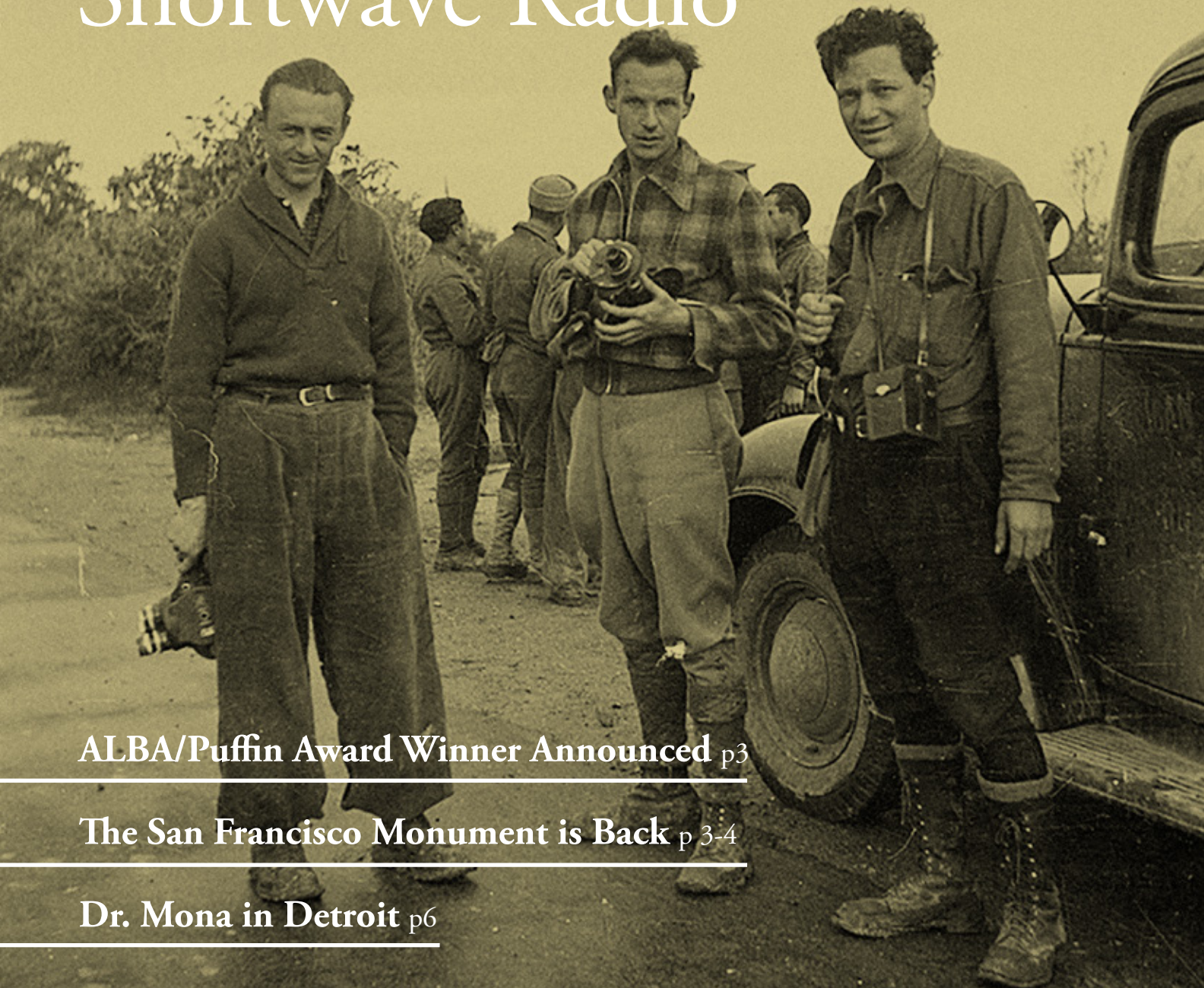


# The Volunteer

FOUNDED IN 1937 BY THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE LINCOLN BRIGADE.  
PUBLISHED BY THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE ARCHIVES (ALBA)

Jacques Lemare, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert  
Kline. (Tamiment Library, NYU, 15th IB Photo  
Collection, Photo #11\_0818)

## Herbert Kline & Shortwave Radio



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Dr. Mona in Detroit p6



# The Volunteer

Founded by the Veterans of the  
Abraham Lincoln Brigade

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The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is an educational non-profit dedicated to promoting social activism and the defense of human rights. ALBA's work is inspired by the American volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who fought fascism in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Drawing on the ALBA collections in New York University's Tamiment Library, and working to expand such collections, ALBA works to preserve the legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade as an inspiration for present and future generations.

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## Dear Friends,

You can look ahead to a busy spring, with two major celebrations in San Francisco and New York City, as well as smaller events in New York, and of course our ongoing teacher workshops (in Washington, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and New York, among other places).

We are also thrilled to announce this year's ALBA/Puffin Award winners for Human Rights Activism: the brave people of **No More Deaths** in southern Arizona, who have been working for 15 years—breaking the law when necessary—to assist migrants on their dangerous journeys through the desert. Please join us for the award ceremony on **May 17 at the Japan Society in New York City**.

Just before that, on **May 3**, we'll be inaugurating the newly restored national monument to the Lincoln Brigade in **San Francisco**. The restoration process has taken a while, but the result is astonishing and the monument is set to withstand the Bay Area climate for decades to come. (See page 3 for more details.)

The work we do at ALBA is only possible thanks to your support. We tell you this every chance we have. But when we do, we're not only referring to your financial backing, crucially important as that is. If ALBA thrives, it's also because of your moral support: the fact that you, like us, believe that it makes sense to study the past to change the present. And that you, like us, believe in the value of the archive, in the broadest sense of the word. The archive allows us to connect with those who lived before us, listen to their voices, share their fears and dreams. It's what makes transmission possible.

This is why we are always thrilled to accept new archival materials from families of Lincoln vets and others. Two months ago, our New York office received an amazing donation from David Geltman. He is the grandson of Israel Perlman, who was a New York City bookseller. In 1939, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade organized a fundraiser auction for anti-Nazi writers and the VALB Rehabilitation Fund. Sponsors included Dashiell Hammett, Dorothy Parker, Luise Rainer, George S. Kaufman, Thornton Wilder, and others. As it turned out, Perlman bid \$35 dollars and won a collection of hand- and type-written statements from individual vets in which they explained why they'd joined the fight in Spain. The collection of notes, some quite extensive, is a unique historical document, a deeply moving window into the past. We'll be sharing highlights in a forthcoming issue.

Speaking of new discoveries, this issue features new investigative work by Nancy and Len Tsou, experts on Spanish Civil War volunteers from East Asia (p. 15). Also look at an interview with Luis Olano who just released a new documentary on Ramon Sender, a pioneer of US counterculture, whose mother was killed by fascists in the Spanish Civil War (p. 9). Sonia García López shares her research on the shortwave radio station that Herbert Kline and others set up in Madrid in 1937 to bring English-speaking audiences worldwide firsthand accounts of the Spanish Civil War (p. 13). And ALBA's Aaron Retish reports on Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha's well-attended Susman lecture in Detroit (p. 6).

Thanks, as always, for being there and supporting our work. If it weren't for you, this magazine would not exist. Nor would the archive, our teacher workshops, our lecture series, or the monument in San Francisco. Thanks for making it possible for us to continue to share—and keep alive—the legacy of the Lincoln Brigade when the world most needs it.

¡Salud!

Peter N. Carroll & Sebastiaan Faber, editors



P.S. Please consider a special contribution to support our growing list of Teaching Institutes that carry our message to students around the country.

# “No More Deaths” Selected for ALBA/Puffin Award

We are pleased to announce that the 2020 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism will be given to **No More Deaths** in support of its humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering and end the fatalities of those crossing the southern border of the United States.

**F**OR THE PAST 16 YEARS, No More Deaths (NMD) has worked to save the lives of migrants crossing the desert and achieve immigration reform. Created in 2004 as a coalition of community and faith groups, the coalition later developed into an autonomous project dedicated to ending the death and suffering in the Mexico–US borderlands through multiple projects of civil initiative.

“No More Deaths is comprised of individuals from all walks of life who are standing up in defense of human rights against the ill-formed and odious actions of their own government,” said Perry Rosenstein, President of The Puffin Foundation. “Their work speaks louder than words, saving lives that have been devalued by heartless US policies.”

Drawing on the foundational principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, NMD has conducted multiple projects to aid and bear witness to the struggles of migrants at the border. Through its network of volunteers, it has maintained a year-round humanitarian presence in the deserts of southwestern Arizona; a program of research and documentation to expose patterns of abuse against people crossing the border at the hands of Border Patrol; an aid program in northern Sonora for migrants who plan to cross the desert; and a weekly legal clinic in Tucson that works side by side with community members applying for status or facing deportation and that trains participants to help each other through the immigration court process. NMD also operates a 24-hour Missing Migrant Hotline and deploys search and rescue teams to look for the disappeared.

“It’s an honor to be recognized for the vital work we do in the borderlands. Over the past few years our organization has been targeted as part of widespread attack on undocumented people in the United States. However, we will not be deterred,” stated Paige Corich-Kleim, a longtime desert aid worker. “We will use these resources to further our mission and continue to stand in solidarity with migrating people around the world.”

One of the largest monetary awards for human rights in the world, the ALBA/Puffin Award is a \$100,000 cash prize granted annually by ALBA and the Puffin Foundation to honor the nearly 3,000 Americans who volunteered in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) to fight fascism under the banner of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. This year’s award acknowledges the urgent need for humanitarian aid to safeguard the lives of immigrants and refugees worldwide, and the profound bravery of the civil disobedience sometimes necessary to accomplish that goal.

The ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism is an initiative to sustain the legacy of the experiences, aspirations, and idealism of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. It supports contemporary international activists and human rights causes. Philan-

thropist and visionary Perry Rosenstein, President of the Puffin Foundation, created and established an endowed fund for this human rights award in 2010.▲

## ALBA Annual Celebration and Award Ceremony Sunday, May 17, 5-6:30pm

*Reception Following*

*The Japan Society | 333 East 47th St.*

*For tickets, write to [info@alba-valb.org](mailto:info@alba-valb.org) or call 212-674-5398*

## JOIN US FOR A RALLY REDEDICATING THE LINCOLN BRIGADE MONUMENT

**SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

Twelve years after the monument’s inauguration, ALBA is proud to invite you to the unveiling of the newly restored national monument located at the end of San Francisco’s Market Street, across the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building. Designed by Walter Hood and Ann Chamberlain, the monument consists of 45 panels displayed in three rows in a large steel frame. The panels are printed on both sides with texts and photographs. It was first inaugurated in 2008 to great public enthusiasm, with speeches by several surviving Lincoln veterans and then-mayor, now governor, Gavin Newsom.

The event is organized by the ALBA group in the Bay Area and co-sponsored by the San Francisco State University Labor Archives and Research Center, Veterans for Peace, and ILWU Local 34. With music by Bruce Barthol and a photo exhibit by Richard Bermack. For more information about the program as it develops, go to [www.alba-valb.org](http://www.alba-valb.org).

# The San Francisco Monument Repaired: Taps for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

By Don Santina

**On Sunday, May 3, a decade after its inauguration on the San Francisco Embarcadero, the only government-supported monument to the Lincoln Brigade in the USA will be re-inaugurated after lengthy repairs. The following article first appeared in Counterpunch on August 16, 2008, soon after the original dedication ceremonies.**

## **“You fought in Spain.”**

When the underground leader, Victor László, spoke this immortal line to Rick Blaine in the 1942 film classic *Casablanca*, he was acknowledging that the cynical nightclub owner played by Humphrey Bogart had already stood up to the Nazis and could be counted on to stand up again. Rick was one of the good guys.

On March 21, we squeezed into the packed Friday night emergency room of Oakland Kaiser Hospital with Ted Veltfort, another one of the good guys. He had fallen earlier in the day and was having trouble breathing. In panic, his wife Leonore had run out into the street and flagged down a taxi to take him to the hospital instead of calling 911 for an ambulance. Ironically, Ted had driven an ambulance for the Spanish Republic during the civil war. His father never forgave him for following his political beliefs to Spain in 1937.

After almost two hours, the ER doctor told us that Ted had pneumonia and they were keeping him at least overnight. Before we left, I told the doctor to take special care of him because he was one of the last veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade who had fought in Spain before World War II. She looked at me blankly.

“You have to get well for the monument,” I said to Ted before we left. “It’s a week from Sunday.” He nodded.

The battle for the Spanish Republic from 1936 to 1939 is regarded by many historians as the first battle of World War II. Five months after free elections, the fledgling democratic government of Spain was attacked by a clique of army officers who had support of troops from Fascist Italy and airpower from Nazi Germany. When the democracies of Europe and the United States declared a policy of nonintervention, the desperate Spanish government put out a call for international volunteers. Young men and woman from all over the world poured into Spain to defend the republic.

Approximately 2,800 of these volunteers came from the United States to form the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, later known as the Lincoln Brigade. They came from all walks of life: seamen, students, dock workers, ranch hands, carpenters, nurses, teachers. They were multi-racial: the Brigade was the first integrated American military unit and the first to have an African-American commander, Oliver Law. They fought major battles with the Fascists in the Jarama Valley, at Brunete, Aragon, Teruel, and the Ebro River, often against overwhelming odds and with heavy casualties. Those odds worsened daily as the Nazi air force and Fascist artillery pounded the blockaded and beleaguered

republic. After three years of bloody battles, the republic was defeated and the international volunteers were withdrawn.

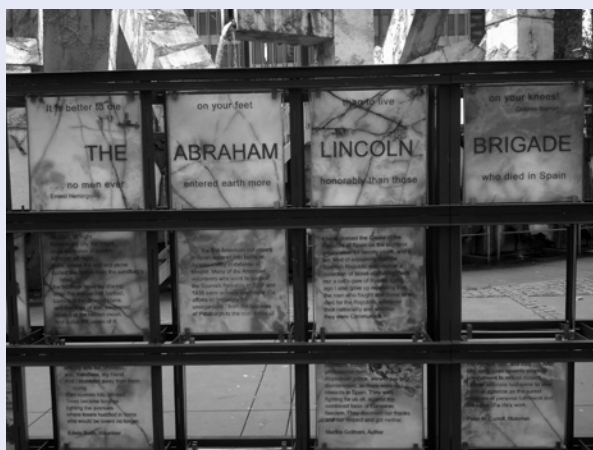
Eight hundred volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade did not return home.

“No man ever entered the earth more honorably than those who died in Spain,” Ernest Hemingway proclaimed, but as the war correspondent Martha Gellhorn noted just as accurately, “there were no rewards in Spain. They were fighting for us all, against the combined forces of European fascism. They

deserved our thanks and respect, and they got neither.”

Back home the Lincolns were subjected to years of harassment from their own government. But while they were being black-listed and hounded out of their jobs during the epoch when Joe McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover were riding roughshod over the Bill of Rights, the veterans stood firm on their political convictions and remained active participants in the battles for peace and justice—demonstrating that same idealist spirit that drew them to the cause of Spain.

Richard Bermack, photographer and author of *The Frontlines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*, noted that while doing the book “I realized that you can keep your





*“You have to get well for the monument,” I said to Ted before we left. “It’s a week from Sunday.”*



own ideals, though it’s not an easy thing to do at all. The point of the book is to show that none of them left the struggle.”

There were about a hundred veterans left in August 2000 when the late San Francisco supervisor, Sue Bierman, introduced a resolution to the Board to honor the Abraham Lincoln Brigade with a monument on the waterfront. The waterfront was chosen because it was the site of the historic 1934 Strike which changed labor relations on the West Coast forever. A number of participants in the strike became volunteers in Spain and returned to the City not only to work on the docks but also to become actively involved in civil right and antiwar activities, including shutting down the shipment of goods to apartheid South Africa. The monument resolution passed the Board of Supervisors unanimously.

Eight years later, on Sunday, March 30, 2008, the first American government-sanctioned monument to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was dedicated with much fanfare on San Francisco’s embarcadero. The monument, designed by Ann Chamberlain and Walter Hood, sits on a grassy area not far from the historic Ferry Building and Harry Bridges Plaza. The dockworkers are gone now, along with the cargo hooks, conveyors, and the low rumble of idling engines of cross-country trucks waiting to be loaded. Stevedores, seamen and strike breakers have been replaced by joggers, bicyclists and tourists.

“Our monument is to remember a group of people who stood up to take a stand,” Peter Carroll, the historian, stated to the hundreds of people who gathered for the event. Carroll is the author of *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War*.

Eleven veterans were there for the ceremonies. Among them were Abe Osheroﬀ, whose car was firebombed while he was helping rebuild churches in Mississippi during the Klan’s reign of

terror in the 1960’s; Dave Smith, who survived the Jarama Valley bloodbath, but lost a piece of his shoulder in a later battle—he could not return to his job as a machinist so he became a high school teacher and union activist; Nate Thornton, an out of work carpenter who joined the Brigade with his father, and Hilda Roberts, a combat nurse who also served in the Pacific during WWII and ultimately—as a silent antiwar witness with Women in Black.

At the dedication, Abe Osheroﬀ stated that “the stuff we’re made of never goes away, with or without a monument because the bastards will never cease their evil, and the decent human beings will never stop their struggle.”

Abe died a week later. Ted Veltfort never made it out of the hospital; he died there on April 7; Dave Smith within a few months. Milt Wolff, the last commander of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain, died in January. There are only about twenty-five Lincolns left now, and soon they too will pass into history.

Dolores Ibárruri, the fiery spokesperson of the Republic also known as “La Pasionaria,” spoke these words of farewell as the Lincoln Battalion and the International Brigades left Spain in 1938:

“You can go with pride. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of the solidarity and the universality of democracy... We will not forget you; and when the olive tree of peace puts forth its leaves, entwined in the with the laurels of the Spanish Republic’s victory, come back!”

Salud, brigadistas. ▲

*Don Santina is a musician and writer. His most recent novel is A Prize for All Saints.*

# “We cannot close our eyes to injustice.”

## Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha Gives the 2020 Susman Lecture

By Aaron Retish

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the pediatrician who gained national prominence by exposing the Flint, Michigan water crisis in 2015, presented ALBA’s annual Susman Lecture to a packed auditorium on the Wayne State campus in Detroit, Michigan on January 27.

*Dr. Mona felt a larger responsibility to the kids of Flint. “It was a choiceless choice,” she said.*

**B**ILLED as a conversation with the local hero, the event attracted a large crowd of students, faculty, and members of the community who travelled from across Michigan to see Dr. Mona (as most people in the area know her). I had the pleasure to join Dr. Mona on stage to ask her questions about history, social justice, and the future of public health in Flint. Many audience members knew of her fight to save Flint’s children from the news that had gripped metro Detroit over the last few years and her New York Times best-selling book, *What the Eyes Don’t See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City*.

Dr. Mona spoke about the origins of the crisis stemming from Flint’s history as the center of the car industry. When General Motors left Detroit, the city’s majority African American resident population was faced with a shrinking tax base and growing poverty. Rick Snyder, then Michigan’s governor, imposed an emergency manager on the city who had the power to do away with agreements decided by democratically elected officials. To save money, in 2014 the emergency manager switched Flint’s water source from Detroit to the Flint River, whose waters quickly corroded the city pipes, exposing its residents to high rates of bacteria and lead (a neurotoxin) and unleashing an environmental and public health disaster. When Dr. Mona discovered these dangerously high lead levels in the fall of 2015, she and her allies fought local and state administrations armed with her own research of local children’s blood levels.

Dr. Mona also talked about her great uncle, Nuri Rafail Kutani, who inspired her devotion to social justice and to medicine. As she wrote in the September 2019 issue of *The Volunteer*, Kutani devoted his life to social justice. While studying at MIT in Cam-

bridge, Massachusetts, in the early 1930s, he became radicalized. Soon after, he was expelled from the university and sent back to Iraq where he organized the Association Against Imperialism and Fascism. He was one of just two Iraqis to fight with the International Brigades in Spain. Nuri, Dr. Mona explained, was a looming figure in her family’s history—someone who devoted his life to justice and “even had a tattoo, which was actually a tattoo of

the symbol of the International Brigades.” It was only while writing the book that Hanna-Attisha and her family were finally able to retrieve Kutani’s file from Spain, where it was catalogued under one of his aliases. For Dr. Mona, the Spanish Civil War offers enduring lessons about to fight for freedom and justice. Her great uncle’s example pushed Dr. Mona to medicine and inspired her response to the health crisis facing Flint’s children.

She also discussed how her family background as reluctant immigrants from Iraq informed her idea of inclusion, which is especially pertinent in today’s political climate. As a child, her parents remained in close contact with friends and family in Iraq but felt that they could not return home under the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein in the late 1970s, which had

created a republic of fear and poisoned its own children. Her father showed her a picture of the chemical gas attack against Kurds in northern Iraq of a child killed by Saddam Hussein’s attack. “We were raised as immigrants; we were lucky to be in this country, but we cannot close our eyes to injustice and we had to continue to raise our voices when we could against injustices that were happening.” Dr. Mona told the audience that she had taken an oath to stand up for children but that hers “was also a value system rooted in a long-standing family history of fighting for social justice.”



“How did you stay positive and not give up when you were attacked by city and state officials?” a member of the audience asked. Dr. Mona replied that she did doubt herself, but that she also felt a larger responsibility to the kids of Flint. “It was a choice-less choice,” she said. Once she learned that there was lead in the water, as a pediatrician she felt a responsibility to act. Audience members also asked about what has happened after she exposed the dangerous lead levels. Since 2015, there has been greater attention and more resources devoted to Flint. It will soon join only two other cities in an effort to replace all lead pipes. In addition, Dr. Mona is part of an important initiative to promote healthy nutrition among the children of Flint. There are no grocery stores in Flint and Dr. Mona is leading a program to persuade residents to buy produce at its farmer’s market. She is also bringing more books to Flint’s children. Still, troubles remain. Residents are still on a water advisory warning, meaning that they should still drink bottled water. Meanwhile, city and state officials who knew about the lead levels and did nothing have not been prosecuted. Environmental racism remains strong as well.

Long lines of adoring students and community members waited to talk to Dr. Mona after the event. They spoke about how much Dr. Mona inspired them and how the community continues to seethe over the injustice of the Flint water crisis. ▲

*Aaron Retish, a member of ALBA's Executive Committee, teaches history at Wayne State University.*



## History and Intimacy Reading the Lincolns' Letters in a College Classroom Today

By Miguel Caballero Vázquez

ALBA's teaching resources are used in college and high-school classrooms throughout the United States. A testimonial from the University of Chicago.

**H**ow to make the **Spanish Civil War** relevant for young people born an ocean away and seventy years after it ended? I always think this is a challenge, but my students at the University of Chicago seem to believe otherwise. This quarter, I'm teaching "Beyond Guernica. Destruction and Conservation in the Spanish Civil War." The class has attracted majors in literature, art history, and history, but also students from more distant disciplines such as economics, mathematics, and engineering. Some are drawn to the topic by the vague appeal of a romantic anti-fascist war, Picasso's *Guernica*, or the mere fact that the university rarely offers

courses with a component of Spanish art. For a handful, the class offers the opportunity for a personal inquiry into their family's history, as many identify as descendants of Spanish exiles, often through Cuba or Mexico. Most of their families hail from the Spanish Republican side, but I also have students from families who left Spain "to escape the Communist terror" and never went back. As this is a rather new narrative of the Spanish exile to me, I am particularly interested to learn how those experiences have been construed and passed on.

I approach the class from a cultural studies perspective, with the goal of immersing my students in the beliefs, feelings, and



aspirations of the 1930s. We discuss how literature and art help build a constellation of ideas and forms, and how this constellation of ideas and forms in turn inspires particular types of literature and art. In the first class of the quarter, I introduce the students to a handful of letters written by Lincoln volunteers, which I have found to be particularly apt for submerging my students in the 1930s. In a sense these letters are time capsules, intimate texts written in exceptional moments. The volunteers write to family and friends to explain their reasons for engaging in a foreign war, allowing for the possibility that they might not understand. They are arguing that the Spanish Civil War does not actually feel foreign to them. My students reading the letters are in a similar position to the recipients, as they do not yet comprehend the reasons for the authors' sacrificial commitment. But at the same time, they are also very close to the volunteers—they are roughly of the same age, from the same country, and share the same interest in Spain.

I start the first class with a broad, provocative question: Can you think of a political or social cause that would make you drop out of college right now, and leave the United States or your home country to go fight and risk your life in a foreign land? They look at me in awe, not sure what to reply. To be sure, this is the first class of the quarter, they don't know each other yet, they don't know me, I don't know them. Maybe this question is too much. Or maybe it's not, since the class is all about giving a glimpse into the polarization, radicality, solidarity, and commitment of the 1930s. Opening with such a personal question makes them uncomfortable—but in this case, the discomfort might be worth it.

Once they get around to replying, their answers lead into a predictable discussion about contemporary narcissism and social media activism. Some students eventually manage to verbalize vague notions of an internationalist commitment to environmentalism, feminism, or LGBT rights. Perhaps the most determined contribution came from a student who shared that she knows peers who have left their life in the United States behind to help build and protect the state of Israel.

It is only after this initial conversation that I distribute the letters. The authors provide a wide range of reasons to fight in Spain, from international solidarity against fascism, to opportunities to learn Spanish and achieve the noble life experiences needed to become a respected novelist. Race and ethnicity figure prominently. Among the letter writers are African Americans and Jewish Americans who point to their identities and backgrounds as crucial factors for their decision to join the war. But they also express their identification with, and loyalties to, other groups: the international working class, progressives, etc. The letters intrigue my students. They read and re-read them. For them, they breathe something familiar and yet something very foreign. Most students pick up on notions of solidarity, but

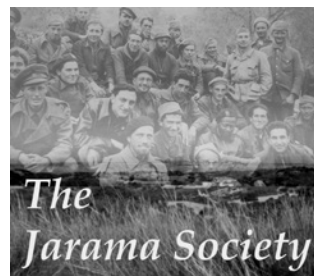


others think the Lincoln volunteers have been brainwashed. These discussions carry over into the following classes.

Eventually, someone expresses discomfort at the fact that we are reading private letters. As it happens, we are in 2020, over 80 years after the end of the war—precisely at the point when (at least in Spain) copyright expires and private intellectual property enters into the public domain—as we walk the fine line between personal or family memories and collective history. At this point, I explain ALBA's mission. We browse the website, discuss the need to understand, disseminate and commemorate the lives of the young Americans who made a sacrifice to

fight fascism. Yet, there is still some distress. Some students are not sure we should be reading these texts at all. Could this be due to the way that the notions of the private and the intimate have evolved from my generation to my students' generation? (I'm around 15 years their senior.) Or is it because there is something in the letters that is still not fully history yet? ▲

*Miguel Caballero (PhD Princeton University, 2017) is Collegiate Assistant Professor and Harper-Schmidt Fellow at the University of Chicago, affiliated to Romance Languages and Literatures, and Art History. He teaches courses on world literature and Iberian studies. As a researcher, he studies the debates and practices of conservation and destruction around the Spanish Civil War.*



## Make Anti-Fascism Part of Your Legacy!

What you leave to friends and loved ones—and the causes you champion—are

ways of expressing your hopes and dreams for the future. As you make your plans, please consider joining the **Jarama Society** by including ALBA in your will or living trust, or naming us as a beneficiary of your estate. ALBA accepts legacy gifts in any amount. Help us to continue and expand our educational mission of teaching future generations about the sacrifices made by the Lincoln Brigade in their fight against the global threat of fascism. Your gift to ALBA will help ensure that today's young people learn about the experiences of volunteers in Spain, as well as their broader dedication to social justice at home.

If you have questions or would like to discuss your options, please contact ALBA's Executive Director Mark Wallem at 212 674 5398 or [mwallem@alba-valb.org](mailto:mwallem@alba-valb.org).

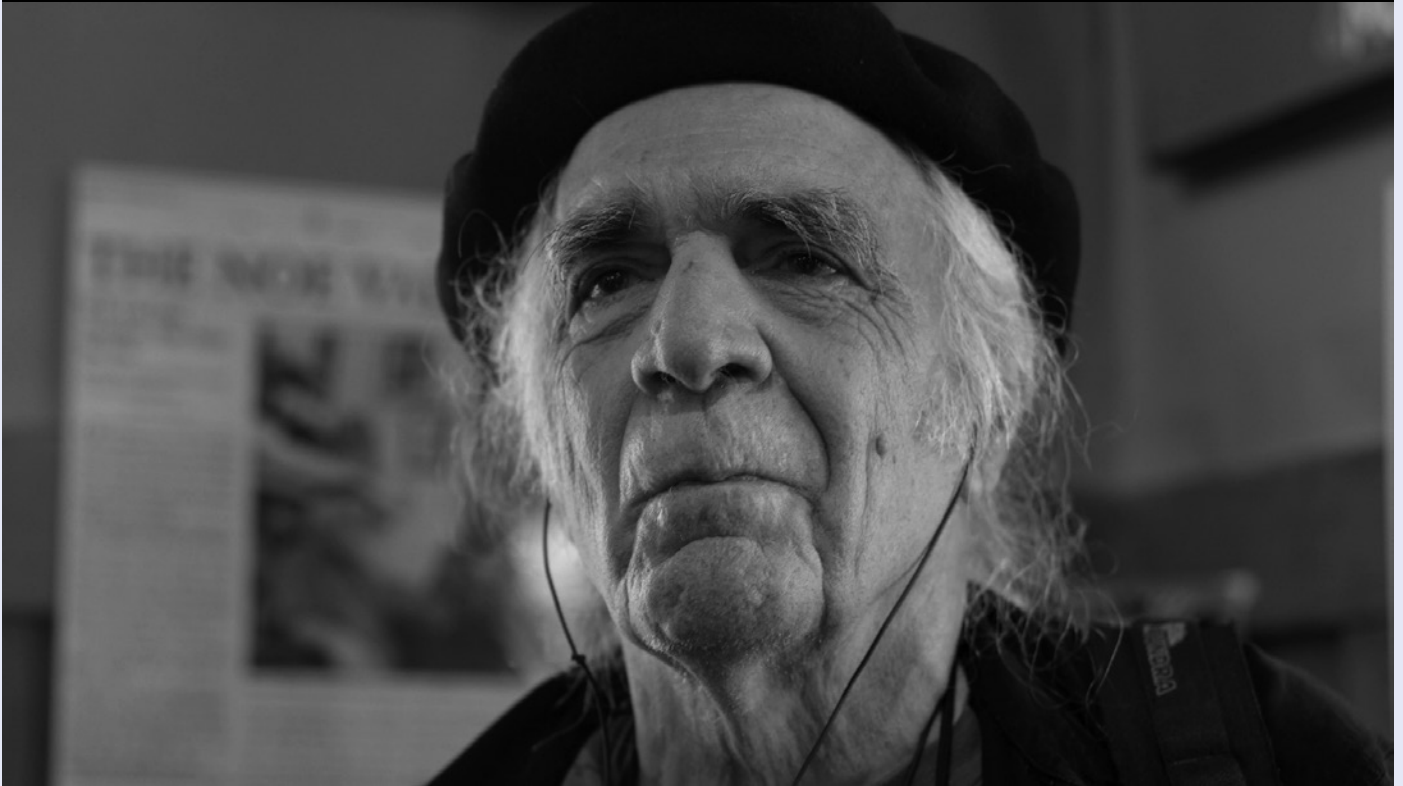


# RAMON SENDER BARAYÓN: A PIONEER IN MUSIC & MEMORY

## An interview with Filmmaker Luis Olano

By Sebastiaan Faber

Ramon Sender Barayón is a pioneer of US counterculture and the son of Amparo Barayón, who was killed by fascists in the Spanish Civil War, and the novelist Ramón J. Sender. A new documentary by Luis Olano sheds light on his remarkable life.



**R**AMON SENDER BARAYÓN, born in Madrid in 1934, is a pioneer of American counterculture and a fixture of the San Francisco art and music scene. A composer, visual artist, and writer, he was the co-founder, in 1962, of the San Francisco Tape Music Center, which later became the Mills Center for Contemporary Music. Together with Don Buchla, Sender designed one of the world's first music synthesizers. He is also the

son of Ramón J. Sender, a prominent Spanish novelist who fought in the Civil War and spent almost forty years in exile, and Amparo Barayón, a pioneering feminist who was assassinated by the Nationalists in her native Zamora in October 1936. Ramon Sender's book *Death in Zamora* (1989) is a memoir of a son's investigation of his mother's politically motivated murder.

This fall, NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center screened *Sender Barayón*:

*Viaje hacia la luz* (Sender Barayón: Trip toward the Light), a new documentary by Luis Olano. A descendant of Spanish Civil War exiles, Olano was born in 1986 in St. Petersburg, Russia. He's lived in Spain since 1991.

**How did you first run across Ramon Sender?**

It was during a trip to California in 2014, at the suggestion of the journalist Germán Sánchez. Sánchez, who

*Ramon's book, **Death in Zamora**, was groundbreaking because it recovered the memory of the female victims of the brutal Francoist repression in the rearguard.*

is my second father and cowrote the documentary with me, had produced a radio story about Ramón J. Sender, the novelist. He suggested I try to locate his son. It didn't take me long to find him through his website. It was love at first sight. Connecting with him was easy: he's got an amazingly broad frame of reference, from the past and the present, he follows the news, and remains socially very active, also online. I remember he told us how interested he was in the appearance of Podemos, which then had only just been founded. Being myself a grandson of a Republican exile to the Soviet Union, it was very special for me to connect with Ramon. Later, Emilio Silva, of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain, put me in touch with Pablo Sánchez León, a historian and editor who was then about to re-issue the Spanish translation of Ramon's memoir about his mother, *A Death in Zamora*. The first video interview I did with Ramon in 2014 convinced us that we had to bring the story of his life back to Spain, and to recover the memory of twentieth-century counterculture from his perspective. In November 2016 I had the opportunity to return to San Francisco, with a grant from the Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, to tape the interview on which the documentary is based. Curiously, this was right around the time of the Trump election.

**Can we think of Ramon Sender Jr. as belonging to Spanish Civil War exile? And if so, to what extent is his experience compatible with historical memory of the war and exile in Spain today?**

In many ways, Ramon's experiences are unique. Of course, he was also a victim of Francoism: his mother was killed by local fascists, and his father exiled from dictatorial Spain. But the umbilical cord tying him to Spanish culture was severed forever when he arrived to the United States as a young child and stopped using his native language. It's important to note that Ramon was not



raised by his father. In fact, he was sheltered from any information about his biological mother and the causes of her death. Once his father had rescued him from the orphanage in Zamora where he and his sister had ended up after his mother's death, they were adopted by a wealthy U.S. family. In this way, his father gave them the opportunity to live a full life completely opposite to the obscurantism that enveloped Spain for at least forty years.

It wasn't until after the death of his father, in 1982, that Ramon decided to return to Spain to investigate the circumstances of his mother's death and try to resolve the trauma caused by her absence, the silence surrounding it, and his own conflicted identity. In many ways, his book **Death in Zamora** was groundbreaking: it recovered the memory of the female victims of the brutal Francoist repression in the rearguard. At that time, the topic was completely taboo and relegated entirely to the private sphere of the victims and their families—if they even dared to address it. So what Ramon did was not only to recover the memory of his parents' generation, which fought for democratic liberties in 1930s Spain, but he also

became a precursor, coming from exile, of the social and political culture of the younger generation of anti-Francoists who came of age toward the end of the dictatorship and the beginning of the Transition.

**How has your documentary been received in Spain?**

Because we have produced it ourselves and have no distributor, it's been hard to find venues. Yet we've been able to do thirty public screenings in cultural centers, arthouses, and universities, thanks in large part to the support of the memory movement. The documentary has also been selected for festivals in Madrid, Lugo, Valencia, and Greece. The public's response has been very positive. Ramon's testimony, along with *Death in Zamora*, speaks to a part of Spain's historical narrative that has been purposely hidden from sight, silenced by the institutions of democratic Spain. The same happened with the exhumations of mass graves that the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory started to undertake twenty years ago. As the bones emerged, as a visible proof of Francoist repression, the victims' families showed up at the excavation sites and, breaking with a deeply rooted routine of forgetting and silence, finally began to speak. In the same way, when we premiered the documentary in Zamora, the entire city felt this



Luis Olano, filming (courtesy of Luis Olano)



*Ramon understands full well that, following his mother's execution, he and his sister were about to be handed over to a Francoist family.*

was something that concerned them. The film helped to return to the city's memory a story that had been buried, but that everyone knew: the cruel and unjust murder of the innocent Amparo Barayón.

Still, we ran into roadblocks. In the early summer of 2018, as we were finishing up editing the documentary, the new edition of *Death in Zamora* was presented at the Zamora Book Fair. The newspaper in charge of covering the Fair, *La Opinión de Zamora*, decided not to mention the book presentation, despite its obvious significance for the cultural and political history of the city, and despite the fact that it was one of the Fair's official events. This was clearly not an oversight. Fortunately, the attempt at censorship unleashed a campaign on social media that pushed the paper to retract, albeit timidly, and to publish the briefest of notes about the presentation the next day.

Now, by the time we premiered the documentary in Zamora, the situation had changed completely. By then, the book's first edition had almost sold out; it had done particularly well in Zamora bookstores. The morning of the premiere, the same paper that had tried to silence the book presentation, *La Opinión de Zamora*, announced the screening on the front page, with a full-page article on the inside. The city embraced the opportunity to meet the prodigal son from exile and to remember, vindicate, and pay tribute to a woman who'd been a pioneer of emancipation and democracy, a true Zamora "martyr." This is particularly stunning if we consider that the Holy Week processions in Zamora are closely linked to Franco's ideology of national-Catholicism, and include fraternities of army veterans.

The premiere drew more people than fit in the theater. Many carried their copy of *Death in Zamora*, some even of the first Spanish edition, which came out in 1990. An added controversy came up when some local officials of the Socialist



Party took advantage of the opportunity to have an unannounced press conference in which they took a conservative regional senator to task for criticizing government subsidies for historical memory initiatives.

But the strangest moment happened

*Our film helped to return to the Zamora's memory a story that had been buried, but that everyone knew: the cruel and unjust murder of the innocent Amparo Barayón.*

two hours before the premiere. Just outside the theater, I was approached by one of the grandsons of the governor who had signed Amparo Barayón's execution order. He'd recognized me from the picture in the newspaper. When Ramon had returned to the city in the 1980s, he'd interviewed the descendants of the perpetrators, but they hadn't expressed any regret, while *La Opinión de Zamora* slandered his mother. Now, however, the governor's grandson told me he was sorry he couldn't attend the screening but that he wanted to thank me for telling the truth about Amparo

Barayón, one of the many innocent victims of the terror in which his ancestors were complicit. Clearly, something has shifted in the past thirty years.

**Do you think that your portrait of Ramon Sender Barayón changes the image of his father, the world-famous novelist?**

Our portrait tries to create a dialogue between those two biographies, which are really each other's polar opposites in cultural, ideological, spiritual, and aesthetic terms. Ramón J. Sender, the novelist, was a man tormented by the trauma of war as well as the murder of his life partner and his brother. Not only does this move him to abandon his children, but also to practically lock himself up into literature for the rest of his life. His son, on the other hand, closes his testimony in our film thanking his father for making it possible for him to live a full life in the United States. Ramon understands full well that, following his mother's execution, he and his sister were about to be handed over to a Francoist family.

Ramon also seems to acknowledge that his father was simply incapable of confronting his own trauma and guilt. In some way, Ramon's own quest for identity and community, but also the search for his biological mother and his Spanish roots, became a self-curing process: a resolution that he, as son, was able to accomplish even if his father was not.

Ramon has spent his entire adult life investigating tools for physical and spiritual well-being. The generosity with which he shares his experience suggests that he's trying to share a tool to confront the psychological wounds brought on by a dearth of memory, forced absences, and a lack of truth, justice, and reparation. ▲

*Sebastiaan Faber teaches at Oberlin College.*



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# Loyalist Voices Crying Out across the Ocean: the EAQ Radio Broadcast during the Spanish Civil War

By Sonia García López

In the spring of 1937, a group of English-speaking journalists and filmmakers launched a shortwave radio broadcast from Madrid to tell the world what was happening in Spain firsthand. It found an eager audience all across the United States and Canada.

**I**N THE AGE OF THE INTERNET, it's easy to forget the power once held by shortwave radio. Thanks to skywave or "skip" propagation, through which radio signals refract off the upper atmosphere, shortwave has an exceptional broadcast range. In the intense political climate of the 1930s, it became part of a global political battlefield. Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy took advantage of shortwave technology to disseminate their messages around the world. But they were not the only ones to use its power to reach distant audiences.

On March 28, 1937, a note from *The New York Times* read:

Today from Spain the Loyalist voices cry out across the ocean in words such as these that surge through the peaceful Spring air of the American evening:

"Hello, hello, English-speaking friends and listeners; take a walk with us along the deserted streets of Madrid. Hear the dreadful hum of an approaching enemy plane and you rush to cover, there to find terror-stricken women, children, old men and women huddled in fear. There is a terrible detonation, a breaking of glass and a storm of dust; a bomb has struck nearby."

Orrin E. Dunlap Jr., radio editor at the *Times*, chronicled the first English-speaking independent broadcast for American listeners eager to know more about the unfolding of the Spanish war and, more specifically, about events taking place on the Republican side. The "Loyalist voice"—the man behind this experimental broadcast and the ones to follow—was Herbert Kline, future director of documentary films such as *Heart of Spain* (Kline and Geza Karpathi, 1937) and *Return to Life* (Herbert Kline and Henri Cartier, 1938).

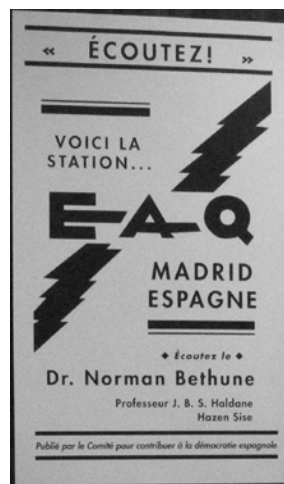
Kline had quit his well-paid job in New York as director of the Left Front magazine *New Theatre and Film*, and turned down several jobs from the publishing world and film industry, to go to Spain. After raiding his own savings and those of his friends and relatives to pay for his trip, he traveled to Madrid, offering his services as a journalist, producer, and writer to the Medical Bureau of the American Friends of the Spanish Democracy (later known as the American Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy). In Spain, Kline organized a

network of "Cultural Front" writers, journalists, and filmmakers who worked cooperatively in an Anglo-American news service that sought to provide the liberal and conservative press with news from the Loyalist Spain. None of these writers would be paid for their work.

Their shortwave radio station, EAQ nº 2, reached states such as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Idaho, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, Ottawa, and Ontario. But, important as the collaboration of the leftist intellectual workers was, the cooperation of the American audience proved critical for helping the initiative get off the ground. Between March 22 and 24, 1937, more than 20 letters from citizens across the US and Canada reached the headquarters of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy (NACASD) at 381 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, New York, and the desk of Edwin Rolfe, a poet and a journalist at the *Daily Worker* who would join the Lincoln Brigade later that year. All of them contained the same message: their authors confirmed that they'd been able to tune into the experimental EAQ nº 2 broadcast from Madrid on the evening of March 22.

The EAQ shortwave station, which broadcast on 31.565 meters, 9.4 megacycles, was described as an official government station because its infrastructure was provided by the Spanish Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT, the labor union associated with the Socialist Party), whose general secretary at the time was Francisco Largo Caballero. But in practice the EAQ nº 2 always operated independently from the Spanish Government. During the experimental transmission on March 22, Herbert Kline had asked the radio audience for feedback about the quality of the broadcast and sent a special message to the NACASD.

Many of these first listeners were passionate radio hams, and they provided thorough reports concerning the outlets they were using, the weather at the time and place they were listening to the program, references to fading, interferences, and whether they were using a stenographer, shorthand writing, or just taking notes to convey the message. Also, following the request made by Kline, the listeners urged the executive board of the NACASD and Edwin Rolfe to listen to the broadcast with news from Spain to be aired on Friday, March 27. One of them signed his letter as "a sympathizer of the Spanish Loyalists"; another wrote in red ink and capital let-





ters “NO PASARAN” and “MADRID shall be THE TOMB OF THE FASCIST!” One well-informed listener advised: “The program comes in perfect, here QSA5 R9 (no fading, no interference now) but Mussolini will soon have a station right over yours as he did over ETB in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), so you better shoot while the line is clear.” All reports agreed that the broadcast came almost as clear and powerful as a local station—something that was confirmed the following days by the note published in the *New York Times*: “the EAQ n° 2 is louder than London, louder than Berlin, and these two cities have been the most powerful voices across the sea. Apparently Madrid is pumping tremendous power into its ethereal arteries and has erected a directional aerial that megaphones the broadcasts to the United States and Canada.”

Up to that moment, the American radio audiences only had a chance to follow the news in Spain through major radio broadcasts such as *The March of Time*, sponsored by Times Inc. Produced and written by Louis and Richard de Rochemont, this very popular newscast staged the news using actors and special effects in order to achieve a dramatic atmosphere that could engage the audience emotionally. For instance, the broadcast of December 31, 1936, dramatized the bombing of a church in Madrid on Christmas Eve. Listeners could hear the priest, the worshippers, and the music in the church—all of them created in a radio studio—while the narrator commented on the event. At some point, he was interrupted by the buzzing of a plane, explosions, and cries of victims (in Latin-American Spanish). Undoubtedly, this immersive way to tell the news was emotionally powerful; but it lacked authenticity. The EAQ n° 2, by contrast (even if marginal compared to big news corporations) provided Canadian and North American radio audiences with the possibility of getting fresh news from the Loyalist side, reported by professional correspondents who were witnessing the events they conveyed to the audience. They did not use special effects: their voices were the most powerful weapon to convey emotion, because they were the voices of committed reporters who had experienced the events they were describing. On April 2, 1937, Kline addressed the audience in first person to say:

*No pasaran!* still stands. What is not known that should be of the greatest concern to all American listeners is the human cost behind this good news.

For the past few weeks I have spent most of my time with the Hispano-Canadian blood Transfusion Service. It has been my job to work with them writing a scenario and co-directing a film. In this film work I have witnessed the human cost behind the welcome news which the outside world has heard against the fascist offensive ...

After describing the dreadful effects of the bombings on the Spanish population, he finished his long speech with a thorough report on the medical needs of Madrid and those of the Canadian and North American professionals working for the Medical Bureau, led by Dr. Norman Bethune and Dr. Edward K. Barsky.

Kline’s reports show that the EAQ was more than a radio broadcast. It also served as a channel of communication for people volunteering in Spain (Kline, Barsky, Bethune, and their collaborators) and the people of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy in the US, who used the broadcasts to raise awareness about the situation in the Loyalist Spain, to ask for aid and supplies, and to inform the relatives of their correspondents.

Following the note at the *Times*, in fact, Francis A. Henson, the director of the National Campaign at the Medical Bureau wrote to Varian Fry (from the NACASD) suggesting that he advertise the broadcasts and arrange for cable for the broadcasters to make more specific appeals for clothes, food and medical supplies, even mentioning the NACASD. This method of getting supplies had been successfully used in the Ohio River Great Flood earlier in January that year, when 385 people died, and one million people were left homeless. Accordingly, the Medical Bureau devised a strategy to reach the American public, publicize the Bureau’s work, and raise support among the citizenry.

In a letter sent from the Medical Bureau to the NACASD on April 7, 1937, the Bureau included the schedules of the EAQ special program and information broadcast for USA and Canada from Madrid, in English (which at that time was aired every Tuesday and Friday, from about 7:30 to 9:30pm). The letter also said that they acknowledged cables received from US and Canada at 9 pm. Following this information, the Medical Bureau suggested making sure that once a week, either a member of their hospital, or a communique, could be sent over for five minutes in order to officially convey the requests of the hospital, including specific supplies and specialized personnel. At the suggestion of the Medical Bureau, Edward Barsky, the head of the American medical services in the Loyalist Spain, approached the radio station on a weekly basis in order to pass on official requests for supplies and personnel. The solidarity of the American public with the Spanish Republic was thus sustained, among other channels, by the committed, informative, and moving speeches by Barsky and Kline broadcast through shortwave radio. ▲

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# NEW YORK CHINATOWN TO SPAIN: WEN-RAO CHEN

By Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou



**Twenty-five years ago, Len and Nancy Tsou made a ten-day trip to Spain tracing some of the battlefields where Chinese brigadistas had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Among other sites, they followed the trail of a Lincoln vet, Wen-Rao Chen of the XVth International Brigade, who lost his life in the battle of Gandesa in 1938.**

**W**EN-RAO CHEN was first brought to our attention by Lincoln vet Kenneth Graeber. Back in 1988, Graeber invited us to his home in Manhattan, showing us a photo of “Yick” that he took during their hospitalization in Benicàssim, Spain in

1937. We found later that [Dong Hong] Yick was the alias of Wen-Rao Chen. Looking at the photo, we saw a young man with features of southern Chinese. He stood in front of a villa shaded by palm trees, resting his left arm on a statue, as if to lessen his weight on the right.

We were excited. It was the first photo that we saw of a Chinese *brigadista*.

Graeber remembered Chen as “a very likable guy” from New York’s Chinatown. They stayed in the same hospital ward in Benicàssim, where Chen was recuperating from his battle wound and

Graeber from jaundice. As young men, they kidded each other a lot. "He used to call me yellow parrot. It sounds silly because I had jaundice. He had a sense of humor." In the 30s, "yellow parrot" was a racist term referring specifically to Asians. Graeber said, "He must have been born in this country, because his English was as good as mine." They were pretty close, always talking about "events, world, Spain and local things", however, not about personal matters.

Before we left his home, Graeber showed us a clip of "The Good Fight," a 1984 documentary about the American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. It was amazing to see Chen sit on a sea wall against the Mediterranean Sea in Benicàssim, smiling and chatting with his wounded comrade. His right foot was wrapped with a large bulge of white gauze, which was why he leaned his body to the left in Graeber's photo. This segment of the film originally came from *With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain*, a documentary filmed by a French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson from late August to early November 1937.

We wondered who Chen was and why he went to Spain. Perhaps there were other Chinese volunteers in the International Brigades as well. Thus, we began our journey to search for information about Chen and possible other Chinese volunteers. Over years of research, we were able to trace Chen and 11 other Chinese volunteers and piece together the puzzles of their lives. Comparing Chen's letters sent from Spain to New York with the archival information about Yick in the XVth International Brigade, we were able to conclude that Dong Hong Yick was his assumed name in Spain. Here is the story of Wen-Rao Chen.

### From New York Chinatown to Spain

Wen-Rao Chen was born in Taishan District of Canton province, China on November 13, 1913. He was proficient in both Chinese and English. It is not clear when he immigrated to the US, but most likely when he was a teenager. His real American name was Maurice Chen. He attended public school in the US for a year and a half, had a high school education and began working at

age 18. Mostly he worked in restaurants in Manhattan as cashier and waiter. He was quite active in the "Chinese Workers' Center" in New York Chinatown. On October 1, 1933, he joined the US Communist Party. His address was listed as 258 W. 55 St., New York City. He also served as secretary of the Anti-imperialist League.

On June 12, 1937, Chen and 16 other Americans boarded the S.S. Georgic to Le Havre, en route to Spain. One of the passengers, Saul Birnbaum, remembered Chen as a merry fellow, who liked to play tricks on him. Together they crossed the Pyrenees on a dark night and reached Setcases, a border town in Spain on June 30. They left the next day and arrived at Albacete on July 3.

They were sent to Tarrazona de la Mancha for military training on July 18, 1937. Chen was assigned to Group 3 in Section 2 of Company 1, while Birnbaum was in Section 3. We were elated to see Chen stand at the training site smiling, in a film shot by Harry Randall, Chief Photographer of the XVth International Brigade.

### Wounded in Belchite

Chen sent letters from Benicàssim to the *Chinese Vanguard*, a New York-based newspaper. In a letter of December 1, he wrote:

In early August, I was assigned to the Lincoln Battalion, and two weeks later was transferred to 24<sup>th</sup> battalion, which was mostly composed of Spaniards with the exception of one American Company. Two days after I joined the 24<sup>th</sup> battalion, we marched and were deployed to a hill in a forest. After preparing for three days, we started our offensive against Quinto.

Chen described in detail the battle of Quinto. While the 24<sup>th</sup> battalion and three other battalions participated in the fighting, the American Company that he belonged to waited on a hilltop as reserve. The next day, they occupied the entire city except for one church that was held firmly by the rebel forces even after several hours of artillery shelling.

After several volunteers from the American Company firebombed the church with hand grenades, the rebels walked out and surrendered. Early the

next morning, Chen with his American Company fought against the remaining rebel forces on a hilltop, and by noon they declared victory.

"After three days of rest in the forest, we were asked to attack Belchite. This time, the battle was more difficult than the Quinto offensive," he continued in his letter. Again, the rebels had a stronghold in two churches, spraying bullets from machine guns through the bell towers, causing lots of casualties to the advancing soldiers. Trenches were not safe enough for cover. Lincoln volunteer Samuel Schiff ducked in a trench talking with his friend. Suddenly a bullet whistled into his friend's chest and killed him. Schiff was wounded in his left knee. Chen was hit on his right foot by a dum dum bullet, which pierced his foot and exited from his big toe. It was September 4, 1937. Chen and Schiff were transferred to Benicàssim hospital.

### Organizing refugee relief in Benicàssim hospital

Chen received surgery on his big toe in Benicàssim. He described his life in the hospital in his letter of December 1:

I am doing well in the hospital.

We have organized ourselves and meet once a week. Those who can walk spend several hours each day in the field to help Spanish farmers. Sometimes we also take care of farmers' livestock. A few weeks ago, we organized an activity that drew the attention of local residents.

The activity was about Asturias refugees. In October, Asturias was about to fall to rebel forces which obtained support from Hitler's Condor Legion for carpet bombing. "A local union was raising funds to help Asturias refugees whom the Republican government wants to relocate to safe places. The Americans organized a committee to solicit donations," Chen explained.

The idea was to ask for *brigadistas* to purchase relief stamps bought from the local union. Those stamps were then pasted on the newspapers in various languages that hung on the wall. "In a few days, with the enthusiastic help from my American friends, the *Chinese Vanguard* was fully covered with the stamps. Within a week, in a gathering where everyone showed up, we col-

lected about 7,000 pesetas. This is the kind of life I have in the hospital," Chen concluded proudly.

In Benicàssim, Chen was delighted to meet two other Chinese *brigadistas*. In the same letter of December 1, he wrote: "One came from Paris, currently working here as a nurse. His name is Hua-Feng Liu, originally from Shangdong province, China. The other is Ching-Siu Ling from Switzerland. Since Ling's wound was serious, he was transferred to another hospital for surgery."

While in Spain, Chen was very concerned about the war in China. "Right here I think about the war against Japanese aggression in our homeland. Although our weapons were inferior to the Japanese, China must find a way to overcome our shortcomings and to win," he wrote to the *Chinese Vanguard* on September 28, 1937. Clearly, while Chen was fighting fascism in Spain, he was equally, if not more, passionate about defeating Japanese fascism in China.

### Return to fight to his death

In the evening of December 17, 1937, Chen left Benicàssim for the headquarters of Lincoln Battalion. On December 22, he wrote to his comrade Ling: "For the time being, we stay in a village. We don't know what our future task will be. I'll inform you later."

Around this time, the battle of Teruel was taking place. Did Chen participate in this battle, which lasted until February 22, 1938? It seems likely, since on January 1, 1938 Lincolns and MacPaps started taking part in the Teruel offensive. While doing research in the Salamanca archives, we found his name on a roster of patients from the XVth International Brigade, issued on March 5, 1938 in Albacete. He came down with a cold and was sent to Benicàssim hospital on February 17, 1938.

The last battle Chen fought was



in Gandesa in April, 1938. Both the Lincoln-Washington Battalion and British battalion had been surrounded by Franco's fascist troops. While retreating, some cut their way through the encirclement; however, many were captured as prisoners. Lincoln vet Carl Geiser tabulated a list of *brigadistas* who went missing in Gandesa retreat on April 3, 1938. Chen was among the missing.

No one heard from Chen again. But ever since Kenneth Graeber told us about him in 1988, Chen has been in our hearts. A quarter of century ago we came to Gandesa for the first time, trying to understand how Chen and his comrades retreated and fell in that battle. On that trip, we also paid tribute to another Lincoln vet, John Cookson, at his grave near Marçà in Catalunya. But unlike Cookson, Chen's body was probably dumped in some unmarked mass grave in Gandesa. Every time we came to Gandesa, we wished we could erect a memorial gravestone or a plaque for Chen in Gandesa.

### Homage to two Lincoln vets

Our most recent trip to Gandesa was in October 2019, bringing with us two photos of Chen. We went straight to a flower shop, Floristeria el Trèvol, to look for Teresa, the owner. Years ago, she was asked by a customer to lay flowers once every year at a memorial plaque for a Lincoln vet Kenneth Nelson, according to an article from the *Volunteer* in 2012. But she did not consider it a job. She wrote to her customer, "We left

the bouquet there with emotion and gratitude for his struggle for freedom... As you can imagine we feel closer to the Republican cause."

Teresa was not in the flower shop when we arrived. We asked to purchase two bouquets of fresh flowers in red, yellow and purple, the flag colors of the Spanish Republic. After the clerk made a call mentioning Kenneth Nelson, Teresa and her sister rushed to the shop.

We embraced each other, overjoyed, even though we had never met before. After briefing Chen's story, we gave her a large photo of Chen. "Nelson and Chen went missing in the same battle on the same day," we added. To our surprise, Teresa volunteered to bring us to the municipal cemetery where Nelson's plaque had been erected.

Walking to the very end of the cemetery, we put Chen's large photo right next to Nelson's black granite plaque. The two Lincoln comrades, Chen, 24, and Nelson, 22, were then united side by side. We and Teresa laid flower bouquets there. The cemetery was quiet with only whispers from the wind comforting the dead. In the future, when Teresa comes to the cemetery, she will bring Chen's photo and lay flowers to both Nelson and Chen. She will honor them every year. They are not and will not be forgotten. ▲

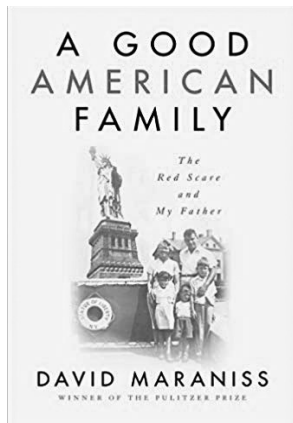
*Nancy Tsou and Len Tsou are the authors of Los brigadistas chinos en la Guerra Civil: La llamada de España (1936-1939) (Madrid, 2013).*



# Book reviews

***A Good American Family: The Red Scare and My Father*, by David Maraniss. New York, Simon and Schuster, 2019, 416 pages**

Reviewed by Melvin Small



WHEN I WAS IN FIFTH GRADE, my elementary school required us to answer a list of biographical questions that included where my father, then a Republican, was born. I wrote Poland even though I knew he had been born in Russia. This was the sort of mindset that dominated many of us in the fifties and is an integral part of David Maraniss' poignant memoir, *A Good American Family: The Red Scare and My Father*. Maraniss is a Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist, an associate editor at *The*

*Washington Post*, and author of scores of notable biographies and histories, including the brilliant *They Marched into Sunlight* that featured parallel stories of a Wisconsin unit in the Vietnam War and protestors against that war at the University of Wisconsin. Like many of his books, this one relies on deep archival research and also a unique cache of family letters.

He begins his story on March 12, 1952 when his father, Elliott Maraniss, answered a subpoena to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activities at the Federal Building in Detroit. A few days earlier, because of that subpoena, the *Detroit Times* fired him from his copyediting job, after which he joined thousands of blacklisted radicals and liberals in the ranks of the Red Scare's unemployed and harassed. Many of them came from good American families. Elliott and his wife's brother Bob Cummins, both affiliated for a long time with communist organizations, were as American as apple pie. The very close friends were baseball fanatics, for example. Mary, Elliott's radical wife, knew "If dad came home with mustard on his shirt...that he stopped off at a Tiger's game." Elliott had also been an enthusiastic Boy Scout in his early years in Brooklyn. And he voted for Ike in 1952.

The author returns to the 1952 hearing and the parallel lives of all its participants many times as he tells the story of his close-knit family and its politics from the thirties through the next century. Like Dan Lynn Watt, who wrote about his

*Elliott and his wife's brother Bob Cummins, both affiliated for a long time with communist organizations, were as American as apple pie.*

father, the celebrated Lincoln Brigader George Watt in *History Lessons* (2017), Maraniss' main concern is to discover how and why his father came to hold his political views over three decades and how those views determined the trajectory of his family's life. Watt, by the way, was the person who recruited Bob Cummins for the International Brigades.

Elliott was active in leftist causes at Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, the same school that Arthur Miller attended a few years earlier. But he really blossomed as an activist at the University of Michigan (1937-1940) where he once again crossed paths with Arthur Miller at the *Michigan Daily*, a hotbed of left-wing internationalism and Marxism. "Ace" Maraniss, who wrote 150 articles during his college years, worked with fellow Young Communist Leaguer Bob Cummins at the newspaper. This was not a "campus" newspaper. It devoted much of its news coverage to national and international issues, especially the Spanish Civil War. Although Elliott did not go to Spain, Cummins did; he was a runner in the Mac-Paps and encountered Alvah Bessie, Robert Merriman, and Joe Dallet. The author's perceptive chapter on Cummins and the Brigades is one of the highlights of the book. (He thinks that the Maraniss name came from the *marranos*, the name given in the late Middle Ages to Christianized Jews or Muslims—another link of his family to Spain.)

Both Elliott and Bob served in World War II. Their political activism followed them in the shape of the thick security files that kept them out of the combat zone, for Captain Elliott Maraniss until the spring of 1945. Like other radicals, Elliott was assigned for much of the war stateside to an all-black unit. Government surveillance from the FBI and the Detroit Red Squad continued when both men returned to Detroit and to Communist-Party activities. Here Maraniss introduces us to a fascinating figure, Bereniece Baldwin, a paid informant for the FBI from 1943 to 1952, who held high positions in the party that gave her access to its files. She would become the star witness at Elliott's and Bob's 1952 HUAC hearings.

The Maraniss and Cummings families continued their "subversive" activities for a while after the war. As the author looks back on their devotion to the Soviet Union from the Spanish Civil War to the Moscow show trials in 1938, to the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 and then again during the early days of the Cold War, he tries to understand why his relatives were so blind to Soviet perfidy and dictatorship. He fails to do so in part because he apparently never engaged his father directly on the Soviet issue. He does understand their Marxist political philosophy and the fact that American Communists were correct on so many of their progressive positions on the economy, race, and capitalism. Maraniss concludes that "they latched on to a false promise and for too long blinded themselves to the repressive totalitarian reality of communism in the Soviet Union. And now [during the Cold War] they were paying the price."

The FBI hounded them after the war, making it difficult for them to keep their jobs—despite Elliott's proclamation that

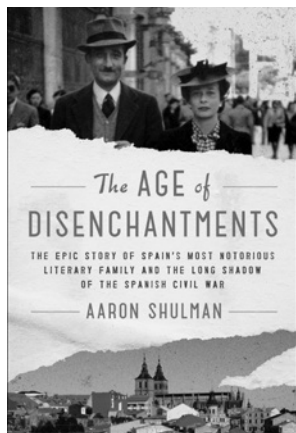
"Nobody has the right to question my Americanism" in his unread statement at the hearing. Thus, after being fired from the *Detroit Times*, he could only stay one step ahead of the agency from 1952 to 1957, even though he no longer was a communist sympathizer. He moved from New York, to Ann Arbor, to Cleveland, back to Detroit, to Bettendorf Iowa, and finally to safe haven in Madison, Wisconsin where he restarted his journalistic career with the *Capital Times*. That made for quite a disruptive odyssey for young David Maraniss and his family.

David Maraniss' well written and well researched study of his all-American family and other American families they encounter from all political perspectives will be a familiar story to those with family ties to the Spanish Civil War and American Communism. Many will "absorb, finally, what I had never fully allowed myself to feel before: the pain and disorientation of what my father had endured."

*Melvin Small is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History from Wayne State University and one of the founders of the university's Abraham Lincoln Brigade Scholarship Fund, now in its fortieth year. ▲*

**Aaron Shulman, *The Age of Disenchantments: The Epic Story of Spain's Most Notorious Literary Family and the Long Shadow of the Spanish Civil War*. Ecco/HarperCollins Publishers. 465 pp.**

**Reviewed by Jeremy Treglown**



**A**MONG THE MORE ESOTERIC cultural shocks of Spain's transition to democracy was a 1976 documentary in which a family—that sacred unit of National Catholicism—tore itself apart in front of the cameras. Three variously self-absorbed, promiscuous, alcoholic, druggy sons denounce their not dissimilar dead father, whom they also plainly revere. The widowed mother reminisces about an extra-marital romance. Everyone analyses and betrays everyone else. The essence of the film's lasting power is that it represents, in

an extreme version, so many averagely dysfunctional families. But in its day Jaime Chávarri's *El Desencanto* ('Disenchantment' or 'Disillusion') had a specificity now lost on most viewers. Felicidad Blanc Panero and her sons Juan Luis, Leopoldo María and José Moisés ('Michi') Panero were celebrities—individually, as a family, and especially by association with the paterfamilias Leopoldo, who until his death in 1962 had been, by popular reputation if not quite in fact, poet laureate of the Franco regime. As José Carlos Mainer and the late Santos Juliá

*Possibly without intending to, the Paneros, so exhibitionist and loquacious, so obsessed with their own lineage, turned out to be a microcosm of the whole country.*

were to write in a book about the transition, "Possibly without intending to, the Paneros, so exhibitionist and loquacious, so obsessed with their own lineage, turned out to be a microcosm of the whole country and a precocious symbol of the necessity... of an urgent national psychoanalysis."

Chávarri trained at the Escuela Oficial de Cine, one of Franco's surprisingly numerous unintended gifts to Spanish avant-garde art. He was a "Name" (*nombre*), in the sense used among the Almodóvar generation of which the Panero sons were part: people related to someone famous. In the director's case, the relation was his great-grandfather, Antonio Maura, five times Spain's prime minister in the early decades of the twentieth century. Even into the 1970s Spanish society was, at least as compared with the rest of western Europe, constricted, and in general quite a difficult place to make headway without connections. Leopoldo Panero (Senior)'s mother was a distant cousin of Franco's wife, a link she used to save his life when he was imprisoned in 1936. The poet married one of the daughters of a prominent actress and a Madrid surgeon. Their children were *nombres* because they were Paneros but also, eventually, on their own account, and while they were growing up their friends and lovers were, too: people called Domecq, Marías, Molina, Ortega. Some of them behaved as if they were the only humans on earth. Not for nothing, one of Madrid's trendiest bars was called El Universal.

It's a universe painstakingly reassembled by Aaron Shulman in *The Age of Disenchantments*, a family history inspired by, and providing a rich contextual gloss on, *El Desencanto*. Like the film's early audience, Shulman sees the Paneros as epitomizing their age, and among the book's successes are the early chapters that bring to life a too easily despised category: intelligent, sensitive, idealistic Spanish Nationalists. Anglo-American ideas about the Civil War—stereotypes that have taken hold in Spain itself—don't allow for the fact that the side indigenous people are on in any conflict (I'm not talking about foreign volunteers) is generally a result of birth or locality. Only a fraction of participants make a principled choice, let alone of a sort subsequently applauded by history. And even being principled is no protection against changing one's mind. After a student career in which he read Marx, got to know Lorca, brought the Peruvian communist poet César Vallejo home to Astorga for Christmas and, during a spell at Cambridge, translated for Miguel de Unamuno, Leopoldo had a religious experience that led to his siding with the Nationalists. His brother Juan, also a poet, had joined the army of the governing Republicans and was killed in an accident. Both men had been befriended by Pablo Neruda, who later attacked friends of Leopoldo's as accomplices of the dictatorship and was in turn savaged by him for his Stalinism.

Leopoldo was right about Neruda. But he was essentially a traditionalist poet of love, religion and nature, not of politics. Being passionate, hard-drinking, and fluent, he was also what poets are supposed to be like, so was useful to a regime shunned by many but not all writers. He held a number of

prominent cultural positions in a country where, even today, such jobs are part of an extended civil-service apparatus intimately tied to government. He worked on the new literary periodical *Escorial*, founded in 1940, and in the state censorship, directed a big series of art exhibitions, and became a literary diplomat, including on the staff of what is now the Instituto Cervantes in London, where he counted T.S. Eliot among his friends. When Franco's regime became a client of the Cold-War USA, he was made editorial director of the Hispanic version of *Reader's Digest*.

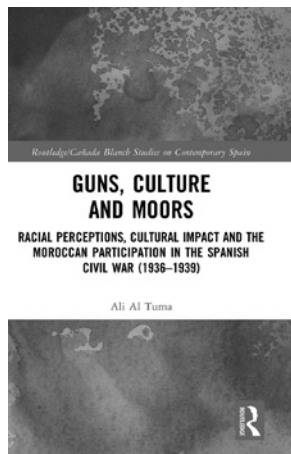
It helped that his wife Felicidad was beautiful, intelligent and a bit flirtatious, though she could also be startlingly insensitive. At the première of *El Desencanto* she invited one her late husband's best friends, the poet and critic Luis Rosales, to sit next to her. Rosales had appeared in the film without having any idea that its effect, in Shulman's words, would be "like a ritual sacrifice" in which the subject was "disemboweled." Other friends, seated further away, left before the end but the polite Rosales was stuck there, speechless. Felicidad not only didn't understand his consternation, she seems not to have noticed it. Shulman is good on her mix of self-absorption, pragmatic adaptability when she was obliged to work for her living, distinct literary talent and adoring indulgence of her sons (whose waywardness, particularly in Leopoldo María's case, may have been inherited from her side of the family: one of her sisters suffered a lifelong disabling psychological illness). In defending her against accusations raised by other women in her world that she was just a bad mother, he shows the fair-mindedness that also characterizes his handling of the sons — all of them, sooner or later and in different ways, gifted, truthful writers as well — as fascinatingly disastrous human beings.

This tact, it has to be said, is at odds with the book's neon-lit subtitle, "The Epic Story of Spain's Most Notorious Literary Family." And while these may be the publisher's words rather than Shulman's, his style is often at odds with the subtlety of his opinions. This is partly a matter of his overdoing the microcosm-macrocosm patterning ("Much like Leopoldo's career at this time, the 1950s were shaping up to be a decade of twisty intrigue." There's a phrase like this every two or three pages). He also has a weakness for clunky metaphors. The teenaged boys and their friends not only drink and do a lot of drugs, they read a lot of books, so just as one of them "inhaled tomes on political and aesthetic theory," another, two paragraphs later, "slurped down all of Kafka and Sartre." Yet the same writer deftly negotiates car-crashes and police beatings, locked psychiatric wards and acid hallucinations, and can produce flashes of his own such as a description of Dalí looking like "an otter dressed up as a gangster." Despite its blemishes, this is a thoroughly researched, at best vivid and reliable account of a deeply unreliable bunch of people in an unhappy age. ▲

*Jeremy Treglown is the author of Franco's Crypt: Spanish Culture and Memory Since 1936 (2014) and most recently of Mr. Straight Arrow: The Career of John Hersey, Author of Hiroshima (2019). He has written biographies of Roald Dahl, Henry Green, and V. S. Pritchett, and is a former editor of The Times Literary Supplement.*

***Guns, Culture and Moors: Racial Perceptions, Cultural Impact and the Moroccan Participation in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). By Ali Al Tuma (New York & London: Routledge, 2018).***

**Reviewed by Alex Vernon**



**A**LI AL TUMA'S *Guns, Culture and Moors* is an essential contribution to the scholarship of the Spanish Civil War. As Tuma observes, it is "almost inconceivable" that histories of the war would overlook the Moroccan involvement on behalf of Franco's Nationalists. Nevertheless, his book is one of the few English-language resources on the topic. Previous general histories of the war describe the use of the Moors in combat as well as in propaganda of both sides to incite fear among the Republican forces and sympathizers. Tuma's

work draws on previous studies, original research, and oral histories to better understand not only the various roles the Moors played and how they were perceived, but also how Moroccan veterans described their experiences.

In addition to oral sources from published historical monographs, Tuma received special access to Mustapha el Merroun's interview transcripts from the 1990s. Tuma himself conducted fourteen interviews in 2011; and he examined 147 interrogations conducted by French officers of Moors from French Morocco "who fought in Spain and deserted back to the French Protectorate after receiving leave, usually following a battle injury." While acknowledging the problematic aspects of the French archival trove, such as the fact that deserters' answers to specific questions hardly constitute representative testimony, Tuma also observes its distinct advantages. The interviews in this collection outnumber all other oral history sources combined. They were conducted immediately after service in Spain. They've also never been used before.

Whereas José E. Alvarez's *The Spanish Foreign Legion in the Spanish Civil War, 1936* (2016) covers the military history of the legionnaires and the *Regulares* (the Moroccan units belonging to the Spanish Army of Africa), Tuma focuses on the Moors and provides a rich and nuanced collective portrait of these soldiers' experiences in Spain. He reminds us, for example, that some Moors fought in units technically under the Moroccan government rather than the Spanish Nationalist command structure, and that some Moors fought in mainland Nationalist units, including the fascist party's Falange militia. Moroccan troops were sometimes placed within Spanish units to help "guarantee the fidelity of the conscription troops," essentially by spying on them. As the oral histories demonstrate,



## *Moroccan soldiers did not always embrace the Nationalists' rhetoric about ideology and kinship.*

the Moor's various backgrounds and roles contributed to mixed opinions regarding their treatment by Spaniards.

Tuma's sources also allow him to address some of the significant historical and cultural questions about the Moorish involvement, such as what transpired between Moroccan troops and Spanish women (beyond the propaganda accounts), the curious mercenary alliance between Franco's traditionally Catholic Nationalists and Spain's centuries-old Muslim enemy, and more generally the relationship with the Moors of both Republican and Nationalist Spain. In addition to its clear and smart organization, one of the book's strengths is the way it integrates the evidence throughout the chapters. The section on hospitals, for example, is in the "Moros y Cristianos" chapter concerning religion, yet evidence about the Moors' medical care appears throughout the book as it touches on all aspects under study. Spaniard officers from the Army of Africa, for example, cared for wounded Moors equally with wounded Spaniards, whereas mainland Spanish officers were more prone to privileging their own. Hospitals, as Tuma reports, "were the places where the Muslims and Christians interacted the most." They became contact zones for religious as well as romantic encounters.

Tuma argues that the rape of Spanish women by Moroccan troops probably did not occur at the exaggerated levels suggested by the propaganda emanating from either side. And Moors were certainly not the only offenders. Moors also frequented Spanish brothels just as their Spanish counterparts did. A few Moors actually married Spanish women—hospitals were a prime site for romances to blossom. To discourage sexual intermixing, the Nationalists eventually imported Moroccan women to serve the troops with both public talents (such as music) and sexual ones.

Tuma's research also allows us to think with more nuance about the ideological justification for the bond between Nationalist Spaniards and Moroccans. To combat the Republic, the propaganda claimed, was to combat infidels of atheism and materialism along with communism. Moreover, instead of bristling against Spain's reputation in the rest of Europe as a northern outpost of uncivilized Africa, Nationalist rhetoric embraced the shared history before the Reconquista—to a point. Spanish stereotypes of Moors continued to be in play: They belonged to a warrior race inclined to certain kinds of military operations; the brotherhood rhetoric too easily slipped to the paternalism of little brothers. But it was the Spaniard, of course, who required the rhetoric. Thus, Nationalist officers not only arranged for Moorish retinues, they very well could have dressed Spanish soldiers in Moorish uniforms and did in fact decorate their own uniforms with a Moorish flourish. As Tuma's oral sources reveal, individual Moroccans did not always embrace the rhetoric about ideology and kinship. In the end, Tuma writes, the Nationalists "struggled to reach a balance between including and excluding Moroccans." Efforts to accommodate Muslim practices and cultural differences simultaneously served to segregate and to contain. Franco and his minions recognized what the postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha has articulated in *The Location of*

*Culture*—that encouraging assimilation and mimicry risks hybridity, that is, an erasure of the very difference on which the colonial relationship depends.

The book's style at times conforms to a social science template that can be repetitious. Still, *Guns, Culture and Moors* gives voice to a major group of soldiers from the Spanish Civil War that historical studies have talked about but not listened to. Readers interested in the recent scholarship on the racial dimensions of the Great War might find Tuma's book an extension of that work. The book is rich in detail as it grapples with the complex intersections of historical generalities, rhetoric and propaganda, policies and operations, and individual experiences. ▲

*Alex Vernon is the Julia Mobley Odyssey Professor of English at Hendrix College. He is the author of numerous books, including most recently, Teaching Hemingway and War (2016).*

## **Abe & Jack, Milt, Moe, Dave...**

By Peter Neil Carroll

They were not my family. They distrusted strangers. I could only approach them slowly, these Americans who had volunteered to fight fascists in the Spanish Civil War.

They lost, bad guys won—they bore failure like primal sin or first love that comes and goes, never leaves. In their homes they kept fetishes—Guernica prints, Spanish brandy.

Their loyalties were born of danger and death. They invited me not eagerly, but lacking choice, if they wished to outlive themselves. Each craved to be last of the Lincoln Brigade.

I became expert at funerals and obituaries. Death beds I avoided but sometimes compassion exceeded common sense. I cared for them, for Abe & Jack, Milt, Moe, Dave, Eddie, Marian, the three Bills.

I miss them. They were history, they were legend. Their example led me to enter intimately into life's calamities—to seek a role, a small role, or merely the hope of a role—to speak against injustice.

Not victory but the promise amplified their cause, living with purpose. Without their voices now, it takes arrogance for me to claim a historic role, though silence means insignificance, defeat.

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