"At the Bar of Public Sentiment": The Congo Free State Controversy, Atrocity Tales, and Human Rights History

Derrick M. Nault, Sophia University

Introduction

Human rights, in the words of intellectual historian Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, represent "the doxa of our time, belonging among those convictions of our society that are tacitly presumed to be self-evident truths and that define the space of the conceivable and utterable."[1] As to why they are so central to contemporary moral and political discourse, scholars have proposed numerous explanations, usually beginning with an origin point in mind and then describing the progressive acceptance of human rights ideas over time. "[T]ime immemorial," the Greco-Roman era, the eighteenth century Enlightenment era, and the founding of the United Nations are the most common starting points proposed for human rights history.[2] Challenging these conventional narratives, Harvard University professor Samuel Moyn, heading an alternate school of thought, suggests human rights only truly gained widespread acceptance in the 1970s as a substitute for competing "utopian" ideologies such as socialism, anti-colonialism, and anti-communism.[3] "The drama of human rights," writes Moyn, "is that they emerged in the 1970s seemingly from nowhere."[4]

In terms of where human rights first emerged most authors, including Moyn, cite Western civilization, events, or intellectuals as the main impetus for human rights ideas.[5] Some writers have begun to challenge this Eurocentric bias in the human rights literature by seeking antecedents in early non-Western thought or by discussing more recent international contributions to human rights.[6] In the latter camp, Roland Burke posits that during the 1950s and 1960s, anticolonial movements and political figures from the Third World played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary human rights frameworks at the United Nations.[7] Similarly, Fabian Klose shows how Great Britain and France provoked anticolonial sentiment in the Third World and greater awareness of human rights issues at the UN, through "unchecked violence" against subject peoples during colonial wars in Kenya and Algeria.[8] Bonny Ibhawoh also draws on African colonial history to counter the Western origins thesis of human rights. He adopts a more localized approach, however, revealing how human rights discourses critiquing imperialism were employed by Africans in West Nigeria for their socio-economic and political advantage before the term "human rights" entered widespread usage after the Second World War.[9]

This paper agrees with Ibhawoh that precursors to contemporary human rights thought can be traced to the age of imperialism, and with Ibhawoh, Burke, and Klose that the struggles of colonized peoples should figure more prominently

in human rights history. It does this by assessing the significance of a specific episode from early African colonial history: the international controversy arising from Belgian King Leopold II's rule over the Congo Free State (1885–1908). Considering its long-term importance for human rights, leading human rights historians have devoted surprisingly little attention to the controversy. Samuel Moyn and Micheline Ishay, for example, fail to mention it at all, while Paul Lauren only does so in passing.[10] Congo historians, and scholars in other fields, have fortunately added to our knowledge of the international furor linked to the Congo Free State,[11] but Adam Hochschild's widely acclaimed *King Leopold's Ghost* is the only full-length work to explicitly connect events in the colonial territory to the emergence of human rights.[12] However, the book is somewhat hagiographical in its treatment of E. D. Morel, the leader of the Congo Reform Association (CRA), and does not engage with debates in the human rights historiography. Sharon Sliwinski has also links the Congo controversy to the emergence of early human rights ideas in two separate articles, but her work, while insightful, focuses solely on atrocity photographs, inadequately defines human rights, and, like Hochschild's, does not refer to key works in human rights history.[13]

The central thesis of this paper is that international outrage concerning atrocities in the Congo Free State inspired some of the earliest modes of thought and frameworks to protect what we understand today to mean "human rights." The original inspiration for the present work was Lynn Hunt's *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, which traces human rights to eighteenth century Western Europe and the emergence of the epistolary novel and writings critical of torture and cruel punishment.[14] According to Hunt, such new textual forms fostered feelings of empathy among the general public that were eventually expressed in key political documents such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1789).

While Hunt's emphasis on emotions as a source of human rights ideas is warranted, Samuel Moyn points out that her book, which largely focuses on events in France, in fact discusses rights, not human rights. He correctly observes that human rights imply more than "a politics of citizenship at home," requiring one to engage with "a politics of suffering abroad."[15] An important task for human rights historians, he suggests, is to determine when rights were refashioned so as to challenge the nation-state "from above and outside rather than serve as its foundation."[16] Accepting this rights/human rights distinction, this paper suggests that human rights history should be seen as commencing not in the West in the eighteenth century (as argued by Hunt) or in the 1970s (as suggested by Moyn) but in the late nineteenth century due to a crisis of colonial rule in Central Africa. As reports of horrific abuses of Africans under Leopold's rule began to circulate throughout the world, a shocked international community was stirred to challenge violations of Africans' rights, propose ways to prevent future infractions, and demand punishments for perpetrators of mass atrocities in a fashion that would be familiar to contemporary advocates of human rights.

The paper makes use of a concept termed the "atrocity tale" in order to argue that the feelings and emotions associated with the controversy evoked the first human rights visions. According to communications scholars David Bromley, Anson D. Shupe Jr., and Joseph C. Ventimiglia, an atrocity is "an event which is viewed as a flagrant violation of a fundamental cultural value" while an *atrocity tale* is

> a presentation of that event (real or imaginary) in such a way so as to (a) evoke moral outrage by specifying and detailing the value violations, (b) authorize, implicitly or explicitly, punitive sanctions, and (c) mobilize control efforts against the alleged perpetrators.[17]

Works thus far on atrocity tales have generally focused on narratives created for deceptive purposes.[18] Bromley, Shupe Jr., and Ventimiglia, for example, examine how outsiders have demonized religious minorities through such frames for reasons of social control,[19] while Scott A. Bonn and Michael F. Welch link them to "moral panics" promoting US aggression abroad.[20] As this paper will show, the case of the Congo Free State indicates that atrocity tales can also serve a progressive function, particularly when their purpose is to expose, punish, and prevent value violations related to human rights.[21]

Human Rights and Humanitarianism

Before proceeding with our central argument, it is necessary to define "human rights" and distinguish it from "humanitarianism," a related, but different concept. As noted by political scientist Michael Barnett, humanitarianism refers to the "impartial, independent, and neutral provision of relief to those in immediate danger of harm."[22] It is "a discourse of needs" that focuses on "keeping people alive" in the short-term. Human rights differs from humanitarianism because it refers to "a discourse of rights" aimed at eradicating suffering in the long-term.[23] Barnett's landmark study *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* cites Save the Children, CARE International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and World Vision as examples of humanitarian organizations and Amnesty International (AI) as an example of a human rights organization.[24]

To further clarify the definition of human rights, the United Nations, the world's premier human rights authority, states that human rights are

> Those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot function as human beings. Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to fully develop and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience and to satisfy our spiritual and other needs. They are based on mankind's increasing demand for a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each human being will receive respect and attention.[25]

The UN further affirms that human rights are "inalienable" and "universal" in scope and must be respected regardless of a person's "nationality, place of residence, sex,

national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible."[26]

The various types of human rights are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and two covenants that comprise the UN's International Bill of Human Rights (IBHR). Issued in 1948, the UDHR recognizes 30 specific human rights, including the right to equality, freedom from discrimination, freedom of assembly, freedom from slavery, freedom of religion, education, and freedom from torture, among others. The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both adopted in 1966 and entering force in 1976, outline these rights in greater detail.[27] According to the United Nations, "the international covenants on human rights constitute the first all-embracing and legally binding international treaties in the field of human rights."[28] This means that all signatories to the two covenants, which includes the majority of the world's nations, are required under international law to uphold the United Nations' human rights standards.

While human rights and humanitarianism differ, they nonetheless have an interwoven history. This is especially evident in the origins of the international legal codes and institutions aimed at preventing and punishing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The four Geneva Conventions adopted at the UN in 1949, which offer protections to combatants, civilians, and medical personnel during times of war, can be traced back to the First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field, issued in 1864, which was originally intended by the ICRC as a humanitarian measure to lessen the ravages of modern warfare.[29] Other rules of war are contained in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, which include prohibitions against the use of poisonous gases and exploding bullets, attacks on undefended towns, collective punishments, rape, and other war crimes.[30] Although the first recorded international prosecution for a war crime dates back to 1474,[31] the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-46 witnessed the first ever prosecutions for crimes against humanity.[32] Following these trials, the 1948 Genocide Convention, aimed at preventing the destruction of ethnic, racial, or other groups during war or peace time, defined genocide and made it a punishable crime.[33] While the origins of the Geneva Conventions, Hague Conventions, and Genocide Convention lie in humanitarian law,[34] most people today consider violations of such codes to be major human rights issues. For that reason, a history of human rights should encompass these conventions[35] as well as more recent innovations such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), founded in 2002 "to help end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community."[36]

Background to the Congo Controversy

The tragic saga of the Congo Free State commenced with King Leopold II, who in 1873, after scouring the world for unclaimed territory, hired the Welsh-born explorer Henry Morton Stanley to sign treaties, establish military posts, and seek out economic opportunities in the Congo River Basin. Leopold's first success came on 22 April 1884, when the United States, followed by France and Germany, recognized the flag of the Brussels-based International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa, of which Leopold was the President, as that of a friendly government.[37] At the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, through shrewd diplomacy and false promises of free trade and humanitarian works, Leopold convinced the European powers to recognize the authority of his International Association of the Congo (IAC). Shortly after claiming his new possession, Leopold named it the "Congo Free State," dissolved the IAC, appointed himself the King-Sovereign, and divided his territory into two areas: "uninhabited lands," in which he was granted the rights to all resources, and lands for concessionary companies, in which he owned substantial shares.[38] Initially, the Congo Free State seemed to possess few exploitable resources aside from ivory, but with the rubber boom of the early 1890s Leopold, and his business partners, secured hyper profits through terror and forced labour. Outsiders did not learn of the abuses occurring under Leopold's rule until the 1890s, and as a result of international pressure Leopold was forced to sign over ownership of his personal fiefdom to Belgium in 1908. By that time, between 8 and 10 million Congolese had perished in one of the worst crimes of humanity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[39] the acts of which were documented and exposed through a wide array of atrocity tale texts.

Atrocity Tale Texts

For convenience's sake, atrocity tale works concerning Leopold's Congo can be classified into four types: (1) protest letters, (2) literary works, (3) reports, and (4) photographic texts. The following section is not exhaustive, but briefly describes some key texts and their themes. This is followed by an examination of the psychological impact of atrocity tales and a discussion of how feelings and outlooks were translated into early human rights concepts.

1) Protest Letters: "To His Serene Majesty"

Protest letters were texts sent to public figures and the media in an attempt to expose the exploitative economic system in the Congo and ultimately influence public opinion and official policy. The first major letter of importance—entitled "Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II"[40]—was written by George Washington Williams, an African-American journalist, pastor, historian, lawyer, and Civil War veteran, after visiting the Congo in the spring of 1890. Hoping to witness firsthand Leopold's alleged philanthropic works, Williams instead left Africa outraged and disillusioned. He wrote Leopold shortly after, "in plain and respectful language,"[41]

protesting how Congolese were swindled of their lands and brutalized by agents of the Congo Free State, including Henry Morton Stanley. He lashed out at Leopold for allowing kidnappings, coerced labour, torture, and wanton murder. Among the most shocking atrocities Williams recorded was of Belgian officers shooting an African for sport:

> In one war two Belgian Army officers saw, from the deck of their steamer, a native in a canoe some distance away. He was not a combatant and was ignorant of the conflict in progress upon the shore, some distance away. The officers made a wager of £5 that they could hit the native with their rifles. Three shots were fired and the native fell dead, pierced through the head, and the trade canoe was transformed into a funeral barge and floated silently down the river.[42]

Williams's letter, like others concerning the Congo that found their way to the international media and Western governments, conveyed both horror and indignation. It was written to expose the discordance between Leopold's affectation of humanitarian concern for Africans impoverished by the slave trade and bereft of the benefits of "civilization," and the reality of his role in exploiting the very people he purported to be aiding. Williams also contrasted the peaceful and content African in his letter with the rapacious and cruel European, inverting accepted beliefs concerning the "civilized" and "uncivilized." Williams' appeal to justice was not merely a call to uphold international moral standards, but also adhere to the General Act of the Conference of Berlin,[43] the treaty signed by Leopold and other European leaders on 26 February 1885. The treaty included broken promises in Article VI to "watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being."[44]

Concluding that Leopold would have to "answer at the bar of Public Sentiment" for his "crimes," Williams sent copies of his letter to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Secretary of State, and newspapers and magazines throughout Britain and the United States, commencing the international debate over the Congo Free State.[45] The fact that Williams was non-Caucasian perhaps limited the impact of his letter. His early death in 1891 also ensured his role in spearheading the campaign against Leopold was downplayed, if not forgotten, and that others, of a lighter hue and more privileged background, would be credited with first exposing Leopold's atrocities. But at least at the time it was circulated, Williams' protest letter "had torn Leopold's cloak of philanthropy, leaving a general sense that all was not well in the Congo."[46] Reflecting on the long-term significance of the document, Adam Hochschild has aptly called it "a milestone in the history of human rights and of investigative journalism."[47]

2) Literary Works: Conrad and Twain

Around the same time that Williams was in the Congo, the Polish writer Joseph Conrad, intrigued by the mysteries of Central Africa since he was a young boy, ven-

tured to the region, securing work aboard the steamship *Roi des Belges*. The disturbing scenes he witnessed during his six-month visit in 1890 served as the inspiration for his story *Heart of Darkness*, which first appeared in serial form in 1899 in *Blackwoods Magazine* and was later published as a novella in 1903.[48] *Heart of Darkness* tells the story of Mr. Kurtz, a deranged and cruel ivory trade post commander for "the Company," and Charles Marlow, captain of the steamship Nellie, assigned the task of bringing Kurtz back to civilization. While Kurtz was once an upright and well-educated Englishman with humanitarian intentions, his lust for riches and power left him bereft of morals and compassion. Among his many cruel acts, Kurtz decapitated enemies, placed their heads on posts around his bungalow, and forced Africans to crawl on all fours in his presence. Kurtz dies exclaiming "The horror! The horror!" but when Marlow later meets the deceased's fiancée in England he falsely claims Kurtz died whispering her name, covering up her intended's atrocities and moral deterioration. Although *Heart of Darkness* does not mention Leopold by name, it nonetheless indirectly condemns his greed and tyranny through Kurtz and other characters.[49]

The American writer Mark Twain joined the Congo Reform Movement later than Conrad but was more deeply committed to the cause, regularly delivering public lectures, granting interviews, and writing letters to newspapers and influential figures concerning the Congo. His literary contribution *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905) was published in the U.S. and later Europe during the peak of the rubber boom, when conditions had deteriorated beyond what Williams and Conrad had witnessed. Dark yet satirical, the work, reprinted numerous times, features a depiction of Leopold reacting to passages and headlines from pamphlets, newspapers, and other writings critical of his activities in the Congo. Claiming he came to the Congo with piety "oozing" from "every pore," the monarch rails against "meddlesome American missionaries," "frank British consuls," and "blabbingblabbing Belgian-born traitor officials" obsessed with unfavourable aspects of his rule and ignorant of his "generosities," such as his effort to combat the slave trade and bring Christianity to Africa. In one memorable passage, an exasperated Leopold exclaims: "It is all the same old thing—tedious repetitions and duplications of shop-worn episodes; mutilations, murders, massacres, and so on, and so on, till one gets drowsy over it."[50]

Whereas Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* as a result of his experiences in the Congo, Twain, having never set foot on the African continent, strictly relied on the accounts of others and his own imagination as inspiration for his play. Another difference between Conrad's and Twain's writings was that Conrad employed fictional characters to raise questions about colonial rule in central Africa, while Twain attempted to convey Leopold's greed and inhumanity through a monologue delivered by the Belgian monarch himself. It could also be said that Conrad's novella, cerebral and dispassionate in tone, was likely designed to appeal to a more highbrow European readership than Twain's one-man play, which, hyperbolic and grandiloquent in rhetoric, was more suited to middleclass American audiences receptive to

sensationalized depictions of brutalities in faraway lands.

3) Reports: Morel and Casement

E. D. Morel, a founder of the Congo Reform Association, aided the international movement for the Congo through numerous publications, such as the *West African Mail*, the CRA's official newspaper, and his books *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (1905) and *Red Rubber* (1906). Morel's initial concern was not with Leopold's cruelties, but with his obstruction of free trade, which not only ran counter to the king's promises to the European powers during the Berlin Conference but also violated Africans' rights to freely sell their labour and resources.[51] As noted by Kevin Grant, Morel initially enjoyed limited success employing rational arguments to support his economic agenda.[52] By the time of *Red Rubber*—which he dedicated "to the British public"[53]—he realized that he needed to better connect to his intended audience's feelings and employ graphic images to sway public opinion.[54]

In *Red Rubber*, Morel claimed "a crisis in history has arrived[…]The truth, in all its international dangers; its greed, its disordered ambitions, above everything in its horror, stands out naked."[55] After outlining how Leopold deceived Britain and other European states into granting him authority over the Congo, Morel devoted page after page to misdeeds committed by the monarch, quoting at length eyewitness accounts of gross exploitation, rapes, murders, torture, and mutilations from missionaries, members of the Force Publique (sentries of concessionary companies), and explorers who had been to the region. He concluded:

> They [Congolese] have been robbed of their liberty. We demand that their liberty shall be restored to them. They are bound in chains. We demand that those chains shall be rent asunder. For fifteen years they have been degraded, enslaved, exterminated[…]The 'Congo Free State' has long ceased to exist. It has given place to a political monster and international outlaw[…]The reek of its abominations mounts to Heaven in fumes of shame. It pollutes the earth. Its speedy disappearance is imperative for Africa, and for the world.[56]

Morel's compilation of horrific eyewitness accounts and emphasis on emotional rhetoric proved highly successful, with the *Marlborough Express* (New Zealand) calling the book "the most appalling indictment of personal rapacity, cruelty, expropriation of life, and labor administration[…]against any one man, in any country, in any age."[57] The *Daily Mirror* (Great Britain) similarly described the book as "Among the most terrible—the most horrible—human and historical documents which have ever seen the light of day."[58]

It is important to note that Morel was not against colonialism itself—his view, like other liberals of the day such as J. A. Hobson[59] and J. S. Mill,[60] was that a benevolent form of colonialism would best serve "backward peoples"[61] in Africa and elsewhere by promoting stable government, international trade, and local industry. Notably, even more left-leaning movements such as the Fabian Socialists in

Great Britain advocated a "lofty and public-spirited Imperialism" and the cultivation of an "Imperial race,"[62] not an abandonment of empire.[63] The quintessential radical thinker, Karl Marx, was critical of all reformism in political thought, yet he too accepted imperialism as a necessity for spreading the global capitalism that he envisioned revolutionary communism would one day overthrow.[64] That is not to say that no true anti-colonialists existed at the time of Morel and the Congo Reform Movement. Michael Cullinane's work on the American Anti-Imperialist League, for example, discusses the League's criticism of U.S. expansionism during the Spanish-American War (1898), and also of European imperialism in Africa, including Leopold's activities in the Congo.[65] A segment of socialist opinion in Belgium, moreover, vehemently attacked Leopold's and Belgium's efforts to rule over the Congo, demanding that all funds for overseas projects be channeled toward combatting social problems at home.[66] However, true anti-imperialists were a minority in Leopold's day and failed to have much impact except when their views were used by colonial reformists for their own purposes.[67]

The major turning point in the international Congo campaign occurred in 1903, when public pressure forced Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of the British Foreign Office, to authorize Roger Casement, His Majesty's Consul at Boma, to lead a fact gathering mission. The resulting *Congo Report* (1904), also known as the "Casement Report," which was based on three months of field research, confirmed allegations of forced labour, floggings, kidnappings, murders, and mutilations.[68] Casement concluded that alarming population decreases were due to years of compelling Congolese to gather rubber. At some villages he visited, locals informed him that they had no reason to live, as they would either be killed for failing to bring in the required rubber quota or die from hunger or exposure attempting to do so. To give his findings more weight, Casement noted the times and places of events as well as the initials of victims and perpetrators. He also included statistics and eyewitness testimonies to add to his report's credibility.[69] Robert M. Burroughs aptly characterizes the report as "forensic in tone," observing that "Casement's emotions are structurally concealed within his narrative."[70] Casement's meticulous fact gathering and style of reporting proved so effective in this regard that the *Congo Report* became the most widely cited source on conditions in the Congo Free State and led to numerous other independent inquiries to verify its claims.[71]

Lord Lansdowne reacted to Casement's report by accepting it as an accurate portrayal of conditions in the Congo. His first stated concern was that the inhumane treatment of Africans violated the terms of the Berlin Act. He thus recommended that parties to the Act confer and "consider whether the obligations undertaken by the Congo State in regard to the natives have been fulfilled," and if not, whether they were bound to take action.[72] After making this suggestion, Lansdowne hinted at motives other than humanitarian concern, mentioning that the king's trade monopolies violated the Berlin Act by preventing other nations from trading freely throughout the colony. "[T]he time has come," wrote Lansdowne,

"when the Powers parties to the Berlin Act should consider whether the system of trade now prevailing in the Independent State is in harmony with the provisions of the Act."[73]

While a certain degree of British economic and political self-interest helped make the *Congo Report* possible, the report nonetheless was a landmark in human rights history for at least two reasons. First, like human rights reports today, the *Congo Report* endeavoured to gather and present information in an unbiased fashion. Second, the *Report*'s inclusion of victim testimonies was unusual for a time when Africans usually appeared as passive, indefinable figures in Western depictions of the continent. According to Burroughs, such images of Congolese were due to travellers' lack of knowledge of Central Africa, Congo reformers' earlier preoccupation with free trade issues, and "observers' acceptance of the dominant image of Central Africa as an atavistic space given over immutable human suffering."[74]

To his credit, Casement directly quoted African victims instead of providing his own interpretation of their sufferings. As an example, one African informant interviewed by Casement recounted the following experience:

> We had to go further and further into the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Wild beasts—leopards—killed some of us when we were working away in the forest, and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation, and we begged the white man to leave us alone, saying that we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: 'Go! You are only beasts yourselves.'[75]

Another Congolese recollected:

> When we were going on the way they [Force Publique soldiers] killed ten children because they were very, very small; they killed them in the water. Then they killed a lot of people, and they cut off their hands and put them into baskets and took them to the white man[…][T]he soldiers saw a little child and when they went to kill it the child laughed so the soldier took the butt of the gun and struck the child with it, and then cut off its head. One day they killed my half-sister and cut off her head/hands, and feet because she had on rings.[76]

While the testimonies in Casement's report were limited in length and short on details they nonetheless were highly significant for revealing the anguish of Africans under Leopold's rule to an international audience whose impressions of Africans were usually based on second-hand accounts from European travellers.[77]

4) Photographic Texts

The international campaign against King Leopold coincided with the improvement of photographic technology as well as the invention of techniques to reproduce photographs in publications. The Kodak camera—compact, portable, and simple

to use—proved revolutionary for its ability to record images of situations and events. As noted by Reginald Twigg, photographs can be thought of as "moments of discourse" as they "circulate and negotiate meanings intertextually in ways that actively engage and reconfigure their socio-historical contexts."[78] As a discursive form, Congo atrocity photography aimed to shock viewers through depictions of colonial brutality and horrific affronts to human dignity. The most prominent individuals taking such photographs were Alice Seeley Harris and John Harris, English missionaries who arrived at the Congo Balolo Mission in 1898.[79] One widely circulated photograph from Alice Harris, of a man named Nsala of Wala, shows him gazing at the severed hand and foot of his 5-year-old daughter who had been murdered by sentries of the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company (ABIR) (Figure 1). Another features a young man named Mola, who lost both hands when Force Publique soldiers tied them too tightly and crushed them with rifle butts, and a boy named Yoka, whose right hand was severed by soldiers when his village failed to make their rubber quota (Figure 2). These images and others appeared in Casement's *Congo Report*, Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, and E. D. Morel's *Red Rubber* and King Leopold's Rule in the Congo. Atrocity photos were also used in "lantern lectures" delivered by the Harrises and other reformers to packed American and British audiences.[80]

Sharon Sliwinski has proposed that the Congo Reform Movement was "the first humanitarian movement to use atrocity photographs as a central tool" and that such photographs also allowed "[c]rimes occurring in far-away places" to be "made publicly visible for the first time in history."[81] Similar to the argument of this paper, she suggests that "the very recognition of what we call human rights is inextricably bound to a particular kind of aesthetic encounter," in this case suggesting atrocity photographs from the Congo served as a prompt for early human rights discourses.[82] Kevin Grant makes a related argument concerning atrocity images, demonstrating how lantern shows employing macabre photographs were critical for shifting international opinion against Leopold and making missionary evangelists such as the Harrises a more powerful political force within the Congo reform movement than liberals such as E. D. Morel. He suggests, however, that missionaries' main concern was not human rights but regaining access to the Congo lost due to Leopold's interference, for evangelical purposes.[83] While Grant is not entirely incorrect to suggest that missionaries had other motivations than the human rights of Africans, missionary political activities during the campaign, which made heavy use of atrocity tales, nonetheless helped shape early human rights thought by drawing attention to abuses and providing support to E. D. Morel and other secular Congo reformers.[84]

Emotional Reactions

A logical starting point for assessing the psychological effects of Congo atrocity texts is to discuss their creators, many of whom witnessed cruelties under Leopold firsthand. The English novelist and playwright John Galsworthy notes that Conrad, who once described Africa's partition as the "vilest scramble for loot that has disfigured the history of human consciousness and geographical exploration,"[85] was forever dogged by his memories of the Congo, which left a "deep fitful gloom over his spirit."[86] Roger Casement, whom Conrad had met in the Congo in 1890, was equally traumatized by his Congo experiences. In September 1903, he wrote the Governor General of the Congo Free State to tell him how the scenes he had observed had left him deeply troubled.[87] Casement, like Conrad, was adept at expressing his recollections as compelling narratives. Of his first meeting with Casement, E. D. Morel recounted how the scenes Casement "so vividly described seemed to fashion themselves out of the shadows before my eyes. The daily agony of an entire people unrolled itself in all the repulsive terrifying details."[88] After reading Casement's *Congo Report*, Morel was able to clearly visualize Africans' suffering, making more strenuous efforts in his writings to describe their oppression. Burroughs writes: "Casement's prose was convincing enough to make an 'I-witness' out of the deskbound Morel."[89]

Fig. 1.
Nsala of Wala in the Nsongo District. © Anti-Slavery International
Available from:
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org (accessed March 11, 2016).

Susan Sontag reminds us that no "*we*" should be assumed when individuals are exposed to and interpret images of atrocities. Every individual gaze is influenced by unique agendas, experiences, and perceptions.[90] Sontag comments, "Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses[…]A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen."[91] Labelling a photograph an "atrocity" image is also presumptive in that an appalling act to one person may represent something entirely different to another. This second point is amply demonstrated by comparing images from German South West Africa from the same period as the Congo atrocities. Rather than being framed for viewers as "atrocities" to be reviled, photographs of Germans beating, humiliating, and even executing Africans

Fig. 2.
Mola and Yoka, Victims of Atrocities Committed in the Congo Free State, c. 1905. © Anti-Slavery International. Available from: http://www.antislavery.org (Accessed March 11, 2016).

embodied what Caspar Erichsen terms "power photography," visual images "used to rape, demean and, moreover, to re-capture photographically an already defeated people."[92] As an example of how desensitized Germans had become to Africans' torment, one widely-circulated postcard from the colony featured Schutztruppe soldiers casually packing Herero skulls and bones for shipment to Germany for examination by scientists seeking to prove notions of European racial superiority.[93] While most people today cannot imagine a viewing public not being disturbed by such images, those taking the photographs did not appear to have harboured such feelings and even assumed the existence of an appreciative audience.

Keeping the above points about representations of pain and suffering in mind, it is still possible to piece together a general impression of how the international community perceived Congo atrocity tales by analyzing the writings and actions of opinion leaders from the era. Indicative of the effect atrocity texts could have on readers who never ventured to Africa, Mark Twain, after reading newspaper reports and other writings pertaining to cruelties in the Congo, was so disturbed by their images that he wrote *King Leopold's Soliloquy* and became a major supporter of the Congo Reform Association.[94] In a special interview with *New York World Sunday Magazine* in November 1905, he revealed his outrage over the treatment of Congolese, stating that if it were possible to truly convey the "horror of the tyrant's murderous acts, the depth of indignation, and accusation in his menacing voice" to readers they would immediately call for Leopold to be tried for his crimes. "If only we could bring home that picture to the minds of the American people," he thundered, "how they would rise to destroy that aged, brutal trafficking in human flesh!"[95]

While some members of the general public dismissed Congo atrocity tales as fabrications or ploys to promote other agendas,[96] most, like Twain, believed the stories and were repelled by the cruelty of the Force Publique and Europeans toward innocent Congolese in the narratives and images they encountered. Thus, upon reading the manuscript for *King Leopold's Soliloquy* before it went to press, Isabel Lyon, Twain's personal secretary, sat distraught and speechless. The American writer's daughter Jean and sister-in-law Susan Crane were equally distressed by the images evoked by early drafts of the manuscript.[97] When Twain's play finally was published the Atlanta Journal called it "the most scathing arraignment we have ever read," and the *Toledo Blade* labelled it "sarcasm of the boiling oil quality."[98] The *Monthly Review* likewise reacted "with mingled horror and incredulity,"[99] while *Christian Work and the Evangelist* saw Casement's findings as revealing "a state of affairs which might cause Europe to hide her face with shame as a civilizing agency."[100]

Some critics have suggested that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* failed to condemn colonial rule. Chinua Achebe argues, that the novella confirms racist stereotypes of Africans by denying them individuality and agency.[101] Birget Maier-Katkin and Daniel Maier-Katkin also maintain that *Heart of Darkness* was a moral failure for human rights because Conrad did not encourage Western readers to empathize

with the sufferings of Congolese.[102] Such appraisals are misguided. While Conrad did not afford readers the opportunity to identify with Africans, his writing exposes the underlying economic greed motivating the European colonial project and its chaotic and horrific consequences.[103] Conrad's work should, therefore, be read as "a subtle but overwhelming expose of Leopold's Free State, the enormities that were perpetuated there, and the attitudes of mind that gave rise to them."[104] From this perspective, Conrad was immensely successful in prompting readers to reconsider Leopold's and other Europeans' alleged humanitarian motivations in Africa. E. D. Morel himself deemed *Heart of Darkness* the single most influential work on the atrocities in the Congo Free State.[105]

Nonetheless, atrocity photographs had the most pronounced effect on international public opinion.[106] Until photographs of mutilated Congolese were shown to the world, doubts still remained in some circles that reports of violence in the Congo were overblown. However, after Alice Harris circulated photos in late 1905 with dates, names, and other details Leopold found it more and more difficult to refute the charges of abuse. The Australian newspaper the *Advertiser* commented that "[T]he Kodak cannot lie" and Harris' photographs proved that the Congo Free State was "a hell of horrors." Describing numerous "heart rending," "ghastly," and "dreadful" photographs of destroyed villages, women and children with severed limbs, the newspaper spoke of how such images "make our blood alternately run cold with horror and boil with anger."[107] Also, recognizing the importance of atrocity photographs for the reform movement, Twain, in *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, had Leopold examine photos of mutilated Congolese and sigh that "The Kodak has been a sore calamity to us. The most powerful enemy that has confronted us, indeed."[108]

For those who were not swayed by stories and images in publications, meetings led by missionaries Dr. Harry Guinness, John and Alice Harris, and others proved persuasive through their use of eyewitness accounts, hymns, lantern slides, grim tallies of the dead, and appeals to Christian duty.[109] At such events, where hundreds and even thousands sometimes attended, individuals were moved to donate funds to the cause, spread the word to others, and in many cases write their political representatives in protest.[110] In an interview with an unnamed U.S. senator, the *Washington Times* in 1906 inquired as to the correspondence he received "in this day of typewriters and cheap postage." He mentioned receiving letters from Americans nearly every day calling for intervention in the Congo "because some lecturer has been touring my State telling people about the Congo outrages, and in nearly every audience there are a few people who write about it."[111] On their speaking tour in the U.S. that year, John and Alice Harris, encouraged by large and enthusiastic crowds, informed E. D. Morel that they soon expected the U.S. President to take action as a deluge of letters to elected officials following their lectures was making inaction less likely.[112] Turning to Great Britain, in 1907 alone, the British Foreign Office received some 1,100 resolutions from groups who had attended Congo re-

form meetings where they were exposed to disturbing stories and photographs of cruelties under Leopold's rule.[113]

The Emergence of Human Rights as a Concept

The late 1800s and early 1900s were not the first time a general public had felt horror, anger, and disgust over brutal acts committed against fellow human beings in a foreign land. However, such emotions served as the foundation for early human rights concepts in this period. They were linked to new dilemmas associated with Western colonialism in Africa, which required rethinking in the area of international relations and the governance of foreign peoples. In exposing serious violations of the professed Western civilizational standards underpinning colonial rule in Africa, Congo atrocity tales spurred demands for sanctions, punishments, and controls to prevent further infractions. Such demands were expressed as international appeals challenging state authority (in this case that of Leopold as King-Sovereign) that were both philosophical and legalistic in nature. They were appeals based on common standards for all of humanity, existing international agreements, and future international regulatory frameworks, all essential elements for what we understand today as human rights.

Shortly after proposing the creation of the Congo Reform Association and consulting with E. D. Morel in early 1904, Roger Casement explained to the English liberal and radical politician Charles Dilke that a special "human rights" organization was needed to handle the Congo question due to the extreme nature of abuses occurring in the colony. He opined, "It is this aspect of the Congo Question—its abnormal injustice and extraordinary invasion, at this stage of civilised life, of *fundamental human rights*, which to my mind calls for the formation of a special body and the formulation of a very special appeal to the humanity of England [emphasis mine]."[114] E. D. Morel, as Secretary of the CRA, similarly spoke of upholding Congolese colonial subjects' "elementary rights of humanity"[115] as did Protestant missionary groups. In 1905, Alice Harris delivered a lecture to 600 people in Crosshills, England, and those in attendance passed a resolution condemning "the barbarities inflicted upon the natives of the Congo" as violations of "elementary rights of humanity" and the Berlin Act.[116]

As noted by Mark Mazower, "civilization" in Western Europe from the eighteenth century increasingly implied a "program" for improving humanity through the promotion of political stability, commerce, education and political rights. The Victorian worldview and system of international law, subsequently, divided the world's peoples on a scale ranging from "civilized" to "uncivilized," with the former entrusted with the task of governing the latter, and imperial expansion rationalized as a means by which to spread civilization's values. The Berlin Conference of 1884–85, which resulted in the Partition of Africa by the European Powers, was based on this ideology and the Congo Free State was "one disastrous outcome."[117] Mazower observes that rights eventually became detached from the no-

tion of civilization after World War II in response to Nazi atrocities and the independence of former colonies, demonstrating that a critique of civilization fostered values, beliefs, and institutions associated with what we today understand as human rights. However, because his focus is not Africa, he overlooks the significant role the Congo Free State controversy played in guiding international politics away from Western notions of a civilizing mission toward more contemporary governing ideals associated with human rights.

Congo atrocity tales inspired two critiques of civilization that helped lay the foundations for early human rights thought. The first critique blamed the human disaster in the Congo on King Leopold's failure to uphold Western civilizational standards. Roger Casement and E. D. Morel were proponents of this view.[118] Such opinions were also widely expressed in the international media. As an example, the *Spokesman Review*, a newspaper from Spokane, Washington, roundly condemned "Shotgun Rule in the Congo" as "a disgrace to civilization."[119] The *Boston Evening Transcript* echoed this stance, adding that Leopold's rule was worse than "native savagery" because those in power had been "given their license[…]by the world's highest civilization [The U.S.]."[120] The second critique, Rousseauian in nature, questioned the very notion of civilization, and reversed the positions of the civilized and the uncivilized. The *Deseret News*, of Salt Lake City, Utah, expressed this perspective, calling civilization "a curse to the black people" in the Congo Free State.[121] The American Anti-Imperialist League, of which Mark Twain was an active member, expressed similar stances on the Congo, emphasizing the right to liberty of all peoples.[122] Importantly, both critiques were not only directed against King Leopold, but also Great Britain, the United States, and other members of the international community, for failing to punish perpetrators of atrocities in the Congo or prevent further abuses.

In late 1903, mindful of the hypocrisy of Europe bringing civilization to Africa, Joseph Conrad wrote an impassioned letter to Roger Casement calling for international action in the Congo to uphold Africans' dignity and inherent rights. Later published by E. D. Morel to advance the aims of the Congo Reform Association, the document was significant not only for its wide circulation but also for its stress on the common humanity of Africans and Europeans. In his letter, Conrad expressed dismay that the "conscience of Europe" could call for intervention in Africa to suppress the slave trade yet support a brutal forced labour regime under Leopold, likening the West's acceptance of Leopold's rule to a "moral clock[…]put back many hours." Europeans were wrong to think themselves superior to Africans and treat them worse than animals, Conrad stressed. "[T]he black man," he claimed, was deserving of "humanitarian regard," since "he has nerves, feels pain, can be made physically miserable." Furthermore, Conrad suggested, Europeans should feel empathy toward Africans as they "share the consciousness of the universe in which we live—no small feat."[123]

Sounding remarkably contemporary in his views, Mark Twain offered ad-

ditional compelling reasons for Americans and Europeans to speak out against atrocities in the Congo. Although he did not actually use the term "globalization," Twain alluded to the process and its importance for international relations, arguing that advances in transportation and communications were increasingly making events on one side of the world relevant elsewhere. He also supported what we today would call "global citizenship" as a reason to confront injustices in distant lands such as the Congo Free State. For Twain, it was imperative that individuals be treated with respect and dignity no matter their location and background, and perpetrators of crimes, such as Leopold, be punished by the international community:

> [I]n these days the steamship and the electric cable have made the whole world one neighborhood. We cannot sit still and do nothing because the victims of Leopold's lust for gold are so many thousands of miles away. His crimes are the concern of every one of us, of every man who feels that it is his duty as a man to prevent murder, no matter who is the murderer or how far away he seeks to commit his sordid crime.[124]

As an example of how far the international community actually supported views such as Conrad's and Twain's, the Foreign Missions Board of the United States and Canada, an umbrella organization for 40 missionary associations representing over 20 million members, met in Philadelphia in early 1907 to issue "an appeal on behalf of the stricken people of the Congo Free State." That the delegates did not view state sovereignty as sacrosanct and believed change in the Congo would only come about through outside pressure can be gathered from the fact that they petitioned U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S. Senate, and King Edward of Great Britain "in the name of humanity, of international justice, of regard for the primal rights of man" and spoke of an "international responsibility for immediate ascertainment of conditions and corrections of wrongs." To coordinate policy toward the Congo and gather information, the missionary groups called for an immediate international conference on the Congo problem.[125]

As such events revealed, stories of Congo atrocities inspired more than philosophical musings of a common humanity and condemnations of injustice—they also led to quests for practical solutions to combat further abuses. In some cases, the search for remedies even prompted legal appeals that anticipated international human rights agreements of the post-World War II era. George Washington Williams, in this regard, was the first to cite violations of the Berlin Act to challenge Leopold's policies in the Congo. According to Williams, as Leopold had clearly failed to promote the welfare of Congolese as required by the treaty, the international community was obligated to investigate charges against him.[126] E. D. Morel in like fashion situated his support of African land and labour rights within the context of the Berlin Act.[127] Once the Congo Reform Movement gathered momentum in the early 1900s, the British government referred to the Act, issuing a diplomatic letter to treaty signatories concerning allegations of abuses in the Congo.[128] In early 1907, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge followed suit, tabling a reso-

lution for the U.S. Senate on Foreign Affairs that called on Washington to assist Berlin signatories who wished to improve conditions in the Congo. The preamble of the resolution stated that "reports of the inhuman treatment inflicted upon the native inhabitants have been of such nature as to draw the attention of the civilized world and excite the compassion of the people of the United States."[129]

In addition to calling for adherence to existing international agreements, advocates for change in the Congo envisioned the creation of future international bodies to enforce compliance with common standards for humanity. Referring to Article 36 of Chapter VII of the Berlin Act, which allowed for modifications and improvements of the treaty based on later needs, Williams called on the signatories to establish an International Commission that would "investigate the charges herein preferred in the name of Humanity, Commerce, Constitutional Government and Christian Civilisation."[130] In July 1903, W. T. Stead, an early British pioneer of investigative journalism, recommended Leopold appear before The Hague Tribunal.[131] Also known as the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the Tribunal, established at The Hague Peace Conference of 1899 convened by Czar Nicholas II of Russia, was granted the right to convene international commissions to investigate charges of impropriety.[132]

To deflect further criticism, and stall for time, in 1904, King Leopold appointed his own international commission to investigate conditions in his colony. Comprised of three distinguished Belgian, Italian, and Swiss lawyers who closely followed Roger Casement's earlier itinerary, the commission reported its findings after a five-month investigation in November 1905. One day before the official release of the report, the *New York Times* published a subdued article entitled "Few Abuses in Congo Found by Commission," with the subtitle "Taxation Hard on Natives" and "Some Other Complaints Justified."[133] While some critics attacked the commission for downplaying atrocities as such,[134] others noted that on close reading, its findings actually confirmed earlier accusations. At a public meeting of 500 persons at Tremont Temple in Boston in March 1906, for example, various speakers described "[a] story horrors and atrocities" in the Congo Free State, citing evidence from the commission's report. G. Stanley Hall, the President of Clark University and President of the Congo Reform Association (U.S.), claimed the commission revealed "punishments of the most cruel and barbaric kind, cannibalism included, by which the Congo Free State is being depopulated." John Harris likewise "proceeded with tales of cold-blooded murders, incredible in their details; horrible descriptions of dismemberments; the sale of wives into captivity, etc., all taken from the commission's report."[135]

To Leopold's dismay, rather than quelling the controversy over the Congo Free State his International Commission only served to prompt greater calls for legal action against his regime. As to what extent critics were willing to challenge the Belgian monarch, W. T. Stead in September 1905, penned an article entitled "Ought King Leopold to Be Hanged?" Based on an interview with John Harris,

the article argued for the establishment of a new international criminal court to try Leopold for the crimes committed in his name. No one, not even a king, Stead suggested, should be immune to international prosecution for permitting or condoning atrocities like those in the Congo Free State. While Harris (incorrectly as it turned out) did not expect Leopold to permit the evidence of the International Commission to be released, he believed that an international tribunal with the powers of a criminal court "would send those responsible to the gallows" if it were allowed to analyze the true facts of conditions in the Congo. To Stead's question as to whether such a court was necessary "in the evolution of society" Harris responded favourably, though he did not expect individuals such as Leopold to submit willingly to its authority.[136]

Opponents of Leopold not only imagined new institutions and legal frameworks such as international tribunals and courts to combat social injustice, they also conceived a new human rights related vocabulary. While "crimes against humanity" was first defined and established in positive international law with the Nuremberg Charter of 1945, and codified on July 17, 1998, by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it was first employed by George Washington Williams in an 1890 letter to US Secretary of State James G. Blaine to describe atrocities in the Congo Free State.[137] Although Roger Casement did not use the term in reference to Leopold's Congo, he later employed it to describe human rights violations on rubber plantations in the Amazonian region of Putumayo (then Peruvian territory),[138] and E. D. Morel once praised Casement as a public servant who "had the honour and privilege of exposing a great crime against humanity."[139] In his book King Leopold's Rule in Africa, Morel again used the term, stating that "if the Congo Basin were capable of being colonised by the Caucasian race, the policy we condemn and reprobate would still be a crime against humanity, an outrage upon civilisation."[140]

According to Dean Pavlakis Congo reformers anticipated contemporary human rights notions concerning the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), a human rights norm established at the United Nations in 2005 to protect populations from genocide and other mass atrocities.[141] Implemented following tragedies in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s, this norm states that although the primary responsibility for the protection of populations lies with individual governments where they cannot, or will not, prevent large-scale killings, ethnic cleansing, or other major human rights violations from occurring the international community must take action. First through diplomatic channels or other peaceful means, and then, if necessary, through stronger measures such as military intervention, as authorized by the UN Security Council.[142] According to Pavlakis, the wording of the UN's Responsibility to Protect norm would have resonated with Morel and other Congo reformers as well as British officials such as Lord Edward Grey.[143] To Pavlakis' observation it should be added that by basing their calls for intervention on the Berlin Act, which was international law at the time, advocates for reform in the Congo

also foreshadowed contemporary human rights practices. According to R2P historian Luke Glanville, Great Britain's repeated invocation of Article VI of the Act and Belgium's gradual acceptance of its terms revealed "the emerging recognition within international society of the responsibility of sovereign states to protect colonized peoples," a development which led to the responsibility to protect later being institutionalized under the mandates system of the League of Nations.[144]

Atrocity Texts and Conditions in the Congo

Susan Sontag observes that one pitfall of atrocity photographs is their potential for reducing victims' suffering to a voyeuristic experience for viewers.[145] In the case of Congo atrocity texts, whether written or visual, Sontag's reservation should be duly noted. Far from the places where injustices took place, readers of testimonies and impassioned opinion articles may have felt distressed over the plight of Congolese exploited and abused by Leopold's policies, yet their emotional responses did not necessarily translate into political activism or long-term concern. Participants at lantern shows were similarly exposed to phantasmagoric visual images that could move them to despair and outrage, but their experiences often amounted to little more than a form of macabre entertainment, in some cases replete with morbid tales of floggings and sexual violence.[146] The overuse of atrocity tales also risked desensitizing the public to grave human rights violations. Finally, a tendency toward hyperbole and emotionalism in descriptions of conditions in the Congo could easily prompt skepticism of the movement.[147]

Despite these potential problems, the texts, based on human fears and aversions, proved highly effective in shaping public attitudes and opinions. Assailed in the press and popular culture in America and Europe as a "monster" overseeing "horrors" Leopold found it increasingly difficult to challenge his detractors.[148] Meanwhile, representatives of the American and British governments felt compelled by public pressure to seek a solution to the Congo problem. Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Office Secretary, proposed in speeches in 1904–05 that the best course of action was for control of the Congo Free State to be transferred from Leopold to the Belgian Parliament. With the Congo no longer under Leopold's personal authority, Grey reasoned that genuine reforms adhering to the guidelines of the Berlin Act would then be possible.[149] After Elihu Root, the U.S. Secretary of State, appointed a consul at Boma in 1906 and found accusations of cruelties under Leopold to be true, United States also supported the Belgian solution. Leopold, in December of that year, agreed to hand over power, but his delays frustrated the Americans and in February 1908 President Roosevelt denied Leopold permission to visit the United States.[150] With Leopold unable to deceive the international community any longer, Belgium finally assumed control of the Congo Free State on 15 November 1908, renaming it the Belgian Congo.[151]

Leopold's main concern was not with improving conditions for his African subjects, but with maximizing his profits as he ceded authority. Here, his machina-

tions were highly successful. In the two years he spent negotiating the transfer, Leopold managed to convince the Belgian Parliament to accept all of his Congo-related financial liabilities as well as pay him 50 million Francs for possession of the colony. The Parliament also agreed to complete and maintain infrastructure projects in the Congo and public works in Belgium that Leopold had commenced.[152] Before this personal coup, Leopold had carefully planned for the future by investing heavily in properties in the French Riviera and spending more time aboard his cruise ship with his teenage mistress Caroline Lacroix, whom he later married and willed his personal fortune.[153] From the perspective of punishing Leopold for his crimes against humanity, the Congo reform movement had apparently achieved very little.

Nonetheless, aware that Leopold's departure offered no guarantee that the situation would improve for the Congolese, E. D. Morel and other humanitarians continued to monitor developments and press for reforms until the most repressive features of the Leopoldian system were eliminated. Some observers were quick to charge that conditions remained unaltered after Belgium assumed control of the colony. In January 1909, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* lamented that proposed reforms had amounted to little more than idle talk.[154] In Great Britain, Morel and other critics of Foreign Secretary Edward Grey, dismayed at the lack of change after the transfer, also called for a blockade of the Congo to force immediate reforms, an idea Grey rejected as premature and dangerous in May 1909. Grey instead adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward Belgium, though he did not rule out stronger actions if it refused to implement reforms.[155] If it did not directly affect developments in the Belgian Congo, Leopold's death on 17 December 1909 still represented a turning point for the colony as it allowed Belgian officials to criticize the king's policies without fear of royal recrimination, and to begin implementing reforms.[156]

As a sign that conditions had improved for the Congolese, Great Britain recognized the Belgian Congo and E. D. Morel delivered his last speech for the Congo Reform Association in 1913, claiming it had fulfilled its promise to end atrocities, reduce native taxation, cease the coercive powers of concessionary companies, promote freer trade, and better protect African labour rights.[157] That the international Congo reform movement—especially the CRA—had played a major role in raising awareness of Africans' suffering under Leopold cannot be disputed. However, research by Robert Harms indicates that the exhaustion of rubber supplies also needs to be considered as a reason for the eventual end to the most egregious abuses that occurred under Leopold.[158] Pavlakis notes further that Belgium incrementally adopted reforms throughout the Congo, beginning with areas depleted of rubber and then adding regions where rubber was still available for collection.[159] When the Belgian colonial state finally did dismantle the exploitative system established under Leopold, therefore, economic realities influenced the implementation of reforms in addition to external pressure. Nevertheless, the movement for Congo reform had had a notable impact on international thinking and conditions in the Congo. In the words of Dean Pavlakis: "Overall the result ap-

peared to be better than passing marks for the reformers."[160]

Conclusion

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman rightly cautions historians against adopting "triumphalist" narratives stressing the "rise and rise" of human rights.[161] Nothing was inevitable about the emergence of our contemporary international human rights regime and writing about human rights in a linear and celebratory fashion only serves to obscure their true origins. More realistically, it makes more sense to conceive of human rights as evolving in unpredictable fits and starts from the late nineteenth century. Thus, in the wake of the Congo Free State controversy an international organization to draft and enforce human rights laws did not suddenly emerge to improve the lives of Congolese and other oppressed peoples. The notion of civilization that informed the Berlin Act remained a guiding principle, the view being that adhering to its central tenets would promote the welfare of Africans and other colonized peoples. Moreover, as before, even these standards of civilization were frequently violated by colonial administrations.[162]

It would take two world wars, the founding of the United Nations, and the rise of African and Asian nationalist movements to refocus international attention on upholding the universal rights and dignity of all peoples.[163] The 1970s and 1980s, during the height of the Cold War, would witness declining human rights support among African leaders.[164] However, there was yet another surge forward among Western intellectuals and political leaders, with the phrase "human rights" being used in political speeches and the media with more frequency than ever before, particularly in U.S. contexts.[165] The 1990s, conversely, saw East Asian leaders tout "Asian Values" and deride human rights as a form of Western imperialism.[166] The world's peoples and nations, in other words, have not always moved in unison on human rights, challenging notions of the "rise and rise" of human rights in more ways than one.

It must be conceded that the phrase "human rights" was used very rarely during the Congo Free State controversy. It could nonetheless be argued that human rights as a *concept* emerged in response to reports of atrocities in the Congo Free State. If we accept the United Nations' human rights definitions and codes as authoritative and also view human rights as a reconfiguration of rights to support "a politics of suffering abroad" that challenges the nation-state "from above and outside rather than serve as its foundation" as suggested by Samuel Moyn,[167] then the international campaign for reform in Leopold's Congo represented the world's first human rights movement.[168] There are also other reasons to see human rights as a concept stemming from this event and period in world history. For one, those condemning atrocities under Leopold commonly spoke of Africans' "rights" and the need to promote "humanity" together, associating the two words and notions from within an international worldview. Moreover, the recommendations offered to halt atrocities and punish those responsible for "crimes against humanity," a well-known

concept in today's human rights' lexicon that dates to this period. The recommendations anticipated later international institutions such as Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Criminal Court, as well as agreements such as the Nuremberg Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine.[169]

Given the similarities in agitation methods and empathetic discourses between leading Congo reformers and abolitionists of an earlier period, it might be thought that the slave trade era is a more appropriate time to situate the origins of human rights history. However, abolitionists only focused on one issue of concern to human rights today—that of slavery. Even if their impassioned rhetoric, emphasis on human dignity, and political strategies bore a semblance to the Congo reformers', they had no vision of a future world in which a full range of human rights would be monitored and enforced by a supranational authority on behalf of an international community. From another perspective, Jenny Martinez has suggested that the mixed commissions enforcing anti-slavery treaties of the nineteenth century were a forerunner of today's international human rights courts. But as important as the courts were in ending the slave trade, they provided no compensation for victims, challenging the claim that they were concerned with Africans' human rights.[170] Moreover, no serious punishments—other than the confiscation of slave trading vessels and related property—were meted out to perpetrators of what would now be considered crimes against humanity, and the captors of slave vessels, colonial governors, and garrison commanders received all "prize money" following convictions.[171] The anti-slavery treaties behind the courts were also bilateral in nature and largely imposed by Great Britain on weaker nations for the non-humanitarian aim of advancing British naval supremacy.[172] Finally, as events after the Berlin Conference soon demonstrated, the European campaign to end the slave trade was not truly meant to liberate Africans, but to provide a convenient pretext to occupy and partition the continent.[173] In brief, the era of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, while associated with one major type of human rights abuse, did not witness the emergence of early human rights concepts or institutions.

Many historians have traced the origins of human rights much further into the past than this paper. Some credit the ancient Mesopotamians, Greeks, and Romans for founding human rights through their legal codes and political philosophies. Others suggest that universalist thought in early Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam laid the foundations for human rights.[174] More commonly, historians have stressed the eighteenth century origins of human rights in the form of ideas and declarations associated with the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolutions.[175] But, while precedents in these eras are relevant, approaches going this far into the past usually result in a rehashing of standard Western civi-

lizational history or world history. Such approaches also make it difficult to discern breaks and discontinuities important for the evolution of human rights in more recent times. In this regard, Samuel Moyn's distinction between "rights" and "human rights" and his call for historians to determine when the former began to be reframed as the latter is highly relevant. However, Moyn's view that human rights only truly emerged in the 1970s is too dismissive of precedents from earlier eras.[176]

It is not just periodization that is crucial for understanding human rights history. Geographical and civilizational emphasis is equally critical. One major shortcoming in the historiography of human rights is its Eurocentric worldview. While it would be a mistake to downplay the role of the West, it is equally a mistake to omit the contributions of other world regions and peoples to human rights history. More accurately, human rights should be viewed as part of a global heritage to which all of humanity has contributed. Roland Burke shows this to be the case in the era of decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s, when African and Asian leaders played a major role in shaping the human rights codes and framework of the United Nations.[177] In this paper, I have shown that the sufferings of Africans in the Congo Free State, as portrayed in atrocity tales, moved Westerners toward visions resembling contemporary human rights notions and frameworks. Human rights thus did not first emerge in self-contained Western settings but through the interactions of peoples, events, images, and ideas across world regions, with Africans in the Congo Free State figuring prominently in the international drama which unfolded.

The nineteenth century Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham once referred to natural rights as "nonsense upon stilts," arguing that rights had to be grounded in concrete laws to be taken seriously.[178] To accept Bentham's legal positivism would mean that historians of human rights should focus solely on human rights law and its evolution. However, as Lynn Hunt points out, "Human rights are difficult to pin down because their definition, indeed their very existence, depends on emotions as much as on reason." They are "not just a doctrine formulated in documents; they rest on a disposition toward other people." Insisting that "any account of historical change must in the end account for the alteration of individual minds," she states further that "New kinds of reading (and viewing and listening) created new individual experiences (empathy), which in turn made possible new social and political concepts (human rights)."[179] In emphasizing emotions and the emergence of more empathetic views toward others Hunt is surely on the right track. However, as *rights* and *human rights* are not synonymous, the beginning of human rights history must be seen as commencing with the Congo Free State controversy and the global diffusion of atrocity tales. Through exposure to horrific images of Africans coerced, mutilated, and murdered by Leopold's agents, an emerging international community was shocked and disheartened to learn of Europeans' ill-treatment of colonized peoples. Yet it was also moved to envision a world in which distant states and commercial interests would not be free to exploit and harm fellow human beings with impunity, and in which all peoples deserved protections under

international law. Such a vision did not end colonial rule or prevent human rights abuses in the postcolonial era, nor did it immediately result in the international human rights regime known today. Nonetheless, it ushered in human rights, the history of which has since been marked by periods of regression, stagnation, and progression and has never been a foregone conclusion.

NOTES

[1] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights," in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.
[2] See Raghunath Patnaik, "Awakening of Human Rights Under the Ancient Texts," in *India and Human Rights: Reflections,* ed. T. S. N. Sastry (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2005), 30; Burns H. Weston, "Human Rights: Concept and Content," in *Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action*, ed. Burns H. Weston and Anna Grear, rev. 4th ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 7–8; Kate E. Tunstall, ed., *Self-Evident Truths?: Human Rights and the Enlightenment* (The Oxford Amnesty Lectures) (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012); and Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting, and Intent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
[3] See Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Samuel Moyn, Human Rights and the Uses of History (New York: Verso, 2014), 12, 81–82, 93–94, 96; and Samuel Moyn, The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
[4] Ibid., 3.
[5] Typical is the view in a popular Western Civilization textbook that "The modern struggle for human rights—initiated during the Enlightenment, advanced by the French Revolution, and embodied in liberalism—continues in the contemporary age." See Marvin Perry, Myrna Chase, James Jacob, Margaret Jacob, Jonathan Daly, and Theodore Von Laue, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, and Society*, 8th ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2014), 878.
[6] Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008); Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi, *Human Rights at the UN: The Political History of Universal Justice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
[7] Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
[8] Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria*, trans. Dona Geyer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Fabian Klose, "Human Rights, State of Emergency, and the Wars of Decolonization," in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 237–57.
[9] Bonny Ibhawoh, *Imperialism and Human Rights: Colonial Discourses of Rights and Liberties in African History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press,

2006).
[10] Moyn, *Last Utopia*; Ishay, *History of Human Rights*; Lauren, *Evolution of International Human Rights*.
[11] Neal Ascherson, *The King Incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo* (London: Granta Books, 1999); Catherine Ann Cline, "E.D. Morel and the Crusade against the Foreign Office," *Journal of Modern History* 39, no. 2 (1967): 126–37; Martin Ewans, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its Aftermath* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002); Kevin Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire: Missionaries, Lantern Lectures, and the Congo Reform Campaign in Britain," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2001): 27–58; Hunt Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement," J*ournal of Modern Literature* 9, no. 1 (1981–82): 65–80; William Roger Louis, "Roger Casement and the Congo," *Journal of African History* 5, no. 1 (1964): 99–120; Dean Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896–1913* (Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015); Dean Pavlakis, "The Development of British Overseas Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Campaign," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 11, no. 1 (2010).
[12] Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost. A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 1999).
[13] Sharon Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights: The Kodak on the Congo," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (2006): 333–63; Sharon Sliwinski, "The Kodak on the Congo: The Childhood of Human Rights," Autograph ABP, 2010, accessed March 4, 2016, http://www.autograph-abp-shop.co.uk/newspapers/republic-of-the-congo. In one article Sliwinski simply suggests human rights are "a response to the witnessing of traumatic violence" (Sliwinski, "The Kodak on the Congo," 3) while in the other they "are conceived through the recognition of their loss. Or put explicitly, human rights are conceived by spectators who, with the aid of the photographic apparatus, are compelled to judge that crimes against humanity are occurring to others" (Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights," 335).
[14] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2007).
[15] Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 12.
[16] Ibid., 13.
[17] David G. Bromley, Anson D. Shupe Jr., and Joseph C. Ventimiglia, "Atrocity Tales, the Unification Church, and the Social Construction of Evil," *Journal of Communication* 29, no. 3, (1979): 43.
[18] The word "tales" as used within should not be taken to mean that the stories were fabrications. However, many Congo atrocity tales were embellished or exaggerated, even if they were generally based on real events or conditions in the colony.
[19] Ibid.

[20] Scott A. Bonn and Michael F. Welch, *Mass Deception: Moral Panic and the US War on Iraq* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).
[21] For two works that analyze atrocity images from the Congo Free State and their varying impact on Western audiences see: Peter Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities: Eyewitness Accounts of Colonialism in the Congo, Angola, and Putumayo* (New York: Routledge, 2010) and John Peffer, "Snap of the Whip/Crossroads of Shame: Flogging, Photography, and the Representation of Atrocity in the Congo Reform Campaign," *Visual Anthropology Review* 24, no. 1 (2008): 55–77.
[22] Michael N. Barnett, *The International Humanitarian Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 174.
[23] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 16.
[24] Ibid.
[25] United Nations, *Human Rights: Questions and Answers* (New York: United Nations, 1987), 4.
[26] United Nations, "What are Human Rights?" UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) homepage, accessed March 8, 2016, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx.
[27] "The International Bill of Human Rights," UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) homepage, accessed March 8, 2016, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Compilation1.1en.pdf.
[28] United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 60/149, Yearbook of the United Nations 2005, Sixtieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations, 2008), 724.
[29] Grant Niemann, "War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Genocide in International Criminal Law," in *Handbook of Transnational Crime and Justice: Special Offer Edition*, ed. Philip Reichel (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2005): 208–09.
[30] Niemann, "War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Genocide," 206–07.
[31] When one Peter Von Hagenbach was found guilty by an international tribunal of perpetrating atrocities on citizens of Breisach, Germany. See M. Cherif Bassiouni, *International Criminal Law: A Draft International Criminal Code* (Alphen aan den Rijn, NL and Germantown, MD: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1980), 8.
[32] Gregory H. Stanton, "Why the World Needs an International Convention on Crimes against Humanity," in *Forging a Convention for Crimes against Humanity*, ed. Leila Nadya Sadat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 346.
[33] G. I. A. D. Draper, "The Development of International Humanitarian Law," in *International Dimensions of Humanitarian Law,* Vol. 1, ed. UNESCO (Dordrecht, NL: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988), 80.
[34] Ibid.
[35] William I. Hitchcock makes a strong case for including the history of the Geneva Conventions as part of human rights history in his "Human Rights and

the Laws of War: The Geneva Conventions of 1949," in *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History,* ed. Akira Iriye and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93–-112.
[36] The International Criminal Court (ICC), "About the Court," ICC homepage, para. 1, accessed March 8, 2016, https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/about%20the%20court/Pages/about%20the%20court.aspx.
[37] "The Congo Free State: What is it?" *New York Times,* December 16, 1906.
[38] Jesse S. Reeves, "Origin of the Congo Free State Considered from the Standpoint of International Law," *American Journal of International Law* 3, no. 1 (1909): 99–118.
[39] Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 3–5.
[40] George Washington Williams, "An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo," BlackPast.org, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.blackpast.org/?q=george-washington-williams-open-letter-king-leopold-congo-1890.
[41] Ibid., para. 2.
[42] Ibid., para. 19.
[43] Also known as the Berlin Act.
[44] Article VI, *General Act of the Conference of Berlin*, accessed March 1, 2016, http://africanhistory.about.com/od/eracolonialism/l/bl-BerlinAct1885.htm.
[45] John Hope Franklin, *George Washington Williams: A Biography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 209–10.
[46] Pavlakas, *British Humanitarianism*, 30.
[47] Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 102.
[48] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Harold Bloom (London: Chelsea House, [1903] 1987).
[49] Frances B. Singh, "Terror, Terrorism, and Horror in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 5, no. 2 (2007): 208.
[50] Mark Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (New Delhi: Leftward, [1905] 2005), 15–17, 52.
[51] Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire," 36-37, 39.
[52] Ibid., 36.
[53] E. D. Morel, *Red Rubber*, 4th ed. (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1909), xiii.
[54] Catherine Ann Cline, *E.D. Morel, 1873–1924: The Strategies of Protest* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press Ltd., 1981), 60.
[55] Morel, *Red Rubber*, xiii.
[56] Ibid., 194.
[57] "The Congo Free State: An Appalling Indictment," *Marlborough Express*, January

10, 1907.
[58] Quoted in Morel, Red Rubber, xvi.
[59] J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1902).
[60] John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Intervention," in *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical*, vol. 4 (Boston: William V. Spencer, 1867), 174.
[61] For such a liberal viewpoint written by a British colonial administrator see: Harry H. Johnston, *The Backward Peoples and Our Relations with Them* (London and New York: H. Milford Oxford University Press, 1920).
[62] Quoted in Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 97.
[63] Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society* (London: Grant Richards, 1900).
[64] For an analysis of Marx's ideas in relation to imperialism see Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: NLB and Verso, 1980).
[65] Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism: 1898-1909* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[66] Acherson, *The King Incorporated*, 271.
[67] The best example here would be Mark Twain and the Congo Reform Association, of which Twain became Vice President and worked closely with even though he was a committed anti-imperialist and member of the American Anti-Imperialist League.
[68] Roger Casement, *Correspondence and Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo* [Hereafter "Congo Report"] (London: Harrison and Sons, 1904).
[69] Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement"; Louis, "Roger Casement and the Congo."
[70] Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, 56.
[71] William Roger Louis, *Ends of British imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (New York: I. B. Taurus, 2006), 58.
[72] The Marquess of Lansdowne, "Despatch to Certain of His Majesty's Representatives Abroad in Regard to Alleged Cases of Ill-treatment of Natives and to the Existence of Trade Monopolies in the Independent State of the Congo," August 8, 1903, enclosure in Casement, Congo Report, 85.
[73] Landsdowne, "Despatch," 86.
[74] Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, 49.
[75] Quoted in Casement, *Congo Report*, 60.
[76] Quoted in ibid., 76.
[77] Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, 61–62.
[78] Reginald Twigg, "The Performative Dimension of Surveillance: Jacob Riis' How the Other Half Lives," in *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and*

American Culture, ed. Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 22.
[79] See Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights"; T. Jack Thompson, "Light on the Dark Continent: The Photography of Alice Seely Harris and the Congo Atrocities of the Early Twentieth Century," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 4 (2002): 146–49.
[80] Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire."
[81] Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights," 333.
[82] Ibid., 334.
[83] Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery. Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005), 41–2. Grant also notes that Leopold allowed Catholic missions to expand in the Congo at the same time he "proved reluctant to authorize more Protestant stations," further frustrating British missionaries. See Kevin Grant, "The Limits of Exposure: Atrocity Photographs in the Congo Reform Campaign," in *Humanitarian Photography: A History*, ed. Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 66.
[84] Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 139–41.
[85] As quoted in Gary Geddes, *Drink the Bitter Root: A Writer's Search for Justice and Redemption in Africa* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 3.
[86] John Galsworthy, *Castles in Spain: And other Screeds* (Amsterdam: Freedonia Books, [1927] 2001), 106.
[87] Angus Mitchell, *Casement* (London: Haus Publishing, 2005), 32.
[88] As quoted in Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 145.
[89] Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, 66.
[90] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 3–7.
[91] Ibid., 13.
[92] Casper W. Erichsen, *The Angel of Death Has Descended Violently among Them: Concentration Camps and Prisoners-of-war in Namibia, 1904–08* (Leiden: University of Leiden African Studies Centre, 2005), 94.
[93] *Loading and Packing of Skulls of Perished Ovaherero by German Soldiers for German Universities and Museums: Research* by Eugen Fischer, accessed March 6, 2016, http://www.klausdierks.com/images/Fischer_Namaheads2.jpg.
[94] Hunt Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement with the Congo Reform Movement," *New England Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1978): 147–75.
[95] Mark Twain, "What I am Thankful for," *New York World Sunday Magazine*, November 26, 1905, para. 21–23, accessed February 21, 2016, http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/mtwain/bl-mtwain-thankful.htm.
[96] "The Congo," *New York Times*, November 11, 1907.
[97] Laura Skandera Trombley, *Mark Twain's Other Woman: The Hidden Story of his Final Years* (New York: Random House, 2011), 62.
[98] As quoted in Vijay Prashad, "The Boiling Oil of Mark Twain," in Twain, *King*

Leopold's Soliloquy, 13.
[99] *Monthly Review* 26 (1907): 149.
[100] *Christian Work and the Evangelist* 79 (1905): 408.
[101] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," *Massachusetts Review* 18, no. 4 (1977): 782–94.
[102] Birget Maier-Katkin and Daniel Maier-Katkin, "At the Heart of Darkness: Crimes against Humanity and the Banality of Evil," *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2004): 584-604.
[103] Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness," *PMLA* 94, no. 2 (1979): 286–99; Singh, "Terror, Terrorism, and Horror in Conrad's Heart of Darkness."
[104] Ewans, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe*, 2.
[105] Hawkins, "Conrad's Critique," 293.
[106] Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights."
[107] "The Kodak on the Congo," *Advertiser*, October 21, 1905.
[108] Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 53.
[109] Peffer, "Snap of the Whip," 63-64.
[110] Grant, *A Civilised Savagery. Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926*, 39-78; Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire."
[111] "Congressman's Samples of One Day's Letters Amusing," *Washington Times*, March 18, 1906.
[112] Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 242-243.
[113] Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 189.
[114] Quoted in Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 62.
[115] Quoted in Grant, "The Limits of Exposure," 67.
[116] Quoted in Grant, "The Limits of Exposure," 84.
[117] Mark Mazower, "The End of Civilization and the Rise of Human Rights: The Mid-twentieth Century Disjuncture," ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34.
[118] Grant, *A Civilised Savagery*, 62; Morel asserted it was Great Britain's "manifest duty in the general cause of civilisation and humanity" to protect both Europeans' and Africans' rights in the Congo. See *Red Rubber*, 178.
[119] "Shotgun Rule in Congo," *Spokesman Review*, January 3, 1902.
[120] "The Congo Atrocities," *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 10, 1904.
[121] "Congo Atrocities," *Deseret News*, March 12, 1906.
[122] Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism*, 75-92.
[123] Quoted in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement," 70.
[124] Mark Twain, *Mark Twain: The Complete Interviews*, ed. Gary Sharnhorst (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 523.
[125] "Aid for the Congo," *Daily Tribune*, January 14, 1907.
[126] Williams, "An Open Letter."

[127] Sliwinski, "Kodak on the Congo," 6.
[128] "Note as to Congo State. Britain Addresses the Signatories of the Berlin Act," *New York Times,* August 20, 1903.
[129] "Favors Congo Resolution. Committee promises Support to President," *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 25, 1907.
[130] Williams, "An Open Letter."
[131] J. W. Stead, "Leopold, Emperor of the Congo," *American Review of Reviews*, July 1903, accessed February 25, 2016,
http://www.attackingthedevil.co.uk/reviews/congo.php.
[132] A problem with The Hague Tribunal solution, however, was that the 1899 conference had been convened to discuss issues such as the regulation of armament production and conduct during warfare among the Powers. It was likely this focus which made reformers such as E. D. Morel wary of using this court to try Leopold. See "Congo Reform Plea on the Way to the President," *New York Times*, September 30,1904.
[133] "Few Abuses in Congo Found by Commission," *New York Times*, November 5, 1905.
[134] "Whitewash for Leopold," *New York Times*, June 8, 1907.
[135] "Reform of Congo Horrors," *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 9, 1906.
[136] J. W. Stead, "Ought Leopold to be Hanged?" *American Review of Reviews*, September 1905, 80-85.
[137] Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 111–12.
[138] Roger Casement, *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement*, ed. Angus Mitchell (Dublin: Lilliput Press.
1997), 178.
[139] Quoted in William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers, *E. D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 167.
[140] E. D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), 255.
[141] Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 157.
[142] "The Responsibility to Protect," United Nations homepage, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml.
[143] Pavlakis, British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 157.
[144] Luke Glanville, *Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: A New History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 123, 125.
[145] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. See also Peffer, "Snap of the Whip" for a similar viewpoint concerning representations of atrocities in the Congo Free State and other contexts.
[146] See Peffer, "Snap of the Whip" and Grant, "The Limits of Exposure."
[147] For an example of such writing see "Twigs of Death. The Congo Horrors," Barrier Miner (Australia), November 10, 1906, accessed March 12, 2016,
http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/44518132?searchTerm=twigs%20of%

20death&searchLimits=.
[148] "Horrors of the Congo and Placing of the Blame," *Pittsburgh Press,* June 28, 1906.
[149] John B. Osborne, "Wilfred G. Thesiger, Sir Edward Grey, and the British Campaign to Reform the Congo, 1905–9," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27, no. 1 (1999): 65
[150] "King Not Welcome. No invitation for Leopold by the President," *Washington Post*, February 2, 1908.
[151] "The Congo. Devastated Belgium's Rich Colony," *Ashburton Guardian* (New Zealand), November 18, 1915.
[152] Ewans, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe*, 230.
[153] Ascherson, *The King Incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo,* 263–64.
[154] "No Help as Yet for Congo," *Hutchinson Daily News* (US), January 13, 1909.
[155] Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 224.
[156] The reforms were implemented from 1910 to 1912. See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 6.
[157] Louis, *Ends of British imperialism*, 180.
[158] Harms focuses on ABIR, one of the more notorious concessionary companies, but suggests events in other concessionary areas followed a similar pattern. According to Harms, it was only after rubber supplies were exhausted that Belgium finally declared an end to the concessionary system and the rubber tax. See Robert Harms, "The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment," *Journal of African History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 73–88.
[159] Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, 12.
[160] Ibid., 258.
[161] Hoffmann, "Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights," 3.
[162] Klose, "Human Rights, State of Emergency, and the Wars of Decolonization."
[163] Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights*, 1–58.
[164] Ibid., 59–144.
[165] Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 4.
[166] Jack Donnelly, "Human Rights and Asian Values: A Defense of "Western" Universalism," in *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, ed. Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 60–87; Hoffman, "Introduction," 24; Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights*, 263–64.
[167] Moyn, *Last Utopia*, 12.
[168] Moyn, as mentioned, is adamant that the 1970s are the key era for human rights' coming of age. In his Human Rights and the Uses of History he stresses that "It was, instead, only in the 1970s that a genuine social movement around human rights made an appearance, seizing the foreground by transcending government institutions, especially international ones" (82).
[169] The Nuremberg Charter officially defined crimes against humanity and crimes

against peace for the first time. The Rome Statute, the 1998 treaty that founded the ICC and entered force in 2002, established four core crimes within the jurisdiction of the court: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.

[170] When a case was successfully concluded, former slaves were simply transported to locations far from their original homes, where, if they survived the perilous voyage and were not entirely left to their own devices, they were conscripted into military service or coerced into indentured servitude. See Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 59–60; Maeve Ryan, "'A Most Promising Field for Future Usefulness': The Church Missionary Society and the Liberated Africans of Sierra Leone," in *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. William Mulligan and Maurice Bric (Houndmills, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 37–58.

[171] Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century*. Slavery Series No. 4 (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 79 –84; Padraic Xavier Scanlan, "The Rewards of their Exertions: Prize Money and British Abolitionism in Sierra Leone, 1808–1823," *Past and Present* 225, no. 1, 113-42.

[172] Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 57; Lauren Benton, "Abolition and Imperial Law, 1790–1820," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 3 (2011): 355–74.

[173] Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 58–59.

[174] Ishay, *History of Human Rights*, 15–47.

[175] Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*.

[176] His lexical evidence from the *New York Times* showing a "spike" in usage of the term "human rights" in the 1970s could be cited to back very different arguments, such as that support for human rights peaked at that time after "rising" since the founding of the UN, that human rights have fallen out of favour since then, or that human rights were simply a topic more widely discussed in the US media (or the New York Times) in the 1970s.

[177] Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights*.

[178] Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 53.

[179] Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 26, 27, 34.