



## The Albert Schweitzer Faculty Fellowship Proposal

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The possibility of promoting and practicing a form of “reverence for life” that is self-conscious of diversity and equity emerges from a reflexive examination of the goals that we construct as steps towards “peace,” the identities that we authorize as agents of change, and the forms of knowledge that we validate as our diagnosis of problems. The analysis of these ideas often unveils the boundaries of our assumptions and the ways in which they lead to the marginalization of “other” goals of peace, agents of change, and ways of knowing. This kind of analysis can help us to “make one’s life one’s argument” and analysis. In other words, whose peace, knowledge, identity, and life do we reverence when we define our plan of intervention upon society and the world?

In order to contribute to this discussion, my main goal is to analyze the epistemic assumptions that are included in diverse liberal projects of peace and foreign policy in the history of the United States. How do liberal epistemic assumptions lead throughout the history of the United States to the construction of different kinds of “others,” which remain marginalized or become “threats” in understudied ways? This genealogical study of the assumptions that marginalize “others” on behalf of “peace” is a broader research goal that I hope to consolidate into a book, but the discussion of liberal notions of “peace,” “progress,” “citizenship,” and “humanism” can contribute to the reflexive analysis of the legacies and similarities that have traveled from liberalism to other projects. Hence, the Albert Schweitzer Institute Faculty Fellowship could help me to access archives, include students as research assistants, discuss preliminary findings, and write an article about the “othering” boundaries that emerge from continuing legacies of liberal peace.



According to Luis Hartz, the declaration of independence of the United States in 1776 did not entail a deep break away from some of the notions and thoughts that were shaping this society during its colonial times (1955). Instead, the United States inherited a Lockean form of liberalism, which deployed the idea of a God-given human nature as the basis of national identity and constitutional law (Hartz 1955, 40). According to the author, this liberal construction of “reason” is based primarily on notions of “satisfaction” and the individual pursuit of happiness (Hartz 1955, 40). Despite their seemingly encompassing respect of “humanity” and universalized notions of equality, these ideas entail an epistemic elevation of a particular identity, which creates a marginalizing boundary against the “others” that do not quite fit this validated way of being. Anibal Quijano states that this notion of “reason” constructs a hierarchy and division of labor that affects peoples in the United States and abroad (Quijano 2000). Others point out that the validation of the “pursuit of happiness” leads to assumptions that construct nature merely as a “resource” that certain human beings are entitled to deplete (Linera 2015; Rivera 2018). Additionally, Charles Mills affirms that this identity often includes racialized specifications, which enact a more detailed boundary of who is “human” and who needs to be assimilated into “civilization” or disappear as a “threat.” As Uday Singh Mehta states, this colonial legacy in liberalism would be impossible without its epistemic commitments (1999, 18). The validation and universalization of a particular identity as “true” human nature appears as the epistemic condition of possibility for regarding “others” as “barbaric,” “uncivilized,” “traditional,” “emotional,” “enemies,” “exploitable resources,” or simply not “human.”

Many indigenous, feminist, decolonial, and post-colonial intellectuals have pointed out that liberal notions of elevated “selves” and marginalized “others” are consistent elements of the domestic and international policies of “peace” that are promoted by the government of the United States (Rivera 1990; Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Mills 1997; Quijano 2000; Mills 2008; Mignolo 2009; Taylor 2012; Reinaga 2014; Méndez 2018). However, how do these notions change over time to create



different kinds of “others” and particular strategies of “peace”? This question requires a much more nuanced study of the genealogical changes in the constructions of different kinds of liberal “peace” in the United States. Moreover, the study of different kinds of “peace” allows us to examine how diverse types of legacies might remain influential in other contexts and projects.

Throughout the year of the fellowship, I thus hope to access virtual and physical archives that contain presidential speeches related to foreign policy and documents of the State Department. In relationship to foundational documents such as the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, these documents often delineate context-dependent boundaries between a “self” and an “other.” To organize these documents chronologically and to begin the delineation of historical patterns of discourses (i.e., different liberal notions of “peace” and “others”), I hope to include one or two students as research assistants. Given the nature of the research and its requirements of previous knowledge, I plan to invite students that have taken my “Development, Globalization, and Colonialisms” class (PO-300-01), which discussed many of these issues. First, students will be introduced to interpretivist methodologies and archival research. Then, they will participate together with me in archival research both virtually and in libraries. The main task assigned to students will be to process the documents into chronologically organized folders, adding bibliographic information and references, but I also aim to have monthly meetings in which we begin to analyze discursive patterns and regularities together. If the students decide to participate more actively in the actual analysis of the documents and their discursive patterns, I am hoping to include them as co-authors of a final article, which will discuss some of the preliminary findings, primarily focusing on the analysis of ideas that travel beyond the case of the United States’ foreign policy to teach us about our own biases, limitations, and boundaries. Additionally, I seek to share our findings and discussions in meetings, presentations, and other opportunities in the Albert Schweitzer Institute, Quinnipiac University, and international conferences.