Under the Guise of Liberation, a Struggle for Empire: Columbia University's Connection with the Spanish-American War

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As the United States prepared to bid farewell to the nineteenth century, it found itself amid yet another war, this time against one of the largest imperial powers in history: Spain. Before American intervention, several Spanish colonies had already taken up arms against the colonizing power. A legacy of Spanish oppression over its colonies propelled the Cuban and Filipino struggles for independence. On one hand, Cuba had been engaged in this liberation fight for decades, with the Ten Years War (1868-1878) presenting one of the first long-standing struggles for liberation on the island.[1] The third of such uprisings in 1895 was characterized by a particular cruelty by the empire. Of Spanish warfare in Cuba, President William McKinley said, "It was not civilized warfare. It was extermination."[2] On the other hand, Filipino revolts against the Spanish commenced in 1896 as Filipino elites and their constituents created a proto-nationalist, separatist coalition to oust Spanish rule.[3] While these events presented the probability of American humanitarian intervention, the changes in the Spanish government in 1897 and the international code of law prevented and prolonged immediate action.

Not long before the declaration of war on April 26, 1898, the explosion of the *USS Maine* off the coast of Havana on February 15, 1898, fueled anti-Spanish sentiments. The incident killed 266 of the 354 men aboard the ship. Yellow journalism flourished during the period. Such emphasis on a sensationalist outlook on journalistic endeavors, that had previously exaggerated the inhumane treatment of Cubans by the Spanish, became more incendiary after the ship's explosion. Joseph Pulitzer—founder of the Columbia School of Journalism and namesake of Pulitzer Hall—was a pioneer who profited greatly from the technique. His newspaper, *New York World*, published articles that propagated mass hysteria

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[1] James Hyde Clark. *Cuba and the Fight for Freedom*. (Philadelphia : Globe Bible Publishing, 1896), 8.
[2] William McKinley. "First Annual Message," The American Presidency Project, December 6, 1897, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/first-annual-message-15.
[3] Reynaldo Ileto. "The Road to 1898: On American Empire and the Philippine Revolution." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2021), 505. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/03086534.2021.1920804?needAccess=true.

with headlines that read, "Maine Explosion Caused by Bomb or Torpedo?"[4] He was not alone in this practice. William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* published similar headlines, "Crisis is at Hand…Spanish Treachery".[5] The inflammatory articles published by Pulitzer's *New York World* and its competitor, Hearst's *New York Journal*, had substantial influence over public opinion, leading to public outcries of mass hysteria. Calls to "Remember the Maine, to hell with Spain" were common at the time as a rallying cry against Spanish cruelty.

The importance of the Maine in the declaration of war against Spain was made explicit by President William McKinley during his 1898 "Declaration of War" speech. In it, he pointed to the *USS Maine* explosion as being a key component in inciting American passions against the Spanish. However, unlike the sensationalist headlines, he did not place immediate blame on the Spanish but rather asserted that the presumed inability of the Spanish Crown to "assure safety and security to a vessel of the American Navy in the harbor of Havana on a mission of peace" at the Cuban front was cause for concern and impetus for action.[6] The explosion thus highlighted, according to President McKinley's speech, Spain's willful neglect and lack of qualification in guaranteeing safety, security, and protection at Cuba's waterfront even for its international neighbors.

President of Columbia University at the time of the Spanish-American War, Seth Low, further problematized the turbulent political climate in Cuba as posing a threat to American national security at the 130th Annual Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York. The proximity of Cuba to the United States, with only 90 miles separating the two States at their closest, made intervention more necessary. Although he does not expand on the

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[4] "Maine Explosion Caused by a Bomb or Torpedo?" *New York World* (New York, NY), February 17, 1898. https://ilp-media.wgbh.org/filer_public/59/71/59717b09-d5c3-4008-ac4d-eb52e4d94313/nyworld.jpg.

[5] "Crisis is at Hand: Cabinet in Session, Growing Belief in Spanish Treachery," *New York Journal* (New York, NY), https://ilp-media.wgbh.org/filer_public/af/00/af00b88c-81ff-42dc-ad7e-0c96164dc4a3/nyj.jpg.

[6] William McKinley. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Volume X, Part 2: William McKinley: Messages, Proclamations, and Executive Orders Relating to the Spanish-American War)*, ed. James D. Richardson, (Washington, D.C.: Project Gutenberg, 2004). https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14446/14446-h/14446-h.htm.

reasons for such supposed fears, his treatment of the Philippine front provides insight. Regarding the conflict as it manifested in the Philippines, Low points to the fear of attack on American merchant ships in the Pacific Ocean as a cause for concern. He boisterously congratulates and thanks Commodore George Dewey's leadership during the Battle of Manila, pointing to the "peculiar heroism" that relieved the American Pacific coast of concern of threat.[7] Free and unhindered naval movement for merchant ships was crucial to the members of the Chamber of Commerce, an entity made exclusively by individuals that built their wealth, or benefitted from a legacy of, merchant transactions. President Low was alluding to merchant sensibilities to a room of merchants for support in the endeavors of the war.

Essentially, President Low could yield great influence over the actions of state governmental agencies on the proceedings of the war. Considering that the members of the Chamber of Commerce of New York were from the wealthy, merchant class, Low was also in a position to influence the perception of the war by society's most influential members. In 1898, he was tasked by the members of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York to draft resolutions to be voted on and adopted by the Chamber. A key aspect of the resolutions was the humanity, loyalty, and patriotism of the American people in their defense of Cuba. The need for "unqualified and hearty support" of the government and the war was cast as vital to secure "for the people of Cuba a free and stable government".[8] President Low points to the vindication that the country in general, and that Chamber in particular, will be granted once history marks its dedication to the promotion of the values of freedom, security, and humanity in Cuba.

Low was not the only Columbia affiliate given a platform to speak during the Proceedings. William E. Dodge, Marcellus Hartley Dodge's—the namesake of Hartley Hall

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[7] *The War with Spain: Proceedings of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York* (New York: Press of the Chamber of Commerce, 1898), 5.
[8] *Ibid.*

and Dodge Hall—uncle and co-founder of Teacher's College, was also present at the function. During his speech, he acknowledged the "wise, patriotic, and statesmanlike action" of President McKinley and his Cabinet in their efforts against Spain. He characterizes the war as a peculiar one because of its selfless nature, explicitly stating that the United States had "absolutely nothing to gain. It is an unselfish war."[9] This sentiment was echoed by another Columbia alumnus and faculty member at the Proceedings, Abram S. Hewitt, after whom Hewitt Hall at Barnard College is named. He stated that "the United States never desired the possession of Cuba…neither the Government of this country nor the people of this country will take advantage of the situation to add one foot of territory to its already ample domain."[10] Although fighting did not solely occur in Cuba, the emphasis placed on the island is indicative of its importance for American businesses. By the 1890s, United States businessmen had virtually monopolized the Cuban sugar markets. A booming sugar refining industry, including big sugar families like the Havemeyers, thus relied heavily upon Cuban products, consequently attracting greater attention in discussions, especially among the upper echelons of the merchant class society.[11]

Another important characteristic of the Proceedings is the importance placed on the United States as a civilizing force that is destined to spread the ideals of Western progress. The dichotomy of uncivilized and civilized nations is iterated by President of the Chamber of Commerce Alexander Orr, who asserted that the Spanish-American War was "the battle of humanity and the battle of civilization."[12] The United States is thus posed as the civilizing force that will free Cuba from the shackles of Spanish oppression. This paternalistic rhetoric, imbued with American exceptionalism, is pronounced by several other members of the New

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[9] *Ibid*., 7
[10] *Ibid*., 10.
[11] Anne Laurie White, "Building Havemeyer Hall: Charles Frederick Chandler and the Sugar Refining Industry," *Columbia University and Slavery*, 2017. https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/content/dam/cuandslavery/seminars/hist-3518/2017-projects/White%202017%20-%20Building%20Havemeyer%20Hall.pdf.
[12] *The War with Spain*, 7.

York Chamber of Commerce. Dodge calls on the United States as the "front rank of the civilized nations…a part of the police of the world."[13] As a result, they must prevent the cruelties and wickedness that the Cuban people were subjected to under Spanish rule. By protecting their Cuban neighbors, American wisdom was meant to warrant exponential progress for the Western world. Similarly, Hewitt casts Cuba as an uncivilized nation that did not possess the capacity to govern itself.[14] With all, the members of the Chamber of Commerce asserted that it was the responsibility of the United States to care for its Cuban neighbors. In doing so, they were setting the foundation for what became a period of expansive and imperialist foreign policy in Latin America that spanned into and throughout the twentieth century in the name of freedom through regime changes.

The importance of character was crucial for Dodge, who asserted that the type of men that volunteered to participate in the war were "the very flower of our manhood, the most vigorous, able and best young men in the country." [15] By this he did not mean that all the men who volunteered possessed these qualities, but rather that there was a class of men that volunteered of a higher caliber. To explicate this, he compared the British and American armies, the British replete with the country's agricultural peasantry, while the American saw wealthy, educated men in its ranks.[16] This was not, if at least partially, an incorrect assumption. Ivy League-educated men, sons of the wealthiest families of the country, could be found in every major branch of the army and naval forces.

The foregoing was no less true for Columbia students, alumni, and faculty, many of whom volunteered at the outbreak of the war. According to President Low's 1898 Annual Report, 47 students enlisted in either the army or navy during the time of the war with Spain. Out of these, six were members of the college, seven from the School of Law, 13 from the

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[13] *Ibid.,* 7.
[14] *Ibid*., 10.
[15] *The War with Spain*, 8.
[16] *Ibid*.

School of Applied Science, and 21 from the School of Medicine.[17] These individuals interrupted their studies to go to the forefront of the battle. President Low thanked and congratulated them in his report, "in this day of trial, the men of Columbia have kept unfalteringly the pledge that was made in their name to love, cherish, and defend the country's flag."[18] In a later speech at the University of Pennsylvania's "University Day" in 1899, he characterized the volunteers as possessing "splendid valor" and "noble devotion" for the protection of the country's welfare.[19] For their participation, all students of the graduating class that were called to the frontline were granted degrees without examination, when their previous records justified such actions. Other students were granted leaves of absence with the privilege of returning to the university at their earliest convenience upon the conclusion of the war.[20] Also, members of the university, including Barnard College and Teacher's College, that did not engage in the physical aspect of the altercation, formed themselves into a Red Cross Auxiliary. The group collected $6,750 to be transmitted to the Treasurer of the National Association to aid sailors and soldiers.[21] Asserting that Columbia, as an institution represented by its affiliates, was an exemplar of patriotism and heroic action, echoes of his resolutions before the New York Chamber of Commerce can be heard throughout his report.

The moral character of the men who volunteered to serve in the war was of grave importance. George R. Van De Water, Columbia University's chaplain during the war, emphasized as much in an article published by the *Columbia Spectator*. In it, Van De Water underscored the importance of war to test a man's character. Because war placed men in positions where their every qualification was to be tested and his manhood "weighed in the

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[17] Seth Low. *President's Annual Report*. (New York: Columbia University, 1898), 91. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t4vh67h73&seq=1&q1=.
[18] *Ibid*., 10.
[19] Seth Low, "The United States in 1899: An Address Delivered Before the University of Pennsylvania, February 22nd, 1899" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1899), 3.
[20] Low. *President's Annual Report*, 10.
[21] *Ibid.*

balances," it was then that his true character would be revealed.[22] Whether "personal bravery or cowardice is the actual revelation" of such enterprises.[23] He pointed specifically to the "Cuban campaign" as a recent example of such a phenomenon.[24] His message can thus succinctly be put as: go to war and discover if you are a man of character. Or, read otherwise, be a man of character, and go to war.

Van De Water continued referencing men's character, writing, "It was in war as in peace; on the field of battle as in the academic lecture room; in the sad scenes of the field hospitals as in the drawing room of a Fifth Avenue mansion…one thing counts, and that is character."[25] According to Van De Water, a man's character should not be confined to moments in which men are in comfortable positions—like the young men of Columbia who existed imbued with legacies of wealth and social prominence—but should be instilled in such a way that even in moments that could paralyze action with fear, sadness, and anger, it is present.

President Low echoed Van De Water during his 1898 Commencement Week speech that poignantly called upon the character of the young men of Columbia in times of war and the institution's importance in cementing it. He calls upon the moral high-ground of selflessness and sacrifice that the students of the university possess, and is further imbued by the teachings of Columbia:

> *The University does a work of such continuing importance that the work may not be interrupted even by war, except when war makes it impossible; but it also means that our University, with its splendid buildings, its great equipment, and its large endowments, does not exist for itself—that the education to be had here is not given for selfish uses, but is to be received as a sacred trust for country and for mankind; and it means that when any of us are tempered to forget that life is service, and life is sacrifice, we only have to turn, in order to*

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[22] George Van De Water, "Some Christmas Thoughts for Students," *Columbia Spectator*, vol. 41, no. 29 (1898), 253.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*

> *recover the true ideal, to our own brothers of Columbia, who, in war after war, have placed their lives in service of the country.*[26]

President Low essentially asserted that the education to be received at Columbia was not merely for purposes of academic growth and development, but that it should motivate the souls of its students to defend their country and the principles it stands for. Knowing the risks of battle and the possibilities of death, he continued, that the students of Columbia plunged into the Spanish-American War was a commendable feat.

Although during the 1898 Annual Presidential Report President Low could not report any Columbia casualties of current students, three alumni were explicitly named as having lost their lives early on in the war: John Blair Gibbs, George Washington Lindheim, and Hamilton Fish Jr.[27] Born in 1858, Dr. John Blair Gibbs graduated from Rutgers College in 1878 before pursuing his medical studies at the University of Virginia and later at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, from which he graduated in 1882. Throughout his early career, he interned at the Bellevue Hospital and studied abroad in London and Vienna. An esteemed pathologist and surgeon, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Dr. Gibbs was an assistant attending surgeon at the Roosevelt Hospital, as well as an instructor at the Post-Graduate Medical School and first assistant surgeon at the Lebanon Hospital in the Bronx. Still, at the call to battle, he applied for a position in the naval medical service; after which, he was appointed acting assistant surgeon with the rank of ensign in the United States Navy. Unfortunately, on June 11th, 1898, Dr. Gibbs was reportedly killed during the Battle of Guantánamo Bay.[28]

Dr. Gibbs was considered by some to be the first officer to die as a result of the war. The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, for example, remembered him as the "first

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[26] "Commencement Week, 1898," *Columbia University Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1898), 16, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwxnt9&seq=1&q1=.
[27] Low, *President's Annual Report*, 9.
[28] "Obituary,"*Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, vol. 138, no. 25 (June 23, 1898), 602-3, https://www-nejm-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJM189806231382516.

medical officer to lose his life in the present war."[29] His impact was such that the general field hospital at Camp Hamilton in Lexington, Kentucky was renamed the John Blair Gibbs General Hospital by order of the President.[30] What's more, four years later, in 1902, a tablet was presented by alumni of the School of Physicians and Surgeons to the University in memory of Dr. Gibbs, George Washington Lindheim, and Harry Augustus Young, all alumni of the institution that had died as a result of the war.[31] Similarly, during the 132nd Anniversary Celebration of Rutgers College, a tablet in memory of Dr. Gibbs was unveiled at the Kirkpatrick Chapel.[32] Whether Dr. Gibbs was truly the first officer to die is unknown. However, his memorialization as such is indicative of the increasing importance placed on wealthy, educated men who had volunteered for war—a trace that can be linked to William Dodge's speech before the Chamber of Commerce.

Yet another Columbia alumnus who perished due to the war was Dr. George Washington Lindheim. He graduated from the School of Physicians and Surgeons in 1898. During the Spanish-American War, Dr. Lindheim served as a surgeon for the Red Cross and as a corporal of the Eighth Regiment of New York Volunteers. He was tasked with transporting the train conveying 265 sick soldiers of that regiment from the Tennessee Camp at Chickamauga, Georgia to New York City. Although he was able to transfer all the men under his care, he was unable to escape the claws of disease himself, contracting typhoid fever. Dr. Monae Lesser, the chief surgeon of the Red Cross, pointed to his labor at Chickamauga and worry over accusations of medical neglect as the source of his demise.[33] The latter point is based on accusations of "heartlessness and profanity" because he angered

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[29] *Ibid*.
[30] "Named in Honor of John Blair Gibbs," *Boston Daily Globe* (Boston, MA), October 31, 1898, 5. https://www.newspapers.com/image/430863279/?terms=%22john%20blair%20gibbs%22&match=1.
[31] "Memorial Tablet at P. and S." *Columbia Spectator* (New York, NY), May 13, 1902, 7. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19020513-01.2.40&srpos=1&e=.
[32] "Gibbs Tablet: Memorial Unveiled with Impressive Ceremonies Yesterday," *The Daily Times* (New Brunswick, NJ), November 11, 1898, https://www.newspapers.com/image/17069592/.
[33] "Death of Dr. Lindheim," *Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, MD), September 17, 1898, 8. https://www.newspapers.com/image/365270025/.

and refused a proposition by Cleveland surgeons to take some of the sick under his care. As a result, he was publicly condemned for incompetency and cruelty.[34] President Low characterized his death as "singularly tragic."[35]

The last member mentioned by President Low was Hamilton Fish Jr. A member of the prominent Fish family, Fish Jr. fell within a generational legacy of Columbia affiliates. An alumnus of the college and trustee, his grandfather, Hamilton Fish Sr., was a candidate for New York Assemblyman in 1834, a U.S. Representative from New York from 1843 to 1845, a candidate for lieutenant governor of New York in 1848, the governor of New York from 1849 to 1851, a US Senator from New York from 1851 to 1857, and the U.S. Secretary of State under President Grant from 1869 to 1877.[36] In 1872, as president of the Spanish Peace Conference at Washington, he mediated negotiations between Spain and the republics of Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Ecuador to formally address tensions and bring closure to the state of war that had permeated the region. Additionally, alongside President Grant, Fish was crucial in preventing a war with Spain in 1873 following the *Virginius* affair. A conference was held with Spanish minister, Admiral José Polo de Bernabé, and a settlement was reached for the Spanish to relinquish the *Virginius*, release survivors, pay $80,000 to be distributed to the families of executed mariners, and conduct formal investigations and carry out the censure of those involved with the executions.[37] Not only was Hamilton Fish Sr. a crucial figure in New York's sociopolitical history, but also in retaining amicable relations with the Spanish, thus preventing the outbreak of the war by over a decade.

Fish Sr.'s influence held familial ties since his nephew Fish Jr. also participated in the struggle against Spain. A member of the Columbia College Class of 1895, Ham, as he was

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[34] *Ibid*.
[35] Low, *President's Annual Report*, 9
[36] Corning, Amos Elwood. *Hamilton Fish* (New York: The Lanmere Publishing Co, 1918), 11-22. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t6736wb05&seq=17&q1=1843.
[37] Nevins, Allan. *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1936), 620.

affectionately called by friends and colleagues, embodied the ideal of a holistic student: member of the football team and fencing club, manager of the Intercollegiate Track Athletic Team, manager of the Columbia College Musical Society and member of its board of directors, and class vice president. In 1895, he went West and engaged in railroad surveying and other such practical railroad matters.[38] No more than three years later, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, he enlisted with Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders;[39] here it is crucial to note Roosevelt's connections with the institution, having attended the School of Law from 1880 to 1882 before leaving his post to assume a seat at the State Assembly.[40] He went on to Texas to train and, by June 1898, was *en route* to Cuba to fight at the forefront. Unfortunately, on June 24, 1898, he perished during the Battle of Las Guásimas.[41]

After he died, his image was memorialized as a Hercules in life. An article published by the *Columbia Spectator* on January 25, 1901, referencing an article by Richard Harding Davis for *Scribers Magazine*'s September 1898 issue, stated:

> *Its position was a hundred yards in advance of any of the others—it was apparently the body of the first man killed. After death, the bodies of some men seem to shrink almost instantly within themselves; they become limp and shapeless, and their uniforms hang upon them strangely. But this man, who was a giant in life, remained a giant in death—his very attitude was one of attack; his fists were clinched, his jaw set and his eyes, which were still human, seemed fixed with resolve. He was dead, but he was not defeated.*

Like Dr. Gibbs, the death of Hamilton Fish Jr. can be contested. It is likely, that presumed bravado and inflated ego pushed Fish Jr. to act before it was prudent, to advance in battle before he was indicated to. Not a trained soldier, this possibility does not seem

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[38] "Sergt. Hamilton Fish Jr. Killed at Battle Near Santiago," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, Utah), July 1, 1898, https://www.newspapers.com/image/11654193/.
[39]"Hamilton Fish Jr." *The Fort Wayne Gazette* (Fort Wayne, IN), June 25, 1898, 1. https://www.newspapers.com/image/29021888/.
[40] "Theodore Roosevelt," *Columbia 250*, Accessed November 26, 2023, https://c250.columbia.edu/c250_celebrates/remarkable_columbians/theodore_roosevelt.html.
[41] "Gift to Men who Fought with Fish," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), December 27, 1898, 5. https://www.newspapers.com/image/349911382/.

far-fetched. It is also likely that less prominent men fell at the hands of the Spanish long before Fish Jr. even reached the island of Cuba. Yet, his family's status and wealth meant that they were able to write him in history as such, to heroicize and memorialize his death.

This final point is visible since, upon news of his death, the Hamilton Fish Jr. Fund was created to erect a gateway at the entrance to university grounds on Amsterdam Avenue. The gateway was meant to symbolize the war and subsequent American victory. There was great emphasis on remembering the "men who gave up their lives for their country."[42] Whether this fund resulted in any of Columbia's current Amsterdam gateways is unclear. What is known, however, is that there was a plaque built in the name of Hamilton Fish Jr. The inscription on the plaque read: "Sergeant of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry, who while fighting for his country was the first to give up his Life and was killed at the engagement of Las Guásimas, Cuba, June xxiv, MDCCCXCVIII. A member of the class of '95, Columbia."[43] The plaque once again places Hamilton Fish Jr.'s death as the first of the conflict and literally inscribes it in stone.

The tablet was originally placed in room 201 of College Hall, now known as Buell Hall, but was to be moved to Memorial Hall once it was completed.[44] Although Memorial Hall was completed and formally opened at the 1901 Commencement Day, there is no record of the tablet being moved.[45] It is unclear whether the tablet was moved upon the completion of University Hall, of which Memorial Hall was a part. A *Columbia Spectator* article published in 1951, pointed to it being placed in College Hall, with no mention of its

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[42] "The Hamilton Fish Memorial Fund," *Columbia Spectator* (New York, NY), November 2, 1898, 194. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs18981102-01&e=.
[43] "Hamilton Fish: Memorial Tablet in College Hall—Given by Friends and Classmates," *Columbia Spectator* (New York: NY), January 25, 1901, 1. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19010125-01.2.7&srpos=4&e=.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] "Commencement Day: Distribution of Tickets—Order of Exercises—Formal Opening of Alumni Memorial Hall—Commencement Committees," *Columbia Spectator* (New York: NY), May 29, 1901, 3. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19010529-01.2.2&srpos=58&e=.

subsequent move.[46] This was the last mention of the Hamilton Fish Memorial Tablet in the university newspaper. However, if it was moved, its location would nonetheless remain unclear since on October 10, 1914, there was a fire that ravaged University Hall, leaving only the swimming pool and power-house standing.[47] Plans for its reconstruction were made to include another Memorial Hall. [48] Yet again, there is no further mention of the plaque's whereabouts during this period. Despite the emphasis originally placed on Columbia's affiliation with the war, a lack of attention and remembrance has tinged the institution's collective memory of the events as they related to its history. Columbia University's neglect to care for the plaque could be construed as willful forgetfulness—an attempt to preserve its image as an institution of progressive thought, not linked to the oppressive system of imperialism.

Moreover, faculty were equally involved in the fighting, on and off the battlefield. President Low points to some of them during his 1898 Annual Report before the Board of Trustees. The university chaplain, George R. Van De Water, became the chaplain of the 71st Regiment of New York Volunteers and on the field ministered consolation to the sick and wounded, while also helping bury fallen soldiers. Other members of the faculty included: (1) Adjunct Professor Charles E. Pellow of the Chemistry Department, who was a Lieutenant of the Signal Corps under General Greely and was later promoted to Captain of this Corps; (2) Mr. George F. Server, Instructor in Electrical Engineering, who as a member of the Naval Reserve, was ordered in May 1898 to take charge of the Montauk Post signal station; and (3) Dr. John H. Claiborne, Instructor in Ophthalmology, who was an Adjutant of the 12th Ministry of New York Volunteers.[49] It must be noted that all faculty members who were on

[46] "Fifty Years Ago This Week in the Columbia Spectator," *Columbia Spectator* (New York: NY), February 12, 1951, 2. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19510212-01.2.15&srpos=1&e=.
[47] "University Remembers Fire 20 Years Ago," *Columbia Spectator* (New York, NY), October 10, 1934, 1. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19341010-01.1.1&e=.
[48] "Will the Dream of Years Soon Become?" *Columbia Spectator* (New York: NY), October 12, 1914, 8. https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19141012-01.2.43&srpos=2&e=.
[49] Low, *President's Annual Report*, 8.

leave as a result of the war were fully financially compensated.[50] The university was able to mobilize funds so that there was no financial burden to deter faculty members from joining the fight.

Perhaps one of the most crucial Columbia figures during the Spanish-American War was John Bassett Moore. Considered an authority of international law, at the outbreak of the War, Moore was selected to succeed Assistant Secretary William Day, who himself was to succeed Secretary John Sherman, who was resigning his position. This was not Moore's first position in public office, he had previously been appointed by Thomas Bayard to the Delaware State Department. After working to become second assistant secretary, he resigned his post to become Columbia Law School's Hamilton Fish Professor of International Law and Diplomacy.[51] The namesake of the professorship is Hamilton Fish Sr., making the legacy of the Fish family worth noting.

One of Moore's most memorable contributions to the Spanish-American War was his participation in the formal conclusion of the war. Along with William Day, Cushman Davis, William Frye, George Gray, and Whitelaw Reid, Moore was a member of the American Commission to Negotiate and Conclude a Peace Treaty with Spain. Having been appointed by President McKinley as the Secretary and Counsel of the Commission, he was tasked with drafting the treaty and presenting it to the parties in its English version.[52] The Treaty of Paris stipulated the following provisions: (1) Spain ceded sovereignty and control over Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam; (2) for the sum of $20,000,000, the United States will acquire the archipelago of the Philippines; and (3) the establishment of an "Open Door" Policy in the Philippines for ten years that would grant Spanish ships and merchandise to enter the country

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[50] *Ibid*., 10.
[51] "War Formally Declared," *The Marshfield Mail* (Marshfield, MI), April 28, 1898, https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-marshfield-mail/133724084/.
[52] "Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain" conclusion date: December 10, 1989, *Congressional ProQuest*, 12-19. https://congressional-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/congressional/result/pqpresultpage.gispdfhitspanel.pdflink/$2fapp-bin$2fgis-serialset$2f7$2f6$2f7$2f8$2f3732_sdoc62_0001_from_1_to_50.pdf/entitlementkeys=1234%7Capp-gis%7Cserialset%7C3732_s.doc.62.

under the same terms as U.S. ones.[53] Upon the signing of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898, the Spanish-American War was deemed finished. Although the war signified the fall of the Spanish Empire, it held a diametrically opposite meaning for the United. Having acquired significant land in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the war symbolized the rise of American imperialism. Puerto Rico and Guam remain the legacies of American imperialist greed. Both territories remain colonies of the United States, unable to even vote in presidential elections.

This trend of territorial greed continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One need not look farther than a few years after the end of the war to be met with the American desire for empire. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt signed a permanent lease agreement with the recently established Cuban government to acquire Guantánamo Bay as an American naval base.[54] While it is a territory of the United States, Guantánamo Bay exists as a loophole to American constitutionality. The detention center located there has been tainted with harrowing accounts of torture and the depravity of U.S. officials.

At its core, the Spanish-American War was a war for empire. Instead of vindicating American intervention as rooted in colonial liberation, as President Low asserted before the Chamber of Commerce over a century ago, what history proved was that the freedom of Spanish colonies was a justifying excuse for America's territorial greed in this struggle for empire.[55] In doing so, it also tainted Columbia's image as an institution that promotes and benefits from the oppressive forces of imperialism. We should look at the Spanish-American War and the institution's role in it to reflect on and speak out against contemporary imperialist expansion fueled by capitalist greed.

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[53] "Treaty of Paris," 7.
[54] "Agreement Between the United States and Cuba for the Lease of Lands for Coaling and Naval Stations," February 23, 1903, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/dip_cuba002.asp.
[55] *The War with Spain,* 5.