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“Fractious Children”: The Incarceration and Assimilation of Native, Black, and White Ethnic Youth at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the Pennsylvania Reform School (Morganza), 1872-1918

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of young people's experiences at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS) and the Pennsylvania Reform School, also known as Morganza, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Emancipation, immigration, and the military conquest of Native nations across the trans-Mississippi West radically altered the United States' body politic and territorial extremities, sparking white Protestant middle- and upper-class anxieties about others' movement, respectability, and belonging. Native, Black, and white ethnic youth, all defined as culturally different but perceived as malleable enough to be redeemed on account of their age, were funneled into assimilative and carceral institutions such as Carlisle and Morganza, where they would be isolated from outside influences for their "uplift." Assimilation would have dramatically different objectives and outcomes for each group based on their structural position in American empire; however, its procedural violence against youth was widespread. While attempting to effect their own release, young people at both sites navigated harsh discipline, barriers to communication, and substandard conditions that clarified Carlisle and Morganza's similarities and the enduring relationship between incarceration and assimilation as mechanisms for young people's repression.

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AND MOST OF ALL

To those

who stayed longer

who survived

and who could not

whose stories I write here

INTRODUCTION

In February 1902, the married couple Elmer and Bertha Simon were looking for work in Pennsylvania. Since both of them were teachers, Bertha decided to write to a school of some renown. "Your school has been highly recommended," she wrote to the superintendent, J. A. Quay, "and my husband and I are anxious to obtain a position there."[1] Elmer was an Anishinaabe ("Chippewa") graduate of the Indian Training School at Carlisle, east of Quay's institution. After his graduation in 1896, he attended the Indiana Normal School, also in Pennsylvania, and returned to Carlisle to teach for two years when he was around twenty-three.[2] Bertha explained that Elmer had taught with "great success"; he was "considered an excellent teacher at Carlisle" and had "fine discipline over his pupils."[3] When she wrote that she and Elmer could "furnish excellent reference," she wasn't bluffing—in 1900, Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle School, had told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that "Elmer Simon, an Indian, has given excellent satisfaction throughout the year."[4] Elmer and Bertha Simon hoped to hear back from Quay in a few days. They were applying to teach at Morganza—a detention center.

What explains the Simons' confidence in their qualifications? How did Elmer's time as a student at Carlisle, with its intense and pervasive discipline, and later career as a teacher there prepare him—in his eyes and the eyes of his wife—for the regimen of an institution such as

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[1] Bertha Simon to J.A. Quay, 12 February 1902, box 1, folder 23, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, Heinz History Center Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA. https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt%3AUS-QQS-mss790/viewer.

[2] "Elmer Simon Student Information Card," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1329, box 1. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.; "Elmer Simon Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 135, folder 5314. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. From this point—with the exception of an address by Richard Henry Pratt to the National Convention of Charities and Correction—all of my sources in this thesis were located in the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center. I will be citing these on the basis of their physical location, but the link to the Digital Resource Center is here: https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/. I will also provide links to my sources in my bibliography.

[3] Bertha Simon to J.A. Quay, Pennsylvania Reform School Records.

[4] Bertha Simon to J.A. Quay, Pennsylvania Reform School Records; "Discussion of Employees Following Expiration of Probationary Period in 1900," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 1798, 1900-#29328. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

Quay's? Why did they see these places as comparable and their skills as transferable? Here, I hope to illuminate why the Simons were right. My thesis is a cross-racial comparative study of young people's experiences of discipline, incarceration, and assimilation at juvenile detention centers and Native boarding schools at the turn of the twentieth century, from their mid-to-late teens to early twenties. In particular, I look at two industrial schools in Pennsylvania: Morganza, or the Pennsylvania Reform School (later known as the Pennsylvania Training School), an integrated youth detention center in Allegheny County, near Pittsburgh; and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS), one of the most infamous Native boarding schools of its time.

Put into conversation with one another, Carlisle and Morganza disrupted the boundaries between carceral and assimilative institutions directed towards Native, Black, and poor white ethnic youth.[5] Founded in 1879 by Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the idea for Carlisle began as a "rehabilitative" effort for a group of Cheyenne and Plains Indians prisoners of war. At Fort Marion, where they were held, Pratt cut their hair, took their clothes, and conscripted them into Anglo-American ways of life, subjecting them to a thankless military regimen—all elements that would inform his later project in Pennsylvania.[6] While Carlisle resembled Morganza in its carceral origins, Morganza was similarly part of an expressly stated assimilationist project. While Pratt's motto was "Kill the Indian… and save the man," officials at Morganza gloated in souvenirs about "doing great work among the foreign-born population of Pittsburg, by its

[5] By "white ethnic," I refer to immigrants from Europe who were regarded as white but seen as culturally different from—and lesser than—the dominant group: that is, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. These included Southern and Eastern European immigrants and could also include Germans, the Irish, Scots-Irish, and others. Additionally, see Robert Waddington, *Matrons Journal: House of Refuge for Western Pennsylvania 1854-1860,* Self-published, print, 2023.

[6] A. Woolford and J. Gacek, "Genocidal carcerality and Indian residential schools in Canada," *Punishment & Society* 18, no. 4 (2016): p. 400-419. https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474516641375; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), p. 100-101.

influence in teaching those committed, the English language, and the love of America."[7] Founded in 1872 as an offshoot of the Pennsylvania House of Refuge, Morganza's assimilationist aims were reflected in its student body in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the majority of whom were first- and second-generation immigrants and African Americans. Far from being sent to prison simply for doing wrong, Morganza's inmates were also the targets of cultural conversion. Like at Carlisle, their incarceration was one means to that end.

To Pratt, these resemblances would not have been coincidental. As he promoted Carlisle, he often argued that if the United States could assimilate African Americans and new immigrants, then the assimilation of Native nations was long overdue. One such instance was in 1892, when he delivered an address in Denver before the National Convention of Charities and Correction, an annual conference where reformers dwelled upon topics such as juvenile delinquency, immigration, penal policy and reform, unemployment, and social work.[8] In his address, Pratt argued that

> As we have taken into our national family seven millions of negroes, and as we receive foreigners at the rate of more than 500,000 a year, and assimilate them, it would seem that the time may have arrived when we can very properly make at least the attempt to assimilate our 250,000 Indians, using this potent line, and see if that will not end this vexed question and remove them from public attention, where they occupy so much more space than they are entitled to, either by numbers or by worth.[9]

In drawing this comparison, Pratt was not only appealing to his audience; he was also outlining the stakes of assimilation as a spatial politics that sought to curtail Native nations' discursive, cultural, and territorial presence. Following the Civil War, social reforms were

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[7] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): p. 397.; Pennsylvania Reform School, "Souvenir of the Visit of Members of Children's Conference," June 26, 1909, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, Heinz History Center Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[8] *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921).
[9] Address by Capt. Pratt Before the National Convention of Charities and Correction, June 28, 1892, in an album titled "Indian School Gen. Pratt his Principles and Methods" by Mrs. Stevick and Mrs. Hawkins, box 11, Carlisle Indian School Collection, PI 5-1, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle.

broadly directed at those who, in the imagination of reformers, "occup[ied] so much more space than they [were] entitled to." The late 19th and 20th centuries involved substantial shifts in the American body politic; citizenship was expanding across the color line, and movement from within and without was transforming the racial, ethnic, and territorial composition of the United States. Emancipation, the failures of Reconstruction, and mass lynchings spurred Black migration to the North; the United States entered its final stages of military conflict with Native nations throughout the trans-Mississippi West, consolidating territory across the continent and opening up further settlement; and immigration from Europe—particularly from Southern and Eastern Europe—began to accelerate, all sparking middle- and upper-class anxieties about who belonged where.[10]

Youth of all kinds found themselves in the middle of the crossfire. As the beating hearts of the nation's future, their unrestrained movement posed a serious challenge to the reconsolidation of racial and territorial order in the United States at the turn of the century. The growth of tenements in the cities sparked tensions between street-walking sons and daughters, their families, and local authorities—to whom their whereabouts, actions, and especially their (possibly interracial) sexual liaisons remained uncertain, all of which contributed to reformers' fears of urban racial and moral degeneration.[11] At the same time, on reservations, tribal familial structures and collective title to land ran up against Anglo-American conceptions of private property—ones that they attempted to enforce through the Dawes Act of 1887, which facilitated

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[10] Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892–94)," *Radical History Review* 1992, no. 5 (January 1992): p. 5-6. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1992-52-5.

[11] Hazel V. Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (1992): p. 745-746, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343828; Saidiya V. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2021), p. 20-21; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class In New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986): p. 146-147.

the privatization of land that broke down Native nations' territorial claims.[12] However, it was not too late for the state to intervene to remake this new, unruly generation.

Young people, theorized as impressionable and "redeemable" subjects, would receive special state attention; as they were funneled into institutions, they were to be "rescued" from home environments perceived as defunct, crowded, or contaminative and remade into respectable American citizens.[13] At Carlisle and Morganza, this was no less the case. Administrators sought to reorganize their captives' gendered labor structures and familial lives in line with the Anglo-Saxon rugged individualist ideal of the hardworking, self-sufficient small landholder or the domesticated, monogamous housewife, rendering them legible and governable.[14] This involved dramatically curtailing and delaying their independence, adulthood, and freedom of movement. A plurality of Carlisle and Morganza attendees were past the age of majority into their twenties—and still incarcerated.[15]

I argue that at Carlisle and Morganza, Native, Black, and white ethnic youth navigated similar forms of state violence that clarify the historical ties between assimilation and incarceration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Administrators attempted to make youth legible in coercive ways; they imposed tight restrictions on students' communication with relatives and community members by surveilling their letters, intercepting them, or discrediting

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[12] The Dawes Act, passed in 1887, authorized the President of the United States to divide the lands of Native nations into private parcels that could be allotted to individual members of each nation. This drastically reduced many nations' land bases by making members' properties forfeitable through sales and foreclosures. See David A. Chang, "Enclosures of Land and Sovereignty," *Radical History Review* 2011, no. 109 (January 1, 2011): 108–19, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-018. Also see Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Susan D. Rose, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), p. 6.

[13] David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020), p. 18; Leonard Packel, "The History of Pennsylvania's Juvenile Institutions: A Sesquicentennial Review," *Villanova Law Review* 22, no. 1 (1976): p. 83-105.

[14] Wendy Wall, "Gender and the 'Citizen Indian,'" in *Writing the Range: Race, Class, Culture in the Women's West*, ed. Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), p. 206-208.

[15] Sarah A. Whitt, "'An Ordinary Case of Discipline': Deputizing White Americans and Punishing Indian Men at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1900-1918." *Western Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2003): p. 54. doi:10.1093/whq/whac093.

their complaints, which contributed to their cultural isolation; they implicitly or explicitly made release contingent on students' adoption of the practices and value systems foisted on them; and they subjected students to substandard conditions, including hunger, harsh discipline and abuse, and overcrowding, which could lead to sickness and death. This demonstrated a clear disconnect between the ways these institutions were conceptualized by administrators—as non- or even anti-carceral—and how youth and their communities understood them.

Still, young people were not simply passive recipients of the invincible programs of adults; instead, they were historical actors who complicated the objectives of those responsible for incarcerating them. At every stage of the carceral process, youth at both institutions made strategic decisions about how to interface with adults—parents, administrators, law enforcement—in attempting to effect their own release or even just to protect themselves. They might withhold information about themselves to untrustworthy adults, attempt to circumvent restrictions on their communication to trusted relatives, enlist loved ones—including other youth outside of the institution—to assist them in getting free, or suggest their transfer to other, more bearable carceral spaces. Even so, the range of options available to students as well as the motivations of parents often differed between Morganza, where students were often "turned over" by parents and relatives working in concert with the state, and Carlisle, where students' incarceration more frequently involved outright colonialist coercion.

While there is a valuable body of comparative literature on Carlisle (and other Native boarding schools), authors have historically avoided studying immigrants as a basis of comparison, leaving the triadic relationship between Native, Black, and white ethnic incarceration unclear. Authors have looked at the enduring connection between education and incarceration for Native and Black youth; recent scholarship has also examined the similarities

and differences between stereotypes of Black and white ethnic criminality, highlighting how reform programs were typically catered to the needs of the latter population.[16] Other authors might briefly mention how Pratt took inspiration from immigrant schools in how he ran Carlisle, or how the arrival of immigrants necessitated the school as a national unifier, or how missionary groups and institutions targeted those at home in need of "uplift": immigrants, African Americans, the poor, women, the disabled—in addition to newly colonized peoples.[17] But these are usually passing comments rather than the crux of anyone's work.

This is also reflected in the literature on Morganza, which insufficiently engages with its racial politics and assimilative elements—features that would, if properly explored, draw it into closer conversation with Carlisle. The only book written about Morganza that is not a primary source is Christopher Barraclough's *Morganza: Pennsylvania's Reform School*, which covers the institution's origins to its decline in the late 20th century based on allegations of abuse. Barraclough does not discuss the racial or ethnic composition of the school.[18] Additionally, he neglects to mention the routine corporal punishment of Morganza's early days, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Instead, he dedicates the book to "those who were reformed and treated here, and to the staff who aided them," effectively depoliticizing their admission into the school and taking their "reform" as both a fact and a transhistorical good. Put simply, Morganza was a

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[16] Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America, with a New Preface* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), p. 102-103.

[17] This isn't simply a comparison made by historians; there was a substantial body of contemporary literature comparing the two groups, including by Native and settler figures such as Carlos Montezuma and Pratt himself, during and after the time that Carlisle was running. See Cristina Stanciu,"'Americanism for Indians": Carlos Montezuma's "Immigrant Problem," *Wassaja*, and the Limits of Native Activism," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 33, no. 1 (2021): 126-158. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ail.2021.0008. For a broader comparative historiography, see Michael C. Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study* (University of Nebraska Press, 2007), p. 5, 39; Elizabeth C. Brown, "Middle Passages: Lessons in Racial Subjection at the Hampton Institute and Carlisle Indian Industrial School," *American Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2023): p. 718. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aq.2023.a913518; and Elisabeth Davis, "'Our Colored and Indian Charges Furnish So Much Amusement for Us': Catholicism, Assimilation, and the Racial Hierarchy in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1883–1918," *Pennsylvania History* 91, no. 1 (2024): p. 49. doi:10.5325/pennhistory.91.1.0047.

[18] Christopher R. Barraclough, *Morganza: Pennsylvania's Reform School* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).

place where kids, presumably white, were sent for having done wrong for their own uplift. This retelling speaks to a broader implicit assumption of whiteness as a morally uncharged, apolitical space, even as whiteness in the American imagination was a much less internally unified category then than it is now; this was a period when white ethnic youth, specifically of foreign-born parents, could be racialized as criminal. Ultimately, the absence of a racial analysis in Barraclough's work raises questions as to the differing experiences of Black and white youth at the institution and forecloses any historical relationship Morganza might have to other violent assimilatory projects from its time, such as Carlisle.

Still, the hesitancy of many authors to draw a direct comparison between Native and (white ethnic) immigrant youth, or to string the experiences of Native, Black, and white ethnic youth together, is understandable. At first glance, conceptualizing youth as a class appears reductive. Native and immigrant youth occupied vastly different structural positions in American empire, and Americanization meant very different things for each. For white ethnic immigrants, it meant the possibility of land ownership, middle-class respectability, inclusion in the dominant group, and the spoils of settler-colonial displacement, whereas for Native nations, it involved the fracturing of their land base and the relationships that held them together as sovereign entities and as individuals. A comparative study of these two groups would have to tread carefully to avoid equivocating them. The first extended study of this kind came out only two years ago, in 2023, when Cristina Stanciu took a lengthy look at how Natives and new immigrants attempted to set the terms of (or altogether reject) their Americanization during the Progressive Era, occasionally referencing each other in their own discourses—sometimes derisively, sometimes aspirationally. At the same time, Stanciu does not fully exonerate new immigrants from ongoing

processes of Native displacement, nor does she compress her work into a purely "multicultural" history that ignores (white) immigrants' eventual settler status.[19]

Building upon Stanciu's scholarship, my specific focus on young people's discipline and incarceration as a way of understanding Americanizing efforts represents an important methodological difference. Surprisingly enough, I found that Stanciu also looked at Carlisle's archives in order to understand Native students' relationship to Pratt and to the Americanizing project. However, Stanciu's comparison of Native and new immigrant assimilative institutions is between boarding schools and Americanization schools.[20] I compare them to reform schools, or detention centers. This comparison is the more salient one for a few reasons: first, Americanization schools were day schools without the same magnitude of separation and loss as boarding schools, whereas in reform schools, white ethnic and Black youth were inmates who also faced familial and cultural severance. Carlisle was a carceral institution from the very start, but its relationship to contemporary reform schools—especially involving immigrants—is understudied.

Additionally, reform schools illuminate the coercive elements, and sometimes the outright cruelty, involved in Americanizing immigrant youth. Americanization schools may corroborate the narrative that the children of immigrants were eager participants in the assimilative process compared to their parents—that they went to school, learned English, went home, and taught their mothers and fathers everything they knew in the hopes that they would not look stupid.[21] But Morganza's inmates are a counterexample: students played truant, ran away from home, or talked to or slept with the wrong people, and their parents turned them in.

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[19] Cristina Stanciu, *The Makings and Unmakings of Americans: Indians and Immigrants in American Literature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2023, p. 12-13.
[20] Stanciu, *The Makings and Unmakings of Americans*, p. 124.
[21] Stanciu, *The Makings and Unmakings of Americans*, p. 124-125.

Parents may have struck a pact with the assimilationist state to reentrench their household control or simply because they were struggling to provide for their children. When youth arrived at Morganza, their relationship to the assimilationist project could range from one of ambivalence to uncertain compliance to violent coercion.

Applying discipline and incarceration as organizing categories of analysis also allows for a more focused archival method. This method foregrounds conflict as revelatory of the specific objectives of young people as they differed from adults, reading against the grain of administrators' hostile narratives. While Stanciu writes in detail about the nuances of former Carlisle students' letters to Pratt along a "continuum of adoration," she admits that the "absence of… student letters from the archival record" depicting "death, destruction, and deferred dreams"—expressing dissent, not fondness—"is as telling as it is troubling."[22] But rather than assessing Native youth's relationship to Americanization through the voluntary correspondences that Pratt saved, I go directly to records involving student discipline and questioning. I am concerned with what students said and did in moments of deeply-felt tension with the institution—words that, while sometimes filtered through administrators, shed light on the uglier parts of their daily lives and on their unique concerns and interests.

In adopting a more critical approach to the archives, it is possible to tell fuller stories of the youth within them, reframing archival silences as forms of ethnographic refusal or self-protection rather than unidirectional, top-down repression. Many authors of Native boarding schools and juvenile reform schools—especially the latter—resort to institutional histories in large part because of the assumption that the archives obliterate, or at the very least omit, the thoughts, feelings, and decisions of young people. As Paul D. Nelson writes in his work on the Minnesota State Reform School, the official records, when read straight, tell a slanted and

[22] Stanciu, *The Makings and Unmakings of Americans*, p. 113.

sympathetic institutional story. “We could not expect complete frankness or the admission of major failures,” he admits.[23] With this in mind, Audra Simpson’s concept of “ethnographic refusal” enables a more thoughtful reading of the gap between the institutional narrative and the experiences of the youth underneath it.[24] What sometimes appears as the absence of youth in the archives is their historical presence—the refusal to abide by colonial demands of legibility and their enduring inscrutability to untrustworthy adults, such as their administrators.

Situations in which the archives massively obfuscate the decisions of young people must be handled carefully so as to avoid flattening them. In these moments, I attempt to critique the sources themselves and offer various possibilities for what *might* have happened.[25] This is especially important when the archives imply sexual violence. At Morganza, many of the complaints that parents, witnesses, and law enforcement levied against girls and young women involved their sexual encounters. Because these complaints were typically framed in the moralistic language of sexual respectability—that the girls were promiscuous, bad, “street walkers,” or “kept bad company”—it is difficult to know with certainty the extent to which these encounters were consensual. On the one hand, to argue that the girls’ street lives were entirely liberatory is to deny the violence, sometimes racialized, that men perpetrated against them day after day. On the other, to hand-wave the possibility that some young women might have enjoyed or at the very least preferred their street lives compared to the household involves capitulating to

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[23] Paul D. Nelson, "Early Days of the State Reform School, Juvenile Distress and Community Response in Minnesota, 1868-1891" *Staff Publications* 4 (2012): p. 20. https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/igcstaffpub/4. For a few works that discuss other juvenile reform schools, see the following: Barbara Brenzel, “Lancaster Industrial School for Girls: A Social Portrait of a Nineteenth-Century Reform School for Girls,” *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): p. 40–53. https://doi.org/10.2307/3518954; Douglas Wertsch, "Iowa's Daughters: the First Thirty Years of the Girls Reform School of Iowa, 1869-1899," *The Annals of Iowa* 49 (1987), p. 77-100; Guyora Binder, “Review of Penal Reform and Progressive Ideology, by David J. Rothman,” *Reviews in American History* 9, no. 2 (1981): p. 224–32. https://doi.org/10.2307/2701991; and Mary Zaborskis, “Queering Black Girlhood at the Virginia Industrial School,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 45, no. 2 (Winter 2020): p. 373–94. doi:10.1086/704990.

[24] Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship,” *Junctures* 9 (2007): p. 67.

[25] This is based in part on Saidiya Hartman’s idea of critical fabulation; see Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (06, 2008): 1-14.

the rhetoric of the middle-class reformers: that the girls were helpless victims of the streets desperately in need of assistance in order to live out the *truly* fulfilling lives that awaited them as domesticated American wives and mothers. This tension repeatedly comes to the fore and resists any simplistic resolution.

My work is informed by the necessities of both the past and present: of situating youth in the racial and colonial politics of everyday American life not as discursive hypotheticals or passive spectators but as real people who think, feel, and suffer. I consult primary accounts by former students and read against the grain of inmate records, disciplinary records and hearings, and letters from parents and administrators to grasp what assimilation looked like in each context, on the ground. My archival base includes documents from the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center and the Cumberland County Historical Society—where I looked for sources on Carlisle not available online—as well as the Pennsylvania State Archives and the Detre Library and Archives, which formed the heart of my research on Morganza. I do not intend to write a far-reaching institutional history; that is beyond the scope of sixty pages. Rather, I am focused on writing around the actions and experiences of individual youth to understand the consequences of Americanization on their everyday lives. My research involves close readings of a few sources that bring these tensions to the fore, which I supplement with general information about each institution when helpful.

The history I have presented is a limited one, filled with uncertainty, the limitations of settler archives, and the historical filters of adults with their own vested interests. In particular, I am aware that the stories I have chosen to tell about Carlisle and Morganza are much bleaker than others that might be told. I have been largely dependent on the archive to tell them, and I have also chosen to interpret them more pessimistically than a peer might. This thesis should not

be taken as an all-encompassing portrayal of either institution; I have highlighted these stories to emphasize the underlying violence of the assimilationist project and its deep, often understudied antagonism towards youth as a class and not because they are the only histories worth talking about. Many accounts of boarding schools, especially oral histories, are complicated or even positive, and these have immense historical value as well as personal meaning to those who tell them.[26]

Describing hunger, isolation, escape, opposition, and censorship—the difficult experiences of youth at Carlisle and Morganza, and the ways that they attempted to survive them—has necessitated walking a tightrope between two sensationalisms: one of absolute victimhood, the other of invulnerable agency and resistance. What distinguishes a history of victimization from the one I have hoped to tell is not the absence of the things that make history hurt—abuse, violence, wrongdoing—but the absence of people: people, rather than objects to whom things are only ever done, on whom history operates, whose interiority and ways of thinking make no difference. And what distinguishes this from a history of agency is a sincere assessment of suffering. This framework of interiority and personhood, in which the ideas, feelings, strategies, and connections of youth as historical actors are the focus, is one I have attempted to work with as an alternative to either a simple narrative of trauma or the reductive optimism of many agency and resistance histories. At points I feel I have fallen from the tightrope on either side, but I hope that the effort shows.

I. THE MYTH OF INSTITUTIONAL BENEVOLENCE

"NOT A DUMPING GROUND FOR INCORRIGIBLES" / "EVERYTHING INDICATIVE OF A PRISON IS AVOIDED"

[26] See Louellyn White, "Who Gets to Tell the Stories? Carlisle Indian School: Imagining a Place of Memory Through Descendant Voices," *Journal of American Indian Education* 57, no. 1 (2018): 122–44. https://doi.org/10.5749/jamerindieduc.57.1.0122.

On April 21, 1893, the Cattaraugus Reservation sent a petition addressed to President Grover Cleveland. Signed by the Cayuga chiefs Alexander John, Austin M. Stafford, and R. J. Pierce and over 120 Haudenosaunee citizens, the letter asked the President for the immediate release of seven students then held at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Izora Taylor, Bertha Patty, Ely S. Parker, Abner Patterson, Alex Kettle, George Eels, and Lillian Eels. Petitioners numbered their grievances: first, some children had been taken to Carlisle without the knowledge or consent of their parents; second, parents were dissatisfied with the care—or lack thereof—that had been shown to their children at the school; third, parents "learned and believed" that their children were "put to work and allowed a very little schooling, while they seeking scholarship."[27] Fourth, "the food allowed for the children in aforesaid school insufficient." Fifth, "the punishments to the children in aforesaid school beyond reasonable." With this in mind, "the parents believe it will be better interest to their children that they should be returned home immediately."[28]

The concluding argument parallels the abuses students experienced at Carlisle with those expected at prisons. "The undersigned believes that the United States of America is a free Country and *no person should be detained in any manner except through Crime*," it reads. "All Institutions for Education in this Country minor Student can be dismissed at option of parent, *excepting Reformatories for fractious children*."[29] In appealing to their intended recipient's nationalist sensibilities—that the United States is free, that it does not detain without reason, that it does not hold children against their will—the petitioners at the Cattaraugus Reservation attempted to secure some form of recourse within the limitations of settler law and politics.

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[27] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation Requesting Return of Children," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 978, 1893-#16452. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., p. 5-6.
[28] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), p. 5-6.
[29] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), p. 6.

At the same time, in highlighting the rights that Cattaraugus's youth were entitled to, the letter argues that they were deprived of them. It would not be necessary to argue against the senseless detention of individuals if the petitioners, or at least the writers, did not believe Native youth were being detained. At the very least, the writers must have regarded the similarities between unlawful detention and the holding of students at Carlisle to be striking enough to make for an effective legal argument. And in needing to distinguish between how students at Carlisle should be treated compared to youth at reform schools, the petition seems to suggest that as things stood, the conditions at each were far too similar. If, against the consent of their parents and under the weight of coerced labor, gnawing hunger, and horrific discipline, the listed students continued to be held there, then they were, in effect, incarcerated.

The Cattaraugus petition highlighted the foundational gap between the school's institutional rhetoric, which presented Carlisle as a benevolent enterprise, and how it was conceptualized and experienced by Native students, communities, and sometimes administrators themselves. In Carlisle's later years, Superintendent Oscar Lipps would lament that it was treated as a *de facto* reform school, both on western reservations and by administrators from other boarding schools. "We have, no doubt, been unfortunate here at Carlisle in the past in having this school considered somewhat as a dumping ground for incorrigibles," Lipps lamented to Cato Sells, the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in 1915. In numerous cases, students who had been low-performing in other schools had been transferred to Carlisle, or Carlisle was viewed as a comparable alternative to explicit incarceration. Lipps hoped that the Indian Office would "instruct superintendents to use greater care in the selection of pupils for transfer to Carlisle… and impress upon them the fact that Carlisle is not a reform school or a dumping ground for incorrigibles." This view seemed to be much more widespread than Lipps would have preferred:

"I recently heard of a Court sentencing an Indian boy to jail or to go to the Carlisle Indian School," he wrote, "and I am informed that throughout the West generally this has been the attitude toward Carlisle for some years past."[30] Ultimately, while Carlisle's administrators may have bristled at the suggestion that their educational institution was a prison, it was treated—and experienced—much like one. This was not limited to the school's origins at Ft. Marion, nor was it a product of the school's decline; the Cattaraugus petition situated incarceration as a central moral problem that administrators should be forced to confront throughout Carlisle's lifetime.

For Morganza's administrators, the desire to avoid the label of a prison was just as potent. A biennial report for the school covering the years 1900 to 1902 depicted a comfortable refuge with a pleasant atmosphere—the right place for young people's moral improvement. "The inmates are brought as nearly into the condition of children in a family as possible," the report stated; "The dormitories are well aired, the beds are comfortable, the food is wholesome and well cooked, and the clothing is plain and neat." The passage continued that "Hospitals, medicines, and a skillful physician and attentive nurse are provided for the sick," along with an excellent library.[31] These words had been published in earlier reports as well. Presumably, Morganza was an institution where young people would be spared the neglect and cruelty that had likely permeated their early lives.

Yet the record suggests something altogether different from this rosy image, sometimes explicitly contradicting it—not decades before Morganza's closing, but in the precise moment that these reports were being written and published. For instance, a 1902 address to the Pennsylvania governor submitted by Thomas Wightman, the President of the Board of

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[30]"Need for Indian Service Reformatory School," March 11, 1915, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), CCF Entry 121, #28884-1915-Carlisle-821. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

[31] "Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1900-1902," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, box 1, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-850, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

Managers, was included only a page before the sympathetic overview of Morganza's facilities, containing a plea for funding over abject conditions. According to Wightman, the building had become so overcrowded that "[a]ll the beds in the several dormitories for boys are double deckers, and frequently inmates are obliged to sleep on the floors, and at times we have been obliged to refuse to receive inmates, owing to the crowded condition of the family buildings."[32] This was a far cry from the report's subsequent promise of comfortable beds and a healthy learning environment.

Moreover, while discussions of cruelty at Morganza have been largely contained to the late 20th century, corporal punishment was one of the most well-documented elements of day-to-day life at Morganza in the late 19th century, particularly in the 1880s. "Habits of cleanliness and respect for authority are imperatively demanded," annual reports would state, though these left out the violence involved in maintaining them.[33] In this period, each formal punishment would be written up on a small disciplinary card, containing the inmate's name, their offense, the punishment dealt to them, the officer in charge, and the date. These cards were common in the archives at Harrisburg, covering a range of offenses with disproportionate consequences. On September 27, 1885, Sarah Banks was punished by Mrs. Beacon for absconding by being confined to a lodge room for 48 hours.[34] On March 23, 1889, Genge Amer and Andrew Widdman were also caught attempting to escape and were subjected to corporal punishment and confinement.[35] On April 24, 1890, Cornelius Hinton was dealt fifteen lashes for

[32]"Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1900-1902," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.
[33] "Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1900-1902," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, p. 9.
[34] Sarah Banks Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Babst-Beerson, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[35] Genge Amer Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Abbattivchis-Ammon, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

insubordination.[36] On February 16, 1885, Frank Smith received 20 blows with a rattan cane for laziness and carelessness.[37] On May 25, 1884, John Beerman received 60 strokes with a rattan cane for sodomy.[38] On January 27, 1884, Joe Alexander was dealt seven blows with a strap for bedwetting.[39] Oftentimes, of those whose punishments were documented, no other records of them or their time at Morganza exist—only the cards.

Morganza's veneer of benevolence conflicts with the deeply coercive ways in which youth could be sent there. Three years after the Cattaraugus Petition, against the will and testimony of her mother, one fractious child was brought to the crowded dormitories of Morganza. At the time of her admission on June 11, 1896, Ella Douglass was 17 years old. According to her inmate record—which is in all likelihood imperfect, but is one of only a few sources—she was born to "Scotch" (likely Scots-Irish) parents and had three brothers and two sisters. Her parents did not own property. Her father had been dead for seven years, and her mother, S. E. Swisher, had remarried to a canvaser named Philip Swisher. Douglass was estimated at about 5'3, with dark brown hair and brown eyes, a "broad face," and a short nose. The record marks her off as not lying, stealing, or using tobacco, but swearing and drinking. She was sent to Morganza for being in "bad company." She could read and write, and she had been arrested before.[40]

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[36] Cornelius Hinton was possibly the brother of Emma Hinton, whom I will discuss shortly. Cornelius Hinton Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder HI, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[37] Frank Smith Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 5, folder Smith, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[38] John Beerman Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Babst-Beerson, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[39] Joe Alexander Disciplinary Card, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Abbattivchis-Ammon, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[40] Ella Douglass Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Derrick-Douglass, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

Earlier that June, three officers—William McClane, John W. Edwards, and Frank Van Brocklin—testified against Douglass. Their words were transcribed and notarized next to her arrest record. The three officers say much the same thing about Douglass, but the testimony of McClane, the Chief of Police of New Castle, is the most detailed and the most difficult to stomach. By his own account, while Douglass was drunk to the point of being deeply incapacitated and after she had in all likelihood been violated by multiple men, he arrested her. A few weeks prior, McClane recalled he "was sent for to to come to the outskirts of the City" because "there was a lot of men had a woman and that they were acting disgraceful." When McClane arrived, "the men had gone but I found the Defendant laying on the ground in a beastly state of intoxication and almost nude."[41] Although Douglass appeared to have been hardly conscious by McClane's description, he took her in that state. She was charged with drunkenness and disorderly conduct. His testimony says nothing more of the men who got away, and the rest of his own and the other officers' statements pivot towards their unsympathetic assessments of Douglass's character.

For the rest of McClane's statement, he focused the bulk of his attention on Douglass's blame for her arrest and need for correction, as he saw it. "[A]t the request of her mother," McClane continued, Douglass "was let off with a small fine, her mother saying she would control her and make her do better." However, he considered her as "worse since her arrest that she was before." On account of repeated complaints about Douglass since then from "good reputable citizens," McClane instructed his officers to arrest her "if they found her on the streets at night," with little clarification. His final judgment of Douglass is especially cruel. "I consider

[41] Ella Douglass Police Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Derrick-Douglass, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

her nothing but a common prostitute and street walker of the worst kind," he said. Both Edwards and Van Brocklin, who had later been sent to arrest her again, would say the same.[42]

Douglass's mother had acted against her daughter's imprisonment on two separate occasions. Her testimony stands out as the only one not in favor of Douglass's commitment to Morganza. Her words as transcribed are not a total negation of the charges placed against her, but they represent a tension between Swisher's interests and those of the court or even the transcriber as Swisher negotiated to keep her at home, implying she would keep her in line. Swisher stated that Douglass "associates with persons of immoral habits," "is frequently intoxicated," and is "beyond my control and is incorrigible." She lamented that when her daughter was arrested a short time ago and "let off at my request with a fine, I thought she would do better but nearly the first time she went to town she got intoxicated and was arrested." Even so, Swisher's testimony ended with a pivot away from the formulaic list of denunciations that the transcriber might expect towards the following: "I don't want her sent to Morganza as I think I might control her." Still, Van Brocklin would echo that Douglass was "incorrigible and beyond the control of her mother."[43] Ella Douglass was sent to Morganza that June. For the crime of saying some bad words, downing some drinks, being with men, or being violated by them, Douglass would be isolated from the pernicious influences that surrounded her and transformed into a respectable, chaste, American(ized) wife. But ultimately, this process killed her—and it would kill Emma Hinton, too. The two inmates died on the same day in 1897.

The deaths of Emma Hinton and Ella Douglass would be a recurring source of distress for David E. Stuart in his memoir *The Morganza*, one of the only published sources on the reform school aside from Barraclough's book. Working as a counselor at the school in the 1960s,

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[42] Ella Douglass Police Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.
[43] Ella Douglass, Testimony of Mother, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Derrick-Douglass, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

Stuart grappled with the institutional abuses and shortcomings he came to expect from administrators and bureaucrats and lamented the struggles of the young people who were exposed to them. Throughout *The Morganza*, Stuart visits the graves of Ella Douglass and Emma Ginton, who both died on November 2, 1897—Douglass at 18, Ginton at 19. Though he attempts to find clarity on their deaths, he is stifled by his superiors, and in the book's epilogue, he admits he is still uncertain about how they died.[44] "I still want to know what happened to them… and to the others," he writes. "A suspicious number of girls aged fifteen to nineteen died between 1895 and 1902."[45]

The Harrisburg State Archives provide limited closure on the deaths of the two girls. Ella Douglass's cause of death is not given. At first, I could not find Emma Ginton in the archives. I later realized that her name, as recorded on all archival documents, was actually Emma Hinton. With what is known, it is possible to reconstruct parts of the lives of the two young women, their incarceration, elements of their time at the institution, and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Hinton, an African American girl, had not been arrested. Like many other incarcerated youth at Morganza, she was sent based on the testimony of her parents, who stated that she swore and went out at night. At the same time as Ella and Emma were living at Morganza, the overcrowded prison was visited by an epidemic of typhoid fever that would claim the lives of several students over the following two years. Hinton was one of these students. According to her medical record, she died of heart complications from typhoid fever. Though the girls were sent for their deviations from middle-class ideals of feminine respectability and domesticity, their time at Morganza would lead to their deaths, revealing the violent and sometimes lethal elements of its assimilationist objectives.

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[44] David E. Stuart, *The Morganza, 1967: Life in a Legendary Reform School* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), epub.
[45] Stuart, *The Morganza, 1967*.

Both Carlisle and Morganza were invested in defending their standing and the good-heartedness of their programs of "uplift," attempting to distinguish themselves from prisons. I am not. Ella Douglass's arrest and arrival at Morganza emblematized some of the early steps of the carceral process at both sites. By subjecting young people to the force and the scrutiny of authorities; making them legible; and limiting their opportunities to contest the skewed narratives and unsympathetic characterizations levied against them, adults attempted to legitimize their coercive removal from their communities. Still, there was a power in young people's illegibility. They would also play a part in determining what would or could be known about them.

Between the years of 1892 and 1902, Seneca youth incarcerated at Carlisle navigated a regime of discipline, questioning, and censorship that influenced the terms upon which they made themselves legible and to whom.[46] Interfacing with settlers was not a new experience for Seneca communities. They were one nation among the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), a prominent confederacy of six Native nations—the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Tuscarora—who faced repeated encroachment throughout the nineteenth century due to land-hungry settlers, land companies, and Dawes Act allotment policies.[47] In the mid-nineteenth century, the Haudenosaunee and especially the Seneca, who had suffered from rampant colonial assaults during the American Revolution, were retheorized as "safe," nonthreatening Natives, ideal targets of ethnographic research. One of the most well-known liaisons between Haudenosaunee and settler society was Ely S. Parker (1828-1895), a descendant of the prophet Handsome Lake and a friend of the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. Still, Parker was not

[46]The Haudenosaunee are somewhat peripheralized in the history of Carlisle as an institution and specifically in Carlisle's carceral history—they were not the Plains inmates at Fort Marion, for example. However, their struggles are integral to understanding the school's carceral elements as well as how youth navigated them, both through words and through silence and refusal.

[47] Keith R. Burich, *The Thomas Indian School and the "Irredeemable" Children of New York* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016), p. 8.

merely a repository of knowledge, as Morgan might have imagined him. At sixteen, he was a political agent, an interpreter for a Tonawanda delegation involved in repealing the 1838 Treaty of Buffalo Creek, which would have removed the Seneca from New York to Kansas.[48]

In 1892, another Ely Parker, born later, the son of William Parker and Sarah John, would be sent from the Cattaraugus Reservation to the Carlisle School at the age of 14. There, he would also confront the colonial demand to become legible in his own way. When Congress investigated the Carlisle School in 1914, multiple testimonies would report student hunger, though Parker had sounded the alarm much earlier in order to protect himself.[49] In the years 1892 and 1893, a number of Seneca youth, including Parker and his peers Helen Patterson and Nellie Kennedy, would take considerable risks to write and send mail to the reservation about their treatment at the Carlisle School, including and beyond insufficient and poor-quality food, even as they ran up against considerable censorship for doing so. A crucial element of their struggle involved determining when to disclose information and to whom in order to make their grievances known while avoiding administrative scrutiny. Placed in conversation with the court records of inmates at Morganza, it becomes possible to grasp how young people challenged a violent system that sought to identify them, categorize them, and contain them by setting the terms on which they were known—in any way they could.

II. LEGIBILITY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC REFUSAL

"IS THAT THE SAME AS OTHERS GET?" / "SHE WILL NOT ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH"

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[48] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 79-82.

[49] "Hattie M. McDowell Congressional Testimony, 1914," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), CCF Entry 121, #10144-1914-Carlisle-154. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., p. 2-3.;
"Wallace Denny Congressional Testimony, 1914," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), CCF Entry 121, #10144-1914-Carlisle-154. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., p. 5-8.

On September 16, 1892, Ely Parker was admitted into the Carlisle School. Described on his first student information card as about 146 pounds and 5 feet 7 inches, Parker was a 14-year-old boy from the Seneca Nation with two living parents, William Parker and Sarah John.[50] Parker would be at the school for only a month and a day before deciding that the toll of staying was too high. By October 17, 1892, he had already run away, traveling over 250 miles from school grounds back to the Cattaraugus Reservation.

In a letter she wrote to the school on December 2nd, Parker's grandmother Betsy White explained the dire circumstances behind Parker's escape. "My grandson Ely S. Parker stayed there for about five weeks," she explained, "and then he ran away on account of having so little and such poor food, he said he could stand it no longer."[51] According to White, Parker went home and stayed with his mother for about two weeks after. When he was "looking and feeling better," his mother decided to send him back to Carlisle so that he could be honorably discharged. It is clear that this was not what Parker wanted. "[H]e went back very much against his wishes," White wrote.[52]

Parker's readmission to Carlisle took a turn for the worse. It is difficult to imagine what it must have meant to him to take the risk of escaping Carlisle in the middle of October—even making it all the way home—only to be sent back shortly after.[53] White continues that

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[50] "Ely Parker Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 34, folder 1641. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

[51] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Betsy White to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 932, 1892-#43794. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

[52] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Betsy White to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

[53] Ely Parker's second student card states that he reentered the school on November 18, 1892, which is slightly later than expected. If Parker ran away on October 17 and spent two weeks at home with his mother before returning, this would mean he returned on November 1, which is the day his first student file describes him as being "discharged" (though it lists his runaway date earlier). At the same time, the November 18 admission date lines up with another part of White's account—that is, that by December 2, he had been at the school for about two weeks. This could mean that he either ran away slightly later than recorded, that he returned slightly earlier than recorded, or that he resisted his return for longer than two weeks.

> Now he has been back there to Carlisle about two weeks and he has written back to his mother and states that there is no change in the food or its quantity and he says that if his mother does not help him to come back home is going to commit suicide as he is hungry and something must be done.

White's letter included a clear demand: if there was no food, let Parker go home. It was "not only my grandson and the School children that make this complaint," White added, "but folks from here, that went there to see for themselves," making Parker's situation especially urgent. "[W]e can take better care of him here," she said.[54] This assertion—that the reservation was a better, healthier environment for Parker—would have been deeply threatening to the benevolent self-image of boarding schools and the assimilatory project more broadly. If conditions were worse at Carlisle than on Cattaraugus, then why should Parker be held? Pratt was placed in the position of having to justify Parker's incarceration.

In response to White's letter, Pratt put together a forceful defense of school conditions for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. On December 7th, he wrote that "[w]e are feeding the full rations allowed by the Department and a quantity of potatoes and other vegetables in addition."[55] He described surveying students about the quality of the food at the school and receiving no negative reports even when he encouraged them. He also ordered that every New York student be weighed, but stated that only fourteen had been weighed prior to entering the school. The fourteen were all listed as having gained weight at Carlisle. "I have made this report thus ample because these complaints have continued so long that something must be done to make their authors shut up," Pratt said. "I feel there is nothing in Eli [sic] Parker's complaint but an effort to find a reason to leave the school. He can read in the second reader but knows scarcely anything

[54]"Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Betsy White to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[55] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Richard Henry Pratt to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

of arithmetic and consequently he is in the lowest department of the school."[56] Pratt did not appear to express any concern for Parker's suicidality; his primary object was disproving the allegations levied against him. To Pratt, Parker was not in any real physical or psychological distress. Instead, he was portrayed as a troublemaker floundering in his studies and doing anything he could to get out of the education Pratt had so graciously provided for him.

Attached with Pratt's appeal was a letter from C. R. Dixon, the school's physician. On the same day, Dixon wrote to Pratt that he had inspected Parker and that he was in "good condition"; to Dixon, students' hunger was simply a lack of self-discipline. "I take it from the general tenor of his talk that preserves, jellies, tarts and pies are the articles longed for in this case," Dixon supposed. "I have no doubt some at least of these pupils are accustomed to a home table far more varied in its make up than possible at a Government School," he continued, "and none of them have been schooled to any regulation of their eating except the capacity of their stomachs and the supply in sight."[57] At least on the surface, Dixon's interview of Parker, which he transcribed for Pratt, appeared to line up with these claims: Parker had confirmed he was sleeping well, feeling well, and seeing extra food left on the table.[58] Looking closely, however, there is ample room to doubt Parker's ability to be truly honest to Dixon about his grievances.

Dixon transcribed his question-and-answer session with Parker in part as a way to lend validity to his (and Pratt's) conclusions about Parker's wellbeing and his motivations for writing home. After all, these were "Parker's words," as his physician had recorded them. At the same time, Parker's responses are more ambiguous than Dixon presents them as. The interview

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[56] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Richard Henry Pratt to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[57] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[58] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

contains a number of leading questions that "ask around" Parker's grievances, downplaying them or carefully removing them from the discussion. It is transcribed as follows:

> Does your table have the same as others do? Ans. Yes sir.
> Do you get your share of what is on the table? Ans. Yes sir.
> Did you ever ask the matron for more? Ans. No sir.
> Do you ever see anything left on the tables? Ans. Yes sir.
> Do you ever get enough to eat? Ans. Yes Sir on Sundays I get enough to eat.
> What do you have on Sundays that is different from other days. Answer. Mince Pie.
> Do you get all the meat you want? Yes Sir. unless it be grisly which is not often the case.
> Do you get enough gravy? Ans. Yes sir.
> Do you get enough bread? Ans. I get 2 pieces
> Is that the same as others get? Yes sir.
> Do you go to school regularly? "Yes sir"
> Do you work regularly? "Yes sir"
> Do you sleep well? Yes sir
> Do you feel well? Yes sir
> Does your Stomach hurt you? No Sir
> Are your bowels regular? Yes sir.[59]

Although the reader is made to believe that this is a sincere expression of Parker's well-being at the school, Dixon was conducting the interview on his own terms; he determined the window of acceptable responses by ordering and framing his questions the way that he did. From the very beginning, Parker was given limited room to answer questions in an open-ended manner; instead, each question demanded a simple "yes" or "no." Rather than asking Parker first and foremost if he got enough to eat, Dixon asked him a series of related questions which could superficially build up to a "yes"—but a table of low-quality food might be as abundant as others, be apportioned equally, and have leftovers and still be substandard. Dixon might have expressed curiosity about how Parker was used to eating, how an average dinner at Carlisle played out for him, what he liked or didn't like about the food, and so on with the intent to understand and

[59] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

accommodate him. Instead, Dixon's questions implicitly communicated the answers that he wanted—or perhaps needed, for the sake of his job—to hear. Parker's responses in the affirmative must be read and analyzed in this context.

Dixon's interview—or interrogation, really—set up a situation in which Parker was expected to answer affirmatively to some things, negatively to others. For the most part, his answers follow this formula. Yet just as Dixon was implicitly communicating his expectations to Parker, Parker was also probably calculating the extent to which he could be frank about his experiences to Dixon. There are a few sections where Parker responds with "middle truths": statements that neither explicitly confirm nor contradict the assumptions of his interlocutor; statements that allow Parker to say something that resists Dixon's demands without setting him off. When Dixon asked, "Do you ever get enough to eat?", the question was framed as a yes-or-no. But Parker didn't say yes, at least not all the way—instead, he said, "on Sundays I get enough to eat."[60] Dixon then moved to clarify that Parker meant mince pie by this, but later in the exchange, it becomes apparent that Parker wasn't just thinking about sweets. When Dixon asked, "Do you get enough bread?", Parker responded, "I get 2 pieces."[61] Again, Parker could have said yes to this but chose not to. It's possible that this was still a kind of assent. It's also possible that Parker was stating a fact because neither "yes" nor "no" were comfortable options: "yes" might have been an abandonment of his experiences—maybe one too many for that day—and "no" might have opened him up to further administrative scrutiny. But rather than allowing Parker to explain what he meant by this, Dixon steered the conversation away by asking, "Is that the same as others get?", to which Parker could only respond, "Yes sir." This communicated once again

[60] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[61] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

that Dixon was not an especially sympathetic physician. His questions were geared towards making Parker believe that there was nothing wrong with his food or portions, which influenced what information Parker chose to disclose to him.

In effect, while Pratt's letter and Dixon's attached interview were intended to disprove Ely's claims, what they actually reveal is the complicated ways that students interfaced with Carlisle's staff and administrators and the disciplinary rituals they were subjected to. Dixon wrote that Parker was 144 pounds, a slight loss from the 146 noted on his first student file, which runs up against the suggestion that Seneca students were uniformly gaining weight based on Pratt's list of before-and-after measurements.[62] Even so, Parker was operating in a context where Pratt was actively disdainful towards him, hoping to make him "shut up" about his complaints and depicting him as a lackluster student looking for any excuse to leave. His medical interview with Dixon embodies the stark difference between what Parker was able to communicate back home compared to with school authorities. The result was an exchange in which Dixon attempted to steer Parker's answers towards a particular end, sending cues as to his own trustworthiness in the process; in turn, Parker also had to "feel him out" and operate within a range of acceptable responses. In superficially giving Dixon and Pratt "what they wanted," Parker avoided a more direct confrontation between himself and Carlisle's administrators. While his peers would have to make similar assessments, this did not stop them from writing back home more frankly.

The following year, on February 25, 1893, Mary Kennedy, the grandmother of Ely Parker's peer Helen Patterson, would write back to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. J. Morgan, concerning students' hunger and harsh discipline at the institution. Morgan had

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[62] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from C. R. Dixon to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs); "Ely Parker Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

requested that Kennedy show him the letters of students at Carlisle who had made the complaints, so Kennedy included a letter from Helen and her peer Nancy Seneca as well as a separate letter from an unnamed student. Additionally, she contextualized Helen Patterson and Ely Parker's reluctance to confront Pratt and other administrators directly. Kennedy explained that Parker and other students were afraid of being punished if they wrote home about not having enough to eat, and she implored Morgan not to tell Pratt the students' innermost thoughts and feelings:

> The parant do not like to have there children punish on account of not haveing enough to eat. they are punish every time Capt Pratt hear some one says some thing about writing to home about not having enough to eat. when they are questioned they are so afraid they will not say I do not have enough to eat Ely S. Parker did not answer they are so afraid of Capt Pratt. so you must not let him hear this
>
> I will inclose the letters in this, which I received from Carlisle
>
> very respectfuly
> Mary M. Kennedy[63]

Still, T. J. Morgan decided to forward the letters to Pratt, placing the students who wrote them in the position of having to answer to him. On April 1, Pratt replied that after examining the letters and talking to their authors, he did "not think it necessary to take any further notice of them." "The writers of the two letters state that they wrote them soon after they came when they were homesick," he explained, "and they are now satisfied and have not the same views they had then."[64] For better or for worse, this may have stalled any more questioning.

Again, there is a dissonance between what students felt capable of saying to loved ones back home and the conciliatory stance they were in all likelihood required to take in the presence

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[63] "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Mary Kennedy to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 967, 1893-#11666. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

[64] "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Richard Henry Pratt to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

of administrators. It is possible Helen Patterson, Nancy Seneca, and other students had adjusted to Carlisle better in between the time of their complaints and the time of being questioned, yet it is unlikely they felt comfortable enough with Pratt to provide him with an honest account of their experiences, especially since he was partially responsible for punishing them in the event that they said the "wrong thing." Even after Ely Parker was questioned by Dixon, he wrote back home to his sister Bertha and mother Sarah John that he was hungry. Similarly, it is not improbable that when interrogated, Helen Patterson leaned on a conceivable explanation—homesickness—to pass off her letter as a child's heat-of-the-moment words rather than a substantive act of dissent, which could have gotten her in more trouble in the long run. The limited responses of students, while presented as refutations of their original complaints, operated to satisfy the needs of administrators and officials to know (or control) what they were really thinking. Meanwhile, they could more sincerely elaborate about their lives to those they trusted.

At Morganza, the early stages of incarceration also involved adult attempts to make inmates legible and understandable, revealing the limitations of their own knowledge in the process. On July 31, 1896, Emma B. Hinton was admitted into Morganza. She was 18 years old. She was described as short—4 feet, 8 ½ inches, the inmate record says—and light, with dark skin and a scar in the center of her forehead.[65] She had four brothers—three older, one younger—and two sisters: one older, two younger. One of her younger sisters, Laura Hinton, was also admitted about three years later, on June 12, 1899. According to both records, her father, Jacob Hinton, was a hod carrier who later became a minister. Their parents did not own property, and they were

[65] Emma Hinton Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder HI, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

raised Baptist. Emma had not been arrested before, and she did not smoke or drink; she was sent for "staying out at night and disobeying parents."[66]

The testimonies of Emma's parents, Jacob and Mary Hinton—as they were transcribed and summarized—offer a narrow glimpse into Emma's life that she was not legally empowered to contest. On the transcription, her father stated that "She is disobedient, She uses very bad Language, She stays out at night, goes in bad company, She will not always tell the truth, and will Steal," before a paper stain cuts off the rest. Her mother's testimony "corroborates the above statement to be true and correct and that for her daughters future welfare she wants her to be placed in the Penn a reform school."[67] Though on the surface, these testimonies obfuscated Emma's personhood and provided little information about her interior life, the ways that they were transcribed point to foundational conflicts between herself, her parents, and the state over her movement and legibility.

The testimonies as recorded on students' inmate forms embody the tension, as well as the collaboration, between the plaintiffs—usually parents—and the transcriber. In all of these cases, the transcriber was obligated to record what the complainant "stated in substance," giving them discretion in determining what was essential to transcribe and how to summarize a complainant's words. These documents typically involved similar turns of phrase: for instance, that due to a youth's "vicious and incorrigible conduct," they were "beyond the control of their parents" and fit to be placed in Morganza. With this in mind, examining a testimony involves parsing out which words belonged to whom—the transcriber, the parent, or some combination of the two. This process unveils moments of moral agreement, as well as possible dissonance, between the

[66] Emma Hinton Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza; Laura Hinton Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder HI, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

[67] Emma Hinton Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza; Laura Hinton Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder HI, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

complainants and the transcriber and suggests which complaints were formulaic and which were specific to an inmate.

In the transcribed testimonies of Jacob and Mary Hinton, it is possible to make some assumptions about which words were summarized by the transcriber and which came more-or-less directly from their mouths. For instance, Mary Hinton's testimony was significantly shorter than her husband's, and a large part of it was in all likelihood streamlined; the transcriber appears to have formalized the language, adapted it to the format of the page, and presented Mrs. Hinton's testimony as supplementary and supportive to her husband's.[68] Mr. Hinton's own words are clearer from what is recorded, gesturing to specific conflicts between himself and his daughter. In the string of complaints that was transcribed—"She is disobedient, She uses very bad Language, She stays out at night, goes in bad company, She will not always tell the truth, and will Steal"—some of the phrasing (such as "goes in bad company") was typical and common, yet the flow of words and order of complaints appears more organic. In particular, lines like "She uses very bad language," written with an underscore, may have recorded exactly where the emphasis fell as Mr. Hinton was speaking. The decision of the transcriber to stick more closely to Mr. Hinton's speech was indicative of both his perceived authority as a patriarch—at least in comparison to his wife—and what he may have felt the most strongly about "correcting" in his daughter. The unique turns of phrase in his testimony speak to the larger politics of legibility as a mechanism of disciplining and governing Morganza's youth.

[68] For instance, it's possible that Mrs. Hinton said that "for her daughters future welfare she wants her to be placed in the Penn a reform school," even if similar phrasing appeared in other testimonies. On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that she said, "I corroborate the above statement to be true and correct"—first because this is a very stiff, legalistic phrasing, and second, because this if she were to have said this word-for-word, she would have been modeling her speech off of the format of the page, what appears above and below, instead of the timing of the testimony relative to her husband's (for instance, "I can affirm everything my husband said *before* is true").

The throughline in many of Mr. Hinton's grievances with his daughter Emma—and what was regarded as necessary to transcribe—was his fundamental uncertainty about who she was, where she was, and what she was doing, elements that gave her some degree of power against the state (and him). Emblematic of his frustration was the line, "She will not always tell the truth." Through this phrasing, one could imagine Mr. Hinton making an understatement to implicitly communicate that Emma lied a lot. Regardless, what was foregrounded in this phrase, at least as it was recorded, was that Emma was an inconsistent truth-teller. It would have been possible—as with testimonies from many other complainants—for Mr. Hinton to have simply said, "She lies" or "She does not tell the truth." Instead, "She will *not always* tell the truth" was what landed on the page.

The problem to be corrected, then, was not the simple sin of lying but the fact that Emma's speech was unpredictable—that it was always *possible* she was lying. Like with the inmate forms of many other girls, the danger of uncertainty bleeds into the rest of the complaint: Emma stays out at night, but where she goes is unknown; she goes in bad company, but the names and contacts of these bad influences are unclear. It's possible Mr. Hinton's motivations for wanting these things to change differed from the state—he may have been concerned with Emma's safety, especially amid the threat of racial and/or sexual violence—but these were likely not so relevant to the state, to whom the primary threat, as transcribed, was young people's mobility, inconsistency, and immorality. The tenuous zone of autonomy that young people carved out through their unpredictable movements through public space or their ambiguous speech would have to be brought under adult knowledge and nullified.

The relative absence of details about Emma's whereabouts, combined with the specific grievances her father levied against her, offers some window into her motivations. How might

Emma have navigated and responded to her conflicts with her parents? What were her feelings and interests? Placed side-by-side with Emma's case, Ella's makes some suggestions. Both girls' movement and unpredictability, like that of many young people, was not simply a source of frustration to the state but a form of agency—however limited, fraught, or risky—that they protected even amid adult backlash. After Ella Douglass's arrest, both McClane's and Swisher's testimonies expressed a disappointment, or at least an annoyance, that she had become "worse since her arrest." The expectation was that she "would do better," but instead she had returned to town to drink to the point where more complaints were made of her and she was arrested again.[69] While it is impossible to know Douglass's exact motivations for continuing to walk around at night and drink, the fact that she continued to do so even in the face of strained ties at home, criticism from her community, the threat of sexual violence, and the carceral violence of the state suggests that even in a limited, flawed way, the street provided her with some form of autonomy that was inaccessible elsewhere.

There are many reasons Emma Hinton and Ella Douglass might have had for staying outside. In Douglass's case, perhaps police exaggerated her drunkenness during their testimony to present her as sexually out-of-control; perhaps following her arrest, she was seeking to return to life as usual, or perhaps she was drinking more heavily to cope, or perhaps she was doubling down on her "troublemaking" out of anger. Maybe she just needed to go out and get some room to breathe, like many young people do. Hinton, like Douglass, had many siblings; was the public arena ironically a place where she could secure a little privacy (to the chagrin of her parents)? Might this have made Emma harder to govern than if she had remained at home, where those she knew could see everything she did and know for a fact it was her—unlike strangers on the street? For a variety of reasons, youth and particularly girls and young women were prepared to take up

[69] Ella Douglass, Testimony of Mother, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.

public space in ways that confused and offended adults, even when "improvement" was demanded or predicted of them.

The testimonies that surfaced when young people's movements were known unveiled larger concerns about preserving a particular racial order—concerns that would factor into Morganza's assimilationist policies. Some narratives that identify the connections and whereabouts of youth displayed anxiety about interracial sexual intimacy, either as a fact or as a possibility. One such instance was the testimony against Emma S. F. Jones, an African American girl who was admitted to Morganza on January 24, 1900. When Emma Jones arrived at Morganza, she was 18 years old, her birthday having been the previous August. According to her inmate record, she was born in West Virginia and raised Baptist. Her father, George Jones, was a laborer without property, and she was the youngest of three siblings: one brother, one sister, and her. No information is listed about her mother. Emma was described as 5'2, with pierced ears. She had been sent for "running away from home, and visiting bawdy houses. Has been living an immoral life for a year or two." Her father testified that she "Refuses to stay at home."[70] Unlike in the records of some inmates, the details of her "immoral life" were known and disseminated by witnesses during testimony.

Emma Jones's testimony record, taken the day before her admission, included her father's complaint as well as complaints from two other witnesses, likely unrelated to her: Charles Braneh and John Thomas. Braneh's testimony, as transcribed, is perhaps the most revelatory of the racial implications of young people's movement and the consequences of their being found. About a week and a half before testifying, Braneh witnessed a white man with her: he "saw her at a house that Bares a bad name and that she was drunk I saw her drink whiskey and saw her in

[70] Emma Jones Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder Johns-Jordan, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

a bed and a white man on top of her and I pulled him of of her She is a bad girl."[71] The fact that Braneh chose to specify the man's race—and that the transcriber followed his words so closely—suggests a consensus that his whiteness reflected poorly on Emma Jones's sexual morality. Focused squarely on this racial overstep, the testimony left ambiguous whether or not Emma Jones could, did, or did not consent; either way, she was blamed; the encounter made *her* a "bad girl." Like with police testimonies against Ella Douglass, the top priority of the court was not consent or violation but the question of sexual respectability and order, which the interracial encounter disrupted. In all likelihood, the white man was not put away for it—but Emma Jones was.[72]

Ultimately, at both Carlisle and Morganza, young people's interiority posed a continual threat to administrators and the state. It raised the possibility that adults would never be prepared for youth and that their actions would rupture a prevailing racial or colonial order: they might run away, badmouth administrators, go to unknown spaces, take up *too* much public space, corrupt or be corrupted by sleeping with the "wrong" person, and so on. As a consequence, adults sought to render them legible early on in the carceral process, restraining their movement, documenting them, questioning them, and attempting to make sense of them. Yet the knowledge they produced about youth could be false, misleading, or at the very least incomplete. Its purpose was not to understand youth fully as people but rather to construct an image of them which justified their incarceration and assimilatory "uplift." They were exaggerating their hunger; they were just homesick, not ill-treated; they did not always tell the truth; they were living an immoral life. As such, they needed to be brought in line with white, middle-class value systems that reinforced racial separation or accelerated colonial encroachment. Even so, adults' desperation to render

[71] Emma Jones Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.
[72] Emma Jones Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.

youth legible and predictable reveals the potential and practice of ethnographic refusal—young people refraining from making themselves fully known, even if only to protect themselves, or negotiating the terms and limits of their knowability. Youth were not empty objects or repositories of information; instead, they were strategists determining to whom they should tell what.

However, the leverage that youth possessed with their selective communication was something that the carceral system was designed to curtail. Students at both institutions would face clear barriers to writing back home and disseminating the conditions of their incarceration, leaving them with limited options for redress. This process of isolation was integral to the assimilationist ethos of Carlisle and Morganza, severing youth from their communities and applying pressure to them to abandon the values they arrived with. Youth would have to make critical decisions about how to write, if they should, and what options they had to effect their own release amid the constraints placed on them.

III. ISOLATION AND THE ASSIMILATIONIST ETHOS

"CAPT PRATT WILL NOT READ IT" / "YESTERDAY THE ENCLOSED LETTER WAS FOUND"

On December 11th, four days after Parker's questioning, a new letter would go out to the Cattaraugus Reservation. "Dear Grandma," Helen Patterson wrote to Mary Kennedy, "I will tell you what Capt Pratt said that New Yorker did not have no business it makes me lonesome I wish that I could go home."[73] Patterson was a 15-year-old Seneca student from Versailles, New York. Her mother was deceased, and her father, Nathaniel Patterson, had a few years earlier remarried

[73] "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Helen Patterson to Mary Kennedy, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

to a white woman, Alice E. Patterson, who would push to keep her stepdaughter at the school.[74] In 1894, against the petitions of Helen's father and grandmother to have Helen returned to New York, Alice wrote to Pratt, "I am very thankful that you did not grant my husband's request as it is far better for Helen to be among good christian people and where she can make a woman of herself than to be tied down on this reserv in ignorance."[75] Alice advised Pratt that if she were in his shoes, she would "not take any notice" of Mary Kennedy's letters, regarding her as a "very ignorant old lady" and lamenting that Helen's "own relations are a great hindrance to her." She also stated that Helen had written to her that she "loves Carlisle and is very anxious to learn and become some-body."[76] Still, Helen Patterson's letter to her grandmother in 1892 reflected an entirely different range of feelings and beliefs about the Carlisle School than Alice might have assumed or known about.

Helen Patterson was admitted to Carlisle on September 16, 1892 along with Parker. But after three months, she was also coming up with a plan to return home, which she requested Kennedy's help with. "[P]lease tell Ely Pierce"—probably a relative or community member—"that I want to borrow ~~letters~~ some money it will take about $13 to get home and when I will get home I will work out and earn money," she promised. Later in her letter, she would add, "I will pay Ely Good when I get home."[77] Given that $13 in 1892 was about $450 in today's money, Patterson must have been very serious about getting back; she'd had to figure out

[74] "Request for Enrollment of Child of Alice E. Patterson," letter from Alice Patterson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), CCF Entry 121, #99227-1910-Carlisle-820. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[75] "Pratt Responds to Requests to Return Helen Patterson and Ophelia King," letter from Alice Patterson to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 1096, 1894-#22474. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[76] "Pratt Responds to Requests to Return Helen Patterson and Ophelia King," letter from Alice Patterson to Richard Henry Pratt, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[77] "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Helen Patterson to Mary Kennedy, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

an amount large enough to cover her travels, identify someone capable of loaning it to her, and then commit herself to repaying it once she was able to work on the reservation.

When mailing her letter to Kennedy, Patterson had to take extra steps to make sure the contents were secure from Pratt. She expressed anxieties about Pratt reading her letter and had it sent through Harrisburg instead, which was about 20 miles away. "[T]here is one lady from New York State and she is going to take our letters and mail them in harrisburg and she is going to pay for mine," Patterson explained. "Capt Pratt will not read it because I am afraid to mail mine in Carlisle."[78] Patterson seems to have been successful in this; it was in February that Kennedy included her letter as evidence when petitioning the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. J. Morgan, for the return of Patterson and other students. Had Pratt read the contents, the letter might not have reached Kennedy at all. But Patterson was not just writing securely because she wanted to leave; her writing also suggests the hostile relationship between Pratt and Carlisle's New York students in general:

> Capt Pratt said… Starvation we never had funnied by that yet he talked about us mean we make so much trouble since we bin here have told you that I never got enough to *] ans. from Helen P.*[79]

The letter is bracketed off and finished by Nancy Seneca, a peer of Helen's:

> *Helen P. did not finish her letter before she went and so I finish for her I don't know what els she want to say in this letter.*
>
> *Written by*
> *Nancy Seneca.*

Nancy Seneca's decision to close Patterson's letter for her was a thoughtful one. It's possible that she actually sent the letter for her peer, either through the "New York State lady"

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[78]"Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Helen Patterson to Mary Kennedy, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

[79]"Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from Helen Patterson to Mary Kennedy, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs). Italics represent the transition from Helen Patterson to Nancy Seneca writing.

like Patterson had intended or at Carlisle without Pratt noticing. Nevertheless, Patterson's remarks spoke to Pratt's harsh treatment of a much larger body of New York Seneca students than just herself and Ely Parker, making her clandestine dissemination of that treatment all the more urgent. The "we" and "us" in Patterson's writing suggest that Pratt lectured Seneca students that they weren't really being starved and subjected them to an array of cruel comments. Additionally, they imply a widespreadness to Seneca insubordination at Carlisle shortly after arrival: "he talked about us mean we make so much trouble since we bin here" could have been Pratt's words, as in Pratt told the students that they were making trouble, or Patterson's own evaluation. Regardless, she painted a picture of continued conflict between herself, her peers, and school authorities. Based on the whole letter, her final words—that she "never got enough to"—are very likely her saying that she never got enough to eat. This deeply hostile school climate compromised the security of her words and formed one among a variety of explicit or implicit barriers to communication caused by students' incarceration.

Patterson's active fear of her writing being intercepted was in line with policy at punitive institutions. A core element of Morganza's disciplinary code was predicating communication on good behavior, generating conditions of repression and censorship that affected its most vulnerable inmates. At the very end of a rulebook for Morganza published in 1891, in a chapter titled "Miscellaneous Regulations," is written, "No inmates shall be allowed to receive communications or presents of any kind, except as rewards for good conduct, and only through the Superintendent. All letters written or addressed to the inmates shall be submitted to him for perusal."[80] Even if the superintendent, J. A. Quay, did not painstakingly examine each and every letter, he nevertheless had the power to dispose of anything that he thought was unfavorable. In

[80] Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, 1891, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-853, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

effect, this meant that the most "unruly" inmates—those most at odds with the institution and subject to the harshest discipline and abuse—were systematically cut off from the outside world. It meant that those who had deep-seated grievances with the school or hoped to enlist their relatives and loved ones in effecting their release had a lack of privacy.

In part, this isolation was in line with Morganza's role as an assimilative facility—similar, in some ways, to Carlisle. Around the time Douglass and Hinton entered Morganza, it contained a large minority of second-generation students and African American students, who together made up the majority of newer entrants. Of the 514 committed between October 1st, 1897 and October 1st, 1898, about 46% (235) were of white American parentage, and about 16% (81) were of African American parentage; white students of foreign-born parentage made up about 38% (198) of Morganza's population. During this period, a slightly greater percentage of white girls were of foreign-born parentage than American parentage: 71 in total compared to 66.[81]

In a souvenir from 1909, Morganza's Americanizing mission was articulated much more explicitly, as administrators advertised the school's capacity to deliver second-generation youth from their degenerative surroundings. The souvenir boasted that the Pennsylvania Reform School was "doing great work among the foreign-born population of Pittsburg, by its influence in teaching those committed, the English language, and the love of America."[82] It lamented that

> [m]any of the children who are committed here, are of foreign-born parents, and their playgrounds have been the streets. Their environments are nearly always such as would demoralize, and very often their playgrounds are veritable schools of crime. It has been demonstrated that it is possible to teach many of them high ideals, and to lead them into

[81]"Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1897-98," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, box 1, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-850, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[82] Pennsylvania Reform School, "Souvenir of the Visit of Members of Children's Conference," June 26, 1909, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, p. 1.

> noble lives. … Many children receive here their first intimation of a better life, and very often it is the thing to do, to remove them from their bad environment to the institution.[83]

The language used in the letter was an assimilationist one that directly articulated the necessity of isolation as a culturally cleansing force. The youth in the passage were racialized as white ethnic, and the reform they experienced at the institution—stripped from their "schools of crime" and taught "high ideals," the "first intimation of a better life"—was intended to make them less foreign, more American. If Morganza had been a strictly moral institution aimed at rectifying children's bad behavior, it would not be necessary for administrators to draw attention to their inmates' foreign parentage, much less to pair it, almost naturally, with the clause, "and their playgrounds have been the streets." In so doing, the souvenir connected foreignness to criminality and introduced incarceration—removal from the community—as the solution. The absence, or exclusion, of Black children from the passage also clarifies the primary targets of Morganza's efforts: wayward white (ethnic) youth seen as more assimilable into the dominant class and culture.

Morganza's 1909 souvenir resonates, in many ways, with Pratt's determination to hold Ely Parker and his peers at Carlisle against their will; with Alice E. Patterson's thanks to Pratt that Helen would not be "tied down on this reserv in ignorance"; and to broader notions of the purifying character of the boarding school project. A couple weeks after the Cattaraugus petition was sent, M. F. Nippe, a local missionary, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel M. Browning to oppose it. Having known the parties involved in writing the petition, Nippe claimed that their children at Carlisle were not in any trouble—they were only "under a restraint to which they are not accustomed." Desiring "the liberty… of reservation life," Nippe continued, "these boys have made absurd and false statements of hunger and privation at Carlisle," and the

[83] Pennsylvania Reform School, "Souvenir of the Visit of Members of Children's Conference," June 26, 1909, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, p. 8.

Cattaraugus petition was only ever "the result of misstatements and falsehood." He urged Browning not to "send home these children to the doom that awaits the young people here" on the reservation.[84] Nippe's appeal performed many of the same rhetorical maneuvers as the souvenir. It sought to discredit the abuses Parker and other students experienced by presenting them as lies—moral infractions committed by wayward youth raised in the wrong place, contaminated by unrestrained freedom. Their salvation would come if they stayed at Carlisle, away from their home, isolated and incarcerated.

In the 1890s, when Emma Hinton and Ella Douglass attended Morganza, the institution's assimilative rhetoric appears to have been more implicit, less pronounced. A crucial difference between the reform school and Native boarding schools was that the egregious, overt assimilatory violence which characterized life at boarding schools—cutting students' hair, beating them for not speaking English, culturally berating them—was not apparent at Morganza based on the archives at Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. Even so, there is clear evidence that the structural isolation and barriers to communication that formed an integral element of Morganza's assimilationist ethos had concrete effects. In 1899, Andy Blonkowski was sent to Morganza by his parents at the age of 12. His inmate record depicted him as short, with brown hair, brown eyes, a dark complexion, and a few small scars near the center of his forehead. His father was a laborer, and he did not own property. In her testimony, his mother complained that he "Plays truant on all ocasions + Is a very Bad Boy," warranting his admission into the reformatory.[85] In a letter sent to the school that January by the St. Stanislaus Church, a reverend wrote to Morganza

[84] "Nippe Requests Commissioner to Ignore Cattaraugus Petition," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 980, 1893-#17084. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[85] Anthony Blonkowski Inmate Record and Parent Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Bell-Blonkowski, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

on behalf of Blonkowski's parents asking if he could be admitted, as neither of them spoke English well:

> To whom it may concern. —
>
> The bearer of this note is the mother of Anthony Blonkowski, a boy who does not at all attend to school and does not intend to obey his parents. The best place for him is Morganza—Would you please have the kindness to send him there? His parents are of the same opinion, only they can not speak English well.[86]

Assuming Blonkowski's parents could not speak fluent English, this language barrier may have posed a challenge in writing to each other across long distances; it is not certain that they could write in Polish or that Blonkowski could (or that administrators would have let him). The Blonkowski parents would have also faced obstacles in interfacing with administrators if they sought out news about how their son was faring at the school or hoped to effect his release. If Andy had any extended relatives in the United States who were fluent in Polish but could not speak or write English, his incarceration would have tapered his connections to them as well.

Cultural isolation could produce deep-seated community anxieties about the welfare of inmates at the school. On May 7, 1897, a man named Peter P. Blank wrote to Morganza on behalf of the mother of a German student, Frank Diehl, who had been rumored dead in the German papers:

> Dear Sir!
> Please let Mrs Diehl know as soon as possible whether there is any Truth about the statement in the German papers stating that Frank Diehl had died at Scool at Morganza. The article stated that he was from Westmoreland County and that he had been serveing his second Term… Mrs Diehl is worried very much about it but I told if there was any Truth about it she would get due notice of his illness I promised her too writhe to you folks and find out the particulars so oblige and answer as soon as you can. Yours

[86] Letter to PA Reform School from Reverend Concerning Anthony Blonkowski, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Bell-Blonkowski, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

Mr Peter P Blank[87]

On the back of the letter, B. F. Heckart, presumably an administrator, clarified that Diehl was "alive and well." However, the fact that such a rumor existed and was convincing enough to be published speaks to the diminished avenues of communication available between students and families, particularly in ethnic communities. The fact that Mrs. Diehl could not write to Morganza directly may suggest that she was not able to speak English well, further impacting her connection to her son while he was away.

Over time, through isolation and hardship, it is possible that some inmates internalized Morganza's ideals in a desperate attempt to free themselves. In a letter to her mother, Annie McBride communicated her willingness to marry as "the only way I can get out," a clear break from the allegations of promiscuity and resistance to domesticity that sent many girls and young women to the institution. McBride's letter was intercepted and sent to J. A. Quay for perusal, presumably by another administrator. "Yesterday," the administrator wrote, "the enclosed letter was found" in the box of another student, Minnie Troop.[88] In her letter, she begged her mother to permit her to marry a boy named Sam so that Quay might finally permit her to leave Morganza after having been returned there. As it stood, she was grief-stricken at the school, going hungry—reduced to "nothing but skin and bones"—and her mental health was deteriorating to the point where if she could not leave, she would commit suicide. Her letter, packed onto the front and back of a single sheet of paper, with words curling upwards onto the corners of each page, reveals her distress:

My Dearest Mother

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[87] Letter Concerning Frank Diehl from Peter P. Blank, May 7, 1897, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Derrick-Douglass, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

[88] Letter to J. A. Quay Concerning Annie McBride, Committee Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-848, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

> I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present and I hope these few lines may find you all in good health. Dear Mother please bring Sam out as soon as you can and we can get Married, all he has to say that he will take care of me and do what is right by me he can tell Mr Quay just what I tell him to say, that is the only way that I can get out, if Dear Mother if you and Sam would come out today I could go home with you and if you dont I will kill my self for I cannot stay here any longer. I am almost crazy with grief, oh Dear Mother please come out and tell Mr Quay that you will give your concent to Sam and I getting Married, oh Dear Mother, I am not fooling, I mean every word I say, Dearest Mother I am going to nothing but skin and bones since I came back, I do nothing but cry all the time, oh Mother please do forgive me what I have done and said to you and papa, I am so sorry about it Dearest Mother I pray to our Dear hevenly Father every day for him to help us all. please tell Sam to send me a christmas gift please give him this paper, Dear Mother if you do what I tell you I can be home with you once more and if I get Married it will be better for me, and then I can live up in Sam's house, and I will keep you and papa and be good to you both.[89]

Because McBride's letter was intercepted by administrators, it is uncertain whether her thoughts, feelings, and demands ever reached her parents; it's possible she wrote and sent another letter, or it's possible that she never got the chance to on account of the school's policy of censorship. However, what her letter does reveal is the initiative she was forced to take in securing her release, dwelling on and coming up with a plan that required her mother's assistance. At multiple points, she entreated her mother to take concrete steps towards marrying her to Sam and to make this apparent to Quay: "please give him this paper," she wrote; "please bring Sam out as soon as you can and we can get married"; "please come out and tell Mr Quay that you will give your concent to Sam and I getting Married."[90] Her remorse appears deep, genuine, almost frantic. It is evident that being at Morganza, as well as the toll it was taking on her, both made an alternative preferable and influenced the alternatives she had or thought she had. Marriage was one—the only one—that appeared viable.

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[89] Letter from Annie McBride to Mother, Committee Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-848, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[90] Letter from Annie McBride to Mother, Committee Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.

At Carlisle, another student was also looking for an alternative. In the second letter Mary Kennedy attached with her appeal to T. J. Morgan on February 25, 1893, an unnamed student went into detail about the harsh discipline her peers faced at Carlisle and her fatigue working in the school's dining hall, where she served food to other students, as well as her desire to return home. Written a few weeks earlier, on February 4, the writer described Ely Parker somewhat more optimistically as "seem[ing] to be enjoying good health but yesterday I heard that he was lone-some."[91] Many of the other boys at the school were not faring well. One had been marked, and others were placed in solitary confinement: "There is one boy on the band stand he got punished for dishonesty on his back is ritten Thief," she said, "and some other boys on in gaurd House."[92] The writer clarified that perhaps differently from her peers, she got enough to eat because of her work, but it was "tiresome":

> I have enought to eat my Self Because im a dining Room Hall girl. I put four loves of bread on the tables for 20 boys and 3 loves of bread for 20 girls and Two platers of gravy for The 20 boys and a 2 pitcher of coffee but it is tiresome but have to stand it I suppose.

Her letter ended with a request that Ely receive some money to go home at least temporarily, like other students, as she "could not bare to think of him being lonesome." Her own desire to return was permanent. "I rather go on the reservation school," she wrote. Rather than coming back home unconditionally, she suggested transferring to another facility.

These two alternatives—the domestic sphere and the reservation school—reveal the terrain upon which students felt compelled to negotiate. Their release would not be unconditional but would be predicated upon a transition to another "purifying" carceral institution in line with

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[91] The writer updates the intended recipient on "your Son Mr Parker," which could suggest that the letter was being written to William Parker or Sarah John and was passed over to Kennedy, or it could just mean that the writer was using familial terms more expansively than settlers were.

[92] "Pratt Responds to Complaints Made by Mary M. Kennedy," letter from unnamed student, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

the values of the original.[93] The isolating conditions at Carlisle and Morganza and the discipline students experienced—which amplified their underlying fear, dissatisfaction, and even suicidality—altered the potential terms of their escape and made it difficult to refuse the assimilationist and domesticating projects of the original institutions categorically. In Morganza's case, monogamous marriage as an assimilationist ideal would limit the number of partners inmates would have upon release to one, restratifying racial boundaries and driving young women from the public into the domestic sphere under the authority of their husbands. In Carlisle's case, the reservation school would reduce students' isolation from their families, peers, and community at home, but it involved their continued targeting by the state as subjects of colonialist "uplift" and did not entirely remove the threat of institutional abuse. As such, the initiative youth demonstrated in planning for and suggesting these transfers negates the charge that they were entirely helpless, yet it also demonstrates the interplay between the choices they made and the enormous institutional pressure that made them arrive at the conclusion that these alternatives were the most (or only) viable ones.

Despite young people's concerted efforts to advocate for themselves within the confines of their institutions, the constraints placed on students' communication as well as their vulnerability to punishment made it difficult to do so alone. Letters might be intercepted, and criticism of administrators might be suppressed or delegitimized. Outside, other youth would advocate on their behalf alongside or in the absence of adults, criticizing their incarceration and calling for their release. The dialogue between incarcerated youth, their peers, and adults in attempting to effect their departure revealed the convergences and fissures in each group's

[93] My thoughts on transfer as a carceral process are influenced by Farina King, "'E'e'aah (West): Survival in Distant Education," in *The Earth Memory Compass: Diné Landscapes and Education in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), p. 125.

approach and their unique—sometimes conflicting—interests in confronting administrators and the state.

IV. YOUTH AND ADULT PETITIONS FROM OUTSIDE

"WE THOUGHT WE WOULD LOOK FORWARD BUT WE ARE VERY MUCH MISTAKEN" / "MY FATHER WAS A MEAN MAN"

A month after Helen Patterson, on January 14, 1893, Bertha Parker wrote to T. J. Morgan requesting the return of Ely Parker, her brother. Her concerns were expansive, encompassing her 16-year-old cousin Nellie Kennedy and many other Seneca youth new to Carlisle. She'd heard from Ely last on January 2, with "just the same old tune. dont get enough to eat."[94] She'd also heard of Nellie writing back home to her mother with her own account of the measuring effort Pratt described on December 7th:

> My cousin Nellie Kennedy has wrote to her mother said that Capt. Pratt has waight all the New York boys and girls and Capt. Pratt said to them that they have gain in waight. And my cousin Nellie says she has lost 9lb since she has been there she says what do you think of that he tells the boys and girls that they have gain. when it is not so. he ought to tell them the truth.[95]

On top of Nellie and Ely's words, which again stood in conflict with the institutional narrative coming from Pratt and Dixon, Bertha remarked on the unhealthy appearances of boys who had returned from Carlisle: "And there are couple boys come back from that school looking very poor and thay didnt have enough to eat," she wrote.[96] Like Helen Patterson, Bertha was particularly affected by Pratt's meanness towards her peers. "I have seen different letters come from that place all the same tune they say Capt calls all the New York children Bull-dogs and

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[94] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Entry 91, box 945, 1893-#2675. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[95] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[96] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

other mean names. He ought not to call them any names," she said, "or is it right to call the student Bull-dogs or other mean name."[97] Bertha Parker was not a student at Carlisle; she was not subject to Pratt's scrutiny, discipline, or censorship. As such, she could confront Morgan directly about Pratt's treatment of those she knew and cared about and make clear demands of the institution that held them.

Bertha's appeal elucidated the connections between Native youth inside and outside of boarding schools, home and away from home. When Bertha asked Morgan, "Will you be so kind as to send my brother Ely home I would rather have him go to school with me," this suggests that at the time of writing, Bertha was a similar age as her brother—probably older by the tone of the letter, but young enough to still be in school.[98] She could have been appealing to the Commissioner's sensibilities, portraying her brother's return not as an escape from education but a transfer to a more suitable institution, or this could have been at the back of her mind; first and foremost, she acted out of a deep concern for her brother and with a clear sense of urgency and dismay at how Seneca students at Carlisle were being treated. Bertha Parker's appeal is notable amid petitions from parents, grandparents, and community members. She was a young person writing for the return of another young person and relaying the struggles of her peers to someone who might be able to remedy them.

Put in the defensive position, Pratt underscored Bertha's youthfulness and attempted to undermine her credibility as a writer, driving a wedge between herself, her brother, and her peers at the school to Morgan. "Both these pupils say they have plenty to eat," Pratt declared of Ely and Nellie—even if it is very possible that the two told him this in order to avoid setting him

[97] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[98] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

off.[99] "The other statements made in this letter are even more puerile," he added. "The suggestion is made that complaints of this character only receive notice when accompanied by the students' letters."[100] However, the Pratt making this suggestion was the same Pratt who had regarded Ely Parker's complaints as "nothing… but an effort to find a reason to leave the school" in his December 7 correspondence with Morgan. Pratt implicitly framed allegations against the school as "puerile"—a product of Bertha's own immaturity—and the favorable responses he had elicited from students as the truth, even though he had tried to disprove Ely's complaints only a month earlier. While youth created "redeemable" political subjects and targets of reform, this category was conversely used to delegitimize and depoliticize their grievances.

Bertha Parker's letter would predate the Cattaraugus Reservation's petition in its distinct political consciousness and challenge to settler-colonial notions of modernity. In so doing, it reveals the influences of Seneca youth—at home and away—on the nation's broader mobilization against the Carlisle School. Bertha spoke of the poor treatment of her peers at Carlisle as something altogether different than the forward-looking, humanitarian education settlers had promised: "You have been to our Reservation and have ask us Indian to enter your schools, you have told us not to look hundred years back but to look forward," she wrote. "We thought we would look forward but we are very much mistaken. Would you like your son or daughter to be starving like that dont get enough to eat."[101] This language mirrored the third grievance in the Cattaraugus petition, in which parents became disillusioned with the educational prospects of the Carlisle School: "That the parents learned and believed that their Children were

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[99] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Richard Henry Pratt to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[100] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Richard Henry Pratt to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[101] "Pratt Responds to Complaints of Bertha Parker," letter from Bertha Parker to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

put to work and allowed a very little schooling, while they seeking scholarship."[102] Viewed in this light, the Cattaraugus petition was not simply an act of adults that politicized the grievances of pre-political youth but rather existed alongside young people's own political consciousness. Through her letter, Bertha Parker politicized students' struggles and expressed their (and her) ideological divergence with administrators. Hunger, sickness, and abuse were not just private problems; they were reflections of the inadequacy of the institutions that produced them.

Bertha may not have fully believed the promises of modernity that Morgan or other officials brought to her at first. The sense of disillusionment that she communicated could have had less to do with her own feelings and more to do with persuading Morgan to return her brother by casting doubt on how advanced the American colonial project really was (at least at Carlisle), moving him to live up to his own ideals. Regardless, Bertha wrote a letter that tackled the ethical and ideological underpinnings of Native boarding schools at the same time as she decried their conditions. This was arguably more overtly political than Betsy White's letter. It demonstrated the relationship between students' physical conditions at boarding schools and how they and their peers might have conceptualized the rhetoric that animated them, pairing self-preservation with moral critique.

On February 7, 1907, John Whitlow wrote to Morganza's superintendent J. A. Quay from East Liverpool, Ohio, asking for the whereabouts of his sister, Annie Whitlow, who had recently been incarcerated there. His letter also criticized the basic premise of her incarceration, revealing the unjust grounds on which she had been sent. Deeply concerned for her, John wrote, "Mister Quay I take pleasure to right you a fue lines to asked you wher my sister Annie Whitlow is I ownt to fine where she is she is the only sister I got." He explained that his father had run away and that about two weeks after, both his father—who may have returned at this time, possibly

[102] "Petition of Cattaraugus Reservation," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

only to run away again—and his sister had fallen ill. "He sent her away," John continued, "cause she didn out to work one after noon." Then, he morally indicted his father: "my father was a mean man he didn care nothing for us."[103] John Whitlow's letter did not overtly call for his sister Annie's release. Yet if students' placement in the reform school was on the basis of adult and specifically parent complaints, then John describing his deep attachment to Annie, undermining his father's character and credibility, and providing clarifying information about his reasons for sending her all—intentionally or not— challenged the deep-seated logic of Morganza's carceral process: that is, that the words and ethics of adults carried authority over those of youth and that young people were sent there for being "bad."

At Morganza, adults—parents and relatives—also wrote on behalf of inmates, using their leverage to present their loved ones as reformed, (implicitly) assimilated, and ready for departure as respectable citizens, often married or working. For boys as well as girls, this approach may have been based, in part, in reformers' racialized anxieties about inmates' sexual lives prior to their incarceration. In 1890, Isaiah Cleaver, an African American young man, was admitted to Morganza at the age of 19. According to his inmate record, he was an orphan.[104] He was admitted on grounds of "having no home and being a vagrant"; his arresting officer, John P. McTighe, stated he arrested Cleaver for attempted robbery, though he does not specify what Cleaver intended to take. "[H]is associates are boys of the very worst kind," he testified; "he makes his home at homes of Prostitution."[105] McTighe's remark presents Cleaver's perceived sexual immorality, lack of a home, and possible lack of work as intertwined and as necessitating his commitment to Morganza.

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[103] Letter from John Whitlow to J. A. Quay, February 7, 1907, box 1, folder 24, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, Heinz History Center Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.
[104] Isaiah Cleaver Inmate Record, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Cemino-Cleaver, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[105] Isaiah Cleaver Police Testimony, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Cemino-Cleaver, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

Still, Cleaver took steps to effect his release. He wrote to his aunt, Athenaide Long, hoping to live with her. Long sent a letter to Quay asking for her nephew's freedom on April 14, 1892. "[K]ind Sir as my nephew Isiah Cleaver requested me to rite to you as he thinks he will live a difernt life," Long said, "and I will try my best to keep him and teach him how to do and if his time is out would you pleas to give him his freedom with many thanks to you for your kindness to him."[106] Like his peers, rather than being a passive resident at the school, Cleaver took initiative to leave and escape homelessness, requesting that Long write on his behalf. In turn, Long emphasized his remorse to legitimate his departure and indicated her plans to help Cleaver get along and make a living.

Late in 1896, Ella Douglass also had a potential way out of Morganza. On September 28, her mother wrote to Quay that Douglass was engaged to a respected young man and she would be happy to see her daughter return home to marry him. "I would much rather have my daughter, Ella Douglass, marry the young man, Mr. C. D. Strahl, as to remain in Morganza," she said. "He is well to do, and has a good reputation, having a good recommendation in print from Geo. B. Berger of New Castle, PA. They have been engaged, and he is willing to marry her at any time, if granted that opportunity."[107] By emphasizing Strahl's status and good standing in the community, Swisher attempted to present the marriage as a viable alternative to her daughter's incarceration. Douglass would be "progressing" from "a common prostitute and street walker of the worst kind," as McClane had put it, to an esteemed wife. The transgression that had landed her in the reform school would be wiped away, allowing Douglass to emulate the respectable, middle-class American femininity that was demanded of her.

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[106] Letter from Athenaide Long to Nephew Isaiah Cleaver, April 14, 1892, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Cemino-Cleaver, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.

[107] S. E. Swisher to J. A. Quay, 28 September 1896, box 1, folder 3, Pennsylvania Reform School Records, Heinz History Center Detre Library and Archives, Pittsburgh, PA.

Though Douglass's agency in selecting her partner and planning the marriage is uncertain, Swisher presented her as penitent and eager to return. In her P.S., Swisher wrote, "I think it is best that these two should get married." She continued, "Ella says she has learned a lesson she never will forget; that she is sorry for the past; and will be a good girl. Also a great relief to me."[108] What is most provable from Swisher's description of Ella is not necessarily her internalization of Morganza's values—though this absolutely could have happened—or even her desire to get married, but her desire to leave the reformatory and return home, which she supported with promises of proper conduct. Even so, the institution exerted an influence on her actions. Once more, by constraining the range of options that would effect her freedom, Morganza transformed assimilation to American middle-class sexual mores from something wholly oppressive to a more-or-less viable strategy that some inmates might choose to adopt.

Petitions sent to Carlisle and Morganza from outside reveal the connections youth struggled to maintain with one another and with relatives while they were away and the initiative they took in their own emancipation. However, they also underlined the distinct ways that each party—incarcerated youth, their peers, their relatives—invoked the possibility of departure and the terms on which they intended it to happen. Frequently across letters, it was proposed that young people move into another kind of contained, surveilled space and that their carceral condition continue, even if more subtly. Nevertheless, young people's reasons for proposing this may have differed from those of adults. When youth articulated a preference for the reservation school or the married household, this may have been more of a bargaining chip, based on a desperate assessment of whatever might bring about the desired end ("that is the only way that I can get out"). On the contrary, adults' propositions—particularly at Morganza—were colored in part by the fact that many of them had issued complaints about their children and had fully or

[108] S. E. Swisher to J. A. Quay, Pennsylvania Reform School Records.

partially bought into the idea that their incarceration might reform them. Consequently, their pronouncements of their children's virtue and fitness for release may have communicated their own expectations as well, ones that their children had to satisfy in enlisting their help. Adults appealed to administrators at Morganza, but they also collaborated with them.

Adults' level of collusion with the carceral project was also altered by the pressures of settler-colonial coercion. At Carlisle, Seneca adults' petitions for the release of youth were less inclined to litigate their good character and moral preparedness to leave and more inclined to address their conditions at the institution, sometimes suggesting improvements as a possible remedy. In her letter on behalf of Ely Parker, Betsy White also requested that T. J. Morgan investigate the lack of food at the school and if students' meals were sufficiently funded. "He [Ely Parker] says he like the school and the place very well if there was only enough food," she added.[109] This differing focus in letters and petitions reflects the fact that Native families were often less active and enthusiastic participants in the carceral project; their children were taken from them, sometimes not even with their knowledge, rather than turned in by them to be improved. Nevertheless, some parents or relatives of Carlisle students, either due to their own settler status—as with Alice Patterson—or pressures from the state to comply, collaborated to keep their children at Carlisle: Alice Patterson because she fully believed in the civilizing effects of removing her stepdaughter Helen from the reservation; Sarah John because she intended for her son Ely be honorably discharged, although her willingness to care for him after he ran away and return him only when he was feeling better raises the possibility that she sent him back only reluctantly. Regardless, those around her—Betsy White, Mary Kennedy, and her daughter Bertha

[109] "Pratt Responds to Request to Return Ely S. Parker," letter from Betsy White to T. J. Morgan, Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

Parker—would still write on Ely's behalf, criticizing his treatment by administrators and attempting various rhetorical moves to improve his conditions or effect his release.

In any case, across both Carlisle and Morganza, youth and adults' rhetoric often converged in the necessity of invoking the carceral logic of the institution where their loved ones were being held, even when they were harshly critical of it. If a young person should be kept there, it was because they were immoral or needed to be removed from pernicious influences; if they should depart, it should be honorably; if they were to be released, they could be transferred somewhere else, under someone else's control; if they'd been bad upon entry, they were penitent now, reformed, ready to return to the world; and if they could not return, then they really, truly were being detained. Yet even still, amid these petitions, youth were put away for longer. Students' continued incarceration would have disastrous consequences for their physical and mental well-being. These punitive experiences were not inherently in conflict with Carlisle and Morganza's assimilationist ideals—rather, they were part and parcel of them.

V. NEGLECT, SICKNESS, AND DEATH:
THE OTHER FACE OF ASSIMILATION

During the time Douglass was incarcerated at Morganza, the school was struggling with a wave of sickness caused by several years of overcrowding. In a biennial report published in 1898, the school president, Thomas Wightman, addressed the Pennsylvania Board of Charities urging them for funding for additional facilities. "The buildings now in use were intended for the accommodation of three hundred and are occupied by from six hundred to six hundred and fifty, necessitating the use of double-deck beds throughout the Institution," Wightman explained. "Some sixty cases of typhoid fever were developed in one of the family buildings during the past summer, all owing to the defective condition of the pipes and fittings in and throughout the

building."[110] The school physician, W. H. Alexander, would clarify that this was an even more long-standing and extensive problem: "During the past two years the Institution has been visited by an epidemic of typhoid fever, of which there were fifty-four cases, four proving fatal. Also an epidemic of measles, of which there were sixty-five cases, one proving fatal."[111] A later biennial report, published in 1902, would explain that overcrowding at the school had been a problem—or at least a threat—for at least a decade. Wightman wrote that "At each session of the Legislature for more than twelve years, application has been made for an appropriation to cover the cost of erection of additional family buildings without success," meaning that inmates frequently had to sleep on the floors or the school had to refuse new ones.[112] This crowded and unhealthy environment, whose requests for larger facilities had gone unanswered, was the one that Emma Hinton and Ella Douglass were sent to and would die in.

Later in Carlisle's history, after Pratt's resignation and under the superintendencies of Capt. William A. Mercer, Moses Friedman, and Oscar Lipps, conditions at Carlisle would also continue to deteriorate. In 1913, repeated student petitioning led by the Anishinaabe student Gus Welch would give rise to a Senate investigation that year and the following.[113] By 1914, long after the departure of Ely Parker and his cohort, multiple testimonies would surface of student hunger, bringing institutional neglect and administrative repression into the public eye. Hattie McDowell, a teacher at Carlisle, and Wallace Denny, a former student-turned-disciplinarian, stated that there was a lack of bread and that students complained that the meat was spoiled.[114]

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[110]"Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1897-98," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, box 1, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-850, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[111] "Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1897-98," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.
[112] "Biennial Report of the Pennsylvania Reform School, 1900-1902," Biennial Reports of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza.
[113] Fear-Segal and Rose, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School*, p. 10.
[114] "Hattie M. McDowell Congressional Testimony, 1914," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs); "Wallace Denny Congressional Testimony, 1914," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

When Denny tried to investigate why bread was lacking at the school even though it was so cheap, he remarked, "I did try to trace it back, and pretty near got into trouble about it."[115] The school closed in 1918.

Amid scenes of deprivation and death, some have questioned whether assimilation and carceral violence have much to do with each other at all. If students at Carlisle and Morganza were meant to be assimilated and remade as upright American citizens, why were they systematically neglected and treated as expendable? Some scholars of Carlisle and the boarding school system argue that at the turn of the 20th century, following the resignation of Pratt and the rise of eugenics, administrators' objectives turned away from assimilation and towards adaptation—funneling Native students not upwards as equals with whites but downwards into the lower rungs of settler society.[116] Others have questioned the disciplinary or "biopolitical" function of the prison as an institution, instead arguing that its principal purpose has historically been a necropolitical one: incapacitating prisoners, removing them from public life, and killing them.[117] I do not see these things as inevitably contradictory.

If Carlisle and Morganza's administrators trumpeted a benevolent, regenerative Americanizing project, then to make a clear distinction between assimilation on the one hand and violence and death on the other is to do their rhetorical work for them—cleansing the name and the historical legacy of assimilation. Rather than identifying a clean temporal break between assimilative and carceral policy, I argue that student sickness and death are pervasive elements that reveal their complicated interrelationship and, in some ways, their mutual dependence. The

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[115] "Wallace Denny Congressional Testimony, 1914," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).
[116] Fear-Segal and Rose, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School*, p. 24; for a challenge to this view, see Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling*, p. 49-51.
[117] Jessi Lee Jackson, "Sexual Necropolitics and Prison Rape Elimination," *Signs* 39, no. 1 (2013): p. 208. https://doi.org/10.1086/670812.

carceral mechanisms of assimilation relied on bodily isolation, deprivation, and harm that took a toll on students' physical and mental well-being and could claim their lives.

Throughout the 1890s and into the early 1900s, Seneca students departed later than they or their petitioners had hoped, with the earliest leaving due to sickness. Helen Patterson was sent back on May 6, 1895 of ill health.[118] Nellie Kennedy was sent back twice in 1895: first for ill health, second because she was "not strong enough." By 1910, she was a homemaker in Gowanda, New York, presumably back on the Cattaraugus Reservation.[119] Lillie Eels also left in 1896 of sickness.[120] Nancy Seneca graduated in 1897 and worked as a nurse in the Indian Service, living in New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. By her own account, she was comfortable, but she remained attached to the place where she grew up: in a 1907 survey, she wrote, "My home is Irving, New York, have always lived there."[121] In 1910, Ely Parker was a farmer, also living in Gowanda. He would not leave Carlisle until 1902. He ran away two more times before then: in August 1893 and later in December 1900, at the age of 23, almost a decade after his first escape.[122] All of these departures took place under Pratt's administration.

Departure from sickness was not necessarily an aberration from a norm of assimilationist uplift. Looked at differently, it was a legacy that this norm left on students' bodies if they survived. Incarceration at Carlisle was an extended process that could be cut short when students were physically unable to endure their time there anymore. Some students who fell fatally ill at Carlisle were sent back home where they died, a practice incentivized in part to diminish

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[118] "Helen Patterson Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 60, folder 3003. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[119] "Nellie Kennedy Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 60, folder 2994. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[120] "Lillie Eels Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 59, folder 2966. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[121] "Nancy Seneca Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Series 1327, box 136, folder 5332. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
[122] "Ely Parker Student File," Record Group 75 (Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

Carlisle's recorded death rates.[123] The many who returned and lived were unlikely to have been entirely unchanged by their experiences. After coming back to the Cattaraugus Reservation, Nellie Kennedy's listed occupation as a homemaker was in line with the domestic role that Native girls and young women were expected to adopt as part of their "uplift" by settlers. Even so, like at Morganza, the intense isolation and deprivation that students experienced may have rendered the lives charted for them outside of the institution—for instance, being a farmer, laborer, or housewife—preferable to what they experienced inside of it.

In this vein, the physical toll that Carlisle and Morganza could take on their captives had a deeply ingrained psychological dimension. Ely Parker and Annie McBride both developed suicidal ideation at their respective institutions. They both wrote letters back home describing their hunger. They both attempted to enlist their relatives in their escape and stated that if they were unable to leave, they would end their lives. That administrators were set on creating a new kind of person—an orderly, productive American subject—meant that they imposed harsh bodily discipline and changed how students ate, slept, worked, and related to one another, driving some to a breaking point in the process. At the same time, the lack of evidence that administrators particularly cared for students' suicidality—and evidence to the contrary, in Pratt's letter smearing Parker as a bad student for writing about his hunger—indicates that death was at least tacitly seen as an acceptable risk of assimilation. Death was built into the process; often, the policy was not to kill youth altogether but to let some die.

Ella Douglass and Emma Hinton would also depart from their institution when their bodies gave out, though they would not return anywhere. Ella's marriage, though planned, never materialized. The only record potentially relating to her death is a mostly empty piece of paper

[123] Frank Vitale, "Counting Carlisle's Casualties: Defining Student Death at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879–1918." *American Indian Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2020): p. 400. https://doi.org/10.5250/amerindiquar.44.4.0383.

from New Castle, Pennsylvania, dated 3-10-97—potentially meaning October 3, 1897—that reads, "Received body of Ella Douglas."[124] The only record of Emma's death is a transit permit for her body. Her cause of death was listed as "Pulmonary Complications following Typhoid Fever," on November 2, 1897 at age 19.[125] Yet despite all of the documents in her inmate file listing her name as Emma Hinton, and her father's name as Jacob Hinton, her last name in the cemetery was Emma Ginton.[126]

Why was Emma Hinton's name spelled that way on the gravestone? Was she really so expendable that they misspelled her name on the very plate that remembered her life and commemorated her death? When I looked for her in the archives, I couldn't find her until long after I had returned home. I checked the Gs, didn't see a Ginton, and assumed that her file was lost altogether. It wasn't until much later, as I was sifting through the thousands of photographs I'd taken, that she appeared to me. I realized that *Emma Hinton* was the girl in Stuart's memoir. Her expendability in life and death formed a part of her expendability after—because how could someone who knew her by the name on her gravestone have located her file except by stumbling?

Ella Douglass and Emma Hinton's lives collapsed the boundaries between assimilative and carceral policy, redeemability and expendability. The qualities that made both girls assimilable in the eyes of the state were also ones that made them expendable: they walked around at night; they took up too much space; their families were propertyless; their intimate lives were inscrutable; they weren't performing American womanhood right—yet they were still in their teens, malleable but also vulnerable. They were brought to an institution that would

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[124] Received Body of Ella Douglass, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 1, folder Derrick-Douglass, Western Center, G-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[125] Emma Hinton Body Transit Permit, Inmate Records of the Pennsylvania Reform School at Morganza, carton 2, folder HI, Western Center, RG-023-AMRT-WEST-846, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg.
[126] David E. Stuart, *The Morganza, 1967.*

remove them from their "corruptive" surroundings, yet the same institution was not considered important enough to properly fund or expand, leading to its overcrowding. At the same time, this combination of "salvation" and institutional neglect generated incentives for inmates to surrender their former values, as conditions were difficult enough for youth to attempt to become—or present themselves as—fit for departure into respectable lives. Incarceration, expendability, and exclusion from the body politic reshaped the terms upon which inmates could reenter. But the violence of this traumatic rupture could push students beyond their limits. If Black youth were more peripheral to Morganza's assimilationist mission, could they have borne the brunt of the violence of expendability? Could Emma Hinton's misspelled gravestone be understood in this way? Or were both of the girls the same in death?

I do not feel that assimilation was experienced equally. But on the whole, I maintain that there is no inherent contradiction between assimilation and death. The possibility of death was not in itself hostile to the assimilative project; on the contrary, it was structurally closer to a calculated loss, the cost of creating a governable population through the removal, isolation, and abuse of the next generation. It was an assault on the "un-American" on two fronts, cultural and physical, acting in concert with one another. Carlisle represented this assault in its most explicit form: a physical and a cultural genocide; Morganza did not aspire to extermination, but it would not permit youth to exist as they were. Death breaks the façade of assimilation as something benevolent, an alternative to state violence—the rosy image Carlisle and Morganza intended to project. In the end, the violent face of assimilation showed itself honestly and completely. Ella Douglass, Emma Hinton, and all the lives claimed by Carlisle and Morganza were its casualties.

CONCLUSION

Carlisle may not have aspired to be a prison like Morganza, nor might Morganza have imagined itself as the same kind of institution as Carlisle. Even so, the experiences of the young people incarcerated at each ultimately cast them as relatives. They operated in a historical moment with critical changes to the national fabric: the swallowing of Native land; the first decades of Black citizenship; and the gradual absorption of white ethnic immigrants into the dominant class. At both institutions, youth were severed from their communities on account of their inability to abide by a white, middle-class American ethic. Their communications were monitored, even outright censored; they were vulnerable to disproportionate punishment and abuse; and they confronted substandard conditions that compromised their physical well-being through sickness, hunger, or overcrowding. Administrators expected to produce "good citizens" by catching redeemable, wayward children before it was "too late," but claiming them as Americans often exposed them to a new terrain of hardship with dubious rewards.

Young people at both Carlisle and Morganza were far from passive participants in the assimilationist project. Often because of adverse positions at both institutions, they were forced to advocate for themselves, sometimes taking stronger stances against the institution than their parents—predictably at Morganza, more surprisingly at Carlisle. Students demanded that their parents and relatives assist them in leaving and improving their circumstances, even as they risked censorship and interception by those tasked with Americanizing them. The difficulties of communicating across long distances—either due to language barriers, perusal, or the simple fact of geography—meant that students struggled with isolation, loneliness, and grief and that their relatives were often left in the dark about their everyday lives. Often, knowing what to disclose when and to whom was a survival strategy—whether it be attempting to run away without

getting noticed, avoiding the harsh interrogation of a superintendent, or galvanizing political support from the right kinds of people. Nevertheless, the pressure of incarceration could lead students in both places to consider suicide and to threaten it if they were unable to escape. Others did not survive.

When comparing these two institutions, I do not argue that their attendees experienced them equally. At reform schools, assimilation was not always an end in itself. Instead, it operated as a tactic that opened or closed avenues for employment, social mobility, and land acquisition depending on the structural position of each student. In spite of its widespread violence across groups, the assimilatory project might amount to a land gain for white ethnics who aspired to move upward into middle-class respectability (if they were not "put in their place" as laborers), whereas it undoubtedly constituted a loss for Native youth, whose nations' land bases were dramatically reduced through genocidal legislation and the social fragmentation that accompanied students' prolonged absence from their communities. For Black youth, who were regarded as alternately assimilable and permanently different, assimilationist institutions were more ambiguous: they could provide limited possibilities for social mobility, or they could operate more openly as sites of capture and neglect, rendering students expendable to the state. These carceral programs reveal the flexibility of the category of youth, experienced differently across race, gender, and nation, and the enormous price many young people paid as their bodies became the cogs of a new, reformulated American empire.

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