

## Editors' Introduction

### Reconsidering Gender, Violence, and the State

As emerging feminist scholarship and queer-of-color critique make clear, archives contain surprising histories about gender, sexuality, and violence, stories that challenge axiomatic, gendered oppositions of power and vulnerability. More than simply repositories of untold stories, archives reproduce, obscure, engender, and distort histories of violent subjugation, conditional accommodation, and creative resistance. This issue of *Radical History Review* unearths and deconstructs such bodies of knowledge in order to reassess conflicting narratives of victimization, subjection, retaliation, and self-defense that arise under, coincide with, and partially constitute forms of state authority.

Events and developments over the last two centuries reveal complex histories of race, gender, and violence. Long-term trends, such as the expansion and dissolution of empires, the growth and subsequent mitigation of racial slavery, the rise of the carceral state, and the emergence of decolonization movements, as well as more contemporary issues, such as the torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib and the recent mass kidnapping of girls in Chibok, Nigeria, reveal the state's complex, evolving role as enforcer, perpetrator, and/or protector. These histories remind us that gendered violence and gendered understandings of violence are political and intersectional topics of lasting significance. Indeed, during the months that this issue of *Radical History Review* was in production, activist scholars in the United States created the African American Policy Forum and launched the "Say Her Name" campaign to incorporate black women's historical and contemporary experiences into the growing movement against the nation's militarized police forces and their concomitant forms of brutality. The intervention represented by this project represents a complex admixture of historical longevity and politicized evolution characteristic of all of these stories of gender, violence, and the state.

*Radical History Review*

Issue 126 (October 2016) DOI 10.1215/01636545-3594359

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We came to this issue of *Radical History Review* with a number of interrelated questions: How have historically shifting conceptions of masculinity and femininity informed the persistence of and punishments for gendered violence? What do the archives reveal about the larger structural factors that perpetuate and engender violence? How have feminist and queer organizing efforts to protect and/or avenge victims further complicated legal, penal, and legislative efforts to address gendered violence?

The questions owe an enormous debt to earlier scholarship about gender, violence, and the state. Judith Walkowitz's path-breaking analysis of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1860s England, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (1982), alerted scholars to the unintended consequences of state action and regulation of female sexuality, showcasing the state's penchant for overreach, the resulting incarceration of suspected prostitutes, and the license such laws gave to harassment of women in the public sphere. In the United States, efforts to curb domestic violence founded on stereotypes of the inherent "brutishness" of working-class men in the late nineteenth century and focused disproportionately on bourgeois interventions of "uplift," to a large extent sidestepping the social and economic roots of violence. Simultaneously, African American women developed a powerful critique of white rape of black women, and of its counterpoint, the rape-lynching narrative that posited all black men as rapists. A growing body of scholarship on the history of the US carceral state makes clear that more complicated readings of gender, violence, and the state are critical to any reconsideration of the state's power to coerce and control through gendered violence and the proposed abolition of the prison-industrial complex.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, scholars of empire, ethnicity, and postcolonial studies have generated new understandings of the ways in which gender, violence, and the state interact. Scholars engaging in queer-of-color critique have laid bare the connections between the expansive western (neo)liberal state and the concurrent acceptance of violent suppression of "others" as suspected terrorists, as noncitizens, as postcolonial subjects.<sup>2</sup> Building on the longer history and contemporary debates and conversations about feminism, its evolving critique of violence, and some of its blind spots, the goal of this issue is to reanimate conversations about gender, violence, resistance, victimization, and the role of the state as arbiter among these categories.

Five separate but complementary sections explore these questions from different angles. Three feature essays dig deep into the historical intertwining of gender, violence, and the state in three discrete time periods and settings. Three interventions on antiviolence activism and the state explore the sometimes conflicting individual, state, and community approaches to antiviolence work. The five compact articles in "Ways of Seeing and Knowing Violence" offer new findings and new interpretive insights into existing and future archives of violence. A visual essay questions the validity of photographic documentary "evidence" of state violence against its

own citizens. Finally, the issue's Curated Spaces contribution showcases a creative new approach to the project of antiviolenence documentation. Together, these varied perspectives, approaches, and methodologies sketch out new lines of inquiry and sites of intervention. They demonstrate what can be gained by approaching the archives with new eyes and probing previous assumptions in ways that challenge received wisdom and familiar historiographies. While in some cases the authors push the limits of what the archives reveal, they nevertheless insist that we reconsider the vexing intersections between gendered violence and state power.

The three feature articles collected here introduce the key themes explored throughout this issue. The articles in this section uncover the role of violence in the carceral and militarized state, and they examine moments when women enact violence upon others, placing these actions in the service of political or personal agendas. They also raise critical questions about the ways in which some forms of media have employed narratives about violence to create and shore up ideals of femininity, masculinity, family, and heteronormativity. Together they investigate the mutual constitution and/or imbrication of gender, violence, and the state, with an awareness of intersectional factors that connect the three categories. Further, each provides detailed analysis of a place in time and a highly specific context, while reconsidering broader themes about the interrelationships among gender, violence, and the state.

The violent treatment of female prisoners was both inherent and invisible to the early development of the penitentiary system in New York State, as Jen Manion reveals through a close reading of two notorious incidents of violence used against female prisoners in the early 1800s. During this time, the idea of a penitentiary was in transition from one of a nonviolent, reflective space designed to promote redemption through reflection and prayer to that of the more familiar and punitive model that infused the modern prison system. Protestant reformers, imbibing romanticism and the Second Great Awakening's emphasis on individual redemption through self-improvement and good works, advocated "punishment without violence," a regime that included solitude (at the time deemed a nonviolent treatment), silence, and prayer as a means of "humane" correction of criminals, particularly female ones. Very soon, however, both male guards and female wardens found rationales, in the "masculine" or nonsubmissive behaviors of their Irish and African American prisoners, for the imposition of violence as an essential tool for prison control. Sentimental notions of female delicacy, in other words, gave way to the infliction of ever-harsher punishments, even for women, at times meted out by (female) authorities who banded together to protect their professional standing and authority and prevent legal oversight for their actions. In this case, the state eschewed its own highly gendered regulations governing the administration of violent punishments for and by women.

In a very different setting, Tomoko Seto shows how, nearly a century later, police authorities used violent means to contain Japanese anarchist and socialist

women protesting during the 1908 Red Flag Incident in late Meiji Japan. Dubbed “anarchist beauties” by the Japanese press, a few radical, nonconformist women dramatized their defiance of conventional feminine gender roles with unconventional clothing and hairstyles and with unfeminine speech and behavior on the street, asserting their visibility within the socialist/anarchist movement. Their accounts of violent abuse by the police, evident at the time and further detailed in court testimony months later, exposed numerous contradictions in popular and media perceptions (and prescriptions) about legitimate gender roles, specifically relating to political power, visibility in public, and/or legitimacy as mouthpieces of a radical ideology and socioeconomic critique. Ironically, state overreach in punishing (i.e., jailing) the radical women generated lively media commentary that—at least in the short term—expanded the reach and inflated the importance of the anarchist critique, in the process attracting young (male) students intrigued by the activities and descriptions of female radicals. The enthusiasm proved short-lived, however; in 1910, the state cracked down on political radicals after the High Treason Incident and imposed a traditional gender order that effectively suppressed the women’s expressions of political radicalism.

Josh Cerretti’s article on domestic militarism examines the engendering of violence from a late twentieth-century US perspective, tracing the US government’s rationales for military intervention abroad and military-style suppression at home. Through strategic invocation of threats to women and children, he argues, the government introduced something akin to a “civic family,” enforced by masculine warriors and sanctioned by the state. To document this “militarization of heterosexuality,” Cerretti juxtaposes four geographically diverse events: the Gulf War in Iraq (1990–94); the Los Angeles riots (1992); the siege in Waco, Texas (1993); and the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City (1995). In each case, Cerretti tests how well the idea of state “protection” of the innocent and vulnerable offered political cover for military or quasi-military responses to threats foreign and domestic. So, US intervention to prevent Iraq’s invasion of US ally Kuwait was framed as a necessary response to the sensational (but later discredited) news accounts of the “slaughter” of infants in a hospital ward in Kuwait, rather than as a strategic deployment to secure access to oil-rich territory in the Gulf. Similarly, military-style crackdowns against unrest in Los Angeles following the acquittal of police officers involved the Rodney King beating invoked protection of communities and restoration of order from lawless rioters rather than suppressing legitimate outrage against a questionable verdict. Likewise, the FBI justified its siege and attack on the Waco Branch Davidian compound with (later discredited) stories of child abuse. Cerretti reads these disparate cases together as evidence that the US state frequently employs the protection of women and children to deflect criticism of a variety of militaristic responses to complex conflicts both abroad and at home. The

twin ideas—the warrior as protector, the “womenandchildren” as victims—he suggests, have disguised the rise of domestic militarism in the United States.

The three essays in the “Antiviolence Activism and the State” section ask us to reconsider the efficacy and/or legitimacy of state solutions to gendered violence in the US context. They differ in approach, analysis, and range of solutions posited over recent decades: self-protection, community organizing, and reexamination of opportunities lost in the state takeover of antiviolence intervention through punishment. For example, Catherine O. Jacquet explores a period in the early 1970s when some activist women, inspired by the militancy of the Black Panthers and other radical organizations of the time, embraced a philosophy of self-defense as a means to female empowerment. Frustrated by the lack of organized protest against sexual violence and rape, and disgusted by the state’s well-documented failure to win prosecutions in individual cases, a few women’s organizations advocated female self-defense as an alternative to state legislation or prosecution. They believed that, through acquisition of personal skills (e.g., martial arts training, marksmanship), women could develop autonomy and reject governing cultural logics that conflated female subjectivity and victimhood. Rhetorically, these movements posited personal militancy as one possible route to political and social equality.

The personal approach emerged, in part, as a reaction to failed state efforts to tackle gendered violence during the same period. As Raphael Ginsberg demonstrates, anti-domestic violence initiatives since the mid-1970s abandoned the original community-based, structural critique for a law-and-order approach of state punishment. A 1978 consultation of the US Civil Rights Commission, influenced by feminists and antibattering activists, identified the root cause of domestic violence firmly within the traditional, patriarchal family structure and the dearth of economic opportunities and support structures for women outside the home. Conservatives quickly rejected the report’s recommendations for federal, state, and local funding for services (safe houses, job training, and housing support for domestic violence survivors), however, as antithetical to traditional family. They pushed instead for a criminal justice approach that focused on punishment of offenders, without consideration of the ability of survivors (typically women and children) to survive outside of marriage, creating an inherent conflict between the need for protection from physical violence and the need for economic survival. Recently, activists have challenged both the state interventions and punishment ethos that took root in the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, instead advocating for renewed attention to a societal, structural approach to domestic violence.

Other recent efforts to address structural inequality, however, threaten to resuscitate rather than avoid the heteronormative patriarchal ideal. Xhercis Méndez explores community activism as an alternative to state-sanctioned efforts to bolster the patriarchal family structure, this time with a primary focus on the Afri-

can American community. President Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative, designed to provide training, counseling, and other support services for young African American men at risk, she notes, ironically revives the largely discredited patriarchal bias of the 1965 Moynihan Report. Critics at the time, and since, have questioned Daniel Patrick Moynihan's assumption of a "pathological" black family structure as a cause for poverty, low educational status, and crime. My Brother's Keeper's embrace of Moynihan's approach, its espousal of a version of individual "uplift" for African American men, does little to challenge the structural causes of inequality. Community-based organizations such as Black Lives Matter and social critics like Julieta Paredes, by contrast, see addressing these root causes—high rates of incarceration for African American men, underfunded and/or highly segregated public education, limited training and job opportunities, a lack of affordable housing, and so forth—as central to efforts to address poverty and unequal justice. Again, it is clear that the state's primary investment in the patriarchal family, and a simultaneous commitment to punishment—the carceral-industrial complex—diverts precious resources from positive infrastructure alternatives and contributes to the failures of modern US antiviolence policies.

The five case studies in the "Ways of Seeing and Knowing Violence" section explore surprising new findings and/or critical reinterpretations of older materials in the archive of violence and antiviolence work. By focusing on the archive as a site of knowledge production, these articles recognize its role in shaping current understandings of gender, violence, and the state and its lasting imprint on future quests for restitution or reconciliation. These authors highlight the importance of critical (re)evaluation of archives and archive building, demanding a full reconsideration of what rightfully belongs in the archive, what has been excluded or overlooked, and/or what can be read in a more critical light. In the process, they caution scholars of the inherent unreliability and instability of existing documentation of violence and the need for greater attention to and intentionality in their compilation.

Reading case files from colonial South Africa's Cape Colony in the early 1800s, for example, Carla Tsampiras brings to light stories of enslaved women resisting and/or "provoking" unsanctioned violence at the hands of their purportedly feminine women slave owners. In the 1820s and 1830s, a series of measures designed to "ameliorate" the Cape Colony's slavery system, emerging from London, officially lessened and finally outlawed violence against female slaves. The measures rested on a highly sentimentalized rationale of domesticity and femininity emerging in England and throughout the empire during this period. In the remote frontier town of Graaff-Reinet, however, such restrictions collided with more ambiguous gender norms. Local officials charged with upholding the new rules lamented the newly empowered slaves (the "stubborn, masculine women") who resisted slavery's subjection. Far from embracing the prescriptions of feminine docility emanating from

the metropole, mistress and slave alike fought hard, both physically and in court, to exercise and/or resist slavery's violent control. Enslaved women took their mistresses to court under the new measures, often at great personal risk or hardship, so as to highlight the violence administered by female owners in violation of colonial regulations. Read alongside the new regulations, these cases suggest that, in this remote stock-raising region at least, there was a profound gulf between expected and actual behaviors relating to gender and violence.

Likewise, Deana Heath explores the disconnect in twentieth-century colonial India between prescribed and actual practices of gendered violence, through her discovery of an anomalous presence in the archive: the sexual assault of an Indian man documented in legal records that otherwise avoided explicit mention of male rape. In 1915, the rape (and subsequent death) of Rahmat Musalli, tortured at the hands of minor local officials, was downplayed and ignored by the British magistrate and again on appeal, and it entered the legal archive on second appeal only because the Punjab Chief Court questioned the ruling, thus preserving details of the torture for the historical record. Sexual violence against men was neither uncommon nor unknown (if unnamed) in the colonial setting; it was not imported from Britain, Heath argues, but rather emerged in the process of colonization and assertion of imperial control over India, mirroring the gendered violence in comparable colonial settings designed to turn colonized men and women into obedient colonial subjects. The logic of colonial gendered power relations made it virtually impossible to admit that sexual assault of Indian men occurred because, in the hierarchy of authority, male rape called into question the masculinity and virility of the British imperialist and thus could not be named. As desire was transformed into discipline, however, so acts of sexual violation could be dismissed as torture. Only an oppositional reading of the details of that torture at the time allowed this particular case of rape to be preserved for later discovery in the archive.

In their study of twentieth-century Ireland, Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Culleton provide another way to challenge the distortions imposed by a partial and/or incomplete archive. The erasure from the national archives of the Irish "Magdalenes," or women confined in religious Magdalene Laundries for pregnancy or other sexual transgressions, they argue, fosters a kind of cultural amnesia about the violence the women endured. Testimonies from oral histories gathered in the Waterford Memories Project and elsewhere do more than challenge the official suppression of the laundries from official Irish histories. More important, the oral histories make evident how laundry survivors themselves have begun to insist on their inclusion in the archive; their importance to the process of national remembering, acknowledgment, and healing; and the value of undoing the silence around their economic exploitation and incarceration in the name of Irish family values. The women's oral histories detail and corroborate years of coercive violence against women, but also

they demand that scholars handle official archival materials with caution; only a full accounting and recognition of the “work” done by the laundries will allow the nation to come to terms with its own history of oppression of women.

Jessie Kindig also proposes a more critical approach to the imperial archive, in this case through a close, contextualized visual analysis of souvenir snapshots taken by US servicemen in post–World War II Japan and Korea. Using a single collection of more than 120 Kodak instant snapshots, she analyzes their exposure of the “violent embrace” of the two occupied nations by US military power in general and US servicemen in particular. The images appear to show men with Asian “girl-friends,” but attention to the wider context reveals “what is outside the snapshots’ frame,” thus enabling the viewer to see beyond the camera’s coercive lens. Read against the high incidence of rape, the photos, and their hand-written captions about “good pieces,” force a clearer understanding of the role of the US military in promoting and defending servicemen’s (transactional and/or violent) access to Asian women and the efforts of Korean and Japanese women to resist violent sexual subjugation. This kind of reexamination of seemingly benign memorabilia in the archives makes it possible to retrieve the unstated and unmentioned sexual violence underlying the banal and chilling phrases like “rest and relaxation” or “rape and restitution.” Further, it demands that scholars remain vigilant in decoding gendered power relationships during wartime, particularly when the archives contain such partial evidence.

The need for care in extracting evidence of gendered violence from the archive is also vividly evident in Benjamin N. Lawrance’s analysis of contemporary African asylum narratives and claims. Writing as an expert witness and legal historian, he reflects on the power of mimesis as a narrative strategy, allowing asylum seekers to invoke a current threat—Boko Haram—to bolster their claims of past abuse and/or future jeopardy. Perusal of a personal collection of letters from asylum seekers and their lawyers reveals the growing insertion of Boko Haram into asylum cases, even those coming from regions lacking Boko Haram activity, or citing past harms that predate the organization’s existence. Asylum seekers’ use of mimetic devices to strengthen their claims portrays Africa in ways that conform seamlessly to western stereotypes about Africa. Meanwhile, media accounts of dramatic (and typically unsuccessful) asylum claims constitute a parallel popular archive in process of formation, one that further reproduces and embeds the Boko Haram mimesis within the context of other, unconnected fears (e.g., genital cutting). The very present reality of the Boko Haram threat becomes obscured, as it comes to stand in for a host of other, unrelated potential harms, even as claimants insert “evidence” of gendered violence into the archive in ways that pander to western fears.

The collection’s visual essay deepens this questioning and reexamination of the archive of violence through the refabrication of discredited photographs of “false positives” that the military in Colombia used to document alleged rebel militancy. By questioning the reliability of photographic documentation, the drawings



make visible a scandal in which young men were killed, put into uniform, and left in public spaces for civilians to “document” (for reward money) the military’s successful campaign against rebels. As Claudia Salamanca points out, the hand-drawn reproductions (by artist Luis Morán) highlight the photographs’ illegitimacy—their demonstrable falsity, in other words—thus establishing an alternative archive to a body of photographic “evidence” that may yet be redeployed to validate future military brutality. If the photographs transformed the typically marginal and often developmentally disabled boys and young men, enticed away from distant homes with promises of jobs and other enticements, into hypermasculine “warriors” replete with the gear and costumes of war, Morán’s new, more obviously fictive archive of drawings allows future historians to displace the discredited photos, together with the military brutality they were meant to legitimate. By highlighting the staged quality of the photographed bodies, as well as the discrepancies, or “anomalies,” within each image, both artist and author insist on a more capacious archive, one that inspires reflection and critique of unchecked state power.

The significant role of the visual in antiviolence work is evident in Efeoghene Igor’s Curated Spaces essay, a powerful conception of what an alternative to the archive of violence might look like. In an exploration of a series of photographs by South African photographer Zanele Muholi, titled *Phases and Faces* (2006–14), Igor reveals the artistic, expressive, and political value of establishing a new archive of violence, resistance, and subjectivity, one that both problematizes and resists oppressive readings and suppressive “disappearing” of antilebian violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The photographs attest to the presence of lesbian women in South Africa, while hinting at a history of sexual violence largely ignored or unprosecuted by the state. Rather than reproducing pain, violence, and suffering, the photos detach the subjects from the national and local context, focusing instead on the faces, the subtle nuances of gaze and expression, as mute interrogators of viewers’ failure to act, intervene, and/or protest. The portraits constitute a wholly new archive, one that emphasizes the subjectivity of the faces in the frame. Muholi’s images and Igor’s commentary remind us of the crucial importance of tending to the archive in process, building of bodies of evidence that truly acknowledge past injustices while gesturing toward a future of restitution and reconciliation.

Together, the histories, reflections, interventions, and imagery collected in this issue of *Radical History Review* reveal how gender and violence are mutually constituted categories of personal, political, cultural, and legal subjectivity. They further demonstrate how violence—and narratives of violence—have been used (and misused) to uphold, resist, or reshape the ordering structures of the state in a variety of national, geopolitical, and socioeconomic contexts. Finally, the pieces here challenge readers, viewers, and scholars to interrogate the archive as a site of knowledge and a body of sources, in order to construct a more accurate, and usable, past.

—Lisa Arellano, Erica L. Ball, and Amanda Frisken

**Notes**

1. See, for example, Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). On US antiviolence legislation, see Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence—Boston, 1880–1960* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002); and Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004). On antirape efforts of African American women from the 1890s, see, for example, Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Lisa Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); and Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1770–1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). There is an abundant literature on the rise of the carceral state; for a few recent examples, see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012); and Talitha LeFlouria, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). On the new abolition movement, see Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (New York: Seven Stories, 2005).
2. See, for example, Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); and Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).