



THE YALE HISTORICAL REVIEW

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THE TESTIMONY ISSUE

“Take Me to the Water
to Be Baptized” :
Waterways & Spiritual
Immersion Among
Enslaved Communities in
the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives

KIARA ALVAREZ

ABOUT *the* COVER

The cover image depicts a baptism in Georgia from the late 1800s. This image was acquired from the University of Georgia Library (sourced from the National Humanities Center website : <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/aarcwgmb.htm>).

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AN UNDERGRADUATE PUBLICATION

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LETTER *from* the EDITORS

Dear reader,

Thank you for picking up the Fall 2024 issue of the *Yale Historical Review*. We hope you enjoy the insightful undergraduate scholarship contained within this issue.

When reading through submissions, we noticed a common theme among the most captivating pieces: an emphasis on ordinary individuals' experiences during major historical events. The articles that follow use testimony—subjective accounts of key moments—to analyze broader historical trends. History is usually written about elites, about their beliefs, actions, and achievements. Too often we study a general's strategic decisions in a battle, for example, without understanding what it was like for the young private who lived through it—or died. But only by focusing on such on-the-ground experiences can we truly comprehend what it was like to live in the past.

Each in their own way, the pieces in this issue all employ such accounts. Kiara Alvarez analyzes first-hand accounts of the baptism ceremonies of enslaved people, showing how these spiritual events drew on both African and Christian traditions. Rose Kohler compares the memoirs of two soldiers, one a British infantryman in WWI and the other an American GI in Vietnam, who fought in different decades and on different continents yet reached very similar conclusions about the nature of war. And Stella Gray uses the notes and letters of Marjorie Rosenfeld, an American Jew living in Weimar Berlin, to describe the social and sexual landscape of a city teetering towards fascism. This issue also features three special projects that grapple with the value and implications of using testimony as a primary source. Evan Daneker describes the scars left on the cityscapes of Bosnia and Herzegovina and examines how personal accounts depart from state narratives. Alex Geldzahler explains how firsthand accounts of the Holocaust change the ways that historians understand its horrors. And Joan Huh interviews Maria Kaliambou of the Yale Program in Hellenic Studies about the use of community archives in reconstructing the history of the modern Greek diaspora.

As always, we are grateful to the authors who entrusted us with their work and to the team of editors who worked with them to perfect these pieces. If you enjoy their work (as we are sure you will), please go to our website using the QR code below to read two additional articles by Tasha Dambacher and Emma Yanai.



Warmly,
Hannah Szabó, Ted Shepherd, & River Sell, Editors-in-Chief

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