in the Sun: An Adventure in Imperialism* (1939) there is not much that the two works share. In her master's thesis Krieger fails to discuss the actions that Americans took in response to the change in tactic initiated by the Filipino fighters. Rather, she spends nearly two full pages writing about Filipinos torturing Spanish priests by using a combination of the water cure and modern-day waterboarding.[17] Krieger fails to mention a single instance of questionable American actions that LeRoy and Latané acknowledged more than a decade prior, but she does employ LeRoy's 1902 article when spending a considerable amount of time talking about the inhumane actions of Filipinos.[18] Pertaining to race, Krieger does use at least one primary source that uses "nigger" in conjunction with the action of shooting Filipinos. Further, she acknowledges that an idea of racial superiority among American soldiers may have been interpreted hostilely by Filipinos. In response, Krieger claims the Filipinos acted aggressively towards the Americans whom they did not welcome in their land. It is not outlandish to suggest that personal prejudices, then commonly held by whites like Krieger, may have persuaded her to write about Asians and Filipinos in this way that demonizes the victims. However, this does not mitigate her failure to acknowledge any instance of American cruelty towards Filipinos as other historians have done and will continue to do in the years following the publication of her thesis.[19] Given that Krieger is writing in Southern California, home to a large Asian population as well as a burgeoning and active Ku Klux Klan membership, she could have been influenced by the racist notions that Filipinos and other Asians that populated the Pacific coast were an inferior race given that a great deal of racial violence against Filipinos took place throughout California.[20] These popular notions likely affected her ability to look at the Filipino as anything other than a savage combatant.

Dissimilarly, Sexton's *Soldiers in the Sun* talks at length about the actions of American soldiers in a number of chapters in his book, albeit omitting the racial overtones of earlier authors like LeRoy. Like Latané, Sexton does not subscribe to the atrocities on which journalists of the time were reporting. More so than Latané, Sexton states unequivocally that, "investigations revealed that although the majority of reports of the alleged atrocities were exaggerations, many were matters of fact."[21] Sexton's publication is the first time since 1902 in which the methods of torture against Filipino fighters and civilians is firmly acknowledged, although without adding the racial component seen in works immediately following the war. However, there still lies a disconnect. Sexton argues that "the Americans did not torture natives for sport. It was a matter of self-defense"

[17]Gertrude Augusta Krieger, "A History of the Movement for Philippine Independence" (master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1931), 35–36, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1644868273/citation/699B12F875ED44A8PQ/2.

[18]Ibid., 36.

[19]Ibid., 25.

[20]Clay Risen, "The Ku Klux Klan's Surprising History," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/04/books/review/linda-gordon-the-second-coming-of-the-kkk.html; Ngai, 105.

[21]William Thaddeus Sexton, *Soldiers in the Sun: An Adventure in Imperialism* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Military Service Pub. Co., 1939), 81, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/003946288.

against guerilla-type fighting.[22] However, on the following page Sexton cites that "Lieutenant Preston Brown was charged with 'the murder of an unarmed, unresisting prisoner of war.'"[23] In these examples, Sexton attempts to justify American actions by deeming them as self-defense but later shows that American soldiers were murdering unarmed and unresisting Filipinos who had been captured and were being held by American soldiers.

Analyzing the writings of Krieger and Sexton in the 1930s, compared to early literature such as what Latané released in 1907 shows that the historical writings on the Phil-Am War emulated the explicit-turned-implicit racism of the decade. During times of explicit racism in the 1920s there exists a pronounced absence in literature on the War. In the early 1930s, compared to previous decades, historians spent less time analyzing American atrocities and more on methods of torture used by the Filipinos, as if to try to sustain the belief that the young, white American soldier went to the Philippines as a deliverer of democracy, incapable of such inhumanity. As the globe entered a second world war, U.S. historians seemed to focus less on race and divisions within the nation and pushed a collective sense of unity and nationalism as Takashi Fujitani implies more than a century later in *Race for Empire*, writing that in the later global conflict of World War II, "...the U.S. ...shifted decisively toward the strategy of disavowing racism and including despised populations within their national communities." While Krieger nor Sexton speak on how American actions were driven by racism, there is a small improvement in the sense that historians are again acknowledging, in small part and in large, that American soldiers did participate in the torture of Filipinos.

[22]Ibid., 240.

[23]Ibid., 241.

3. Explicit Racism and Internal Social Change in the 1950s and 1960s

The context of the 1950s and 1960s saw extensive racial unrest, largely due to the post-WWII Civil Rights movement. Immediately following WWII, the United States granted the Philippines their independence. While the U.S. government was focused on containing communism in Asia, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s competed for attention. For the first time since the Philippine War, American treatment toward the non-white "other" was again at the forefront of national discourse and international politics.

Compared to the 1930s, historians focusing on the Philippine Revolution acknowledged the brutal actions carried out by American soldiers. In 1954, Filipino citizen and historian Gregorio Zaide published *The Philippine Revolution*, an account of the war from the Filipino perspective, which is unsurprisingly contradictory to the previous histories written by American-educated historians. Dissimilar to any previously explored American account, Zaide states unequivocally that "America... fired the first shot of the war" while American historians prior to Zaide's publication agree that a trigger-happy American soldier killed a Filipino who did not comprehend the soldier's orders to "halt."[24] What is important in this work is that this is the first account where American atrocities are explored in depth while also acknowledging that Filipino fighters were engaged in similar actions towards Filipinos who collaborated with Americans. Placing blame on both sides, Zaide says, "...the American soldiers perpetrated wanton acts of cruelty, rapine, and sadism, making them equally guilty of violating the rules of civilized warfare. The conduct of both combatants... degenerated from 'human methods.'"[25] Without explicitly saying that ideas of racial superiority were a factor in how Americans acted,

[24]Gregorio F. Zaide, *The Philippine Revolution*, (Manila: Modern Book Co., 1954), 298; Latané, 89; Krieger, 32.

[25]Zaide, 349.

Zaide suggests such.

These sentiments are not unique to Filipino historians such as Zaide. Leon Wolff, an American historian of the Philippines, agrees with many of the ideas Zaide puts forth in 1954 and adds a clearly racial component to his analysis of the War in his 1961 *Little Brown Brother*. To prove that race played a significant role in the killing of Filipinos, Wolff turns to the letters written by American soldiers who use racial slurs to demean Filipinos and justify their murder.*Leon Wolff, Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippine Islands at the Century's Turn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), 305.* More explicitly linked to these racially-driven actions is the highlighting of a popular tune that was sung by American soldiers.[26] The song implies that the overwhelmingly white American soldiers in the Philippines saw a difference in race that they could not overlook in order to consider the Filipinos they were "protecting," as brothers, supporting Wolff's argument.

With common conversations about race, most likely driven by the Civil Rights Movement as well as American presence in Asia, the connection between racism and imperialism was bound to be applied to studies of the Phil-Am War. What these two works add to the conversation is an in-depth analysis of American atrocities which have previously been acknowledged and dismissed as exaggerations. These works show that historians are beginning to look at this conflict through a racial lens by observing the war from previously unexamined angles. Driven by explicit racism and the nonviolent pushback associated with the African American Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s, historians used the social circumstances and prejudices of these decades to examine how Americans were compelled to look at an enemy of a different race at the turn of the twentieth century.

[26]Ibid., 313.

4. Implicit Racism and Discussion in the 1970s and 1980s

Arguably even more so than in the 1950s and 1960s, the United States dealt with many more instances of public discord during the Civil Rights Movement. Grappling with the aftermath of the social change of the sixties and an ongoing war in Vietnam, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed historians closely analyze racism and war together. American presence in Vietnam and de facto racism in the 1970s under the Nixon administration opened the door for historians like Richard Welch and Stuart Creighton Miller to observe the association between racial superiority and how these beliefs justified the violent actions by American soldiers towards Filipinos.[27] Richard Welch's 1974 "American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response" examines how notions of racial superiority on the part of white American soldiers allowed them to justify their actions towards the inferior Filipino. Overall, what Welch aims to prove is that race, above all, incited American soldiers to act with such cruelty toward their "brown brothers."

Unlike in the previously examined works, Welch admits that Americans were unhesitatingly cruel to the Filipino people, and he asserts that their contempt for the Filipinos did not emerge after they resorted to guerilla warfare, as LeRoy and Krieger claimed. Rather, conditioned racism that soldiers brought from home was to blame. He states, "the American soldier viewed his Filipino enemies with contempt because of their short stature and color" which suggests a feeling of racial superiority among the Americans.[28] Push-

[27]Although civil rights legislation of the 1960s sought to transform the United States into a more racially egalitarian society, federal legislation would be unsuccessful in the total eradication of racism and the corresponding discriminatory practices of segregation.

[28]Richard E. Welch, "American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response," *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (1974): 240, https://doi.org/10.2307/3637551.

ing his argument further away from traditional historians on the matter, Welch writes "for the most part, [American soldiers] were very young men, poorly educated, and conditioned by the racism and provincialism of their upbringing. They were determined to prove their manhood by 'shooting niggers.'"[29] Welch proved that through the practice of referring to Filipinos as "niggers," white American soldiers showed that engrained racism and their comfortability in killing Filipinos were related.

Welch also uses examples from soldiers and their superiors who invoke the Filipinos' racial inferiority as an explanation to justify their extermination. Citing a 1900 newspaper article that appeared in the *New York Evening Post* Welch proves that soldiers did not "'regard the shooting of Filipinos just as they would the shooting of white troops. This is partly because they are 'only niggers'.... The soldiers feel that they are fighting with savages, not with soldiers,'" which shows a plain disregard for the lives of the Filipinos simply because of their race.[30] Welch goes on to support the notion that the soldiers "saw [Filipino] civilians as inferior... as less than human."[31] Organizing this evidence into one analytical article, Welch shows that this contempt for the enemy was not simply because the Filipino soldiers resorted to guerilla warfare, but largely because of their skin color.

The decade of the 1980s, in terms of degrees of racism and American presence in Asia, was very different from that of the 1970s. Though the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War were both over these events did not stop historians from continuing to look at how race impacted not just the American atrocities that took place in the Philippines but how it impacted the entire war. Stuart Creighton Miller's 1984 Benevolent Assimilation looks at these exact notions and argues a watered-down but lengthier version of Welch's twenty-one-page article that strictly dealt with looking at American atrocities in the Philippines. What is different from the argument that Welch makes is the idea that soldiers learned to harbor a racist hatred for the Filipinos once stationed on the island. Within the first one hundred pages, Miller already seeks to contradict the firmly established notions of the ability for American soldiers to refrain from responding to verbal insults by the natives. Miller states that "American soldiers... addressed the Filipinos as 'niggers'" and proceeded to note that "it was common practice to knock down a native with the butt of a Springfield [gun] merely for 'seeming disrespectful.'"[32] More explicitly, Miller states that abuse against native civilians or combatants was caused by, "an outgrowth of racist attitudes and of the belief that violence was the only way to deal with 'Asiatics.'"[33]

As first-seen in Welch, Miller agrees that, without a doubt, racism induced Americans to kill and torture Filipinos. Taking this idea a step further, Miller claims that if a newly-stationed soldier arrived "without a degree of racial hatred for the Filipinos, he was not very long in acquiring it... They were not long in the Philippines before they were hounded by their comrades, who branded them 'nigger lovers'" an idea that complements a point that Welch touched upon when stating that young, white American soldiers wanted to "shoot niggers" in order to prove their manhood.[34] What these ideas confirm is that explicit racism expressed among the soldiers while stationed in the Philippines encouraged soldiers to act more inhumanely towards the Filipinos. This claim also contradicts the popular Phil-Am War era belief that by simply being present in the Philippines, a land where "savages" outnumbered soldiers, white Americans became unrestrained

[29]Ibid., 241.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., 242.

[32]Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines*, 1899-1903 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 58.

[33]Ibid., 59.

[34]Ibid., 182; Welch, "American Atrocities in the Philippines," 241.

murderers, whose targets' only identifiable difference from them was the color of their skin.

Examining Welch and Miller's publications written in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively, shows that with the relative social calm of race relations that followed the Civil Rights Movement, historians were more open to discussing ideas of racism without the internal pressures of the 1950s and 1960s. Though the 1970s and 1980s were certainly not without instances of racism, and these decades would not mark the end of explicit racism within the United States, these works show that the social advances made possible after periods of explicit racism opened the door for historians to engage in honest dialogue about past (and present) notions of white superiority and subsequent actions.

5. Conclusion

Through analyzing the histories of American atrocities in the Philippine-American War, what is clear is that historians' interpretations of these atrocities are molded and shaped by the periods in which they write. When explicit racism is strongest, particularly in the 1920s, there is a notable absence in literature on the war itself and thus on American atrocities. This absence, and the subsequent blame of atrocities placed on the Filipinos, shows that historians did not find racially-charged atrocities towards persons of color worth studying or important enough on which to write. What follows is a transition from explicit to implicit racism as the nation sought to unify against their common, foreign enemy in World War II. However, through the explicit racism of the 1950s and 1960s historians began looking at the war in a new, racialized light because of the crisis that the Civil Rights Movement would attempt to solve. Later in the 1970s and 1980s as explicit racism returned to implicit, historians who were aware of the racist sentiments that made anti-imperialists out of many Americans, mirrored a society of de jure racial toleration and symbolized no longer a resistance to observe the war through a racial lens. Rather, they rightly chose to view the American soldier as a racist, not a deliverer of democracy. An evolution of how historians analyzed and ignored American actions sheds light on how not only the nation's values changed but also how ideas of race and similar concepts can reveal much more about a society at large. Or, it can reveal the moral truths that the country either refused to accept or was unprepared to face.

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