

The Volunteer

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

Bans Off Our Bodies rally, Tiguex Park, Albuquerque, NM,
with IWR's Rachael Lorenzo

Indigenous Women Rise to Fight for Reproductive Rights



Six Students Win Watt Awards p 9

Palestinians in Spain p F2

Faces of ALBA: Daniel Millstone p 14

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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,

The fight against fascism, in all its guises, has always required broad alliances: networks of people and organizations who realize that the threat to democracy is dangerous enough to warrant collective action, even if not everyone sees eye to eye on everything. This is why, two years after Hitler's rise to power, the Popular Front brought together socialists, communists, liberals and even pacifists. The International Brigades were equally diverse.

As an antifascist organization, ALBA is all about networks, national and international. One of the thoughts behind the ALBA/Puffin Human Rights Award is precisely to help build alliances—because today, as we well know, the struggle against fascism continues to be waged on many fronts. This year's award winner, Indigenous Women Rising, is bravely active on several of them. In a country where many states, with the Supreme Court's blessing, have been turning the clock back at least 50 years, they are valiantly defending women's reproductive rights. But IWR has also climbed the barricades for Native Americans and other populations who have long been marginalized socially, economically, and politically (see page 3).

Meanwhile, ALBA's educational work continues apace, with a new five-week workshop this spring. In this issue, we are gratified to feature two of our recent alumni. Cora Cuenca shares her experience as a teacher in Sevilla, Spain (page 5); Charlie Christ writes about his work as an intern on our online biographical database (page 8), which we featured at a recent event with board member Chris Brooks.

This issue also introduces six outstanding new winners—two high schoolers, two undergrads, and two graduate students—of ALBA's George Watt Essay Prize (page 9). On page 15, Daniel Millstone looks back on his activist life and his upbringing as a child of Spanish Civil War veterans. And don't forget to check out Nevine Abraham's interview with the author of a novel about Palestinian volunteers in Spain (page 12); Rosi Song's piece on Pablo Casals' forgotten pupil, the Catalan cellist Gaspar Cassadó; or Peter Carroll's review of a new book about Black soldiers in World War II.

As you know, every issue includes a page—an honor roll, really—listing everyone who's supported our work over the past three months. The fact that, this time around, we need two full pages to include all the donors warms our hearts. It's beyond gratifying to know that you continue to support our work with such steadfast dedication. ¡*Gracias!* from all of us at ALBA.

Keep up the fight. ¡*Salud!*

Sebastian Faber & Peter N. Carroll, Editors



P.S. Don't forget to check out our online edition at albavolunteer.org.

P.P.S. Did you know you could set up a recurring donation online? Go to alba-valb.org/donate

To the Editors:

I would like to thank Peter Glazer for his "shout out" to Steve Nelson during the Susman lecture with Nora Guthrie on December 4th. It was very moving to me personally. I had known about the song "Antyfascist Steve," but seeing it on screen brought back a flood of memories about Pittsburgh in 1953.

It was a very dark time.

What is so significant about Woody's tribute to Steve is its timing. Steve had searched for a lawyer throughout the entire state of Pennsylvania and could not find one. The fear of McCarthyism was so strong that people were afraid to show any support of the Smith Act and Seditious victims. This was the time of the "blacklist," yet to his credit Woody showed his support. In 1953 that was a very brave act.

All of this is lost to history but thanks to ALBA these stories are not forgotten. Please convey my thanks to the Guthrie family.

—Josie Yurek, daughter of Steve Nelson

ALBA NEWS

ALBA/Puffin Award for Indigenous Women's Group Defending Reproductive Rights

Fifty years after *Roe v. Wade*, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is pleased to announce that the 2023 ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism will go to Indigenous Women Rising (IWR), which is committed to honoring Native and Indigenous People's inherent right to equitable and culturally safe health options through accessible health education, resources, and advocacy. Following the assault against reproductive rights after *Dobbs v. Jackson*, ALBA and The Puffin Foundation renewed their commitment to reproductive justice, particularly in underserved communities. IWR, an Indigenous-led full-spectrum reproductive justice organization, helps Indigenous families pay for and access abortion care, menstrual hygiene, culturally sensitive education, and midwifery funding and support. The award will be presented to IWR in New York City. For more details, see ALBA's event calendar at alba-valb.org/eventcalendar.

"The Supreme Court's deplorable *Dobbs* decision that stripped away federal privacy and reproductive rights is yet another horrifying setback for those seeking to manage their own bodies and health," said Neal Rosenstein, President of The Puffin Foundation. "But the impact of such decisions has always fallen hardest on marginalized populations. That's why the work of Indigenous Women Rising is all the more impactful and important to support. We're honored to be presenting this year's ALBA/Puffin Award to them for their targeted, meaningful work that honors the inherent health rights of Native and Indigenous People."

Rachael Lorenzo, IWR's Executive Director, started Indigenous Women Rising in 2014 as a campaign to bring attention to the fact that Indigenous women and people who rely on Indian Health Services for healthcare were being denied access to Plan B, a form of emergency contraception. "Indigenous Women Rising is honored to receive the ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism," said Lorenzo, who is Mescalero Apache, Laguna Pueblo, and Xicana. "Indigenous people's rights throughout the world have been trampled by colonialism, disrupting our connections with each other, our children, our land and all other living beings. Our work is built on our own traditional Pueblo and Apache values that our matriarchs are powerful and our children are the future. Abortion has always been a part of our story and our right to our own bodies is the most sacred thing we have. We knew, based on our individual life circumstances, and the threat of war, famine, or pending migration, can alter an individual's decision to terminate their pregnancy. It's not so different than now. We will always make sure our people have access to the care they want, whether it's abortion or prenatal care because we believe denying our sexual selves is inhumane."

"IWR is tirelessly advocating and working for reproductive justice for those whose human rights have been unacceptably curtailed both before and since the reprehensible June 2022 decision," said Jack Mayerhofer, ALBA board member and chair of the Human Rights Committee. "Due to centuries of systemic and deep-seated racism, Indigenous communities across the United States and Canada have for too long been denied the health care and justice they deserve,

WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS DURING SPAIN'S SECOND REPUBLIC

The proclamation of Spain's Second Republic in April 1931 opened the door to a spate of modernizing legislation, including in the area of women's rights. The 1931 Constitution legalized divorce, defining marriage as founded on "equal rights," allowing for its dissolution by mutual agreement or, for cause, at the request of either of the two spouses. Divorce was further regulated in a law passed in early 1932. In 1933, women in Spain gained voting rights. In January 1937, less than seven months into the civil war, the regional parliament of Catalonia legalized the voluntary interruption of pregnancy up to 12 weeks. It was the most advanced abortion legislation in Europe at the time, as it allowed any individual to break off their pregnancy for medical, genetic, or ethical reasons.

In Spain's national government, then led by Prime Minister Francisco Largo Caballero, the Anarchist leader Federica Montseny, who served as minister of Health and Social Assistance, pushed for the nation-wide legalization of abortion as well. Although she faced with opposition from her fellow cabinet members, she nevertheless worked to extend the Catalan legislation to the rest of the territory controlled by the Republican government.

The Republic's defeat in 1939 turned back the clock. Divorce in Spain would remain illegal until 1982, seven years after Franco's death; abortion would not be legalized until 1985.

NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE LINCOLN BRIGADE

The close to 2,800 volunteers who joined the Spanish fight against fascism from the United States, included at least six native Americans. **Charles "Blacky" William Sanborn** (1902-1966), born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was in Spain from September 1937 until August 1938, serving with the XV Brigade. **John William Parks** (aka William Lewis Banks, 1914-1937) was born in Pennsylvania. A textile worker, he had done several years of military service before the war in Spain. Having arrived in early 1937, he was killed in February of that year at Jarama. **Freeman Woodson Mani** (1909-1996), born in South Dakota, was part Sioux. He served with the Lincoln-Washington Battalion from October 1937, deserted, and returned to the US in May 1938 as a stowaway. During World War II, he joined the Merchant Marine. **Thomas Cox, Jr.**, from Alaska, was one of the older volunteers (he was 47 when he joined) and was killed at Jarama in February 1937 as well. **Judson Mill Reynolds Briggs** (1906-1981) was a fifth-generation member of the Seneca Nation. Born in Philly, he served as an ambulance driver with the Republican Medical Service from May 1937 until his return to the United States in March 1938. **Ephraim Bartlett**, a coalminer and US army veteran who was 38 when he joined the XV Brigade, served in Spain from July 1937 until July 1938.

and this is only being made worse by *Dobbs v. Jackson*. We are honored to partner with an organization that so boldly combats this racism and fights for the healthcare and reproductive rights of Indigenous communities.”

The ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism, a \$100,000 cash prize granted annually, 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. A philanthropist and visionary, the late Perry Rosenstein created and established an endowed fund for this award in 2010. Previous awardees include investigative journalists Lydia Cacho and Jeremy Scahill; Judge Baltasar Garzón; Kate Doyle and Fredy Peccerelli, for their work exposing human rights violations in Guatemala; United We Dream, a national network of youth-led immigrant activist organizations that fight for the rights of millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States; public-interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson; Proactiva Open Arms, dedicated to rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean; the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a worker-based labor and human rights organization founded in Florida in 1993; My Brother’s Keeper, which works to improve the health and well-being of minority and marginalized populations in the United States; and Life After Hate, which helps people leave violent far-right and white supremacist groups.

Workshop on Women and the Spanish Civil War

On March 8, International Women’s Day, ALBA board member Jo Labanyi, emerita at NYU, will once again lead a workshop on women in the Spanish Civil War as part of the Perry Rosenstein Cultural Series. See ALBA’s event calendar at alba-valb.org/eventcalendar for registration details.

Hundreds View Online Event on Biographical Database

On January 29, ALBA’s longtime board member Chris Brooks gave an online presentation about his decades-long work on the biographical database of U.S. volunteers in the Spanish Civil War—the single most-visited part of ALBA’s website. Assisted by ALBA intern and institute alumnus Charlie Christ, as well as Dennis Meaney, our Executive Assistant, Brooks explained how the massive project, which includes close to 2,800 records, continues to grow. After a brief conversation with ALBA chair Sebastiaan Faber, a lively Q&A followed the presentation, a recording of which is available on ALBA’s website and YouTube channel.

Nora Guthrie Featured in Susman Lecture



On December 4, ALBA board member Peter Glazer had a public conversation with Nora Guthrie, daughter of singer and activist Woody Guthrie (1912-67), whose recording of Jarama Valley is legendary, and who in 1952 wrote a series of songs against Franco. Ms. Guthrie

began her career as a modern dancer, founded the Woody Guthrie Archives in 1992, and is president of the Woody Guthrie Foundation. The lively dialogue, which centered on Woody’s activism and legacy, was followed by a Q&A with the audience. A recording of the entire event is available on ALBA’s YouTube channel.

Tertulia Involves Students

On Tuesday, December 5th, participants gathered at ALBA’s office, while some joined via Zoom to hear former Hunter College student Haley Trunkett interview Peter Hartzman about his mother May Levine Hartzman, who sailed in 1937 and served with the Republican Medical Service as a nurse. More tertulias at ALBA will take place and the general public is invited to join and chat in an informal setting.

Roundtable on New Online Museum of the Spanish War

On February 21, ALBA featured a roundtable discussion with three of the seven scholars responsible for the new Virtual Museum of the Spanish Civil War. Adrian Shubert (York University, Canada), Andrea Davis (Arkansas State University), and Alison Ribeiro de Menezes (University of Warwick, UK) explained the origins of the project, which has been largely funded through Canadian agencies, as well as their plans for its continued development.

Join ALBA’s Online Teacher Workshop

Continuing its successful model, ALBA is once again joining with the Massachusetts-based Collaborative for Educational Services to offer a five-week online teaching workshop on “The United States and World Fascism from the Spanish Civil War to Nuremberg and Beyond—Teaching Human Rights Today.” Optional graduate credit is available. Registration Deadline: Feb. 23, 2023, more information at collaborative.org.

ALBA Authors Curricular Guide for Students and Teachers in Spain



ALBA is proud to partner with the Spanish government in the publication of a 70-page curricular guide for high-school students and teachers in Spain as part of a government-sponsored series. Highlighting the experiences of U.S. volunteers in the International Brigades, the guide invites readers to use these stories as an inspiration to set up their own historical-memory projects. Written in Spanish by James D. Fernández and Sebastiaan Faber, the booklet is available for free to any student or teacher in the world through the websites of ALBA and the Spanish government. ▲

LEGACIES OF THE CIVIL WAR AND FRANCOISM: ETHICS IN JOURNALISM AND THE CLASSROOM

By Cora Cuenca



When Cora Cuenca, an ALBA workshop alumna, teaches journalism to undergraduates in Seville, she invites them to consider the Spanish Civil War in personal terms. The legacies of the war, she writes, continue to weigh on Spain: “Education is political. There are no gray areas when dealing with fascism.”

It all started six years ago, when I was a 20-year-old studying Journalism and Filmmaking in Sevilla, a city near my hometown, Córdoba, in the south of Spain. University would soon be over, and I didn’t really know what to do next. Then one day, one of my professors—who would later become my doctoral advisor and friend—spoke in class about the existence of concentration camps in Sevilla. After class, he showed me a map of the province and pointed at a few locations.

During the Civil War (1936-1939) and the subsequent repression—which lasted until the death of the dictator in 1975—Franco and his people designed a network of camps where prisoners were forced to work under extreme conditions. Some died from starvation and exhaustion. Most were interned for political reasons, although it’s better to write “political” in quotes. During these past few years of research, I have spoken to descendants of survivors and many of them say that their grandparents, aunts, parents, uncles, and so on were not really into politics besides maybe having joined a union or having

attended a meeting about how to improve workers terrible conditions. But, for almost forty dark years, as the historian Ricard Vinyes put it, everything that didn’t fit into the symbolic universe of the national-Catholic dogma designed by Franco was considered a crime and, often, punished with death.

It is impossible not to think what would happen to us and our loved ones if a similar political (and cultural, economic, demographic, and social) catastrophe occurred. Would we be prosecuted? Tortured? Killed because of our beliefs and core values? Would we kill another human being to defend our lives, everything that we believe in? And what about our friends and family? Would some of them show their true colors and embrace fascism? They wouldn’t necessarily support every measure or step of the new terrorist state, but maybe they’d rather stay quiet under the regime than take action to overthrow it. That might be too high of a price to pay if you’re a parent trying to feed your family.

The Civil War has shaped the way we exist as a society and behave as a community of people.

This is a tiny sample of the questions that I pose to my undergraduate students at the beginning of the semester in a journalism course I teach. Normally, during the first days, the silence that follows these questions becomes heavy, and I can understand why. Of course, they know about Franco, the Civil War, and the horrors it led to. But they might have never thought about all that in personal terms. Yet it is personal. It is emotional. It is something that, whether some political parties like it or not, has shaped the way we exist as a society and behave as a community of people.

Sometimes I wonder if I should be writing in the past tense. On November 8, 2022, the city council of Madrid organized a public ceremony to honor the Foreign Legion, a military force that openly supported Franco and the “golpistas” during 1936’s coup. The reason was the unveiling of a ten-foot statue of a *legionario* armed with a bayonet and ready to charge. The mayor of the capital, José Luis Martínez Almeida, gave a speech in which he mentioned the founder of *La Legión*, a close collaborator and friend of Franco, General Millán-Astray.

All differences aside, can we even begin to imagine a ceremony in Berlin to honor Himmler? Symbols are extremely powerful. The fact that Almeida, an alleged “civil servant” who holds a great amount of power, is honoring symbols that involve death and destruction is disturbing, ethically wrong and unfair to all the victims and survivors, specially two weeks after the passing of the new Ley de Memoria Democrática.

As it turns out, there is a connection between the fascist Millán-Astray and higher education. In October 1936, a few months after the coup, fate brought together two very different characters in the auditorium of the University of Salamanca: the founder of *La Legión*, on one side, and the writer and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, on the other. Historians haven’t yet agreed on who actually said what on that October 12 almost ninety years ago, but something is clear: while the first represented death and shouted an ode to ignorance (“¡Viva la Muerte! ¡Mueran los intelectuales!”—“Long live death! Death to the intellectuals!”), the second sided with life and intelligence (“Vencer no es convencer”—“To conquer is not to convince”), horrified as he was with the events that unfolded in that ominous year.

It is crucial for Spanish college students to receive an ethically informed and historically accurate education about the Civil War and the dictatorship. Education is political and we must not be naïve to think that Almeida mentioning Millán-Astray during a public ceremony is completely unrelated to what happens in a Spanish college classroom, especially if the students are studying to be journalists. Actions like Almeida’s should not be normalized and should have legal consequences. This way, young people would internalize the fact that there are no gray areas when dealing with fascism.

It’s true that historical memory is part of a complex system of references and inferences, and those relations happen in a mediatic, economic, political, social, religious, and cultural arena, among others. Another interesting example that illustrates these connections happened also in November 2022, a couple of hours before the bones of fascist and murderer general Gonzalo Queipo de Llano were exhumed from the Basílica de la Macarena, in Sevilla.

A journalist from an alt-right online newspaper of ill repute, *Okdiario*, was covering the exhumation and briefly interviewed a young man called Manuel Pérez, who was leaving the church. In the video, that went viral, you can see that the journalist was expecting him to charge against the government’s decision of removing the bones. Was it because Manuel is a religious person who had just come out from a late mass? Maybe because he was dressed a certain way? The questions of the journalist were biased and tendentious (something that is sadly normalized in the Spanish media), but Manuel displayed a beautiful elegance as he dismantled all his expectations. He argued that the exhumation of Queipo was a matter of justice towards the victims and, when asked if he was a voter of the PSOE (the party who Pedro Sánchez, Spain’s current Prime Minister, belongs to), he declined to answer, because he understood that historical memory and reparation of the dignity of those who were killed can no longer be obscenely weaponized by politicians and the different media, depending which party they favor.

Nonetheless, historical memory in Spain is a politicized issue, and my concern here is not to argue that it should not be. On the contrary. However, if we, as a society, want to show some respect to those who fought and died defending freedom, to those who were killed arbitrarily by a murderous regime, we need to go further. Because, before being political, memory is a matter of human rights, dignity, and justice. Manuel is a journalist who studied at the Faculty of Communication Studies of Sevilla, where I currently work. With his words, he honored more than 45,000 people who were killed by order of Queipo de Llano. Patiently, pedagogically, as Unamuno did.

The only way to build a truthful narrative towards the victims of the war and the repression is through education and information. Because that spark that ignites in a classroom full of students can quickly spread like wildfire. I grew up as an Andalusian kid knowing that Blas Infante was “el padre de la patria andaluza” (the father of our homeland) but finding out that he had been killed by Franco’s soldiers (commanded by Queipo de Llano) and his body thrown into a mass grave took me more years than I’d like to admit. How can we celebrate the life and accomplishments of a person and not talk about how he was viciously murdered by a fascist regime? Or not mention the fact that his bones, along with those of thousands of people, are still unidentified? That is not something they

teach you at school in Spain, sometimes not even in high school. We could also talk in class about the foreign men and women who came to Spain voluntarily from around the world with the purpose of fighting for freedom in 1936. Or Spanish people who died in Nazi concentration camps. Or how the political power structures during the dictatorship remained the same thanks to a process which was wrongly called “*Transición*,” a word that means a “gradual change” that never took place.

Non-profits like the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives help to promote these marginalized stories and reach a wider audience. The last online seminar I attended was a carefully designed combination of memory, history, and culture, but also a safe space to share our own experiences as lecturers. Because it has not been properly dealt with on a cultural, but especially, on a political level, the Civil War and everything that came after it is a flammable topic that must be handled with care. There is a great difference between accessing the war through a movie or through an academic paper, but both are useful when focusing on different aspects of this complex conversation. There is an overwhelming volume of cultural artefacts that can be used to access our past, and I, as a teacher, felt lucky to have wise and well-informed people pointing at some of them for me. Paradoxically, I find that teachers are life-long students, so it is important to be present in these spaces where we can improve our knowledge and skills and suggest new ways of facing the subject. It is a win-win situation, both for lecturers and, more importantly, students.

In using pedagogy against fascism, memory and a critical approach to history are fundamental. Students respond to that. After a few weeks of talking about these issues from different perspectives in class, they feel the urge to tell their family's stories. Those stories make our history as a society, and that is a complex operation that should never be trivialized or simplified. We are witnessing the rise of alt-right parties that support ideas that dwell in the ideological core of some of the worst episodes of our recent past. An adequate education about the Civil War, the dictatorship and the repression are issues that should concern us all, but educators and journalists need to be especially careful and sensitive about the way they handle information. Because the murderer Francisco Franco died in his bed on the 20th of November 1975, and still in 2022, hundreds of people gathered in different churches all around Spain to honor him on that day. Those of us who are privileged enough to have a voice need to use that information to persuade people to be on the right side of history, along with intelligence and life, not ignorance and death. “*Vencer no es convencer*,” said Unamuno: to conquer is not to convince. But if Spanish journalists and educators honor a code that ultimately is aimed to protect human dignity, we will win by convincing. That is a long and complex process, but it starts in the mind of someone willing to hear or read or watch a story about truth, justice, and restitution. ▲

Cora Cuenca is PhD candidate and lecturer in the Faculty of Communication in the University of Sevilla, where she works on historical memory and representations of the past in the media.

STUDENTS CURATE ALBA EXHIBIT ON WASHINGTON SQUARE

By Danielle Nista and Miriam Basilio

This spring, NYU's Kimmel Windows—a 13-window exhibition space spanning LaGuardia Place and West 3rd Street—will feature *Fighting Fascism: Visual Culture of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)* From New York University Special Collections, Tamiment-Wagner Collections, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.

The exhibition originated in a Fall 2019 undergraduate seminar, *Art and Propaganda: The Case of the Spanish Civil War*, taught by Miriam Basilio Gaztambide, Associate Professor of Art History and Museum Studies. Assistant University Archivist Danielle Nista's teaching about the ALBA collection was an integral part of the research and curatorial process.

Miriam was inspired to teach the class drawing from her book *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War*, which analyzes the propaganda of the Republic's Popular Front government, as well as developments in areas controlled by Franco, in the context of recent debates about the memorialization of the war. Miriam's grandfather and other family members fought against Franco—a legacy that inspires her to draw attention to the dangers of fascism and dictatorships today.

The students in the class read Peter Carroll's *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* and the catalog of the exhibition *Facing Fascism: New York and The Spanish Civil War*. Danielle provided context on the history of the collection at NYU and instructed the students on archival research methods.

To prepare the exhibit, we selected themes for each window and proposed materials from the archive to be scanned that would showcase the many perspectives and stories of the war. In various ways, the students found relevant personal, historical, and contemporary points of reference as they studied posters, postcards, magazines, letters, photographs and more.

Among the show's highlights are a set of drawings by New Jersey volunteer Syd Graham (killed in action at Brunete), which carefully render the propaganda posters in Spanish and Catalan that he saw along his way; letters written by veterans to protest their treatment by government agencies and the armed forces after the Civil War; and a photograph of volunteers, including NYU students, that put faces to names the students learned about in class.

The students in the class thoughtfully engaged with the material and brought these archival materials to life by putting them into historical context and drawing connections to recent events. They learned how to carefully work with archives, make curatorial decisions, and write concise text to educate viewers. The result is an exhibit that is both a look back at a particular time and place in history and a lens through which to view our current moment. ▲

Fighting Fascism: Visual Culture of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) From New York University Special Collections, Tamiment-Wagner Collections, Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives is on view from March 3rd through mid-September 2023. For additional information about programming, Google “Kimmel Windows Gallery.”

The Working-Class Legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

By Charlie Christ



After attending an ALBA workshop, Charlie Christ joined ALBA as an intern to work with Chris Brooks on the biographical database. “The Lincolns were incredibly diverse, representing the full spectrum of the American and international community. Yet as I dove deeper into their lives, one trend in particular struck me—their indelible impact on the labor movement.”

I began my internship with ALBA in May 2022 as part of the Data Renewal Project team. My task was updating the extensive volunteer database and entering meta-data to unveil details and connections of Lincoln Veterans previously obscured to researchers. Students and scholars alike will be able to search by birthdate, occupation, college, political affiliation, the ship they sailed to Spain on, and if they were killed in action, wounded in action, or became a prisoner of war. This position was a match made in heaven for me—a longtime admirer of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a history student captivated by the Spanish Civil War, and more recently, an idealist fascinated by the American labor movement and the “fighting left” of the 1930’s. This makes an admittedly tedious job—editing thousands of Volunteer records—a labor of immense love. But more importantly, this internship has been a way to connect with a chapter of American history worth being proud of.

The Lincolns were incredibly diverse, representing the full spectrum of the American and international community. They were overwhelmingly immigrants or the children of immigrants. They were African American, Irish, Jewish, Puerto-Rican, Cuban, Canadian, Croatian, German, Italian, and Russian—just to name a few. Some were young, as I discovered last week when I stumbled upon a Veteran who was only 16 years old! And some were nearly sixty by the time they braved the treacherous mountain odyssey across the Pyrenees to enter the fight. As impressive as their diversity was, it was not nearly as impressive as the values, backgrounds, and beliefs that united them in the battle against fascism, beliefs so profound that hundreds paid in blood, both in Spain and during the Second World War.

As I dove deeper into their lives, one trend in particular struck me—their indelible impact on the labor movement. After editing nearly one thousand profiles, it was impossible to ignore the prevalence of Lincolns belonging to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the Department Store Employees Union, Maritime Unions, Teachers Unions, and many more. I also noticed a correlation between political affiliation and labor activity; most Lincolns belonging to the Communist Party prior to 1936 had some involvement in the labor movement. This is hardly surprising; the American Communist Party was a steadfast ally of the working class, and they worked hand in hand with other left-leaning political groups to improve the conditions of working people.

While there are many Lincolns that could be mentioned, I’ll highlight two that caught my attention recently:

In 1932, a 17-year-old named Irv Fajans took a job at Macy’s, joined the Young Communist League, and became an organizer for the Department Store Employees Union. He was a strike leader who fought to unionize thousands of underpaid retail workers across NYC. They demanded an eight-hour workday, higher pay, expanded benefits, and many rights already secured by blue-collar

unions across the country. Fajans took a break from labor activism to fight fascism in Spain and then again in Italy during the Second World War; he was wounded in both conflicts. Later on, he edited an anthology on the Spanish Civil War (though he resigned the position in a debate about including a piece by Hemingway). He then went to film school. Most notably, he worked with a group of blacklisted Hollywood filmmakers to produce *Salt of the Earth*, a revolutionary movie depicting the struggle of Mexican American miners during a strike in New Mexico. This movie was banned in the U.S. immediately after release; its “subversive” themes of racial, gender, and worker equality were far too “communist” to be shown to the public.

Born on Labor Day in 1914, Ralph Fasanella wielded the brush of the labor movement, depicting quintessential scenes of working-class life in his paintings, from night-time factory scenes of NYC to the Bread and Roses Strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In Spain, Ralph wielded a rifle in the fight against fascism. After returning to the States, he became an organizer for the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America. In fact, this is how he learned to paint—he took an art class hosted by the union. This seems novel now, but in their heyday, unions were houses of culture, offering a variety of classes and community activities for members. Ralph spent the next thirty years working at his brother’s gas station, painting religiously. His work was discovered after a 1972 *New Yorker* article launched him into the mainstream. As he grew older, Ralph visited schools in NYC, talking with high school students about painting, about the struggle of the working-class, and about the importance of America’s immigrant heritage. One of his paintings hangs permanently in the Great Hall of Ellis Island.

There were many other Lincolns involved in the labor movement. And if I’m being honest, I found these two while editing the Veterans with last names ending in F... And it was difficult narrowing it down to just these two! However, Fajans’ work on *Salt of the Earth* and Fasanella’s paintings offer powerful representations of hope, of worker solidarity, of racial and gender equality, and the unbreakable power of a united working class. These two men were activists until the day they died. I found their stories inspirational, especially at a time when the working-class struggle continues, and a revival of the Labor Movement is desperately needed to challenge the gross inequities plaguing our nation.

I hope that in some small way, my work with ALBA will make it easier for anyone to reach into the past and discover their stories. I hope it will save many aspiring historians hours of time. And I hope others will discover what I did: the historical legacy and sacrifice of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade offers us a blueprint to build a newer world. One fair to the workers, immigrants, women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community. This is the world the Lincolns fought to create. ▲

CELEBRATING THE 2022 WATT PRIZE WINNERS

By Aaron B. Retish

Six students were recognized in this year's George Watt Prize for their outstanding essays on the Spanish Civil War. The committee read through dozens of wonderful submissions from across the United States and Western Europe in what was, once again, a reminder of how many students appear interested in the Spanish Civil War.

Two outstanding students received the precollegiate award for their essays. Olinmazatemictli (Maza) Reyes of the Arizona School for the Arts described how Bernard Knox went from a committed soldier who fought fascism in the Spanish Civil War and World War II to becoming a renowned scholar of classics at Harvard. Ashwin Telang of West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South in New Jersey submitted a winning essay, "Policy Gone Wrong: U.S. Neutrality in the Spanish Civil War," that examines the debate in the US government and among the public about the US government's decision not to intervene in Spain.

The prize committee was thrilled this year to be able to meet with the recipients of the undergraduate and graduate awards. These four young scholars captivated the committee with presentations of their work. They spoke passionately about the larger implications of their scholarship and how they planned to develop their projects further. Rebecca Mundill (University of Manchester) presented "Reassessing the Humanitarian Activism of Eleanor F. Rathbone in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937," which focuses on the political activism of Rathbone, who was a member of the British Parliament and a well-known defender of women's rights. Mundill has graduated from Manchester and is planning on teaching in Spain. Alfie Norris (University of Leeds) told the committee how his research on his hometown of Wakefield's "only" veteran of the Spanish Civil War,



Frederick Spencer, ended up revealing that there were in fact five men from the city who fought in Spain. Alfie is now studying veterans from across the whole area of Leeds.

The graduate students' projects were equally innovative. Paula Pérez-Rodríguez (Princeton University) joined us from Spain, where she is finishing her dissertation research. Her winning essay, "Reperto de armas espirituales: alfabetización, socialismo y utopía letrada en la Guerra Civil Española," is a study of the Republican Army's literacy campaigns, which embodied Republicans' views of culture and proper citizenship. Luis Madrigal (University of Chicago) presented his creative project, "Little Has Been Said: The Fredericka Martin Papers." In this essay, Madrigal recalls how

his high school teacher, Tobyanne Berenberg, introduced him to the story of her mother, Fredericka Martin. After serving as a volunteer in Spain fighting fascism, Martin continued the struggle in the United States and Mexico. Prompted by this story, Madrigal researched Fredericka Martin's papers at the ALBA Collection at NYU's Tamiment Library. The committee was captivated by Pérez-Rodríguez and Madrigal and looks forward to their future scholarly endeavors.

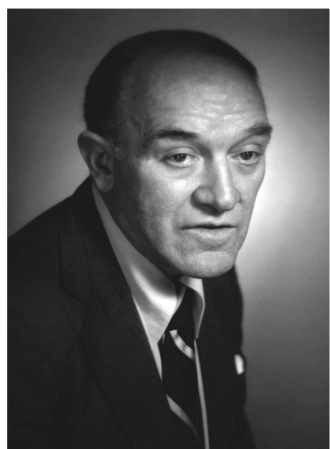
The jury for the 2022 George Watt Memorial Essay was comprised of Angela Giral (Columbia University), Joshua Goode (Claremont Graduate University), Jo Labanyi (New York University), Aaron Retish (Wayne State University), Josephine Yurek (New York City Public Schools), and Nancy Wallach (New York City Public Schools). The Watt award honors the memory of Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran George Watt (1914-1994), a social worker, writer, and lifelong activist central to the creation of ALBA. The personal correspondence between George and Ruth Watt during the Spanish Civil War was recently staged by actors Vero Maynez and Nathan Payne. The performance and script can be found on the ALBA website.

What follows are summaries of the prize-winning projects; for links to the full text, visit the online edition of *The Volunteer* at albavolunteer.org.



Olinmazatemicltli (Maza) Reyes (Arizona School for the Arts) “Bernard Knox: Soldier and Scholar”

The life of Bernard Knox is representative of the typical, ideologically driven volunteer in the International Brigades. A committed anti-fascist before war broke out in Spain, he snuck his way across the Spanish border to fight valiantly against General Franco, and he later used his hard-earned experience to fight the Axis in the Second World War. Also, like many brigaders, he eventually ended up laying down his weapons and enjoying the comfort of civilian life, becoming a renowned professor of Classics. Though today he is celebrated for his scholarly work, his heroism in the battle against fascism deserves remembrance from anyone with an interest in classic Western literature or the Spanish Civil War.



Bernard Knox.

Ashwin Telang (West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South, New Jersey), “Policy Gone Wrong: U.S. Neutrality in the Spanish Civil War”

The Spanish Civil War sparked one of the largest debates among Americans of the time period. While some supported a position of neutrality — to isolate America from the Spanish conflict — others wanted to aid the Loyalist, democratic causes. President Franklin Roosevelt was pressured to follow the isolationist camp. In the end, his decision to isolate America from the war cost the Spanish Republic a victory. In effect, the U.S. posture of neutrality between 1936-39 inadvertently helped Francisco Franco establish himself as a fascist dictator. In fact, the Second World War could likely have been avoided had America aided the Loyalists. This essay analyzes the far-reaching consequences of U.S. neutrality during the Spanish Civil War and how it fundamentally changed the fabric of American foreign policy.

Undergraduate Awards

Rebecca Mundill (University of Manchester) “Reassessing the Humanitarian Activism of Eleanor F. Rathbone in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937”

Eleanor Rathbone (London, 1872-1946) has been remembered by her associates and biographers for the many successes of her career in politics. Her dogged determination to provide humanitarian relief in the Spanish Civil War has been overshadowed by her work as leader of the National Union of Societies

for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), her campaign for Family Allowances and her humanitarian response to the Second World War. This thesis seeks to re-assess her work by focussing on her humanitarian activism in the Spanish Civil War. By studying Rathbone’s humanitarian activism between 1936-1937 in the Spanish Civil War from a gender perspective, this thesis aims to add an extra layer to Rathbone’s legacy. It shows how Rathbone differs from the image of humanitarian women who are driven solely by care and charity. By examining Rathbone’s devotion to public service, democracy and liberty combined with her unique position as a feminist and an Independent backbencher in the British parliament, this thesis reveals the true extent and motivations of Rathbone’s humanitarian activism in Spain.

Alfie Norris (University of Leeds). “I was born of working-class folks’ study of Wakefield International Brigade Volunteers and Forgotten Working-Class History”

My dissertation is an attempt to understand the motivations, and lives, of the five men who left my hometown of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, to fight in Spain. The work was inspired by the story of Frederick Spencer, who lived down the street from my high school and was killed at Jarama on 12 February 1937. His story had gone overlooked and originally, I believed he was the only volunteer from the area. My research soon showed that in fact five local men had fought in Spain. The story of the Wakefield volunteers shows how so much working-class history has been lost in the U.K., especially as regions such as my own have been affected by deindustrialization. The volunteers also represent local resistance to both local and international fascism. Using archival documents, photographs, and interviews with relatives, their stories now hold the place in history that they have long deserved. I hope that we will one day have a permanent physical memorial. This prize will provide much support and weight towards this, and I must thank ALBA for the inspirational work they do to promote the stories of the International Brigade, without which stories like mine in Wakefield would be so much harder to tell.



Graduate prizes

Paula Pérez-Rodríguez (Princeton) “Reperto de armas espirituales: alfabetización, socialismo y utopía letrada en la Guerra Civil Española”

Los procesos de educación y “culturización” de las masas durante la Guerra Civil han sido ampliamente estudiados. Así también, la tendenciosidad propagandística de las labores culturales y de los organismos socialistas en general y comunistas en particular. Combinando unas y otras observaciones, cabe preguntarse: ¿cuál fue la cualidad retórica de los propios procesos de alfabetización, su específica orientación discursiva, y de qué modo contribuyeron al esfuerzo socialista por conseguir la hegemonía política? El bando de los leales se dedicó no sólo a desarrollar intensas labores de alfabetización y de difusión cultural, sino a comunicar, a aquellos ya “culturizados”, el valor de esta empresa.

Este trabajo analiza los discursos que acerca de analfabetismo y alfabetización fueron elaborados durante la Guerra Civil Española desde el bando republicano, prestando especial atención a aquellos que se refieren a las filas del Ejército Popular. Por cuestiones de espacio y coher-

encia interna, me centro en los procesos de alfabetización de adultos y jóvenes, de corte comunista y socialista, hegemónicos durante 1937 y 1938, dejando fuera la retórica y las labores de corte anarquista, y la alfabetización infantil. Recabo por tanto artículos aparecidos en publicaciones como *Ahora*, *La Hora*, *El Sol*, *Democracia Artillera*, *Solidaridad Obrera*, *La voz del combatiente*, *Libertad*, *La Libertad* o *Mundo gráfico*, y recorro asimismo a la revista de la Inspección General de las Milicias de la Cultura, *Armas y letras*. Se comentan aquí, pues, procesos de alfabetización llevados a cabo, principalmente, por Milicias de la Cultura, aunque a menudo solapados con las actividades del Comisariado, Cultura Popular o el Socorro Rojo Internacional. El objetivo global de la investigación es comprender las contribuciones que los sueños de alfabetización tuvieron dentro de la resistencia republicana, y el papel que dichos sueños jugaron en su modelo de ciudadanía.

Luis Madrigal (University of Chicago) “Little Has Been Said: The Fredericka Martin Papers”

Fredericka Martin (1909-1992) was Head Nurse of the American Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy. In

spirit, she was a member of the Abraham Lincoln battalion in the fight against fascism. On January 16, 1937, she sailed from New York aboard the *SS Normandie*, headed for the crumbling old world. “Aware that I was participating in the pivotal event of our century,” she wrote years later, “I managed to guard many records and keep notes for some future historian—I hoped—to use.” This essay gleans from those notes, kept in the Tamiment Library at New York University, a sketch of Martin’s life and the project she could never bring herself to finish: a book about the experiences of the war, a collection of testimonies from “nurses, the ambulance and lorry drivers, the social workers, administrators, pharmacists, and lab technicians.” It also draws upon the personal relationship between the author and Martin’s daughter, Tobyanne Berenberg, a retired Geography professor living in Mexico City who keeps the memory of her mother very much alive. ▲

LIBERATING PALESTINE IN SPAIN

By Nevine Abraham

Hussein Yassin's New Novel on Palestinian Arab Volunteers in the International Brigades

Framing its protagonist's journey to defend Spanish freedom as an extension of Palestinian Arab resistance at home, Yassin's novel sheds light on the turbulent history and the political and social contexts of pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine.

"I am an Arab volunteer who has come to defend the Arabs' freedom on the Madrid front! I have come to defend Damascus in Guadalajara, Jerusalem in Cordoba, Baghdad in Toledo, Cairo in Andalusia, and Tétouan in Burgos." These words were published in *The Vanguard* in June 1938 by Najati Sidqi (1905-1979), a leading member of the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) who joined the Spanish Civil War to combat fascism and support freedom. The quote reappears in *Ali: The Story of an Honorable Man* (2017), in which the Palestinian novelist Hussein Yassin recounts the journey of Ali Abdel Khaleq, a farmer, member of the PCP, and one of five Palestinian Arabs—as opposed to "Palestinian Jews" who also lived in the pre-1948 Mandate Palestine—who volunteered in the International Brigades in defense of the Spanish Republic against Francisco Franco's nationalists. The others, in addition to Najati Sidqi, were Naguib Youssef, Fawzy Sabri Al Nabulsi, and Malih Al Kharuf.

Ali, Yassin's third novel, documents a historical episode that helps debunk the notion that Arabs only collaborated with fascist regimes in the 1930s and 1940s—exemplified by the 250,000 Moroccans who fought in General Francisco



Franco's army and who had been recruited from what was a Spanish protectorate. In addition to the five Palestinian Arabs mentioned, IB volunteers from the Arab world included seven Palestinian Armenians, the Iraqi Nuri Roufael Kotani, a Syrian, a Lebanese, many Libyans, Tunisians, and Algerians, in addition to Mizrahim. "With the exception of Sidqi's writings, Arabs did not record this part of history, which made them completely absent, as if they weren't part of history," Yassin told me when I interviewed him in the fall of 2022. "I was ashamed of this absence and thought I should make up for this shortcoming."

During Yassin's search for Palestinian Arab volunteers in IB, he came upon a book by German historian Gerhard Hopp that identified the names of Abdel Khaleq and Al Nabulsi among those who fought in the Spanish Civil War. This prompted the novelist to enthusiastically embark on a five-year endeavor to track down their story, leading him from Moscow to Spain. He learned that Ali left Acre's prison to go directly to Spain, where he was quickly promoted to be one of the commanders of the Botwin Company. He was shot on March 17, 1938, on the Madrid front, and buried in Albacete. "My novel attests to the

Spanish tragedy," he told me. "It attests to my sympathy with its people, and to the commemoration of the Palestinian Arab volunteers, the heroes who left their embattling home, fought for a free Spain against fascism, Nazism, and destructive capitalism. They did not demand anything in return save the honor of being counted among its fighters. I resolved to identify those unknown heroes." In *Ali*, the Palestinian Arabs' willingness to fight fascism in Spain becomes emblematic of the struggle for a better future, free from imperialism, inequality, and oppression.

While Palestinian Arabs were not politically tied to Spain, Yassin explains, their defense of the Spanish Republic extends their "resistance to the first true enemy: The British oppressive occupation of Palestine" that supported the Jewish settlement project and worked in alliance with the Anglo-Jewish philanthropists. Ali's upbringing as a farmer embodies the tragedy of the Palestinian *fellah* or peasant whose "dispossession by Zionist land-purchase became acute" in the 1930s amidst a rapidly growing Jewish population, as Rashid Khalidi has written in *Palestinian Identity*. Ali's struggle as "a national hero" who, as Yassin discovered, was imprisoned several times by the British for expressing his opinion and who went on a hunger strike for approximately 19 days reflects his belief "in bridging people through love, social justice, and personal freedom," Yassin told me. It also conveys the significance of these universal values to conjoining the combat in Spain. This resonates with Sidqi's testimony from 1938:

I noticed that the volunteers in the Republican ranks and those that constituted the International Brigades were a mixture of Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Ethiopians, Americans, Chinese, and Japanese. A brigade of Arabs, too, had come from various Arab countries, so I said to myself: truly, there is no excuse for excluding the Arabs from volunteering. Are we not also demanding freedom and democracy? Would not the Arab Maghreb be able to achieve its national freedom if the fascist generals were defeated? Would the defeat of the Italian fascist forces at the hands of the popular democratic Spanish forces not lead to the salvation of Arab Tripoli from the clutches of the tyrant Mussolini? Would the victory of the Spanish Republicans over the German and Italian colonizers not tip the scales in favor of supporters of democracy, and of oppressed people the world over? I did not hesitate, and in a matter of days I was on my way to Spain.

In this context, Palestinian Arabs' willingness to sacrifice their lives reflects an underlying cultural belief in martyrdom as an



act of agency and a path to eternalize a superior cause—that is, the liberation from the oppressor. In Palestine's case, it shows the longing to perpetuate "Palestinian land that will never die." The novel tells a story of dual self-sacrifice. On one hand, the Palestinian martyr's blood mixing with the land testifies to the Palestinian claims to that land in the face of its confiscation. On the other, Ali's concurrent journey to Spain embodies this self-sacrifice. In both journeys, the narrator glorifies the "prestigious honor of martyrs who fall while defending the land" and dubs them "heroes who have reached eternity," whose "blood does not flow in vain" and whose power resides in the reward or "*diyya*," that is, a free nation.

As the novel frames Ali's journey to defend Spanish freedom as an extension of Palestinian Arab resistance at home, it sheds light on the turbulent history and the political and social contexts of

pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine. In the opening scene, Ali sets sail to Spain while having flashbacks of Jerusalem's holiness tarnished with violence, Jaffa's shamouti oranges, and Haifa's shores. The scene alludes a string of protests in 1933—in Jerusalem on October 13, Jaffa and Nablus on October 27, and Haifa on October 27 and 28—that reflected intensifying activism against British rule and its anti-Arab policies, notably the Balfour Declaration (1917), which supported the Zionist movement's call for a Jewish national home in Palestine. The Declaration legitimized the increasing number of Jewish settlements, which had begun in the nineteenth century and turned into organized Jewish immigration to Palestine, provoking strikes and tensions between Palestinian Arabs and Jews during this period. A series of revolts against the Jews of Palestine in the 1920s ensued, with clashes erupting in between Jewish and Arab communities over control of the holy sites. This explains Ali's mourning of the "repeated crime" in Jerusalem, recalling Jesus's crucifixion in Golgotha. Notwithstanding Ali's upbringing as a *fellah* who lost his land to the Zionists, the novel's focus on Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa shores up the city as the center of class struggle, cultural awareness, and resistance, in a parallel with the combat in Madrid.

Nonetheless, the fact that the eruption of the Palestinian Arab Revolt in 1936 coincided with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War raises questions on the reasons for the Palestinian Arabs' decision to fight in Spain rather than in their homeland. Surely, Ali's unhesitant response to this question—"every arena of struggle is an arena of honor, and the current arena of struggle is in Spain"—expresses solidarity with the Spanish cause. Yet a closer look at the volunteers' involvement in the PCP and its evolving policies in response to local instabilities helps explain why they viewed fascism as a threat to the Palestinian cause.

Palestinian Arab communists witnessed the shift of the Party, originally conceived as predominantly Jewish, from being concerned with social class disparities to its adoption of a national liberation strategy, demanding that Jewish laborers help dispossessed Palestinians “expel Jewish settlers who took over their land,” as Ran Greenstein writes in a 2009 article in *International Labor and Working-Class History*. While the 1929 clashes led the Communist International to call on the PCP for more inclusiveness of the Palestinian Arab working class, the Party later adopted its Arabization policy in response to the eruption of the Arab Revolt (1936-1939) against the increasing influx of Jewish immigration from an increasingly anti-Semitic Europe. As a result, the party recruited more members from the Palestinian-Arab community while its Jewish membership decreased.

In the novel, Ali’s political outcry at British colonialism and its “divide and rule” policy underpins his discontent with the Yishuv, the pre-Israel Jewish community established in the 1920s by the PCP, which the narrator dubs the “deceiving pre-Nakba Jewish community in Palestine.” As Yassin told me, it was a “non-nationalist party that served the colonizers’ interests.” The Palestinian Arabs, in other words, saw the British and Zionist forces as manifestations of the same fascism that the Spanish Republic was battling. This explains what motivated Palestinian Arabs like Ali to join the PCP and travel to Russia, back to Palestine, and then to Spain while the Arab Revolt was igniting in Palestine.

Palestinian Arabs saw the Yishuv as a colonialist project aimed at forcing a new Jewish state on the indigenous population. Yet in the novel, Ali’s romantic involvement with Jewish women of the PCP changes his perspective and help him discern the shared struggle of many Jewish immigrants against injustice, Zionism, and British imperialism. His first sexual encounter with Samha, a Yemenite Mizrahi communist activist who escaped Yemen with her mother, for example, is an epiphany that delineates his views on “the power of freedom, emancipation from the past, [...] social justice, and gender equality. Samha also recounts the story of Alejandra, a Spanish Jewish communist who had joined a Kibbutz and was later killed by the British Intelligence for speaking against injustices against Palestinian Arabs and the false myth of a vacant land. To Yassin, her story, too, bridges the Palestinian and Spanish struggle for liberation, a link that he is keen on portraying throughout Ali’s journey.

Nevine Abraham is Assistant Teaching Professor of Arabic Studies at Carnegie Mellon University. She has published on Arab and Coptic citizenship, identity politics, cinematic representation, and the politics of food. Hussein Yassin is a Palestinian novelist, who was born in the village of Arrabeh in Upper Galilee in 1943, received his Bachelor’s in Economics at the University of Leningrad, Russia in 1973 and currently lives in Jerusalem since 1984. *Ali: The Story of an Honorable Man* (2017) was published in Arabic was long listed for the Arabic Booker prize, and has been translated into Spanish. All references to the novel in this essay are to the Arabic version and all translations from the Arabic are the author’s. ▲

Faces of ALBA

Daniel Millstone, 2023.



DANIEL MILLSTONE: “MY PARENTS DIDN’T TONE ANYTHING DOWN.”

By Sebastiaan Faber

Daniel Millstone, a retired attorney in New York City, is the son of George Millstone (1901-1967), a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and Dorothy Loeb (1907-1977), who during the Spanish Civil War worked in France and Spain for the Committee for Spanish Children. A lifelong activist himself, Millstone worked for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) throughout the 1960s. He is currently a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Tell me about your family.

I was born in 1945, in New York City, days before the atom bomb attack on Hiroshima. My mother left her job as labor editor of the *Daily Worker* just after. She found work doing publicity for the American Social Hygiene Association, the anti-venereal disease outfit. Yet she was fired from that job in 1949 or so after she was targeted for spreading socialized medicine. At Tamiment there’s a lovely letter from an anti-Communist research unit—I’m being sarcastic—explaining how she needed to be stopped. She then worked for many years for the Reform Jewish seminary in NYC, The Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion. She ended her working career doing public relations for Planned Parenthood. My father worked in the fur industry for an auction house that was part of the Hudson Bay Co. During a strike, he borrowed money to run a grocery and a laundromat but then went back to fur. His job was to help unload skins from trucks and to sort them for auction.

Did your parents talk about the Spanish war?

Memories of Spain were omnipresent. I heard about it probably before I could talk, and certainly all through my youth. People talked about it all the time. After all, both my mother and father had been in Spain working on behalf of the Republic. My father

Memories of Spain were omnipresent. I heard about it probably before I could talk.

had volunteered for the Lincolns; my mother, who had been helping to run a Paris-based charity for Spanish children, was sent to Spain to run operations there. Since she had majored in Romance languages, my mother often translated messages for the Vets from Spanish to English and vice versa. My father had been wounded in the war. He had a hole in his arm and the skin had grown around it so you could put your finger through his arm. All the kids were fascinated by it.

So it was not a taboo topic, even during the Cold War?

Not at all. My parents were public Communists, you see. They were not underground. And they did not caution me—at all—about toning down the communism that I was taught from earliest childhood. I've met children of Reds growing up in that period who didn't discover their parents were different until one day they opened the closet and had the Little Lenin Library fall on their heads. Our family was not like that. My parents didn't tone anything down even though that led to some very bad consequences for me as a kid.

Do you mean in school?

In school and elsewhere. Most obviously, the parents of some of my friends were arrested. The Rosenbergs were executed. Many people lost their jobs because they were Reds. My mother lost hers when I was little. Before I had learned to shut up, I would just open my mouth in school.

What happened?

For example, when I was in second grade, for Negro History Week, in February, I brought Paul Robeson's record *Ballad for Americans* to class. But for some reason they wouldn't play it. I was shocked, indignant—I couldn't understand why they wouldn't. Well, that sort of put the teacher on notice that there was something going on there. As a result, I was isolated in the classroom. They put me in the back, away from the other children. When you're seven years old, that's less fun than you would think. It certainly left me with a fear of speaking out.

So, then you learned to be more careful...

Yes. My parents' solution was to have me switch schools. At my next school, there were a lot of other parents who were Reds. Both were public schools, mind you, but one of them was much richer and much more upwardly striving.

Last year, you shared a photograph of your mother sitting in Central Park with the Polish photographer David

"Chim" Seymour, who did a lot of work in Civil-War Spain. How did they know each other?

You have to understand that leftist people, especially CP folk in Spain and France who were working on behalf of the Republic, all knew each other. All of the people in that photo I sent you were very close friends. Noelle Newman Gillmor had been married, as Naomi Dreyfus, to Jean-Paul Dreyfus, the

filmmaker, who became Jean-Paul Le Chanois. Boulanger Rhodes, from Belgium, and her husband Peter Rhodes, who is not in the photo because he was working in France and Italy with resistance groups, were in charge of the charity.

How did your parents' relationship to the CP evolve over time?

My mother's first assignment from the Party on returning to the US from Europe was to explain the Hitler-Stalin Pact to the Hollywood sections of the party. She returned to NYC to the *Daily Worker*. There she was socially close to the people who made up the Gates faction:

John Gates, Alan Max George

Charney, Bill Lazarre. My father and mother, who had met in the aftermath of the war, lived with George Charney's family. Neither parent, though, was in the Gates group. My parents disagreed with the CP decision to give up on the American Labor Party. They favored an independent third electoral party and after they left in '57, they found themselves with Annette Rubinstein, Jack McManus and others who tried to create an independent socialist party in New York State.

Where did you go to college?

I went to a small Methodist college in the Midwest called McMurray College, which is now out of business in Jacksonville, Illinois, where I majored in English literature and philosophy.

Did you join SDS then?

No, I was in a high school group that affiliated with SDS in 1961. But I had been in that for a year or so before the group decided to be an SDS chapter. What inspired me most was the 1960 sit-in in Greensboro. For me, SDS was a very interesting connection. You see, most of political activity of young people in the late '50s and early '60s in New York City was steeped in the most, shall we say, arcane sectarian traditions of the Left. The Trotskyites were against the Communists and the Communists were against the Socialists, and so forth. It was grotesque. But the little group I was in was not quite like that. So it fit very well in with the kind of New Left movement that Al Haber and Tom Hayden were trying to create.



My mother's first assignment from the Party on returning to the US from Europe was to explain the Hitler-Stalin Pact to the Hollywood sections of the party.

A new Popular Front, so to speak.

I wouldn't have put it like that, but yes: we were trying to undo the anti-communism that had become a shibboleth-like requirement of the liberals and social Democrats while not being slavishly associated with the Soviet Union.

In a way, then, you continued in your parents' political tradition.

Well, only in a way. I never had a chance to discuss this with my father, who died when I was in my early twenties. But my mother, who died in 1977, never once addressed the shortcomings Stalinism, the Comintern, or even the post-Stalin period in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I'll tell you an anecdote to illustrate the extent of this. Among the people that my mother knew in Spain quite well were two Comintern agents, Gertrude Duby and Rudolf Feistmann. Both were journalists; Rudi was German and Trudi was Swiss. After Barcelona fell and everyone had to leave as quick as they could, they all went to France, where Rudi ended up in a concentration camp. To give him a way out, my mother married him. This was after the Germans had already taken Paris. It worked. He got out, divorced my mother, and then met up with Trudi, his girlfriend, who in the meantime had met somebody else and was active helping refugees in Mexico City. When the war was over, Rudi went back to what became East Germany, where he ended up as foreign editor of the official party daily, *Neues Deutschland*. But then in 1949 Noel Field, who had worked in refugee aid during the Spanish war for the Unitarians and later defected to the East, was accused of espionage. Rudi was implicated along with many other Jewish veterans of the Spanish Civil War. He "committed suicide" in 1950, presumably helped along. Well, even at this juncture my mother did not seem to have any issues with what was happening. Yet she knew many of the people involved: she knew Arthur London, Rudolf Slánský, and so forth. When London wrote his book *The Confession*, she said: "It wasn't right." But she never drew any conclusions that were critical of the Soviet Union. So, in that sense I would say that she and I were not on the same page.

Did you see your own activism as a clear departure from your parents' line?

It was both a continuation and departure. The very first thing I did independently of them was to go on a youth march for integrated schools. This was 1958—I was 13. The guy who organized that demonstration, which was in Washington DC, was Bayard Rustin, a former communist connected with the Socialist Party. The people I felt most attracted to were connected to Rustin. That left my parents quite puzzled, I think.

In other words, you began tracing your own trajectory early on.

Right. Unlike my parents, I was critical of the Soviet Union. I

did not understand why anyone would accept veterans of the Spanish Civil War being bumped off in Eastern Europe.

How active were you within SDS?

Very active. There was a lot of opportunity for organizing adventures. It was a lot of fun.

How do you look back on that period in your life and US history sixty years later?

Well, I'm still doing the same old stuff. I'm in a descendant organization from SDS, the Democratic Socialists of America—in '71, SDS activists who were not Weather underground, Progressive Labor nor Revolutionary Youth, created a group called the New American Movement, which merged with the Mike Harrington group to form DSA. And I see the same issues and same divisions coming up in the DSA as we had in SDS. There's a lot of continuity. If anything, I feel like I'm very much a Johnny One Note. I have this one set of ideas, and they haven't changed—not enough, perhaps, considering how much the rest of the world has changed.

As a supporter of ALBA, what would you say is the significance of keeping alive the memory of the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades?

I think it's important to try to talk about that moment in history—among many others, of course, but that's one that I happen to have a family affection for. It feels to me like the Spanish war presents a very interesting way of showing a moment where people had to make important, life-or-death decisions. Telling the story of the Brigades and the Spanish Civil War is important because it is an alternative to the history in which everyone is neat and clean and well advised. In that sense, I don't think of it as all that different from the histories of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam-war movements. They are all the same sort of struggle.



George and Daniel Millstone, 1940s.

MUSICAL LEGACIES OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE STRANGE CASE OF CELLIST GASPAR CASSADÓ

By H. Rosi Song

While the cellist Pablo Casals became an international symbol for Catalan culture and anti-Franco resistance, the reputation of his pupil Gaspar Cassadó is limited to the music world, and his national roots are often overlooked. Cassadó's reputation never fully recovered from a public fallout with his maestro.

The lives of musicians have long been deeply affected by international conflicts. Globe trotters by trade, they travel far and wide seeking education and mastery of skills, looking for admittance into the right intellectual and artistic circles to stimulate their creativity and launch their careers. In the process, many have found themselves uprooted, facing forms of exile and forced migration that, in some cases, end up transforming the musical landscape of their new and adopted homelands. The war-ridden twentieth century is full of examples of musicians embroiled in political affairs or caught in ideological battles that were not always of their own making.

While most readers will be familiar with Pablo Casals (1876-1973), few, even in Spain and Catalonia, will know the name of Gaspar Cassadó. Both were world-renowned cellists with important careers. Cassadó (1897-1966) is also a respected composer of classical music whose pieces continue to be played by cellists around the globe. Still, while Casals continues to be an international symbol for Catalan culture, Cassadó's reputation is limited to the music world, and his Catalan—or even Spanish—roots are often overlooked.

This imbalance can perhaps be attributed to the fallout of the Spanish



Civil War and its aftermath. Casals's prestige as one of the most respected soloists of the twentieth century is intimately connected to the defense of the Second Republic during the Spanish Civil War and his opposition against the Franco dictatorship—a stance that later earned him the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by John F. Kennedy in 1963. Cassadó's recognition amid musicians, by contrast, is almost apolitical, even though his own career,

too, was deeply impacted by the war—most notably in March 1949, when the *New York Times* published a letter by Casals himself in which he suggested Cassadó had been less than critical of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Francoist Spain.

The real story is more complicated. Gaspar Cassadó Moreu was born in Barcelona to a family dedicated to music. His father, Joaquim Cassadó i Valls (1867-1926), was not only the organist for the La Mercè church in Barcelona, but also the founder of the choir Capella Catalana, a conductor at the Teatre de Liceu, and a well-known composer. His brother Agustí was an accomplished violinist who died during a typhoid outbreak at the beginning of the First World War. His sister Montserrat was also a cellist and Josep, the youngest, fought in the Spanish

Civil War. His mother, Agustina, ran a well-known piano shop in the city.

Around 1908, Casals heard the young Cassadó play when his father took both of his sons to the French capital to study, and where they also regularly performed as a trio. Casals was not interested in taking students but made an exception for Gaspar. Cassadó also took up composition, learning from composers active in the French capital

Casals was feeling anxious about his own musical legacy and beginning to harbor mixed feelings about the success of others.

before the war, including Manuel de Falla, Alfredo Casella, and Maurice Ravel.

After the Spanish Civil War Cassadó moved to Italy and tried to relaunch his career, an effort put on hold by the outbreak of World War II. In 1949, he was due to tour the United States, when the fact that the publicity materials mentioned his connection to Casals sparked an unexpected controversy. Diran Alexanian (1881-1954), another student of Casals, contacted his maestro and received a scathing letter that Alexanian shared with the paper. "During the war," Casals wrote, "Cassadó made himself a brilliant career in Germany, Italy, and Franco Spain." To present himself as Casals' student, the maestro added, showed a "presumption" that "knows no limit, when knowing that I am undergoing exile for having played the opposite card, he uses my name to cover himself. A revolting cynicism!"

Cassadó, shocked by his maestro's accusations, penned a response that was published a month later. "The inquisitorial tone" of the letters, he wrote, accused him "of crimes I did not commit." "During the Spanish Civil War I did not take sides," he added, "having always been an 'apolitical,' a great failing in our times, without question. My only brother fought with the Loyalists." He pointed out that he'd only played

once in Nazi Germany and did not play in Italy during the war. Scholars and writers who have examined this story have wondered about the maestro's lashing out at his once favorite disciple, as there is nothing in Cassadó's career or life that deserved such characterization. With more scrutiny, it is easy to see that Casals, already over sixty by the time the war ended, was feeling anxious about his own musical legacy interrupted by war and exile and beginning to harbor mixed feelings about the success of others, including his onetime pupil.

Cassadó, who could not bring himself to say anything negative about his beloved teacher, ended up cancelling his tour. A few years later, by the mediation of renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin, who remained a faithful friend to both maestro and disciple, they reconciled and remained in good friendship. Still, Cassadó's reputation never fully recovered, and his untimely death in 1966 contributed to his relative obscurity. Most of his papers, meanwhile, were transferred to Japan when his wife, the pianist Chieko Hara (1914-2001), returned to her country. After her death, her son donated them to the Museum of Education at Tamagawa University. As Hara and Cassadó left no apparent heir, his works remain in a limbo in terms of further access or the possibility of publications of his out-of-print works or unpublished work.

Over the past twenty years, however, Cassadó has been rediscovered by musicians and researchers, including Gabrielle Kaufman, a cellist and scholar in Barcelona, whose book *Gaspar Cassadó* came out in 2018 and includes the first complete listing of his more than fifty compositions. Meanwhile, he also features in a recent biography by Carmen Pérez Torrecillas of pianist Giulietta Gordigiani (1871-1955), the widow of Robert von Mendelssohn who was also Cassadó's longtime accompanist and lover.

After Cassadó's passing, his wife Chieko Hara founded an international cello competition in his name, which ended in 2013. Today, Cassadó's cello compositions, *Requiebros* and his Solo Suite remain favorites in the repertoire of cellists around the world.

H. Rosi Song holds a Chair in Hispanic Studies at Durham University, where she specializes in 20th and 21st century Spanish culture and literature. Her most recent book, co-written with Anna Riera, is A Taste of Barcelona. The History of Catalan Cooking and Eating. She is currently engaged in a research impact grant from Durham University seeking to create a cultural and musical context from which Cassadó's work can be discovered and studied in collaborations with professional musicians from the U.S., the UK and Europe. ▲

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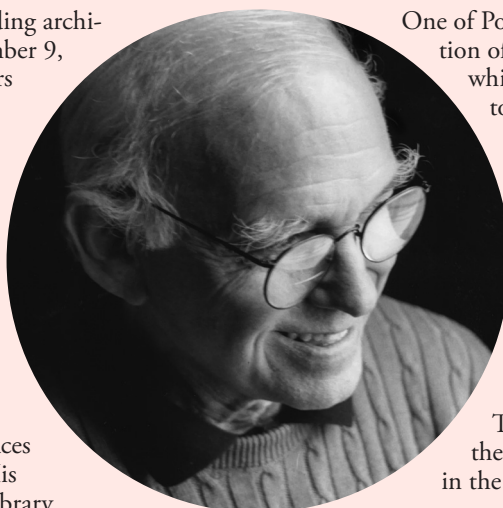
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Jim Polshek (1930-2022)

JAMES STEWART POLSHEK, one of the leading architects of his time, passed away on September 9, 2022, in New York City. He was 91 years old. Born in Akron, Ohio in 1930, Polshek dedicated his life to the design of transformative buildings that enhanced the human experience and elevated the role of architecture in shaping our world.

Spanning six decades, Polshek's remarkable career encompassed a wide range of projects. His legacy as an architect is marked by his innovative designs, his commitment to sustainable architecture, and his ability to create spaces that inspire and engage communities. His works include the William J. Clinton Library and Museum in Little Rock, Ark.; the Rose Center for Earth and Space at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan; the Santa Fe Opera; and the Newseum in Washington. Mr. Polshek received the 2018 Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects, the group's highest honor.



One of Polshek's most notable projects was his renovation of Carnegie Hall in the heart of Manhattan, which served as a testament to his commitment to preserve the legacy of great buildings while adapting them for contemporary use. Polshek's firm, Ennead, also designed the Puffin Gallery for Social Activism at the Museum of the City of New York, conceived as a space that would inspire visitors to take action on issues that mattered to them. Using interactive exhibits and immersive installations, the gallery aims to encourage visitors to engage with the city and its activist history in new and meaningful ways. The gallery features a plaque commemorating the Americans who volunteered to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil War.

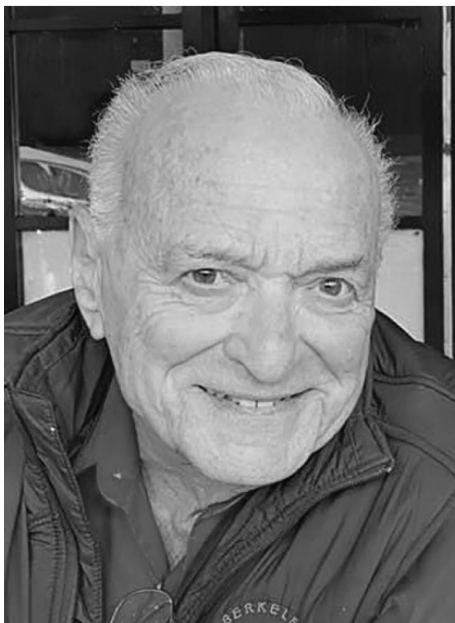
Polshek is survived by his wife Ellyn, a longtime ALBA board member, his sister Judy, his children Jennifer and Peter, and two grandchildren.

Al Wasserman (1930-2022)

Al Wasserman, 92, died under a blood moon in Oakland, California, on November 7, 2022, surrounded by Ann, his wife of more than 70 years, and his three children, Steve, Rena, and Sherry.

The son of Yiddish-speaking Polish-Jewish immigrants who came to New York City in the early 1920s, Al grew up and came of age in the radical secular world of Jewish progressives. His father was an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. The family lived in the workers' cooperative housing (the Coops) built in the late 1920s in the Bronx.

Al went to Cooper Union, studied civil engineering, and came to Oregon with his pregnant wife in 1952 to help build the road from Mt. Hood to Portland. In 1963, they settled in Berkeley, where Al worked for Bechtel's hydroelectric division. Clean energy for the masses, he believed, was a project worth defending. In his early thirties, he convinced his employers to pay for night classes at the USF Law School, all the while helping Ann raise



three young children. He didn't believe his being was synonymous with the work he did. He joined the family every night for dinner.

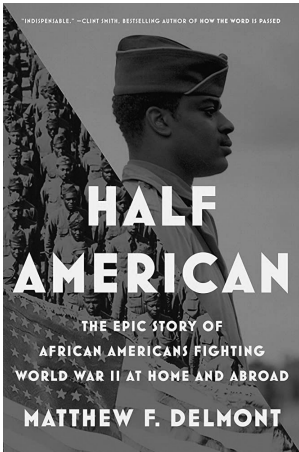
A noble and principled man, Al was meticulous and responsible, decisive to a fault, and unencumbered by regrets. After earning his law degree, he was active in the National Lawyers Guild helping the Black Panther Party resist unprovoked attacks by police, and served as president of the Berkeley-Albany chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. He was a longtime supporter of ALBA.

He died as he lived—unsentimental, humble, and modest, with an abiding dignity and self-possession, a deep attachment to what is beautiful and joyous about life, and a bottomless curiosity about the cosmos and how it works. An ardent advocate of a more just and equitable world, he embodied an unblinking devotion to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Book Reviews

Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad. By Matthew F. Delmont. Viking, 2022, 374 pp.

Reviewed by Peter N. Carroll



This new book about the role of African Americans during World War II has a rare and surprising opening on the subject: a full chapter titled “Black Americans Fighting Fascism in Spain”! Ever since Ernest Hemingway casually forecast in a journalist’s report that the Spanish Civil war was a “dress rehearsal” for a second world war, most writers, historians, and politicians have downplayed the

idea that the conflict in Spain *was* a direct opening round in the battle against western fascism.

Yet Matthew F. Delmont, a historian at Dartmouth College, introduces the subject of Black participation in the anti-fascist struggle through the lens of the writer Langston Hughes, who journeyed to embattled Spain as a reporter for the *Baltimore Afro-American*. “If democracy is to be preserved in Europe,” Hughes wrote in 1938, “it must first be preserved in Spain. The world must rise to that issue or face an even greater offensive of the fascist powers.”

From that vantage point, Delmont follows the Hughes’ trail through his meeting with several African American volunteers in the XV International Brigade, including Thaddeus Battle, a Howard University student soldier who in turn introduced him to Bernard “Bunny” Rucker and other volunteers. He also interviewed nurse Salaria Kea. “These Negroes in Spain,” wrote Hughes, “were fighters—*voluntary fighters*—which is where history turned another page.” His proud affection for the Lincolns was reciprocated, and some of the poems he wrote in Spain appeared in the brigade’s newspaper, *The Volunteer*:

Just now I’m goin’;

To take a Fascist town,

Fascists is Jim Crow peoples, honey—

And here we shoot ‘em down.

Delmont’s description is wholly supportive of the commitment made by US African Americans in Spain. But ironically, he seems to know little of the services that numerous Black Lincoln veterans rendered during the big war that followed Spain—or even of the existence of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives and the ALBA collection at NYU, which clearly document their connection to the Second World War. To be sure, he does mention the posthumous military honors won by Sergeant Edward C. Carter, though he claims Carter spent two years in Spain, when the truth is that there is almost no documentary trace of his presence in the Spanish war. And while Delmont mentions that Paul Robeson’s name appears on an ambulance donated to the Spanish Republic, he does not seem to be aware of the fact that the great entertainer himself went to Spain to give political support to the cause, sang to the soldiers, and left a legacy of inspiration. Even Bunny Rucker, who gave Hughes a warm jacket and whose World War II letters were published by ALBA sixteen years ago, goes entirely unmentioned.

Nonetheless, the core focus of this book, as its title asserts, is on the heroic struggles of African Americans during the war against fascism. Delmont is astutely aware of the pervasive hypocrisy of white leaders and rank-and-file followers who consistently treated Black soldiers and civilians with hatred and violence. Drawing on diverse sources, especially from the Black press, he depicts one evil situation after the next as well as the stubborn resistance of Blacks to institutional racism. Finally, he usefully follows the Black veterans of the US military into the civil rights movement and the desegregation of the army.

Although it’s a horrible story to confront, I recommend this book to every schoolteacher and anyone who denies that racism sleeps at the soul of our country. ▲

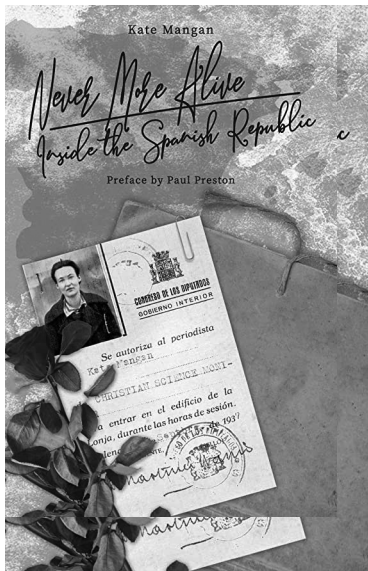
Peter N. Carroll is co-editor with Michael Nash and Melvin Small of The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (NYU Press, 2006).

Kate Mangan, Never More Alive: Inside the Spanish Republic. The Clapton Press, 2020. 346pp.

Reviewed by Angela Giral

Kate Mangan, who claimed never to have been more alive than during the first year of the Spanish Civil War when she volunteered to help defend the Spanish Republic, was long a relatively unknown figure among the thousands of foreigners who traveled to Spain during the conflict. Strangely, for example, she is absent from Angela Jackson’s thoroughly researched *British Women and the Spanish Civil War*, although Jackson did consult the papers of Kate’s fellow volunteer Jan Kurzke—papers held by the daughter that Mangan had with him. It is this same daughter, Charlotte Kurzke, who has now edited her mother’s memoir.

Born in 1904 as Katharine Prideaux Foster, Mangan was an artist who studied at the Slade School of Art in University



College, London, and also worked for a couturier as a mannequin. Among the many things we learn from this diary, published by the Clapton Press with a preface by Paul Preston, is the fact that it wasn't exactly Mangan's ideals or political convictions that took her to Spain.

In the early summer of 1936, Kate happens to find herself on vacation

in Portugal with her new lover Jan Kurzke, a handsome German who has escaped the Nazis and fled to England. In Cascais and Estoril they run into the Spanish royal family, exiled there since the proclamation of the Republic in 1931. In mid-July, Jan and Kate's idyllic vacation is interrupted by the rebellion of the fascist generals in Spain against the duly elected government. Jan is immediately possessed by the desire to go fight the fascists, and they return to England so he can arrange to become one of the first to join the International Brigades along with thousands of young men and women from all over the world. In other words, Kate Mangan initially went to Spain to follow her man.

At first, though, she is careful to hide this fact. The edition of her diary includes a letter from October 1936 addressed to the American writer Sherry Mangan, to whom Kate was still married at the time, in which she writes: "I would like to go to Spain and die too—all the people will die because they haven't got any guns or airplanes." She also claims she needs to rescue her niece, who is living in Barcelona with her Spanish husband. A few days later, she writes again: "...I went to Barcelona to fetch Tina and am now back in Paris with her. But I couldn't resist the war atmosphere of excitement and *alegría* and am returning there tomorrow as I have joined up..." In practice, she comes across as much as a tourist of the war as a fighter and volunteer.

In a postscript, Jan and Kate's daughter, Charlotte, tells us that after the death of her parents she found herself "in possession of two separate manuscripts of their memoirs." Although she had understood that they were meant to be published together, she could not figure out how to make that work. Thanks to the Clapton Press, they have now both been edited, albeit separately. (Kurzke's manuscript came out in 2021 as *The Good Comrade*.) Indeed, Mangan's book is a testimony to filial devotion. Ms. Kurzke, for example, has taken trouble to identify all the characters her mother disguised with a variety of nicknames in her manuscript. She also provides the reader with excellent explanatory footnotes.

In his preface, Paul Preston calls Mangan's "non-celebrity" memoir "one of the most valuable and, incidentally, purely enjoyable books about the war." It stands out among the thirty thousand books about the war in Spain, he writes, for its "sheer wealth of fascinating information and insight provided in brutally honest and beautiful prose."

More than anything, what comes to the fore in Mangan's story is her persistence, resourcefulness, and ingenuity as a woman traveling in wartime Spain who finds herself on the outskirts of the political and ideological motives driving everyone around her. She makes it to Barcelona in spite of not obtaining a safe-conduct, and having her offers to transport medical or any other materials refused. She is unflappable and resilient throughout. In Barcelona she makes do with odd jobs translating or interpreting. She goes to Madrid, where she makes use of her command of several languages to get a job with the Spanish Government press office (her official ID is the image on the book's cover). Even though she suspects that her lover Jan Kurzke does not want to be found (he never picked up the letters she wrote and left for him in Barcelona) she persists in tracking him down, finding him in Malaga, where he lies wounded in a poorly appointed hospital. She also succeeds in getting him out of Spain and into Paris where he can receive better care for his shattered leg.

Still, Mangan's story is surprisingly uneven. Although she writes well and many of her insights are quite perceptive, her depictions of other women are less than generous. Martha Gellhorn, who covered the war as a reporter, and Gerda Taro, the young photographer who died crushed by a tank, are not rendered kindly despite their important contributions.

In the end, though, readers' take on this book will depend on what they want from a memoir about the war. The novelist Brigitte Giraud, in accepting this year's Prix Goncourt, said that "the intimate only makes sense if it resonates with the collective, with a society, with a period, with a story." My old friend M., who, like myself, grew up in Mexico as a Spanish refugee from the Civil War and has lived and raised a family in the United States for many years, told me that I should write down some of my family stories, because her historian son tells her that historians are always looking for such personal takes on historic events.

Paul Preston, a historian interested in such personal perspectives, admires the perceptiveness of Mangan's profiles. But unless you have an affinity for "non-celebrity" memoirs, you may want to hold out on investing in this one. ▲

Angela Giral, born less than a year before the start of the Spanish Civil War, grew up in Mexico as an exile and migrated to the US for graduate school at the University of Michigan. She practiced as a librarian in Princeton, Harvard and Columbia before retiring in 2004. After retirement she preserved and catalogued the archive of her grandfather, José Giral, a former Prime Minister of the Spanish Republic, now deposited in the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid and available through PARES.

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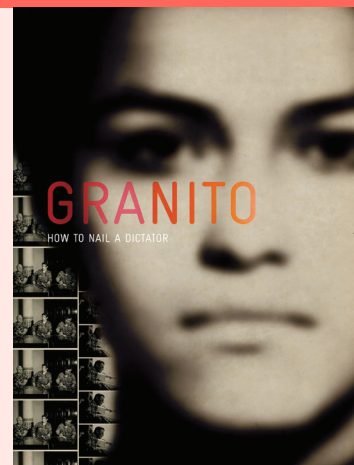
FEBRUARY 21: Curating the Spanish Civil War: Roundtable with the Creators of the Online SCW Museum

MARCH 2 - APRIL 15: Teacher Workshop: America and World Fascism – Teaching Human Rights Today

MARCH 8: General-Audience Workshop: “Women in the Spanish Civil War” (Jo Labanyi)

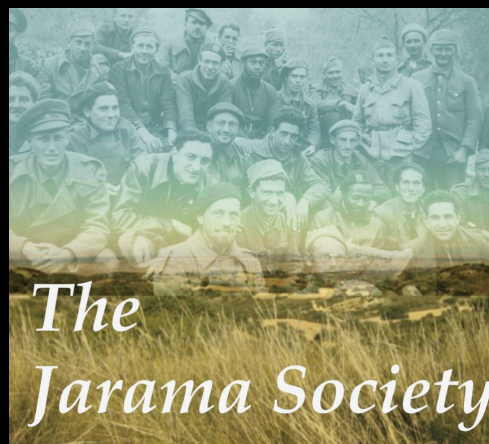
APRIL 18: Film Discussion: *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*

For details, registration, and more events, visit alba-valb.org/eventcalendar



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