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Women in Combat: The Soviet Example

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WOMEN IN COMBAT: THE SOVIET EXAMPLE

by

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Soviet women who fought in World War II, in all aspects of service; especially the forgotten women who suffered in silence in the years following the war. This is for you.

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Thank you to all who have offered me support throughout this process: my family, friends, and committee. Thank you to Alberstons Library and the Boise State History Department in having faith in my “vague” vision for this exhibit. I could not have done this without the continued support and encouragement from my cohort. Lastly, countless thanks to all the badass Soviet and American servicewomen who inspired me to tell their stories. Keep up the good work.

ABSTRACT

This project explores the experiences of Soviet women in combat on the eastern front during World War II. Through an exhibit, website, and thesis, Soviet women are shown in stereotypically male-dominated roles, performing as well as their male counterparts, while not acknowledged for their work after the war. Their invisible service reveals trends through military history scholarship, and larger ideology surrounding women in combat. This project informs on a relatively unknown topic, while using their historical example to advocate for American women in the military integrating into combat jobs.

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Exhibit Diagram. See Appendices A & B for display case content, text, images, and booklet text. 28
- Figure 2. Louisiana's Civil War Museum and Confederate Memorial Hall. Personal Collection of the Author..... 29
- Figure 3. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Arrows direct visitors to pull out kitchen drawers..... 31
- Figure 4. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Newspaper headlines and monitors relay exhibit information. 31
- Figure 5. National World War II Museum. From the Personal Collection of the Author. Interviews by those interned play on displays made from suitcases. 32
- Figure 6. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Training bunker display. 32
- Figure 7. National World War II Museum. The Road to Berlin exhibit, North Africa. 33
- Figure 8. National World War II Museum. The Road to Tokyo exhibit, "Guadalcanal: Green Hell," gallery. Illustrating the fight in the Pacific. 33
- Figure 9. National World War II Museum. The Road to Berlin exhibit, Battle of the Bulge. 34
- Figure 10. National World War II Museum. Oral History booth. Alcove titles "Personal Accounts: Nightdrop into Normandy." From the museum's Two-Minute Oral History Program..... 34
- Figure 11. Whitney Plantation. Life-size sculptures corresponding to cards of actual slave children..... 40
- Figure 12. Whitney Plantation. Card with specific slave child. Each visitor receives one..... 40
- Figure 13. Whitney Plantation. Allées Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. Dedicated to all the slaves who lived in Louisiana.. 41

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WOMEN IN COMBAT: THE SOVIET EXAMPLE.....	i
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	6
CHAPTER THREE: PROJECT DESCRIPTION.....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: EXHIBIT POTENTIAL & THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC HISTORY.....	29
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS.....	60
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	74
REFERENCES.....	78
Primary:.....	78
Secondary:.....	79
PHOTOGRAPHS.....	95
APPENDIX A.....	97
A Text Version of the Exhibit Panels and Visuals.....	97
Text Version of Exhibit Panels.....	97
Exhibit Visual Aids.....	108
APPENDIX B.....	113

A Text Version of the Exhibit Companion Booklet	113
Booklet Visuals	120
APPENDIX C	123
Website and Social Media Pages	123
Website	123
Facebook URL	127
Instagram Handle	128

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Women in combat is not a new concept, despite what some American military officials would have you believe.¹ These conversations continue, but the constant questioning of “can women do this?” needs to be answered affirmatively once and for all. Within certain factions of the military, particularly the Marine Corps, women are thought to be weak, emotional, and not fit to serve in combat jobs. By looking at historical examples, one realizes that that is not the case. Specifically, the Soviet Union mobilized estimates of up to a million women into service during World War II, with approximately half of them serving on the frontlines.² These women performed in every aspect on the battlefield, from clerks and nurses in the rear, to snipers, tankers, and pilots at the front, and every job in between. They received the same training as men and proved themselves as capable as their male comrades. This Soviet example invalidates every argument made opposing women in combat roles. These women illustrate that females serving alongside men is not a shocking, unique phenomenon, but during WWII

¹ For this project “combat” is defined as any direct fighting, particularly, on the frontlines under direct fire from the enemy. “Combat jobs” are those specifically that draw fire and see action, such as snipers, machine gunners, tank crews, medics, and airwomen being fired upon. That is not to say that those in the rear areas did not receive incoming fire, but for my purposes I am referring exclusively to frontline duties unless otherwise noted.

² Throughout the paper “Soviet Union” and “Russia” are used depending on time period. “Soviet Union” is used when discussing 1922-1991, while “Russia” is used pre-1922, and post-1991. These terms are used to refer to the land and country, and not delineating political standings unless expressly stated.

on the eastern front women in combat became a common occurrence that cannot be ignored any longer in American minds. This need for more visual representations, such as Soviet women, performing and succeeding in battle is an important step to gain any sense of military acceptance of female capabilities, earning respect for current and future female servicemembers and leadership.³ Representation and respect are key to making any kinds of changes to an institution such as the U.S. military, while holding men and women to the same expectations and code of conduct.⁴

The goal of this project is twofold. First, by simply showing numerous women in stereotypically male roles, we begin the process of representing and normalizing women in these jobs. The Soviet women in World War II present a perfect historical example that demonstrates the opportunities for women in the military to perform adequately, shutting down sexist remarks. The western public is relatively unaware that Soviet women served in the Red Army infantry, so another facet of this project is general education. Showing real-world examples of women fighting on the frontlines in modern warfare is a powerful tool, exhibiting the capabilities of women in a significant way. Despite the fact that after the war the Soviet Union practically erased female involvement on the front, the stories extracted from oral histories describe powerful experiences of women who felt it was their duty to protect Mother Russia, avenge fallen comrades, visit other parts

³ Mary Jennings Hagar, *Shoot Like A Girl: One Woman's Dramatic Fight in Afghanistan and on the Home Front*. (New York: Berkley, 2017).

⁴ Kate Germano, and Kelly Kennedy, *Fight Like A Girl: The Truth Behind How Female Marines Are Trained*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2018).

of the world, and contribute to the war effort in every possible way. These motivations align with similar reasons that people join the military today and demonstrate that patriotic duty has no gender. By choosing to display all of this information through artifacts, photographs, newspaper articles, booklet, and maps, both in a free public exhibit with a presentation and online platforms, the hope is that these sentiments reach as many people as possible, while exercising current public history methods of communication that foster discussions among viewers concerning the military, sexism, and social issues.

The second goal is to inform the current debate surrounding American women entering infantry jobs.⁵ Even though World War II ended seventy-four years ago, this example is still relevant because the rigors and stresses of battle have remained unchanged. The women who fought in World War II witnessed horrors, and underwent extreme conditions, both physically and mentally. Those facts have not changed and women in the military today face those same challenges and more, due to the ridiculous notion that women must perform twice as well to be taken seriously in the male dominated field. When they do succeed, there are rumors that allege to lowered standards, cheating, and insults to their sexuality, “because how could a straight woman possibly be as good as a man.”⁶ This increased scrutiny leads to women feeling that they have no margin of error

⁵ Women are still currently barred from serving in Special Operations units. As such, women and female teams can be attached to special operations missions and are not exempt from combat.

⁶ Chris Hernandez, “Female Rangers and [Alleged] Lowered Standards,” *Breach, Bang, Clear*, September 8, 2015, <https://www.breachbangclear.com/female-rangers-and-alleged-lowered-standards/>.

to make mistakes or step out of line, because of the incorrect assumptions projected not just on the individual, but on women in general. This is evident, not solely in the military, but in most male-dominated fields, from business to academia, where women must work as hard as men, and then some, to be viewed as competent. In both the professional and military worlds, many women feel they must forsake their femininity, in addition to working harder than their male colleagues, because femininity in most instances equates to weakness. In cases of military sexual assault, accusers who report their assaults often face retaliation with the assailant receiving no punishment.⁷ This is not to say that sexism today and sexism faced in the 1970s has remained unchanged, because it has not. The expressions of sexism within the military have simply evolved into different issues that still need to be addressed. All of this is profoundly significant because it speaks to situations relevant in politics and society, when debating gender equality, deeply entrenched cultural norms, governmental policies, and the direction the American military is going in.⁸

Aside from the goals, the following chapters describe why the scholarship has ignored Soviet women until recently, a description of the project including details on the public exhibit and online resources, public history theory and ways

⁷ T.S. Nelson, *For Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military*. (New York: The Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press, 2002), 123.

⁸ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

to improve the display, and the exploration of multiple angles of why this topic of gender in the military continues to be discussed and its importance.⁹

⁹ This project defines “public history” as anything a practicing historian does outside of academia. For the majority of this project I will be referencing “public history” as it relates to museums and interpretive sites since my project is modeled after a museum exhibit.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY

Within the field of military history, women in combat has often been a neglected subject. This is more so the case concerning Soviet women in combat during World War II. Their active participation in the war has been underrepresented and rarely discussed. Western historiography in particular, has frequently downplayed the role of Soviet women in combat, mainly mentioning partisans or home defense units. According to Reina Pennington in 2001, “despite the advent of ‘new military history,’ with its increased emphasis on social and cultural history, military historians have been slow to examine the question of women’s participation and the broader issue of gender in military history.”¹⁰ Since then, recent scholarship has seen an increase in English translations of work featuring Soviet women in more roles than ever during the war, showing their significant contribution to the war effort. This increase parallels trends in the history field regarding previously ignored topics, and in the last decade, expanded accessibility to military history that mirrors society.

The 1960s and 1970s saw an outpouring of books concerning the war, as a whole, and more specifically, the eastern front. Perhaps this can be attributed to a rise in popularity among westerners amid the Cold War with Russia. Among these western publications are *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Shirer, *Russia at War 1941-1945* by Alexander Werth, *Barbarossa* by Alan Clark,

¹⁰ Reina Pennington, *Wings, Women, and War: Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 214.

Scorched Earth and *Hitler Moves East* by Paul Carell, as well as, *Enemy at the Gates* by William Craig.¹¹ In those books, women are rarely discussed, if at all, noncombatant or otherwise. William Craig does include portions adapted from his interviews with Tania Chernova. Chernova is mentioned briefly, noting her training as a sniper and participation in the battle of Stalingrad. Although, her appearances have more to do with the fact that she was Vassili Zaitsev's lover, and her inclusion was not to present a different female perspective in the text.¹² Another opinion was that Soviet women shown fighting was simply propaganda and a public relations stunt.¹³ While these works are valuable, they fail to

¹¹ William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960); Alexander Werth, *Russia at War: 1941-1945*. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1964); Alan Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-45*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965); Paul Carell, *Scorched Earth: The Russian-German War, 1943-1944*. Translated by Ewald Osers. (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1970); Paul Carell, *Hitler Moves East 1941-1943*. Translated by Ewald Osers. (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1964); William Craig, *Enemy at the Gates: The Battle for Stalingrad*. (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1973).

¹² Craig, *Enemy at the Gates*, 386. Unfortunately, her role is diminished further in the film adaptation of Craig's book released in 2001.

¹³ George H. Quester, "Women in Combat." *International Security*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Spring 1977): 81. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538624>; Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 40, 53.

Berkhoff points out that the Soviet Union neither encouraged nor dismissed women from becoming soldiers, censoring the press and reports that the public received about the war. The poster propaganda that followed the news that more and more women were enlisting in the Red Army was inconsistent. Posters did not expressly encourage Soviet women to pick up arms, but individual women were celebrated in the press for their exploits. Home defense (working in factories and antiaircraft batteries) was the greater emphasis of the state-run press, remarking that, "together with their fathers and brothers, the girls of Kiev are fighting selflessly against the enemy." The Soviet Union used this type of framing, featuring girls protecting their cities, as motivation for men, implicitly shaming them if they did not fight for the Motherland. Along those lines, the Soviets did taunt the Germans by dropping propaganda pamphlets boasting that sniper Lyudmila Pavlichenko, a woman, threatened their great army. As with the Soviet men, women were used to shame the Germans, pointing out that their Aryan race is being taken out by a mere woman, an inferior, in their eyes. In this way, the Soviets are celebrating Pavlichenko's achievements, while also insulting the Germans. These are just a few examples of the complicated issue of Soviet propaganda.

incorporate women as active participants in war, therefore ignoring a significant force on the battlefield and excluding them from history books.

Perhaps these outdated histories can be summed up best by one of the most famous British military historians, John Keegan. In one of his obituaries, Keegan is “widely considered the pre-eminent military historian of his era,” and yet he makes no statements about Russian women being involved in military affairs, beyond a brief sentence about their contribution in partisan groups.¹⁴ Keegan makes no mention of women at all in the Red Army in his 1989 survey of the second World War.¹⁵ In his best known work he does refer to women on the eastern front but goes so far as to say that the men in the Red Army were not allowed home leave while at the front, thus stating that the men “mentally abandoned their families, taking ‘field wives’ from among their women comrades.”¹⁶ This alludes to women in the Red Army being prostitutes, with their only purpose being sex, and the idea that men away from their families cannot remain faithful. He is not the only one making this assumption, but this example is emblematic of what many histories purported if women were included in military narratives at all.

¹⁴ Multiple online news outlets published obituaries praising John Keegan’s career as a military historian. One such website was *The New York Times*, written by David Binder on August 2, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/03/books/sir-john-keegan-historian-who-put-a-face-on-war-dies-at-78.html>.

¹⁵ John Keegan, *The Second World War*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989).

¹⁶ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1976), 309.

In the concluding chapter of *The Second World War*, Keegan laments that the “grievous suffering among the combatant states was borne by the Soviet Union, which lost at least 7 million men in battle and a further 7 million civilians,” and again makes no mention of the women lost in battle.¹⁷

Furthermore, Keegan states in his 1993 book that:

Warfare is, nevertheless, the one human activity from which women, with the most insignificant exceptions, have always and everywhere stood apart. Women look to men to protect them from danger, and bitterly reproach them when they fail as defenders. Women have followed the drum, nursed the wounded, tended the fields and herded the flocks when the man of the family has followed his leader, have even dug the trenches for men to defend and laboured in the workshops to send them their weapons. Women, however, do not fight. They rarely fight among themselves and they never, in any military sense, fight men. If warfare is as old as history and as universal as mankind, we must now enter the supremely important limitation that it is an entirely masculine activity.¹⁸

These inaccurate and sexist sentiments proposed by Keegan are interesting because publication years yield light to what was happening in contemporary western militaries, specifically American forces in this case study. *Face of Battle* was published in 1976, the same period in which women were admitted to four of

¹⁷ Keegan, *The Second World War*, 590.

¹⁸ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993), 76.

the five military academies, and the first time that women were allowed aboard noncombat ships.¹⁹ The military often mirrors shifts in society and this push in the 1970s allowed women into more military roles, making the United States more representative of the entire country.²⁰ This change directly correlated with the second wave of feminism, with more women fighting for workplace equality and the passing of the Title IX act. Despite these national struggles against discrimination and harassment, some correctly postulated that “among male military personnel, the discussion of women in combat often descends quickly into a series of double-entendre jokes, typically betraying a nostalgia for the good old days,” while Keegan belittled Soviet women into nothing more than “field wives” and strongly stated his incorrect opinion that women should never, and have never, taken part in fighting men, as seen in the excerpt from *A History of Warfare*.²¹

As with *Face of Battle*, the publication of *A History of Warfare* is telling. Published in 1993, women within the military were breaking through into previously off-limits jobs, and the debate continued about what role women should have in the military. Keegan was not the first, nor alone in his opposition to women in war in the 1980s and 1990s as we can see with the editor of the *Journal of Strategic Review* Arthur G. Metcalf’s statement that “Put plainly, as a group, and in a lesser degree than men, women do not want to fight, to kill, to risk

¹⁹ “Timeline: A History of Women in the U.S. Military.” March 8, 2017. Accessed January 15, 2019. <https://taskandpurpose.com/timeline-history-women-us-military>.

²⁰ Quester, “Women in Combat,” 91.

²¹ *Ibid*, 85.

being killed or captured.”²² Another historian in agreement with Keegan was Jeff M. Tuten who argued that allowing women into combat risked national security and that women should be removed from all army and marine divisions.²³

As such, the 1980s and 1990s saw a shift in western scholarship which focused on not the deeds of powerful men, but instead on the invisible, such as Soviet women combatants, while the contemporary discussion about American women in combat raged on.²⁴ Women’s participation in the Gulf War fueled these discussions and women often ended up in combat regardless of intentions due to proximity to the front.²⁵ The change in historical scholarship to previously ignored communities could be attributed to the fact that more women were entering the history field. Much of the early western study on Soviet women during the war was conducted by women.²⁶ One such prolific writer and translator in the 1980s and 90s was Kazimiera Janina Cottam, a Canadian professor and

²² Arthur G.B Metcalf, “Time to Re-examine the Role of Women in the Military.” *Strategic Review* 25, (Spring 1997): 6.

²³ Jeff M. Tuten, “The Argument Against Female Combatants.” in *Female Soldiers- Combatants or Noncombatants?: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Nancy Loring Goldman, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 261.

²⁴ Mady Wechsler Segal, “The Argument for Female Combatants.” in *Female Soldiers- Combatants or Noncombatants?: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Nancy Loring Goldman, 267-290. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982). Also by Mady Wechsler Segal, “Women’s Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present, and Future.” *Gender and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (Dec. 1995): 757-775. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/189540>.

²⁵ “Women in the Gulf War: What is Their Role?” *NBC Nightly News*, New York, NY: NBC Universal, January 3, 1991. Accessed January 19, 2019. <http://www.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/flatview?cuecard=50023>.

²⁶ Some examples being Shelley Saywell, *Women in War*, (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985); Anne Eliot Griesse, and Richard Stites. “Russia: Revolution and War.” in *Female Soldiers- Combatants or Noncombatants?: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Nancy Loring Goldman, 61-84. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982).

expert in Russian history.²⁷ One might also speculate the increase in western publications on the Soviet Union is due to the de-escalation of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the U.S.S.R allowed for previously restricted access to Soviet sources, which led to more western scholarship and translations.²⁸

Consequently, American women were permitted to serve on combat ships and fly in combat missions in 1991 largely due to their service in the Gulf War.²⁹

²⁷ Cottam wrote or translated all of the following publications: K. J. Cottam, "Soviet Women in Combat in World War II: The Ground Forces and the Navy." *International Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1980): 345-357; K.J. Cottam ed. and translator. *The Golden-Tressed Soldier*. (Manhattan: MA/AH Publishing, Kansas State University, 1983); Cottam, K.J. "Soviet Women in Combat in World War II: The Ground/Air Defense Forces." In *Women in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, edited by Tova Yedlin, 115-127. (New York: Praeger, 1980); K.J. Cottam ed. *The Girl from Kashin: Soviet Women in Resistance in World War II*. (Manhattan: MA/AH Publishing, 1984); Smirnova-Medvedeva, Z.M. *On the Road to Stalingrad: Memoirs of a Woman Machine Gunner*. Translated by Kazimiera J. Cottam. (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1997); K. J. Cottam, *Women in War and Resistance: Selected Biographies of Soviet Women Soldiers*. (Nepean: New Military Publishing, 1998).

²⁸ All of the following chapters or articles were published in the 1990s concerning Soviet women: John Erickson, "Night Witches, Snipers and Laundresses." *History Today*, July 1990: 29-35; John Erickson, "Soviet Women at War." In *World War 2 and the Soviet People*, edited by John Garrard and Carol Garrard, 50-76. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Svetlana Alexievich, Keith Hammond, and Ludmila Lezhneva, "'I Am Loath to Recall': Russian Women Soldiers in World War II." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. ¾, Rethinking Women's Peace Studies (Fall-Winter 1995): 78-84. Accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40003502>; D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 57, No. 2, (1993): 301-323. Accessed September 11, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2944060>; Linda Grant De Paw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Reina Pennington, "'Do Not Speak of the Services You Rendered': Women Veterans of Aviation in the Soviet Union." *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1996): 120-151; Barbara Alpern Engel "The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II." In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, edited by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 138-159. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999); David M. Glantz, "Women in War: The Red Army's Experience," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* Vol. 12, No. 1, (1999): 208-212. Accessed September 27, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13518049908430385>; Katherine Hodgson, "The Other Veterans: Soviet Women's Poetry of World War 2." In *World War 2 and the Soviet People*, edited by John Garrard and Carol Garrard, 77-97. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

²⁹ Helen Dewar, "Senate Approves Women in Combat." *The Washington Post*, August 1, 1991. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/08/01/senate-approves-women-in-combat/8ccabc0e-876f-455d-839c-fc2498207ddd/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f140c653c57a.

This erosion of the combat ban for women also led to more study of women warriors throughout history.³⁰ It is no surprise that with air combat open to women in the early 1990s, the first topic featuring Soviet women to gain global popularity and renown was air power. The famous “Night Witches” captured people’s attention with their nighttime flying antics of silently gliding in to bomb the German troops, with books such as Myles’ *Night Witches*, Noggle’s *A Dance with Death*, and Pennington’s *Wings, Women, & War* informing many about women’s contribution in the air to defend Mother Russia.³¹ By aligning with what American women were doing in the military, authors were able to write about Russian women flying without being dismissed or thought of as being shocking.

The same time period saw larger accounts of the eastern front beginning to incorporate women in their narratives, albeit sparingly, one example being Antony Beevor’s *Stalingrad*.³² Beevor briefly mentioned women manning anti-aircraft embattlements defending Stalingrad, nurses carrying men from the front lines, and the mass mobilization of women working in factories.³³

This trend of increased western scholarship on the eastern front and Soviet women continued into the 2000s, with more translations accessible in English and

³⁰ David E. Jones, *Women Warriors A History*. (London: Brassey’s, 1997).

³¹ Bruce Myles, *Night Witches: The Amazing Story of Russia’s Women Pilots in World War II*. (Chicago: Presidio Press, 1981); Anne Noggle, *A Dance with Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994); Reina Pennington, *Wings, Women, and War: Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

³² Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege: 1942-1943*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998).

³³ Beevor, *Stalingrad*, 108,157,224.

western scholars studying the eastern front.³⁴ The increased availability of sources, coupled with the decline of old-school sexist scholars and the World War II generation created the ideal environment for memoirs, oral histories, and biographies to be recorded. Women's service in the war was not celebrated as men's was after the war and this was in part why their history has been ignored. Women shamed female veterans for their service, while men told them not to speak of their time at the front, so they did not; or they relayed the war as their husbands coached them to.³⁵ Once the oppressive male generation of veterans and politicians begin to die out, do women deem it acceptable to divulge their stories about the war. The female veterans themselves do not have years to spare so there is a sense of urgency and a need for their stories to be preserved and remembered for future generations.³⁶ Additional reasons for the increased volume of books could be attributed to the rise of Russian Nationalism brought about by admiration for Russian victory in World War II with the construction of the Museum of the Great Patriotic War opening in 1995, and Vladimir Putin's presidency. All of

³⁴ Albert Axell, *Russia's Heroes 1941-45*. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2001); David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945*. (New York: Picador, 2006); Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

³⁵ Svetlana Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. (New York: Random House, 2017), xxiv.

³⁶ Anna Timofeyeva-Yegorova, *Red Sky, Black Death: A Soviet Woman Pilot's Memoir of the Eastern Front*. Translated by Margarita Ponomaryova and Kim Green. (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2009); Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War*; Bill Yenne, *The White Rose of Stalingrad: The Real-Life Adventure of Lidiya Vladimirovna Litvyak, the Highest Scoring Female Air Ace of All Time*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013).

these explanations correlate to more books featuring Soviet women, both in scholarly and popular history in the 2000s.³⁷

One would think that with all these publications showing the participation of women in war that the United States government would not still keep debating the role of American women in the military, but that is not the case. Men, such as popular politics journalist and writer R. Cort Kirkwood, continue to claim that the more women the military enlists, the weaker it becomes.³⁸ Meanwhile women have already been permeating many areas of the military during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, rising through the ranks and becoming vital teammates forming

³⁷ Reina Pennington, ed, *Amazons to Fighter Pilots: A Biographical Dictionary of Military Women*. Vol. 1. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003); Henry Sakaida, *Heroines of the Soviet Union 1941-45*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003); Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society 1941-1991*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Susanne Conze, and Beate Fieseler, "Soviet Women as Comrades-in-Arms: A Blind Spot in the History of the War." In *The People's War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union*, edited by Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetch, 211-234. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45." In *Recalling the Past- (Re)constructing the Past: Collective and Individual Memory of World War II in Russia and Germany*, edited by Withold Bonner and Arja Rosenholm, 315-335. (Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2008); Antony Beevor, "Stalingrad and Researching the Experience of War." In *Russia: War, Peace and Diplomacy, Essays in Honour of John Erickson*, edited by Ljubica Erickson and Mark Erickson, 154-168. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005); Anna Krylova, "Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender: Rearing a Generation of Professionally Violent Women-Fighters in 1930s Stalinist Russia," *Gender & History* Vol. 16, No. 3, (2004): 626-653; Reina Pennington, "Women and the Battle of Stalingrad." In *Russia: War, Peace and Diplomacy, Essays in Honour of John Erickson*, edited by Ljubica Erickson and Mark Erickson, 169-211. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005); Euridice Charon Cardona, and Roger D. Markwick. "'Our Brigade Will Not Be Sent to the Front': Soviet Women Under Arms in the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45." *The Russian Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr. 2009): 240-262. Accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20620992>; Petra Rau, "Night Witches." *Women, A Cultural Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 2005): 115-118; Roger D. Markwick, "'A Sacred Duty': Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-1945." *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2008): 403-420. Oral histories available in English at <https://iremember.ru/en/> Online oral history collection "Memories of Veterans of the Great Patriotic War." Published September 2010; Steven Merritt Miner, "'Things must be bad at the front': Women in the Soviet Military during WWII." *MCU Journal*, Special Issue, (2018): 41-64.

³⁸ R. Cort Kirkwood, "What Kind of Nation Sends Women Into Combat." April 11, 2003. Accessed May 1, 2009. <http://www.lewrockwell.com/orig3/kirkwood3.html>.

Female Engagement Teams.³⁹ These women also felt the need to share their stories about their service, showing the sexism and obstacles that women still face in the military, while meeting those challenges and paving the way for future recruits.⁴⁰ This led to the surge of interest in Soviet female snipers, as contemporary women broke down arbitrary walls within the military and scholars continued to dig deeper into life on the front.⁴¹

Assuming pilots are the most famous of Soviet women, snipers are next in line. The cult of Soviet “sniperism” was indeed real and has only become the subject of study recently in last decade.⁴² Two examples are Lyuba Vinogradova’s *Avenging Angels*, a scholarly book, and *Soviet Women Snipers of the Second World War*, a popular history book intended for broader audiences.⁴³ Andy Dougan also includes female snipers in his history of snipers, providing

³⁹ “Timeline: A History of Women in the U.S. Military.” March 8, 2017. Accessed January 15, 2019. <https://taskandpurpose.com/timeline-history-women-us-military>.

⁴⁰ Kayla Williams, and Michael E. Staub. *Love My Rifle More Than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); Kirsten Holmstedt, *Band of Sisters: American Women at War in Iraq*. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2007); Tanay Biank, *Undaunted: The Real Story of America’s Servicewomen in Today’s Military*. (New York: New American Library, 2013); Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, *Ashley’s War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2015); Mary Jennings Hegar, *Shoot Like A Girl: One Woman’s Dramatic Fight in Afghanistan and on the Home Front*. (New York: Berkley, 2017). Megan H. MacKenzie, “Let Women Fight: Ending the U.S. Military’s Female Combat Ban.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 6 (November/December 2012): 34-42. Accessed September 13, 2018. <https://jstor.org/stable/41720932>.

⁴¹ Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Euridice Charon Cardona, and Roger D. Markwick. *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the Second World War*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Lyuba Vinogradova, *Defending the Motherland: The Soviet Women Who Fought Hitler’s Aces*. Translated by Arch Tait. (London: MacLehose Press, 2015).

⁴² Andy Dougan, *Through the Crosshairs: A History of Snipers*. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2005), 235.

⁴³ Lyuba Vinogradova, *Avenging Angels: Young Women of the Soviet Union’s WWII Sniper Corps*. Translated by Arch Tait. (New York: MacLehose Press, 2017); Youri Obraztsov, and Maud Anders. *Soviet Women Snipers of the Second World War*. (Paris: Histoire & Collections, 2014).

individuality among the generalities.⁴⁴ Dougan goes beyond just discussing the famous, Lyudmila Pavlichenko, and includes other female snipers, such as Roza Shanina and Nina Lobkoskaya, detailing their weapon of choice, the 1891/30 Mosin-Nagant bolt action rifle with 3.5x PU scope. Dougan adequately observed that “The Red Army took advantage of the fact that women were able to kill just as ably and every bit as effectively as their male counterparts.”⁴⁵

With the official announcement of the integration of women into combat roles in the United States military late in 2015, one would think the debate surrounding women in the military would end.⁴⁶ That is wishful thinking. The Marine Corps protested this announcement and was the slowest branch of the government to implement changes, only recently experimenting with boot camp integration.⁴⁷ Years after the announcement some people, both in the general population and the government, still ask the question if “can women do it?” One could simply steer them to the stack of books and articles published in the last fifteen years alone on Soviet women to see the resounding ‘yes’ to that question.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Dougan, *Through the Crosshairs*, 235.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 233.

⁴⁶ Matthew Rosenberg, and Dave Philipps. “All Combat Roles Now Open to Women, Defense Secretary Says.” *The New York Times*, December 3, 2015. Accessed October 2, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/04/us/politics/combat-military-women-ash-carter.html?_r=0.

⁴⁷ Shawn Snow, “Male and Female Marine Platoons to Integrate at Recruit Training for the First Time.” *Marine Corps Times*, January 4, 2019. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/04/male-and-female-marine-platoons-to-integrate-at-recruit-training-for-the-first-time/>.

⁴⁸ Reina Pennington, “Offensive Women: Women in Combat in the Red Army in the Second World War.” *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 74 (July 2010): 775-820; Adrienne Harris, “Yulia Drunina: The ‘Blond-Braided Soldier’ on the Poetic Front,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* Vol. 54, No. 4, (2010): 643-665. Accessed September 19, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23345044>;

Simply by reading recent 2018 books: Lyudmila Pavlichenko's memoir and Kate Germano's scathing account of the Marine Corps, the reader can clearly distinguish that the "problems with gender integration" have nothing to do with women and everything to do with the sexist culture of the military and the institution of the Marine Corps itself.⁴⁹ This western bias of not allowing women in combat stems in part from their carefully regulated participation in World War II on the home front.⁵⁰ American, Canadian, and British women were the constant source of arguments on everything from what they should wear to the implications of having women pull the triggers on anti-aircraft emplacements.⁵¹ Oftentimes the discussion centered around the moral concern of having women as active killers.⁵² As one can see, the "moral" topic is still brought up regarding women, in addition to the question of physical and emotional strength. Many opposers to women in combat cite scientific studies in attempt to establish

⁴⁹ Lyudmila Pavlichenko, *Lady Death: The Memoirs of Stalin's Sniper*. Translated by David Foreman. (Barnsley: Greenhil Books, 2018); Germano, and Kennedy. *Fight Like A Girl*. Ironically as of September 26, 2018 the jury is out on whether women will be successful in combat roles according to James Mattis: Sophie Tatum, "James Mattis: 'The jury is out' on whether women will be successful in combat roles." *CNN*, September 26, 2018. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/james-mattis-the-jury-is-out-on-whether-women-will-be-successful-in-combat-roles/ar-AAAE5Ob?ocid=se>.

⁵⁰ Nataliia Zaliatok, "British and Soviet Women in the Military Campaign of 1939-45: A Comparative Review." *MCU Journal*, Special Issue, (2018): 9-40; John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985); Beate Fieseler, M. Michael Hampf, and Jutta Schwarzkopf. "Gendering Combat: Military Women's Status in Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union during the Second World War." *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 47, (2014): 115-126. Accessed January 25, 2019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.06.011>.

⁵¹ Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Judy Barrett Litoff, and David C. Smith, ed. *American Women in a World at War: Contemporary Accounts from World War II*. (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 1996).

⁵² Gerard J. DeGroot, "Whose Finger on the Trigger? Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries and the Female Combat Taboo." *War in History*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (1997): 434-453.

women's failings as fact. One such 2015 study conducted by the Marine Corps concluded that mixed gendered units are not as accurate on the rifle range, are more prone to injury, and hinder unit cohesion, disregarding multiple flaws in methodology and differences in training between men and women.⁵³ The conversation has evolved, but is still occurring, from the end of World War II to the present.⁵⁴

Aside from airpower and snipers, women served in every other position in the Red Army. Accounts detailing women as medics, machine-gunners, anti-aircraft gunners, tank drivers, sappers, do exist but are more difficult to find. This area of women in the Red Army is where more study and translations are required. Despite this oversight in study, more and more is being published featuring women in Soviet Union on the eastern front. As contemporary women are completing the Army's Ranger school, the Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course and the Winter Mountain Leaders Course, so too are more Soviet women who served in all military roles coming to light.⁵⁵ Oral history collections

⁵³ Eyder Peralta, "Marine Corps Study: All Male Combat Units Performed Better than Mixed Units," *NPR*, September 10, 2010. Accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/10/439190586/marine-corps-study-finds-all-male-combat-units-faster-than-mixed-units>; Matthew Cox, "New Details Question Validity of Marine Corps Gender-Integration Study." October 2, 2015. Accessed February 19, 2019. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/10/02/new-details-question-validity-marine-gender-integration-study.html>; Germano and Kennedy, *Fight Like a Girl*, 28.

⁵⁴ William A. Taylor, "From WACs to Rangers: Women in the U.S. Military since World War II." *MCU Journal*, Special Issue, (2018): 78-101.

⁵⁵ Shawn Snow, "First Female Marine Graduates from Winter Mountain Leaders Course." *Marine Corps Times*, January 8, 2019. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/08/first-female-marine-graduates-from-winter-mountain-leaders-course/>; Andrea Scott, "Meet the First Female Marine to Graduate IOC and Lead an Infantry Platoon." *Marine Corps Times*, August 10, 2018. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2018/08/10/meet-the-first-woman-to-graduate-ioc-and-lead-an-infantry-platoon/>; Scott Neuman, "First Female

demonstrate that women were combat medics, machine-gunners, tank drivers, sappers, communication specialists, rifewomen, and in every other job the Red Army could offer.⁵⁶ Also of note is the fact that Soviet women are also being depicted more in the media and fictional realm.⁵⁷ This increase in awareness might help fill the gap in scholarship. As Kate Germano pointed out, simply seeing more women in military jobs and leadership positions normalizes the “spectacle” of it and decreases the “otherness” that occurs when women are segregated from men.⁵⁸ As a result, increasing women in the military could help to change the male dominated culture, which many attribute to the problems with sexism and assault that too many face while serving.⁵⁹ By portraying women as

Soldiers Graduate from Army Ranger School.” *NPR*, August 21, 2015. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/08/21/433482186/first-female-soldiers-graduate-from-army-ranger-school>.

⁵⁶ Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War*.

⁵⁷In 2017 numerous fiction accounts were published on Soviet female pilots. Pamela Dell is a popular children’s author and her book *The Soviet Night Witches: Brave Women Bomber Pilots of World War II* is intended for children aged 8-14 years old. *Night Witches* by Kathryn Lansky and *Among the Red Stars* by Gwen C. Katz are intended for teen readers. Another example of fictional accounts intended for adults is *Daughters of the Night Sky* by Aimie K. Runyan published in 2018. These are just a few examples of some of the fiction books recently published featuring Soviet female pilots. Additionally, David Benioff’s *City of Thieves* published in 2008 features a lone female sniper who is part of a partisan group. Her part is reduced to a love interest, but nevertheless illustrates one more example of women in combat. A more famous Russian novel is *The Dawns Here Are Quiet* by Boris Vassilyev. The short novel was published and adapted into a movie in 1972. A miniseries was then produced by the same name in 2015 in Russian. The novella is available in English and the 2015 series has English subtitles. Maybe in the future, with the help of these books, more and more readers will become familiar with them, looking into the real women who inspired these novels.

⁵⁸ Germano, and Kennedy, *Fight Like A Girl*, 289.

⁵⁹ Cynthia A. LeardMann et al., “Combat Deployment Is Associated with Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault in a Large, Female Military Cohort.” *Women’s Health Issues*, Vol. 23, No. 4. (2013): 215-223. Accessed February 5, 2019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.whi.2013.05.002>; Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Nathaniel Toppelberg. “The Persistence of Sexual Assault Within the US Military.” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 54, No. 5, (2017): 620-633; Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987); Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); T.S. Nelson, *For Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military*. (New York: The Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press, 2002).

fully capable and held to the same standards, both in Soviet accounts and in American contemporary articles, respect and trust forms between male and female servicemembers. The evolution of sources on women in combat and the eastern front demonstrate the changes within society, the military, and the history field itself.

CHAPTER THREE: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Soviet women in combat during World War II was relatively ignored in the history field until the last twenty years. Within their own country, their service was omitted from victory celebrations and disregarded as shameful. Despite ongoing efforts to research and study these women, many westerners remain unaware of the inclusion of women in infantry roles during the war. They may know about the “night witches” or famous Lyudmila Pavlichenko, but those women were deemed a select few and not the norm on the eastern front. As the United States military works to integrate women into combat jobs, they turn to various studies, which continue to question if women “can hack it.” These government and military officials fail to utilize real-world historical examples that illustrate that women can and do succeed in combat roles. The stories gleaned from female Soviet veterans paint a narrative that proves that when women are trained and sent to battle among men they perform just as well as their male comrades.

This project stresses that message by providing ample examples of Soviet women performing their military duty and defending their country against the invading German forces. Utilizing photographs, newspaper articles, maps, artifacts, and quotes taken from oral histories, a public museum exhibit was crafted as a method to present this research in a bold and appealing way. The location of the exhibit in the Boise State Albertsons Library lends itself to a high traffic area, free of charge, that can potentially reach more students than a display

in a museum would and allows for more accessibility. The flexibility of the space also permitted for more creativity in designing the visual aspects of the exhibit. As education of the public is one of the project goals, this setting seemed ideal, with substantial foot traffic through the library. Unfortunately, many would assert that a college campus is already a hub of progressive ideas, and perhaps would not reach some of the older, more conservative audiences that the exhibit is intended to educate, indicating a challenge within the space.

As museums lean towards more fusion between environmental design, visitor participation, social media, and technology, this exhibit incorporates all of those elements. Burlap and camo netting hanging from the ceiling combined with stacks of ammo cans and crates adds to the military atmosphere of the subject-matter. Visitor participation is encouraged through technology interaction. A provided iPad allows viewers to listen to a Woodie Guthrie song written about Lyudmila Pavlichenko, hear a portion of an oral history interview by a female veteran, and see one of Pavlichenko's speeches made in United States. A companion booklet is also provided, containing the Woodie Guthrie song lyrics, oral history interview transcript, and text of Pavlichenko's speech. Additionally, the booklet holds concise biographies of specific women to gain a more individualistic perspective of the war. The last pages of the booklet detail some of the equipment these women utilized and some of the sources used in writing the biographies. The other technological element is a computer monitor showing

Pavlichenko's speech and the oral history interview on a loop. This permits video viewing without needing to stop and use the iPad.

The rest of the exhibit features panels combined with artifacts. A main banner welcomes viewers, and gives an overview, while display case panels summarize five case studies through different jobs: airwomen, snipers, medics, tankers, and machine gunners. The last display case panel contextualizes the information by including research on contemporary women in the United States military. The cases also house artifacts relevant to the corresponding job discussed. Outside of the display cases a propaganda poster, poetry examples, maps, and a timeline are on display to gain a sense of the operational level of the eastern front. The second goal of the exhibit is to persuade the audience that women really are capable of being successful on the battlefield despite western biases and sexist undertones prevalent in the military.

The booklet and main banner both provide the web address to the corresponding exhibit website, sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com. The website contains all the visual aids and text content from all the panels and banner, plus photographs of the finished exhibit in the library space, and full bibliography. This makes all the information on display available online for those who cannot visit the exhibit in person or are interested in what sources were utilized for the project. The website also links accompanying social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram.⁶⁰ These social media platforms also make

⁶⁰ Facebook URL: facebook.com/sovietwomenincombatwwii

the research easy to find for those interested. The secondary purpose for creating a website and social media accounts is to increase awareness and visibility of Soviet women in combat, continuing to reach as many people as possible and educate the public. With that goal in mind, the website contains all the content from the exhibit and will not need constant updating and management. The social media accounts also require minimal activity and supervision in the long run.⁶¹

According to history design experts, History Associates, exhibit design is all about telling compelling stories that educate and engage visitors.⁶² The hope is that the exhibit and web content does just that. They also list tips on what creates a good exhibit, which this project has attempted to follow. Some of those items being: 1) use technology, 2) facilitate dialogue that encourages visitors to think about and discuss contemporary issues, 3) make it accessible, and 4) get social by providing visitors ways to share their experience and spread the word about the exhibit.⁶³ This project encompasses all of those aspects, from the iPad station and video monitor, connection to current military debates, providing multiple types of

Instagram Handle: @sovietwomenincombat

⁶¹The website and social media accounts will remain active for the foreseeable future. The website will remain fairly static, providing information about my exhibit project and the research conducted. The social media platforms may receive updates periodically as I come across relevant articles and things I deem worth sharing, while occasionally continuing to post photos and snippets of information about Soviet women in combat. With the completion of the exhibit, those updates will not be as frequent. Since the intention was always to create a temporary exhibit there is no long-term social media plan beyond raising awareness for these women. Down the road, I could see posting about newer gender developments within the U.S. military and other women in combat from around the world and other historical periods, not just from World War II or the United States.

⁶²History Associates was the firm that created many of the displays in the National World War II Museum.

⁶³ History Associates. "What We Do." Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.historyassociates.com/what-we-do/>.

displays and web access, to the social media platforms. By providing provocative, and sometimes shocking, quotes from oral history interviews, the expectation is that viewers will internally reflect and ponder the implications of the exhibit, connecting it to the current social and military issues. Including a website and social media platforms, gives audiences the opportunity to engage with the content online, ask questions, and see occasional posts from the social media accounts that keeps the topic at the forefront of conversations. These online platforms allow the exhibit to occupy a space even after it is taken down.

Choosing to connect a historical topic to a contemporary issue gives viewers context and a chance to relate to history. Since the Cold War, Russia has been considered by many to be the “other.” Making these connections that link America to the “other” fosters the pondering of common experiences that transcend western biases. Instead of focusing on the differences between the United States and Russia, Americans have the opportunity to see what the war was like for our allies fighting a common enemy.⁶⁴ The United States fought largely overseas, while the Soviet Union was invaded and decimated by the German army. Through the photographs, quotes, and research viewers are able to look past American views on the war and current opinions about Russia to see new perspectives about what the eastern front was like and the victorious Soviet

⁶⁴ Many people fixate on the issue of communism as being a major factor in the differences between the U.S. and Russia. This paper and exhibit do not discuss communism because that is not a point that is important. Yes, the Soviet Union was established with the October Revolution in 1917, embracing communism and declaring equality between the sexes. Despite the “official” adoption of gender equality, the Soviet Union was still a deeply patriarchal society that conformed to traditional gender norms.

advance towards Berlin. The exhibit also provides a perfect opportunity to capitalize on the timing of changes taking place within the American military. Using this historical example, the actions of the Soviet women advocate for issues affecting current servicewomen, displaying the potential that activist history can have. By promoting the exhibit through flyers, an informal presentation, advertising through Boise State articles, *The Arbiter*, and a radio interview discussing why Americans are not aware of Soviet female service during and after the war, the goal is to bring more light to the topic of gender equality and equal opportunities in a male dominated field, and direct people to seek out more information.⁶⁵ Public historians have a responsibility to help educate the public, while being true to historical facts and working within the confines of budgets and stakeholder needs, and this is one example of how to do that. The exhibit would not have been possible without the collaboration of multiple entities, including the Idaho Military Museum, Albertsons Library, private loans, IT assistance, and graphics services, showing the value of interdisciplinary cooperation. This project not only advocates for gender equality but advocates for the importance of history itself. Exhibits like this prove the need for history to understand current situations.

⁶⁵Here are some of the links of those promotional efforts:

Boise State News: <https://www.boisestate.edu/news/2019/03/20/history-graduate-student-explores-world-war-ii-violence-and-gender/>.

Albertsons Library: <https://library.boisestate.edu/2019/03/25/women-in-combat-the-soviet-example-exhibit/>.

Boise State Public Radio, *Idaho Matters*: <https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/post/boise-state-exhibit-looks-role-soviet-women-wwii>.

The Arbiter: <https://arbiteronline.com/boise-state-graduate-student-explores-overlooked-women-in-combat/?fbclid=IwAR0jYJKFH5n3jvrlmrv0174vAav2uVA4VI1yJaRVdGvxF5g7Z2QpaB9WI0s>.

In a STEM-focused society people often forget the importance of historians as tools for comprehension. Coming back to the public nature of this exhibit and its promotion, this project shows that history as a field of study can be more than teaching in classrooms. By working outside of academia, historians can have a lasting impact that shapes public opinions, while hopefully educating about important topics.

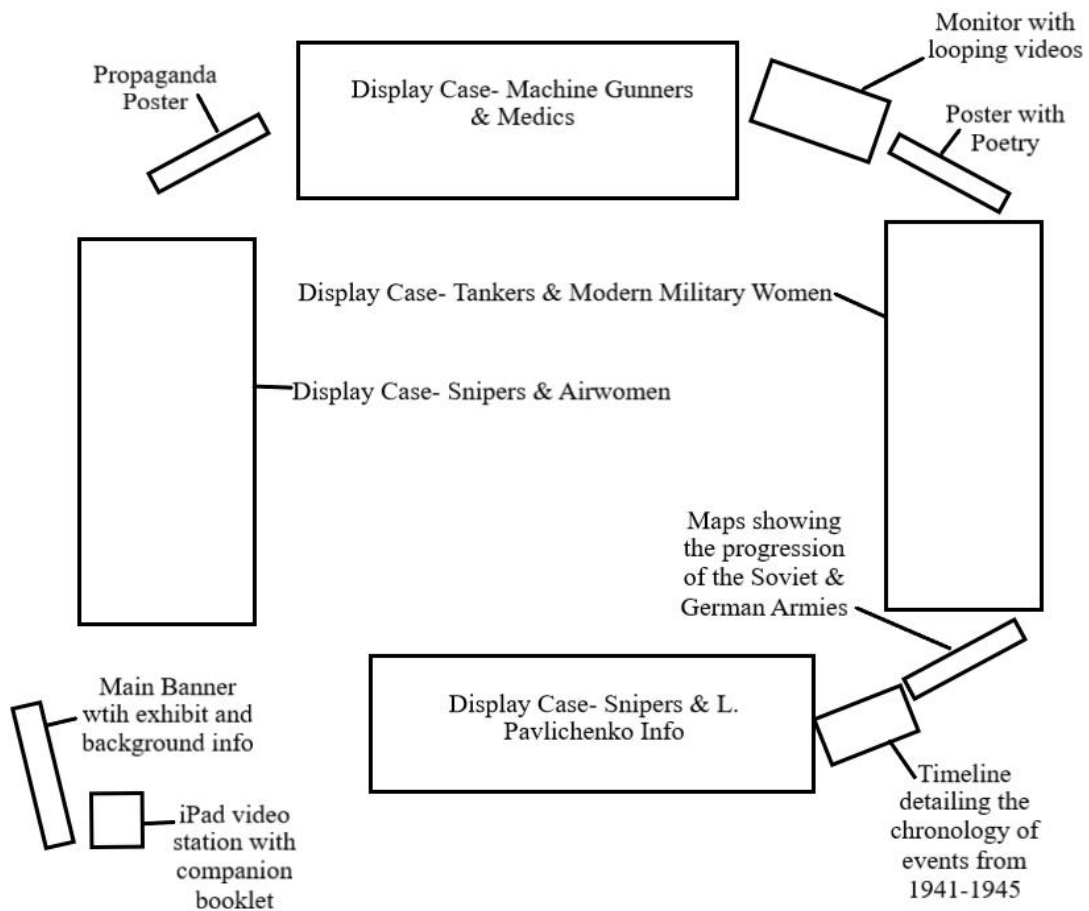


Figure 1. Exhibit Diagram. See Appendices A & B for display case content, text, images, and booklet text.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXHIBIT POTENTIAL & THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC HISTORY

This vast subject of Soviet women lends itself well to visual representation. The current project is an ample starting place, but so much more could be done to assist in telling the stories of these women. While artifacts behind glass and photographs make a point, the realm of possibilities is endless in expanding this exhibit's potential. Given ample resources, such as more time, money, and labor, a complete overhaul is possible, while being thoughtful about public history controversies.

One instance of differences in display methods is evident is when examining two military museums in New Orleans. The first museum is Louisiana's Civil War Museum and Confederate Memorial Hall. A long hall was lined with display cases with framed flags and portraits adorning the walls. Opened in 1891, Confederate Memorial Hall has remained much as it was when



Figure 2. Louisiana's Civil War Museum and Confederate Memorial Hall. Personal Collection of the Author.

established.⁶⁶ The hall feels stagnant, because nothing has changed in one hundred and twenty years.

For someone that is not a Civil War buff, the museum could be labeled as outdated and removed from the more recent museum trend of including more visitor participation.⁶⁷ It is great that the museum has managed to keep the original building, but maybe some updating could be done to some of the cases and side galleries to allow more interaction. The artifacts in the display cases look as if they have never been rotated out for more variety within the collection. Perhaps their intention is to be as authentic as possible, and to the museum, that means never changing the displays. One could view the Civil War Museum as what not to do, or simply go there knowing that this is the original building, with original display cases and not much has changed since its construction.

Conversely, right across the street from Confederate Memorial Hall, the National World War II Museum has a completely different approach. Founded in 2000, the National World War II Museum embraced new museum techniques and hired a professional history firm to design the museum galleries.⁶⁸ Their case study example directly influenced the ideas on how to improve my exhibit. In many of the galleries in the National World War II Museum, the visitor experience is very much taken into consideration, including atmospheric elements

⁶⁶ Confederate Memorial Hall Museum, "History of Museum," <https://confederatemuseum.com/about-museum/history-of-museum/>.

⁶⁷ Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010. Accessed February 10, 2019. <http://www.participatorymuseum.org>.

⁶⁸ History Associates, "Our Clients," <https://www.historyassociates.com/who-we-serve/our-clients/>.

and creative displays that aid in guest education. For instance, in the exhibit detailing life on the American home front, *The Arsenal of Democracy*, the museum includes artifacts located in kitchen drawers and cupboards, modeling a typical 1940s house. The visitor is expected to pull out the drawers and



Figure 3. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Arrows direct visitors to pull out kitchen drawers.

investigate the cupboards to uncover the artifacts and information, all related to how average Americans would have experienced the war at home.



Figure 4. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Newspaper headlines and monitors relay exhibit information.



Figure 6. National World War II Museum. Personal Collection of the Author. Training bunker display.



Figure 5. National World War II Museum. From the Personal Collection of the Author. Interviews by those interned play on displays made from suitcases.

Another creative way to display information is to use mixed media elements as exhibit panels, as seen in the newspaper stand, bunker recreation, and utilization of suitcases to make a point. By changing each room's floor, walls, and lighting, a completely new atmosphere is created. By recreating a bunker utilizing airplane silhouettes, piled sandbags, and the look of "dirt" on the floor, the exhibit is directly distinguishing that the visitor has left the home front with its kitchens and newspaper stands,

moving into how troops were trained and deployed, in a barracks setting. Similarly, the subject of Japanese Incarceration was handled delicately by the museum. Surrounded by photographs, videos played showing interviews from those who had been interned, describing what life was like in the camps and the trauma of being rounded up by the government. The choice to use suitcases to hold the video screens was a powerful tool to express just how the

Japanese-Americans had to abandon their lives and faced prejudice from their own government.

As seen with these examples, the National World War II Museum created all-encompassing



Figure 8. National World War II Museum. The Road to Tokyo exhibit, "Guadalcanal: Green Hell," gallery. Illustrating the fight in the Pacific.

displays, down to the small details. This aspect was even more prevalent in their newest exhibits, *The Road to Berlin* and *The Road to Tokyo*. By essentially crafting the displays from blank black space, the designers created a full sensory experience, relaying not only textual and artifact information but also



Figure 7. National World War II Museum. The Road to Berlin exhibit, North Africa.

environmental clues, video projections, and auditory elements. Case in point, the museum's exhibit on Guadalcanal illustrated the island warfare American forces faced



Figure 9. National World War II Museum. *The Road to Berlin* exhibit, *Battle of the Bulge*.

by utilizing dark lighting, tropical plants, video footage with audio, gun emplacements built up with sandbags, and sound effects to imitate the jungle

setting, with display cases holding artifacts. Similarly, the same tactics are employed in sequential galleries to follow the narrative of Pacific Theater through to the bombing of Japan, displaying tunnel systems and barren landscapes on Iwo Jima, to gigantic screens showing nuclear destruction accompanied by a somber soundtrack. The exhibit *The Road to Berlin* did the same, employing environmental design, coupled with multi-sensory modes of communication.

Moving from the battles of North Africa, through the Italian Campaign, and into Northwest Europe,

the exhibits changed drastically to match the location of events. Not only did the National World War II Museum



Figure 10. National World War II Museum. Oral History booth. Alcove titles "Personal Accounts: Nightdrop into Normandy." From the museum's Two-Minute Oral History Program.

apply environmental design techniques in their exhibits, the museum allowed visitors to hear real stories from the war, setting up oral history stations throughout the galleries, compiled from their immense oral history collection. For many these two-minute snippets humanized events of the war by hearing from an individual. The listener was able to escape into a booth, choose which program to hear, and learn from people who took part in or were affected by the events of the war.

The National World War II Museum illustrates the larger trend among museums that accept significant funding from donations and receive hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. These sources of income allow the museum to create different exhibits, host various functions, and remain up to date on current museum practices, while hiring the best people for jobs. The most recent trend is evident from viewing exhibition design websites to the newly remodeled Idaho State Museum, which seeks to blend artifacts, graphics, and multimedia to create “powerful emotional experiences.”⁶⁹ All of these efforts to produce interactive exhibits aim to “offer museum visitors an opportunity to find personal relevance in the content. Active participation places the visitor in the center of the exhibit

⁶⁹ All you have to do is look on the websites of exhibit design firms to see the shift towards immersive and interactive environmental designs. Websites such as History Factory <https://www.historyfactory.com/>, West Office <http://woed.com/>, Lord <https://www.lord.ca/>, Museum Environments <https://museumenvironments.com/>, and History Associates <https://www.historyassociates.com/>; Tyson Miller, and Doug Petcash, “Reimagined Idaho State Museum an interactive feast for the senses.” KTVB, October 8, 2018. Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/reimagined-idaho-state-museum-an-interactive-feast-for-the-senses/277-598844822>.

content.”⁷⁰ In doing so, fully surrounded by the museum or historic site’s unique identity, learning about why the content of such a site is significant.⁷¹

Additionally, different exhibition concepts appeal to diverse audiences with varied “learning modalities.”⁷² By embracing these different learning modalities and site identity, there is a better understanding of what the exhibits are trying to teach. Knowing your site’s identity dictates how your exhibits will be designed, what tone and message you want to convey, and the direction your marketing should take. So, what brought about these trends? According to the National Endowment for the Arts in 2009, “over the last twenty years, audiences for museums, galleries, and performing arts institutions have decreased.”⁷³ Nina Simon believes that by inviting people to actively engage as cultural participants and not passive consumers, cultural institutions can reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value.⁷⁴ As such, museums have started drawing on entertainment and media to achieve this.⁷⁵

Keeping this information in mind, my temporary exhibit could lend itself to such treatment. In a perfect world with more resources, time, and space, employing environmental designs would illustrate the battlefields of the eastern

⁷⁰ Museum Environments Exhibit Design. “Participation: Personalizing the Exhibit Experience.” Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://museumenvironments.com/participation-post/>.

⁷¹ Adrian Murphy, “Exhibition design: creating theatre in our cultural spaces.” *Museums + Heritage Advisor*, April 26, 2018. Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/exhibition-design-creating-theatre-cultural-spaces/>.

⁷² Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996), 65.

⁷³ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, preface.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 17.

front. From the steppe in southern Russia and the Ukraine, to the urban fighting in Stalingrad, to the forests in northwestern Russia, the variety of landscapes and the vast scope of the front would benefit from environmental elements, such as those seen in *The Road to Berlin* and *The Road to Tokyo*. Purely from an educational standpoint the illustration of diverse terrain would demonstrate the different strategies used in different battles across the European Theater. While the current exhibit on display focuses on the human experiences of war, more space and money for environmental design would contribute to more strategic and operational information about the eastern front, providing more context for the experiences of war. As such, the current exhibition focus is precisely on those human experiences and connections to current military issues. More of an environmental design element could add an unwanted distraction from the central message of the exhibition, even though it could be enlightening information. Furthermore, as oral histories were a large part of my primary resources, this exhibit would profit from listening booths, modeled after the National World War II Museum. Added video and audio components would enhance the experience and convey details, so the provided information would not have to be only textual.

Aside from environmental aspects and oral history booths, my exhibit would also include some participatory elements, such as a “game” of sorts to allude to sniper training. This game would involve a touch screen in which the viewer would see a landscape with the goal being to find the camouflaged sniper hiding amongst the landscape. Various terrains would cycle through with the

sniper changing positions and into appropriate camouflage. This teaches one of the key skills required to remain undetected and successful as a sniper; that of effectively staying hidden. This “game” would also demonstrate the patience and discipline needed by snipers to stay concealed during daylight hours. This is just one example of a possible interactive display. Another more tangible approach would be to allow visitors to try on weighted backpacks to experience the strength required to carry one’s equipment while marching for long periods of time. Even using “games” similar to flight simulators such as those played on Xbox and PlayStation consoles could be interactive, with the participant sitting in a mock plane cockpit, viewing a screen, experiencing what flight feels like, and possibly shooting down enemy aircraft.⁷⁶ Of course, all of these games and interactive aspects would have to be designed so as not to contribute to the “Disneyfication” of history.⁷⁷ To that end, my exhibit would seek to find a balance between providing educational and entertainment value, meeting both the public demands for enjoyment and the ethical requirements to communicate the realities of history.⁷⁸

This topic of educational and entertainment value is crucial when designing exhibits. Often times historians feel that sacrifices in education must be made to appeal to the general public, namely tourists. This means that some

⁷⁶ Flight simulator games are nothing new and have been developed for both gaming consoles and computers (think *Heroes Over Europe* from Ubisoft).

⁷⁷ Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide*, 16. Sayer describes Disneyfication as entertaining the public through the past, often sensationalizing and romanticizing the past in order to create an unrealistic yet publicly appealing version of history.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

decisions are made for the sake of entertainment rather than education, putting historians and scholars (education) at odds with marketing and administration personnel (entertainment). This struggle results in efforts to combine these two concepts into designs that educate as well as get people through the doors in ways that entertainment does. These tactics are the reason I chose to frame some of my interactive elements into games. Educators and psychologists have known for years that people, especially, children, retain and learn better when content is formatted in a game, digital or not. Games allow for active engagement and retention of lessons, while holding short attention spans.⁷⁹ By using games to teach about sniper training and flight, the hope is to be both educational and entertaining for all ages. So as to avoid “Disneyfication” discussions surrounding games and historical content needs to be paramount. My fear in creating games is that the experiences of combatants is trivialized. Flight simulators can be useful, but when pilots can “shoot” down enemy aircraft, does it lessen the gravity of death? People have surmised for years that first-person shooter video games numb teenagers to violence and make that same violence commonplace in their lives. Does shooting down a plane instead of shooting people make it acceptable?

This same fine line exists between any site that illustrates violence and loss of life, and much of this has to do with the tone that the institution chooses to

⁷⁹ Robert J. Marzano, “The Art and Science of Teaching / Using Games to Enhance Student Achievement.” *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 67, No. 5 (Feb. 2010): 71-72. Accessed March 10, 2019. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb10/vol67/num05/Using-Games-to-Enhance-Student-Achievement.aspx#ref1>.

perpetuate. Both the National World War II Museum and Confederate Memorial Hall intentionally choose to go in the celebratory route. Rather than focusing on the extreme loss of life in WWII and the Civil War, both museums glorify the contributions made to secure Allied victory, and the “tragic” sacrifices that live on in the War of Northern Aggression while celebrating the Confederacy. The National World War II Museum does have galleries on Japanese Incarceration, racial segregation, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but they get overshadowed by exhibits featuring the “Greatest Generation.” Even the Holocaust is not featured, making the sole purpose of the museum focused on America’s efforts to win the war. Similarly, Confederate Memorial Hall made no mention of slavery whatsoever. The differences in tone and site choices about what to display was evident on that same trip to New Orleans, visiting two separate plantations. The Whitney Plantation is the first of its kind to make the entire tour solely about the experiences of slaves on the plantation. Upon entrance to the property the visitor is given a specific name of one of the slave children who lived on the plantation corresponding to a sculpture representation of that child. You are instructed to then find your assigned child. Seeing the sculptures and reading the names is a very humanizing thing; they no longer remain abstract but were real people. Then the first sights you see are three



Figure 11. Whitney Plantation. Life-size sculptures corresponding to cards of actual slave children.

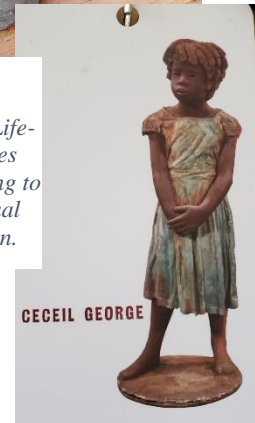


Figure 12. Whitney Plantation. Card with specific slave child. Each visitor receives one.



Figure 13. Whitney Plantation. Allées Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. Dedicated to all the slaves who lived in Louisiana. All 107,000 names recorded by Gwendolyn Midlo in the Louisiana Slave Database are engraved on 216 granite slabs and mounted on 18 walls.

memorials: one to everyone enslaved on the Whitney Plantation, one to all enslaved people in Louisiana, and one to all the enslaved children who died in St. John the Baptist Parish. Each memorial contains lists of names after years of archival research and efforts to create a slave database.⁸⁰ Then the tour proceeds with reconstructed slave quarters, the detached kitchen, and entrance into the “Big House” through the back doors used by slaves. The entire experience is incredibly moving and a somber tour of a neglected piece of America’s history.

Comparatively, the Oak Alley Plantation, along with all the other plantations available for tours, focus on the “Big House,” the opulence of the South, and *Gone with the Wind*-esque romanticizing of slavery. The guides mention slaves, but the tone is completely different from the Whitney Plantation approach of complete sobering realism, detailing the systemic exploitation of African-Americans during and after the slave era.⁸¹ Confederate Memorial Hall could stand to include additions to the Civil War narrative like slavery but chooses to idealize the past. Confederate Memorial Hall is certainly not alone in

⁸⁰ <http://whitneyplantation.com/on-the-property.html>

⁸¹ Jared Keller, “Inside America’s Auschwitz: A new museum offers a rebuke- and an antidote- to our sanitized history of slavery.” *Smithsonian.com*, April 6, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/inside-americas-auschwitz-180958647/>.

its omission of slavery and the nostalgic glorification of the Confederacy. Startlingly, this treatment is widespread throughout the South at Confederate sites. One example is prevalent when looking at cemeteries. Confederate gravesites are usually kept in pristine condition with funding through organizations like the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Some of these groups receive monetary stipends from city governments for the upkeep of these cemeteries. Meanwhile, most slave cemeteries across the South have been neglected.⁸² Similar treatment is seen at other Confederate sites, deliberately telling only part of the Civil War narrative, ignoring slavery and the subsequent costs of segregation.

These intentional gaps in the historical narrative illustrate the need for transparency in public history institutions. Museums that deal with war and death must be realistic about the casualties and cost of violence. Again, tone plays a big role in this aspect. “Dark tourism” refers to the tourism that involves traveling to sites associated with death and suffering. Many people take part in “dark tourism” without realizing it when they visit battlefields, sites like the Anne Frank House and concentration camps, and catacombs. There is a kind of negative connotation to the term “dark tourism,” but almost every historical site can somehow, or another, be classified as a dark tourist destination.⁸³ Whether or not a historical

⁸² Dave Davies, “The ‘Very Particular’ History Being Presented At Confederate Sites.” *NPR*, January 21, 2019. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/21/686547376/the-very-particular-history-being-presented-at-confederate-sites>.

⁸³ Robert Reid, “Is ‘Dark Tourism’ OK?: There’s nothing inherently wrong with visiting Chernobyl’s fallout zone or other sites of past tragedy. It’s all about intention.” *National Geographic*, April 26, 2016. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/features/is-dark-tourism-ok-chernobyl-pripyat-disaster-sites/>.

site can be classified as a “dark tourist” spot is largely ambiguous, but elements such as marketing and the site’s intention can give some insight. Many would not say that visiting Rome’s Colosseum or Auschwitz Concentration Camp is “dark tourism,” but there’s no doubting that many gladiators, slaves, and animals met their doom in the arena, and the systemic genocide of Jews and “undesirable” populations. Similarly, Robert Reid mused that at these sites of darkness we are tasked with “confronting the most chilling examples of what poet Robert Burns termed ‘man's inhumanity to man,’ and can be a profoundly moving experience, bringing war, oppression, violence, and injustice to gut-wrenching life and deepening our capacity for compassion and empathy.”⁸⁴

Historians and designers are challenged to develop thoughtful exhibits, balancing the scale of gimmicks and exploitation for money. This fascination for the macabre and morbid can be manifested by the existence of two locations of the Museum of Death in Hollywood and New Orleans. The museums boast of serial killer artwork, antique funeral ephemera, mortician and coroners’ instruments, Manson Family memorabilia, pet death taxidermy, and crime scene photographs.⁸⁵ The museum warns that many visitors have fainted, which makes one wonder as to the purpose of the museums. Are they creating respectful displays for educational purposes or merely being gratuitously morbid to test

⁸⁴ Reid, “Is 'Dark Tourism' OK?”

⁸⁵ <http://www.museumofdeath.net/info>

visitors fainting abilities, or serving the fetishization of death and gore? Tone, intention, and marketing all play into the categorization of “dark tourism.”

It is these ideas that were pondered when designing *Women in Combat: The Soviet Example*. Considering that the exhibit celebrates these women, who killed thousands of human beings, the topic must be approached delicately, while keeping in mind that these women suffered trauma and abuse throughout and after the war. Snipers are discussed as heroic, but rather than depicting them as killers, their actions are presented in a feminist light that was intentional. The deliberate focus of the exhibit was to be celebratory, showcasing their actions, being transparent about the brutal nature of war, while limiting any German perspectives. Those calculated choices set the tone and intention of the exhibit, focusing on female actions during the war. Perhaps since the topic is war and it’s experiences, the exhibit could be placed in the “dark tourism” category.

Another place that tone and intention affect atmosphere is in the decision to present painful aspects of the past in certain ways. The emergence of memorial museums have become places to address “trauma and the lasting impact of past violence, genocide, and atrocity on present societies.”⁸⁶ These museums seek to engage with past violence to “build a more tolerant, democratic culture through the promotion of human rights and an ethic of ‘never again.’”⁸⁷ The recent openings of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and

⁸⁶ Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 10.

⁸⁷ Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*, 10.

the National Memorial for Peace and Justice are instances of these memorials that reflect on the nation's history of slavery, oppression, and lynching. The poignancy of the Memorial for Peace and Justice joins the likes of the Holocaust Memorial and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg.⁸⁸ Sites like these become important places of much needed discussions. This is all well and good, but one aspect to remember about memorial museums is that they are designed to trigger emotional responses to memories. According to Amy Sodaro, memorial museums “bestow legitimacy upon the regimes that build them,” cautioning us to look beyond the initial visuals to see the political priorities linked with memory.⁸⁹

In dealing with any kind of museums, questions concerning the concept of ownership can arise. As we are living in the postcolonial era, museum officials must confront the uncomfortable means that some artifacts in collections were obtained and ask difficult questions. In the case of The Museum of Scotland, Sumaya Kassim argues that many “Victorian museums with substantial colonial collections usually have some serious superiority issues.” She asks that questions need to be pondered, such as who has the right to interpret objects and “other cultures,” and what does it mean for the museum to “own” an artifact if it was taken during a period of looting and exploitation?⁹⁰ She made a poignant

⁸⁸ Campbell Robertson, “A Lynching Memorial Is Opening: The Country Has Never Seen Anything Like It.” *The New York Times*, April 25, 2018. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/us/lynching-memorial-alabama.html>.

⁸⁹Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity*, 11.

⁹⁰Sumaya Kassim, “In These Times, Museums can be Critical Sites of Debate on What a Nation Is.” *The National*, January 12, 2019. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/17354120.in-these-times-museums-can-be-critical-sites-of-debate-on-what-a-nation-is/>.

statement that “museums like the idea of change and honesty, but only when that is palatable, and only if the change can be controlled.”⁹¹ These questions have been asked for years and there are no easy answers that will please everyone.

Some institutions maintain that items obtained under colonialism must remain where they are in the name of preservation, arguing the need for “universal museums” that allow access to items from all over the world. Consequently, western museums have been scrutinized for promoting the illicit trade of antiquities to populate their “universal museums.” One defense of “universal museums” argues that items would be lost due to the ongoing destruction of ancient sites in the Middle East by the Islamic State and that only western institutions can preserve the world’s cultural heritage.⁹² While this sentiment retains “western superiority” concepts, other museums are working to fix the problems.

Some of Berlin’s state museums are trying to combat these complicated issues with a program employing refugees, the Multaka project. The Museum of the Ancient Near East and the Museum of Islamic Art utilize refugees as guides to give tours, which assist newer refugees with finding their place in Germany. According to Syrian guide, Kefah Ali Deeb, she observes that “The first time they [Syrian and Iraqi] refugees see all these objects they feel sad, or even angry. They say these pieces belong to our heritage and so they should be there in our

⁹¹Kassim, “Museums can be Critical Sites of Debate.”

⁹² Kanishk Tharoor, “Museums and looted art: the ethical dilemma of preserving world cultures.” *The Guardian*, June 29, 2015. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jun/29/museums-looting-art-artefacts-world-culture>.

country,” but they are glad to see the artifacts kept safe from the same destruction they themselves have fled. The project also seeks to provide a meeting space for people with shared experiences to receive support from the tour guides. Kefah Ali Deeb noted that “They are unsure about their place here in Germany. But when we do this tour and they start to know more about their heritage, they start to rebuild this trust in themselves. It’s very connected with integration. No one can integrate if they aren’t confident.”⁹³ This does not solve all the questions, but it is one way that museums are helping to connect people with their heritage.

Another example of this deals with human remains and differences in cultural practices. With the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in 1990, American museums had to obey the law and return human remains, funerary objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and their lineal descendants.⁹⁴ With this law in place in the United States, it was surprising to visit Turin’s Egyptian Museum and view twenty-four human mummies on display.⁹⁵ Recently across Europe and America museums have heard the call to return looted art. Western institutions have thousands of skulls, skeletons, bone fragments, and even preserved heads of Indigenous people that will never be displayed. Lou-ann Ika’wega Neel—a

⁹³ Josie Le Blond, “Berlin refugee guides show off cultural riches from home.” *UNHCR*, June 29, 2016. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2016/6/576d29884/berlin-refugee-guides-show-cultural-riches-home.html>.

⁹⁴ Chip Colwell, “Can Repatriation Heal the Wounds of History?” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Feb. 2019): 90.

⁹⁵ <https://www.museoegizio.it/en/>. Turin, Italy hosts one of the world’s largest Egyptian collection outside of Egypt.

descendant of the tribes of the Kwakwaka'wakw stresses that it's important "for communities to know that 'their grandparents and great grandparents' are reburied with the correct rituals and ceremonies. Many believe that their ancestors' spirits cannot rest until their remains are returned. 'It is a form of healing,' she says."⁹⁶

One has to wonder why there is a difference in practices with Native American and Egyptian remains. Chip Colwell suggests that the difference "lies in how remains were collected and their connection to living people today. Viking warriors, ancient sacrifice victims preserved in England's bogs, and China's first farmers were all excavated with either the permission of descendants or from governments if no descendants are known."⁹⁷ Colwell argues that "like the treatment of Native Americans, the collection of Egyptian skeletons is rooted in colonialism and a disregard for the wishes of the dead. But, while living Native Americans claim descent from their continent's first peoples, the Islamic communities of Egypt do not claim continuity with the people who built the pyramids. And even if they did, mummies were gathered to glorify ancient Egyptians while Native American skeletons were long collected to dehumanize

⁹⁶ Pes, Javier. "It's Not Just Art That Indigenous People Are Fighting to Reclaim From Museums. They Want Their Ancestors' Remains Back, Too." *Artnet News*, November 29, 2018. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://news.artnet.com/market/its-not-just-art-that-indigenous-peoples-want-back-from-museums-they-want-their-ancestors-human-remains-too-1397737>.

⁹⁷ Chip Colwell, "The Long Ethical Arc of Displaying Human Remains." *Atlas Obscura*, November 16, 2017. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/displaying-native-american-remains>.

indigenous peoples.”⁹⁸ For many, repatriation is the first step to healing the exploitative and racist practices of colonialism.

As museums evolve away from their colonial past, they must confront ideas of ownership and authority when considering repatriation. Repatriation as healing is based on the “notion that if colonialism rubs out cultural values and practices from subjugated communities, then postcolonial healing must involve redrawing what has been erased.” That means restoring material culture to their communities to foster what was lost so that spirituality can be regenerated, while physical control of sacred objects facilitates religious practices so that returning to tradition liberates those under colonial oppression.⁹⁹

Similarly, at sites of suffering and violence, visitors must face the brutal truth of what their ancestors endured. These sites can “address historical trauma and unresolved grief by linking past, present, and future.”¹⁰⁰ Going back to the topic of slavery, descendants of slaves approach their visit to plantations differently than many others. When visiting a plantation connected to an ancestor, Benji Hart explained that “it wasn’t merely contemplating our own connection to the site, but also witnessing other visitors’ vastly different relationships to it that made the experience so intense, and at times painful.”¹⁰¹ Rather than finding a site of mourning, Hart and family were the only black people there and found

⁹⁸ Colwell, “The Long Ethical Arc of Displaying Human Remains.”

⁹⁹ Colwell, “Can Repatriation Heal the Wounds of History?” 95.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 108-109.

¹⁰¹ Benji Hart, “What to Expect When Visiting A Plantation Where Your Ancestors Were Enslaved.” *Teen Vogue*, February 5, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/visiting-a-plantation-where-your-ancestors-were-enslaved>.

apolitical displays with sanitized historical interpretations. Conversely, James Madison's home of Montpelier recently opened its latest exhibit, "The Mere Distinction of Colour," through a partnership between the site's staff and descendants of the slaves who worked there. The exhibit seeks to tell a more complete picture of American history through the stories of slaves. The living descendants of the enslaved people who worked at Montpelier tell the stories of those slaves and explore the legacy of slavery in society today.¹⁰² From the site's webpage, it states that "The messy and bipolar power of place is not lost in this emotional exhibition that confronts visitors with a historic site that is simultaneously a place where ideas of Liberty were conceived and, depending on *"a mere distinction of colour,"* a place where the same ideas were systematically denied."¹⁰³

As institutions work to engage various communities, they can begin to make amends for past transgressions, as seen at Montpelier. Rather than museum staff deciding what to display, many museums are turning to the community they serve to act as curators. Sharing historical authority may help to "break down perceived audience barriers that museums have struggled with for years-exclusion, intimidation, elitism, and disconnection."¹⁰⁴ In doing so museums

¹⁰² Sophia A. Nelson, "'The Mere Distinction of Colour': Montpelier Descendants Tell Their Story." *NBC News*, September 29, 2017. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/mere-distinction-colour-descendants-tell-their-story-n804906>.

¹⁰³ <https://www.montpelier.org/resources/mere-distinction-of-colour>.

¹⁰⁴ Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds. *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. (Philadelphia: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 69.

embrace the contributions of expert knowledge while simultaneously expanding the definition of “expert” to include broader domains of experience.¹⁰⁵ That does not mean historical integrity is ignored, but simply that instead of structuring an exhibition around a curator’s perspective and special interest, staff reorganize exhibition concepts around what community partners think is most important. Museum visitors expect historical expertise, but they are not just interested in monologues. This points to a need in which museum experts share the inquiry process and change perspectives as new ideas emerge.¹⁰⁶

One illustration of this is to display narratives connecting the “everyday” and not just the extraordinary. Smithsonian curator, Ariana Curtis, points out that oftentimes museums display successful, unique, and desirable women. This exclusion perpetuates the “marginalization of the everyday, the regular, the underrepresented and usually, the nonwhite.” Through her work Curtis passionately advocates for diverse, authentic representations of women, especially historical representations, because women have always been there.¹⁰⁷ By engaging communities and fostering diverse representation in these ways

¹⁰⁵ Kathleen McLean, “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, edited by Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski. (Philadelphia: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 71.

¹⁰⁶ McLean, “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” 74, 77.

¹⁰⁷ Ariana Curtis, “Museums should honor the everyday, not just the extraordinary.” Filmed November 2018 in Palm Springs, CA, TED Video, 12:19. https://www.ted.com/talks/ariana_curtis_museums_should_honor_the_everyday_not_just_the_extraordinary/transcript?fbclid=IwAR3wZa1d-awFKgoKrehRbu-WZQ-WHFPlhg6TUcJ-C4MDmY0IDJbPs_fObVY.

museums hope to break down the intimidating and elitist imagery of these institutions and to keep visitors returning for more active exhibit engagement.

One way of tackling a museum's elitist reputation is to be completely transparent about exhibits. A current debate surrounding museums involves originality versus authenticity. In most museum settings, the two do not go hand in hand. Much of this involves pitting preservation against guaranteed originality. This concept can be explained using the art workshop of Factum Arte. Their mission uses technology to preserve cultural heritage. To do this they use high-tech scanners to completely document a tomb, a chapel, or a piece of art as they appear today. Then using 3-D printers they replicate the surface of the object or wall, then adhere the visual details. The finished product is a copy that looks and feels like the original. The work used to explain this is the "Wedding at Cana" by Veronese. The original hangs in the Louvre in Paris, but the piece first hung in Venice. Factum Arte scanned the original in Paris and then placed the copy in Venice. Adam Lowe, Factum Arte's founder, argues that "We know the one in the Louvre is more original. But the experience of the facsimile in Venice is perhaps more *authentic*."¹⁰⁸ Lowe's team is currently working on replicating the Hall of Beauties of Seti I's tomb, that will go to Egypt's Valley of the Kings for tourists to

¹⁰⁸ Reid Orvedahl, producer. "Using high-tech tools to recreate and preserve ancient treasures." *CBS News*, February 3, 2019. Accessed February 5, 2019. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/factum-arte-using-high-tech-tools-to-recreate-and-preserve-ancient-treasures/?ftag=CNM-00-10aab6i&linkId=63166881&fbclid=IwAR3x7Nm8Gx_wCEpB0ye5VIEy4V2dxrgTHIJ2iA6zLQdjHK73EGI_BgdnPxQ.

see, so as not to further destroy the original that had no intention of ever being entered.

Some question whether these practices diminish the experience of seeing a work of art, making it less meaningful. Some replicas are inevitable when displaying things like fossils, requiring plaster casts to complete partial bone fragments or to display a sculpture that would otherwise crumble. Gary Vikan, former art museum director, points out, “What does fakery mean in a world where we typically know ancient Greek masterpieces only by way of their Roman copies?”¹⁰⁹ Most agree that the most significant aspect in the original versus authentic debate is that museums are transparent with visitors.

Within some of these trends that museums are undertaking to remain relevant, they play a role as agents for social change. The struggles of race in America and governmental policies that influence this struggle elicit protests and demonstrations ripe with artifacts and material culture. Some museums are recognizing the importance of these demonstrations and deploy staff to collect artifacts for museum collections that record history before history books are written. Lonnie Bunch, the National Museum of African-American History and Culture director, explains that “For us it's really important that this museum, which really has to help the American public grapple with things that have

¹⁰⁹ Manchem Wecker, “The Imitation Game.” *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2019. Accessed March 13, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2019/02/27/feature/are-museums-being-clear-enough-with-the-public-about-whats-real-and-whats-fake/?fbclid=IwAR1xoQifMJpAHgbJkVNiVdB9tdBazyJCAtt7PozzZRT2TeZpxHBQsWywpA&utm_term=.0e90f60b48d8.

divided us, to not just be about yesterday, but to be about as much about today and tomorrow.” He further states that his job as a scholar is to interpret the past through different lenses, but also ensure that there are resources available to tell future stories. Bunch believes that “whenever America is really debating its identity, debating who it is, grappling with issues that divide us, that’s when the museum ought to be more aggressive and collecting material. It just seems to me that a good museum isn’t just a place of nostalgia. It’s not just a place of the exotic. It’s a place that provides people useful tools to grapple with the world they face. And by grappling with the world they face they can make it better.” By collecting items from Black Lives Matter protests, Women’s Marches, and demonstrations objecting to immigrant family separation museum curators preserve artifacts that would not otherwise be available for collections in the future.¹¹⁰

Some call these actions “activist history,” usually with a negative connotation.¹¹¹ As such, some museums do not have the luxury of being “activist” because of where their funding comes from, who the stakeholders are, the environment of the community they serve, and the politics attached to history. Some museums avoid more timely or controversial subjects so as not to rustle feathers. That creates its own problems when presenting perhaps a more censored and watered-down historical narrative.

¹¹⁰ Ivette Feliciano, “Museums are curating an era of social movements in real time.” *PBS*, November 24, 2018. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/museums-are-curating-an-era-of-social-movements-in-real-time#transcript>.

¹¹¹ Curtis, “Museums should honor the everyday, not just the extraordinary.”

Many see museums as “safe” spaces to discuss controversial issues, and historians must work to keep that reputation alive and fight censorship. Rex Ellis, a director of curatorial affairs, notes that within sacred spaces such as churches and museums, people sense the sanctity of those places and “upgrade” their behavior. He hopes to show people that national museums, like the Smithsonian, can “address both history and contemporary grassroots issues.”¹¹² Some museums like the Northwest African American Museum in Seattle strive to employ multicultural and multigenerational staff who understand the need and significance of creating collaborative “multidisciplinary programming with the explicit intent to create a safe space where all can come to understand new issues and concepts.” Responding to events like Ferguson, the museum engages outside their physical space by providing a discussion platform through social media, which advocates for ways to have deeper conversations about difficult subjects.¹¹³

In these ways museums are advocating for more representation and discussions, whether that involves ideas about gender, race, class, and other social issues, using history as a tool to broaden horizons. This has led to a movement admitting that museums are not neutral, and never have been.¹¹⁴ They can be

¹¹² Manchem Wecker, “Why Museums Should Be a Safe Space to Discuss Why #BlackLivesMatter.” *Smithsonian.com*, April 29, 2015. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/why-museums-should-be-safe-space-discuss-why-black-lives-matter-180955114/>.

¹¹³ Leilani Lewis, “Responding to the Events in Ferguson and Beyond: The Northwest African American Museum’s Example.” *The Inclusion*, December 16, 2014. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://inclusion.com/2014/12/16/responding-to-the-events-in-ferguson-and-beyond-the-northwest-african-american-museums-example/>.

¹¹⁴ Lindsey Steward, “Museums Are Not Neutral: A Discussion on Why There is No Museum Neutrality in Museum Education.” *Medium*, July 12, 2018. Accessed March 16, 2019.

places for safe conversations, or like their origins, they can continue to have racist and sexist undertones determined by choices ranging from what items to display, to what current events are featured and discussed.

All of this boils down to public historians being responsible for what gets collected in a museum, what papers are kept in an archive, and assisting how the public perceives social issues. Archivist, Rachel Winston, admits that “The responsibility and the job of an archivist now is so much more than just processing papers. There’s more social accountability and responsibility.”¹¹⁵ As educators, public historians have a responsibility to inform the communities they serve, while being transparent about the choices they make from tone and intention, to marketing, garnering funding, and balancing entertainment and respect for the history they are interpreting. We see the unfortunate actions taken in the name of “cultural heritage” and the tragic consequences when people hold on to racist and romanticized ideals of the past. As seen with Confederate monuments, white supremacists weaponized “cultural heritage” as justification for violent outbursts.¹¹⁶ Museums cannot continue to claim their neutrality when Civil War museums fail to mention slavery, or memorial museums project certain politics.

<https://medium.com/@steward.lindsey/museums-are-not-neutral-a-discussion-on-why-there-is-no-museum-neutrality-in-museum-education-526e8de21f77>.

¹¹⁵ Kaila Schedeen, “Rachel Winston: Archives as Activism.” *Sight Lines Magazine*, January 31, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://sightlinesmag.org/rachel-winston-archives-as-activism?fbclid=IwAR1oNW3qcl4tYuaMAjN6X7HUsJxjtcM9gFP9I-j9C8VwUGhIDixAVmPnjoM>.

¹¹⁶ Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, “Deliberate Heritage: Difference and Disagreement after Charlottesville.” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Feb. 2019): 121-132.

In this way public historians must accept responsibility as educators, being thoughtful about tourism and marketing, accepting new community partnerships, sharing historical authority, ensuring they tell the complete story by including minority perspectives, relinquishing their hold on outdated colonial ideas about curating collections, and being upfront about originality and preservation. Now, this is quite a lot to be responsible for, but as museums are challenged to remain relevant museums staff and public historians have to ponder these heavy themes, down to tone, intention, and responses to social change and violent subject matter.

This is why the field of public history is so complicated. For some of these issues, there is no easy answer, as politics, the public, and impossible situations play roles in decision-making. But as public historians we must attempt to answer difficult questions and realize that when we educate and make this knowledge available to everyone, especially marginalized groups, we can empower them to better their lives.¹¹⁷ The destruction of artifacts that “embody the ideas, beliefs, and characteristics of past societies is a well-tested means of control and power.” We have seen this time and time again, recently with destruction of sites, such as Palmyra in Syria, by the Islamic State. By “erasing traces of civilizations that do not align with their ideology, performing, in effect, a form of ‘cultural cleansing.’”¹¹⁸ The role of public historians is to help prevent this kind of

¹¹⁷ Abigail Hunt, “Education and empowerment: you’re nobody until somebody trains you.” *The Guardian*, August 1, 2013. Accessed March 16, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/aug/02/education-empowerment-adolescent-girls>.

¹¹⁸ Rachel Van Bokkem, “History in Ruins: Cultural Heritage Destruction around the World.” American Historical Association’s *Perspective’s on History*, April 1, 2017. Accessed March 10,

“cleansing” by connecting people with their cultural heritage and history, gaining a sense of connection to their ancestors, and tools by which to grapple with current debates facing society.

Confederate Memorial Hall remaining as it was when founded points to intentional choices about what they want to convey. Perhaps the museum wants to persist keeping originality and authenticity side by side. More realistically, the museum feeds off of the nostalgia of visitors seeking the “glory days of the Confederacy.” The museum’s lack of mentioning slavery, is a deliberate way to resist deeper reflection of the Civil War and America’s ongoing racial struggle. This museum caters to specific visitors, with doubts that it will change any time soon. But other museums see the value in changing their presented narratives. The Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum is undergoing a renovation to stay relevant with the American people. This staple in the museum world is directed by Ellen Stofan who notes that “If museums are going to stay relevant into the future, they’re going to have to change, because everything else is changing.”¹¹⁹ She hints at the necessity of museums to evolve and adapt to different climates, while providing safe spaces for education, reflection, and preservation.

2019. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-2017/history-in-ruins-cultural-heritage-destruction-around-the-world>.

¹¹⁹ Joan Michelson, “What Would You Do? How to Reinvent America's Most Popular Museum.” *Forbes*, November 5, 2018. Accessed March 15, 2019.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanmichelson2/2018/11/05/what-would-you-do-how-to-reinvent-americas-most-popular-museum/?fbclid=IwAR1-IcR937IvKSfneSm8uqifngRrhiDqmvZGfYmFWchAfh3qFf_oNGtAAQ#23a1af381cdd.

By modeling an exhibit after the National World War II Museum galleries, Soviet women in combat would make a fascinating example of the emerging trend of environmental exhibit design, capitalizing on both the significant exploits of the women and the vastness of the eastern front. By applying several ways to communicate, this exhibit would attempt to reach and impact as many viewers as possible. The exhibit would strive to embody the goal of personal relevance for every visitor. In this way, attempting to keep museums relevant and educating about a significant, and previously ignored, portion of female combatants. Would this qualify as “activist” history? Probably, since the whole point of the exhibit is to showcase women and how gender continues to be an issue for militaries. On a larger scale, I would hope that the topic of violence and death in war is handled with respect, while balancing the celebratory actions of these women. Using quotes from oral histories lends authority to the text and gives these Soviet women a voice. In doing so, one of the goals of the exhibit is to empower women, and perhaps engage with persisting sexist ideas, while being completely transparent about female experiences in war. The exhibit presents the Soviet narrative well, but could use more connection to current U.S. servicemembers, blatantly initiating deeper reflection and analysis for American viewers.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

Aside from contributing to the scholarship and narrative of World War II and women, this project informs the current discussions concerning women in combat roles. The U.S. military is actively working to integrate women into these jobs, but one can argue that they are not moving fast enough while there are still women accomplishing “firsts” in their careers as this project is being written: first woman to command a Marine Corps infantry platoon, 1st Lt. Marina Hierl, for example, happened less than a year ago in August 2018.¹²⁰ This problem reveals deeper issues that the United States as a country must work on, not just in the military. According to the World Economic Forum, the United States ranked forty-ninth of one hundred forty-four on the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report.¹²¹ The report assigns a rank to every country in the world based on women’s economic participation, educational attainment, health, and political empowerment. The United States prides itself on being the most powerful and liberated country in the world, yet it does not even make the top ten list. The

¹²⁰ “Firsts” refer to the headlines seen whenever a woman does something new that the military. See: Shawn Snow, “First Female Marine Graduates from Winter Mountain Leaders Course.” *Marine Corps Times*, January 8, 2019. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/08/first-female-marine-graduates-from-winter-mountain-leaders-course/>; Snow, Shawn. “Male and Female Marine Platoons to Integrate at Recruit Training for the First Time.” *Marine Corps Times*, January 4, 2019. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/01/04/male-and-female-marine-platoons-to-integrate-at-recruit-training-for-the-first-time/>; Andrea Scott, “Meet the First Female Marine to Graduate IOC and Lead an Infantry Platoon.” *Marine Corps Times*, August 10, 2018. Accessed January 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2018/08/10/meet-the-first-woman-to-graduate-ioc-and-lead-an-infantry-platoon/>.

¹²¹ World Economic Forum. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017. Accessed March 19, 2019. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf.

social climate, according to this telling report, influences how the U.S. military operates. One common assertion is that the military mirrors society, socially.¹²² What does that say about the military when the society it serves is number forty-nine on the list in terms of gender equality? - it implies that there is not much hope that the military will treat women any better. What is worse, it that the gender bias and discrimination women face is often justified as a way to protect the “gentler sex” from unnecessary harshness, then disparaging women for being incompetent, when they are not allowed to prove themselves.

But the military does pride itself on adhering to a code of conduct and upholding standards of behavior. One would think that if these standards are in place and the military mirrors society, then the resulting military population would be split 50% female, 50% male. That is not the case with women making up only 16% of enlisted personnel and 18% of the officer corps of total service members.¹²³ This small representation has led to a military force saturated with toxic masculinity, sexual harassment, and scandal. The combination of these factors creates a hyper-masculine culture that perpetuates gender stereotypes and biases, leading to a lack of respect for female service members. These are generalizations, but they speak to the larger predicament of military culture, seen

¹²² Stephen Peter Rosen, “Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters.” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995): 5. Accessed April 16, 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539118>.

¹²³ George M. Reynolds, and Amanda Shendruk, “Demographics of the U.S. Military.” *Council on Foreign Affairs*, April 24, 2018. Accessed March 19, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/article/demographics-us-military>.

with the Marines United scandal, among others.¹²⁴ The rise in female authored memoirs about their service reveals that almost every woman in the military faces discrimination and harassment at some point in their careers.¹²⁵

This crisis of military culture, stemming from the absence of respect, is what leads to harassment and sexual assault. Rape within the military has often been one of the reasons arguing against more women included, specifically in combat. Certain socialization practices among recruits and officers leads to the trivialization of sexual assault, the establishment of sexual abuse as punishment, penalizing those who do report assaults, and the toleration of officers abusing subordinates.¹²⁶ Many have cited this prevalence of sexual harassment as a reason for upholding the combat ban against women, but this kind of thinking contributes to victim blaming, telling women that they are not safe, when the actual issue goes undiagnosed. The problem is exacerbated with retaliation against the accuser, while many perpetrators receive no punishment.¹²⁷ Studies have found that women deployed to combat zones, entrenched in more male-dominated spaces had greater odds of experiencing sexual harassment.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Lolita C. Baldor, "Marines investigate 130 for online misconduct after scandal." *Marine Corps Times*, May 3, 2018. Accessed March 19, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2018/05/03/marines-investigate-130-for-online-misconduct-after-scandal/>.

¹²⁵ Lemmon, *Ashley's War*; Germano, and Kennedy, *Fight Like A Girl*; Hegar, *Shoot Like A Girl*; Holmstedt, *Band of Sisters*; Biank, *Undaunted*; Williams, and Staub. *Love My Rifle More Than You*.

¹²⁶ Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Nathaniel Toppelberg. "The Persistence of Sexual Assault Within the US Military." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 54, No. 5, (2017): 630.

¹²⁷ Nelson, *For Love of Country*, 128.

¹²⁸ LeardMann et al., "Combat Deployment Is Associated with Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault in a Large, Female Military Cohort."

The lack of respect that ultimately contributes to harassment and gender bias is built upon power structures from basic training to high levels of leadership. Within the Marine Corps, segregated boot camps allow for male recruits to only see females at graduation. This separation creates differences in how men and women are trained, which leaves women at a disadvantage. Female recruits are not held to the same standards as men with the expectations that they will perform worse in every category from academics, to fitness, to rifle qualification. Kate Germano explains that “All that the male Marines and recruits know is that the women have to train separately because they can’t mentally handle training with their male counterparts. We teach the men from the second they arrive at Parris Island that the women are inherently frail.”¹²⁹ Others have noted that the boot camp segregation “fuels a perception that female recruits are less able and less qualified than men. And they say it suggests that the females are held to lower standards and makes it more difficult for them to be accepted as equals.”¹³⁰ When men and women train together both male and female recruits work together and see the leadership of both genders. All the other branches of the military have integrated boot camps, but the lack of respect for women is still prevalent.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Germano, and Kennedy. *Fight Like A Girl*, 113.

¹³⁰ Lolita C. Baldor, “Move for more gender integration at Marine Corps boot camp ends; future unclear.” *Marine Corps Times*, March 31, 2019. Accessed April 1, 2019. <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/03/31/marine-corps-move-to-integrate-boot-camp-more-ends-future-unclear/>.

¹³¹ Something of note is that this issue of respect is also argued to be lacking in normal society as well. The military just exaggerates it due to the hypermasculine culture.

Military women sense the “other-ness” of their presence in highly male-dominated spaces and therefore feel that they must work harder to be taken seriously. They realize that when one woman makes a mistake, it reflects poorly upon the entire sex in many male eyes, leading to increased pressure not to make errors of any kind. Even in the Air Force, which is considered by many to be the most welcoming to women, there are issues of sexist behavior and conversations from male airmen, including officers. Mary Jennings Hegar recalled how a member of her rescue helicopter crew did not think women should be in the military and as a result he created opportunities to harass her and make her look foolish. In one instance, Hegar foiled her teammate’s attempt to trap her, so he began spreading rumors that she was voluntarily “on her knees servicing fellow airmen.” Hegar recalls how she was repulsed by the rumor and “had been so careful since arriving in Kandahar to stay above this sort of thing. I hadn’t so much as flirted with any aircrew members precisely to avoid being made into such a joke.”¹³² She continues that “it wasn’t the fact that he had lied about the sexual act that was bothering me. It was the fact that Richard and the others [other crewmembers] didn’t see me as a strong, competent, well-trained pilot who deserved his respect.”¹³³ Men attempt to further disrespect women by insulting their sexuality by either “slut-shaming” or being deemed lesbians in a derogatory way. In the pursuit of being taken seriously women have to contend with top-

¹³² Hegar, *Shoot Like A Girl*, 159.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 160.

notch performance scores, coupled with constant self-behavioral regulation to stay above these insults to their sexuality, and prove themselves capable. Even then, capabilities do not always point to earned respect among fellow service members. Only when respect is earned between men and women, can the “military culture” begin to change.

Allowing full integration of women into combat jobs would begin to breakdown those traditionally male-dominated environments, leading to positive influence on the “military culture.” Full integration can only be achieved when women receive the same training and equipment as men. In situations where that happens, and they are contributing to missions, women perform as well as men.¹³⁴ Germano re-enforced this idea as she restructured the way female marines are trained. She saw better fitness and academic scores when she held her recruits to high standards of success. When female recruits are told that they can achieve high scores, instead of being told that women typically do not do well at the rifle range, they rise to meet those expectations. When these women move through the ranks and gain leadership positions, they are better equipped and respected for undergoing the same training as their colleagues. Hegar supported these sentiments when speaking about training she completed with her second all-male aircrew stating that “We faced the same training standards and the same challenges, which created a bond that enabled us to implicitly trust one another with our lives, to depend on the person sitting next to us to watch out back when

¹³⁴ MacKenzie, “Let Women Fight.”

the shit hit the fan.”¹³⁵ During her deployment she observed that among ground forces, women were being “attached” to units without the benefits of joint training that ultimately put them at a disadvantage.¹³⁶ Remediating this would ultimately create the bonds of camaraderie that Hegar mentions, and leads to the famous “band of brothers” terminology. Adapted from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, the “band of brothers” phrase refers to the passage reading “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.”¹³⁷ This language romanticizes battle, while putting these bonds on a pedestal that only men can attain, putting up a “no girls allowed” sign. This idea is further explained by Maj. Richard Winters stating that “the result of sharing all that stress throughout training and combat has created a bond between the men of E Company that will last forever.”¹³⁸ In return, with women entering combat, you rarely hear about a “band of sisters” and the bonds between service members are discussed differently, in spite of a multitude of accounts detailing that special bond that Hegar mentions. Instead, women have adopted the phrase “like a girl,” turning an insult into a motto for empowerment.¹³⁹ Rather than letting “like a girl” define lower standards and weakness, many women are embracing it, and

¹³⁵ Hegar, *Shoot Like A Girl*, 281-282.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 282.

¹³⁷ Stephen Ambrose. *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne From Normandy to Hitler’s Eagle’s Nest*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992).

¹³⁸ Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, 291.

¹³⁹ Germano and Hegar both titled their memoirs “Fight Like a Girl” and “Shoot Like a Girl” making that phrase their mantra for empowerment.

changing the definition to align with outstanding female capabilities and pushing themselves to be the best.

Many feared that allowing women into the “coveted world of combat” would “feminize and therefore reduce the fighting potential of the military.”¹⁴⁰ This notion hints at the complicated problem surrounding gender norms that equate femininity with weakness and masculinity with strength, prevalent both in the military and in society. That discussion would be an entire paper in and of itself. The basic premise argues that women cannot be both life-givers and killers. One exception is the vengeful mother protecting her offspring, but in terms of the military, having the “gentler sex” pull triggers is uncomfortable for many.¹⁴¹ The dichotomy of birthers and killers is difficult for people to accept and it stems from the oversimplification of gender constructs. Within military spaces women are often criticized for being too feminine, and conversely if a woman is more masculine and acts like “one of the boys” she is not womanly enough and, is again, insulted as a lesbian. The concept that people have a difficult time accepting is the possibility that women can be feminine, while simultaneously being strong, competent, and deadly. Women can be more than one “thing” and that idea is hard for some to comprehend.

Women entering World War II did not escape these gender norms in the patriarchal Soviet Union. “In an overwhelmingly male institution such as the Red

¹⁴⁰ MacKenzie, “Let Women Fight.”

¹⁴¹ Delves into the morality argument and what it means to have a nation that sends women to do it’s killing. Look to DeGroot, “Whose Finger on the Trigger?” 436.

Army, military values and virtues, of heroism, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom, were inherently ‘masculine.’”¹⁴² These values essential to the public image of a male military hero undermined the revolutionary rhetoric of gender equality in the Soviet Union.¹⁴³ When young men saw military service as “validation of their own virility and as a certificate of manhood” then it was not very manly if women could do it.¹⁴⁴ As a result of these thoughts, Soviet women did face discrimination and gender bias. Despite the state’s acceptance of their volunteer service, that did not mean that every commander welcomed women to their units with open arms. In this way, the women were essentially fighting two wars: one against the Germans and one against discrimination from their own army. This male chauvinism manifested in different ways, but most accounts detailed how these commanders were hesitant to allow women into battle, and finally, relented when women proved their worth in some way. One example, among many, is that when Lt. Col. V.V. Markov took over command of the 587th Bomber regiment, he was under the pretense that women were capricious and undisciplined by nature. After flying with the regiment, he changed his mind remarking that they were self-disciplined, careful, and obedient to orders, noticing no difference between them and male regiments.¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, not all women served with respectful,

¹⁴² Roger D. Marwick “‘A Sacred Duty’: Red Army Women Veterans Remembering the Great Fatherland War, 1941-45.” In *Recalling the Past- (Re)constructing the Past: Collective and Individual Memory of World War II in Russia and Germany*, edited by Withold Bonner and Arja Rosenholm, (Helsinki: Kikumora Publications, 2008), 318.

¹⁴³ Krylova, “Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender, 627.

¹⁴⁴ Campbell, “Women in Combat,” 321.

¹⁴⁵ Noggle, *A Dance with Death*, 105.

understanding men whose minds could be changed. In these situations, fighting two wars meant that there were never opportunities for respite, requiring guarded actions at the frontlines and in the rear. Famed sniper Roza Shanina wrote in her diary that unwanted attention was not a rare occurrence and that she sometimes worried about finding a safe place to sleep due to the prevalence of rape. She wrote about the 785th regiment, “wonderful guys, well received, but started to get harassed by the head of the regiment, chasing me when I had done nothing, grabbing at me like he was in a brothel.”¹⁴⁶ This behavior was typical, not among fellow soldiers, often came from commanders to subordinates. Many women felt that this imbalance of power meant that they could not refuse the advancements of officers. Conversely, most women felt safe amongst their male comrades, often being referred to as “little sister” and as such meant they were “off limits.”¹⁴⁷

Regrettably, Soviet women still received unwanted attention once the war was over from those who incorrectly assumed what the women were up to while at war. Many women who stayed on the home front accused the female soldiers of prostituting themselves, becoming “rifle women.” Sniper Klavdia S-va recalled “How did the Motherland meet us? I can’t speak without sobbing...It was forty years ago, but my cheeks still burn. The men said nothing, but the women...They shouted to us, ‘We know what you did there! You lured our men with your young

¹⁴⁶ Roza Shanina, “January 24th, 1945” and “January 8th, 1945.” Accessed February 16, 2019. <https://rozasdiary.com/category/rozas-diary/page/2/>.

¹⁴⁷ Barbara Alpern Engel, “The Womanly Face of War: Soviet Women Remember World War II.” In *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent*, edited by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 143-144. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

cunt! Army whores, military bitches.’ They insulted us in all possible ways.’¹⁴⁸ Receptions like this led to a sense of shame about their service and in response, many women did not speak about their time during the war. That shame and silence contributed to female service being ignored, and in turn “we [female soldiers] hid, we didn’t even wear our medals. Men wore them, but not women. Men were victors, heroes, wooers, the war was theirs, but we were looked at with quite different eyes. Quite different...I’ll tell you they robbed us of the victory. Men didn’t share the victory with us.”¹⁴⁹ With the conclusion of the war, women had to keep fighting, not the Germans, but their own people for their personal dignity and victory.

This is where having more widespread knowledge about Soviet women in combat would be beneficial. Their example puts a spotlight on the topic of women as active in war and killing, rather than as passive observers or home front laborers. They are described as feminine and effective at their jobs, embodying this idea of complex and multifaceted women. The inclusion of women on the eastern front mean that women could fight like men but did not have to disregard their femininity to have their capabilities and potential recognized on the battlefield.¹⁵⁰ The entire issue concerning women in combat is predicated on the idea that feminine equates to weakness. When Soviet women can be both feminine and effective killers, gender hierarchies begin to breakdown. These

¹⁴⁸ Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, 247.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 109.

¹⁵⁰ Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*, 288.

implications dismiss every excuse arguing that women should not be allowed to do something, combat or otherwise. When weakness ceases to be the reason, the debates are unfounded.¹⁵¹

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie notes that, “If we do something over and over again, it become normal. If we see the same thing over and over again, it becomes normal,” even if done unconsciously. If we keep seeing only men in certain roles, it starts to seem “natural” that only men should occupy those roles.¹⁵² This simple philosophy is why representation is so important. Seeing images of these Soviet women and hearing their stories normalizes female participation in battle. Their example paves the way for American women. As more women join the military, their presence breaks down the “military culture” that often accompanies male-dominated environments, normalizing female involvement in all levels of the military. This leads to more women contributing in policy and creates more opportunities for mentoring that Germano desperately pleaded was necessary for change. As discussed, representation is a valuable tool, and significant in the road to empowerment.

These issues can only be rectified once more women join the military, at all levels, receiving the same training and adhering to the same standards as men. Kate Germano reveals that within the U.S. Marine Corps, women face a similar situation that female Soviet veterans experienced: women not being involved in

¹⁵¹ In these situations, weakness can mean not just physical strength and endurance but intelligence, mental fortitude, and emotional toughness.

¹⁵² Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 13.

victorious celebrations. She states that “the myth that only men can be warriors on the battlefield exists partly because we don’t celebrate the victories and contributions of female Marines in combat situations.” Germano further implies that part of the problem is a lack of female Marines to begin with.¹⁵³ As women enter these male-dominated spaces, having earned the respect of their peers, can the toxic “military culture” be dismantled. With the dissolution of that culture will the military address its problem with sexual harassment and gender bias, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. As these issues are resolved, more women will continue to join the military adding to the diversity among the armed forces, which contributes to better representation and empowerment.¹⁵⁴ In this way, fierce women become the norm and not the token exception. Hopefully as the military fixes its toxic masculinity, so too will the nation, and the criminal justice system attempt to change the grim statistic that out of 1,000 rapes, 995 perpetrators will walk free.¹⁵⁵ If the military can hypothetically tackle its problem with sexual assault, maybe the country as a whole can learn from their example—respect women, equal representation in power positions, and the expectation that they will succeed.

As a public historian, it is my responsibility to participate in these efforts to normalize women in combat and to promote their representation historically

¹⁵³Germano and Kennedy, *Fight Like a Girl*, 284.

¹⁵⁴ Of course, this is an over-simplification to illustrate the connection between respect and sexual harassment. If only it was this easy. Perhaps this an idealized look.

¹⁵⁵ Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. “The Criminal Justice System: Statistics.” Accessed March 19, 2019. <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>.

and presently. Through activist history, Soviet women could gain more prominence, while advocating for current western military's integrating women into combat jobs, working to erase the stigma attached to the words "feminist" and "activist history."

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Women in Combat: The Soviet Example is a project intended to present an often-overlooked aspect of the World War II narrative, bringing light to the fact that approximately a million Soviet women were mobilized for war. While exact numbers are difficult to attain, of those million most scholars estimate around 500,000 served at the front, performing combat jobs comparable to their male counterparts.¹⁵⁶ By highlighting five of those jobs in a public display- snipers, airwomen, machine gunners, medics, and tankers- and profiling individual women, their service no longer remains an abstract idea. By bringing awareness to these women, their example sets a precedent for modern female participation in war.

The exhibit advocates for equal treatment between the sexes, especially in the military, speaking to the current American efforts to fully integrate women into combat jobs. The Soviet women provide a model for how to proceed, demonstrating that when women receive the same training as men, they can indeed succeed on the battlefield. By displaying these deadly women, their representation normalizes female militarization, while empowering those to follow their lead. This normalization debunks the “shock” of seeing women in combat, while proving that women are equal contributors in the military.

¹⁵⁶ Griesse, and Stites, “Russia: Revolution and War,” 73.

Exact numbers of women who served are difficult to come by due to a variety of reasons, some of which are incomplete records, on-the-go recruitment in the field, and differing definitions of jobs and what qualifies as “at the front.” Most agree that at least 300,000 women served at the front, with higher estimates of around 500,000-550,000 also included. Whatever the number, it is safe to say that women were a considerable force in both combatant and non-combatant roles.

Furthermore, this normalization leads to more respect and acceptance of women in the military, abating the “otherness” that occurs when women enter predominantly male spaces, like combat. Lack of respect is one of the chief reasons that women become targets of sexual harassment in the military, attributed to the hyper-masculine military culture. When women are allowed to prove themselves, they earn the respect of their peers, while their presence works to chip away at the toxic masculinity that permeates military culture. This project is extremely timely considering that gender in the military continues to be discussed, whether that is concerning draft registration or the Marine Corps’ recent boot camp integration experiment.¹⁵⁷ Despite the evidence arguing for women’s inclusion in all military jobs, the Marine Corps repeatedly stated that their boot camp integration experiment yielded no conclusive results and officials were undecided if they would do it again.¹⁵⁸ The blatant disregard for historical examples and current evidence by the Marine Corps is precisely why the project was completed.

Stories from the eastern front where men and women served together illustrate the bonds formed under fire. An American paratrooper, Joseph Beyrle, was captured and sent to a German POW camp. After escaping the camp, Soviet tankers picked him up. Beyrle convinced the Soviets that he was an American and they allowed him to serve in the tank battalion. The battalion was under the

¹⁵⁷ Matthew S. Schwartz, “Judge Rules Male-Only Draft Violates Constitution.” *NPR*, February 25, 2019. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/25/697622930/judge-rules-male-only-draft-violates-constitution>.

¹⁵⁸ Baldor, “Move for more gender integration at Marine Corps boot camp ends; future unclear.”

command of a woman, whom Beyrle referred to as “Major,” her rank. He made it all the way to the Oder river in Poland with Major and the battalion before being wounded. Beyrle recalled, “Of all the people who may have survived World War II, I wish I knew if she is still alive. And if she is, I’d go to Russia just to see her- my major, my CO, my second Wolverton [one of his American commanding officers]- who was a woman.”¹⁵⁹ Beyrle and Major illustrate the bonds formed in combat between soldiers, regardless of sex. He praised Major’s battalion and was impressed by her leadership and fortitude under fire. This story illustrates the larger point of the project: that men and woman can serve in war together as equals, commanding each other’s respect and admiration.

Within the field of public history this project joins the larger trend of bringing awareness to minority groups and using their platform to advocate for said group or topic. Just one glance through the National Council on Public History’s website or newsletter reveals the growing responsibility that public historians tackle. The NCPH prides itself on being an advocate for historians, the history field, and those that are voiceless in the historical record.¹⁶⁰ Their periodic emails and newsletters to members highlight the ongoing work within the field, bringing current issues to the forefront of historical practices.¹⁶¹ This project fits

¹⁵⁹ Thomas H. Taylor, *The Simple Sounds of Freedom: The True Story of the Only Soldier to Fight for Both America and the Soviet Union in World War II*. (New York: Random House, 2002), 279.

¹⁶⁰ <https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/advocacy/>.

¹⁶¹The latest NCPH email from March 20, 2019 included articles written about gender inclusivity in museums and ways that the American Alliance of Museums can be more LGBTQ friendly. <https://medium.com/viewfinder-reflecting-on-museum-education/beyond-bathrooms-including-all-genders-through-language-300580834384>; <https://www.aam-us.org/professional->

in well with what leading public historians are discussing and working on, advocating for activist and feminist history. The exhibit, accompanied by the website and social media accounts, hope to spread awareness for these Soviet women, proving that women, past and present, have the capabilities to perform on the battlefield alongside men and be successful, advocating for more female representation in the U.S. military.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 2. Louisiana's Civil War Museum, also known as Confederate Memorial Hall. Photograph taken May 12, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 3. National World War II Museum. *The Arsenal of Democracy* exhibit, "War Affects Every Home" gallery. Photograph taken May 11, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 4. National World War II Museum. *The Arsenal of Democracy* exhibit, "America Responds" gallery. Photograph taken May 11, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 5. National World War II Museum. *The Arsenal of Democracy* exhibit, "Citizens to Warriors" gallery. Photograph taken May 11, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 6. National World War II Museum. *The Arsenal of Democracy* exhibit, "United but Unequal: I Am an American" gallery. Photograph taken May 11, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 7. National World War II Museum. *The Road to Tokyo* exhibit, "Guadalcanal: Green Hell," gallery.
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-tokyo/guadalcanal>.

Figure 8. National World War II Museum. *The Road to Berlin* exhibit, "Desert War – North Africa" gallery.
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-berlin/desert-war-north-africa>.

Figure 9. National World War II Museum. *The Road to Berlin* exhibit, "Battle of the Bulge," gallery.
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/exhibits/road-berlin/battle-bulge>.

Figure 10. National World War II Museum. *The D-Day Invasion of Normandy* exhibit. Two-Minute Oral History Programs "Personal Accounts: Nightdrop into Normandy." Photograph taken May 11, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figures 11-12. Whitney Plantation. "The Children of Whitney" by Woodrow Nash. Life-size sculptures corresponding to cards and actual slave

children. Photographs taken May 12, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

Figure 13. Whitney Plantation. Allées Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. Dedicated to all the slaves who lived in Louisiana. All 107,000 names recorded by Gwendolyn Midlo in the Louisiana Slave Database are engraved on 216 granite slabs and mounted on 18 walls. Photograph taken May 12, 2018. From the personal collection of the author.

APPENDIX A

A Text Version of the Exhibit Panels and Visuals

This Appendix represents the text of my exhibit panels and banners. This Appendix also includes photographs and copies of the visual aids utilized in the exhibit.

Text Version of Exhibit Panels

Main Banner

WOMEN IN COMBAT: THE SOVIET EXAMPLE

With the American military's efforts to integrate women into combat roles, some have questioned that move, citing long-held beliefs that women would disrupt combat effectiveness, unit cohesion, and cannot handle the stress and rigors of warfare. What they fail to realize is that women in combat is nothing new. Seventy-eight years ago, Soviet women met the invading German army head-on and came to the aid of Mother Russia. Women inhabited every role on the battlefield, including infantry jobs in the trenches alongside their male comrades. By highlighting just five of these jobs: airwomen, snipers, medics, tankers, and machine gunners- we see that their motivations and actions on the eastern front parallel men.

Their precedent sets an example of what women are capable of when they volunteer to protect their country and receive the same training as men. Their

individual stories here are just case-studies and do not speak to the thousands of other women who served on the frontlines, both in enlisted and leadership positions. These representations normalize women in combat and show that patriotic duty is genderless. The fact that their service was ignored after the war and continues to be overlooked in the World War II narrative is disgraceful. These women fought admirably and provide a perfect historical example advocating for the capabilities of female soldiers under fire, demonstrating that women can and do play significant, deadly roles on the battlefield.

“I heard words...Poison. It was men’s desire-to go and fight. Can a woman kill?! Those were abnormal, defective women. No! A thousand times no! No, it was a human desire...We had been taught to love it [Russia]. To admire it. Since there’s a war, it’s our duty to help in some way.” -Sgt. Klara Semyonovna Tikhonovich, Antiaircraft Gunner

For more information please visit
sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com

A history exhibit in fulfillment of the Master of Applied Historical
Research Degree by Hayley Noble

Committee: Dr. David Walker, Dr. Bob Reinhardt, and Amber Beierle,
MAHR

This exhibit is brought to you by:

The History Department and Albertsons Library

Countless thanks to Rachael Studebaker, Alli and Cameron Eagans, and Andrei Tipa for your help.

Many of the artifacts are courtesy of the Idaho Military History Museum, David Walker, and Lorin Noble.

Display Case Panels

AIRWOMEN

During the war Soviet airwomen served as pilots, navigators, mechanics, and ground crews. Marina Raskova mobilized three female air force units in October 1941: the 586th Fighter Aviation regiment, the 587th Bomber Aviation regiment, and the 588th Night Bomber regiment. The 588th gained notoriety amongst Germans due to their tactic of idling the aircraft engines before reaching their targets. They would silently glide in to release their bombs. The Germans deemed them the “night witches.” All three regiments flew a combined total of more than 30,000 combat sorties and served until the end of the war in 1945.

“I didn’t even think twice...I had a profession that was needed at the front. I didn’t think, didn’t hesitate for a second. In general I met few people then who wanted to sit out that time.”

-Sgt. Anna Semyonovna Dubrovina-Chekunova, Pilot

MEDICS

One of the most common jobs held by Soviet women was that of combat medic. Combat medics are not to be confused with nurses, medical assistants, and doctors working in field hospitals. Medics were armed and part of the infantry, expected to participate in battle when not treating the wounded. They carried their comrades off the battlefield and administered medical aid, all while under fire.

“Altogether I carried 481 wounded soldiers from under fire. One of the journalists counted them up: a whole infantry battalion...We hauled men two or three times our weight. When they’re wounded they’re still heavier...So you hoist some 180 pounds on your back and carry it. Unload it...Go for the next one.”

-Maria Petrovna Smirnova, Medic

MACHINE GUNNERS

While some women joined the infantry as medics and snipers, others served as machine gunners. They operated both heavy and light machine guns, providing much needed covering fire for advancing forces. The Soviet Union was still entrenched in traditional gender stereotypes so in addition to operating machine guns, many women were also expected to treat the wounded among their units. Consequently, many machine gunners were also considered medics, and

vice versa.

“I got as far as Warsaw...And all on foot...The infantry, as they say, is the wartime proletariat. We crawled on our stomachs...We went sick, coughing, sleepy, dirty, poorly dressed. Often hungry...But we won!”

-Lt. Liubov Ivanovna Liubchik, Machine Gunner

TANKERS

Armor was yet another area where women made their mark. Women were trained as part of tank crews, often taught to drive and fix mechanical issues in tanks. Having knowledge of how to operate and fix tanks made these women valuable assets. Tankers were responsible for destroying fortifications, machine gun nests, and other tanks.

Home in Minsk: “Everybody shouted, women cried, ‘A man’s been killed! A man’s been killed!’ And I sat alone in the car I couldn’t understand why everybody was crying. I didn’t feel it was terrible. I had seen so many people killed at the front...I didn’t react. I got used to living among them. The dead were always nearby...We smoked near them, we ate. We talked. They were not somewhere out there, not in the ground, like in peacetime, but always right here. With us.”

-Sgt. Bella Isaakovna Epstein, Tank Driver

SNIPERS

One of the most popular and well-documented jobs for women in the Red Army was that of sniper. The Central Women's School of Sniper Training was established in 1942 and graduated more than a thousand women. These graduates, and other self-trained snipers, were deployed in pairs to the front: one as a spotter and one as a shooter. They operated the sniper version of the 1891/30 Mosin-Nagant rifle with a 3.5x PU scope. Many female snipers earned acclaim, becoming a famous part of the eastern front.

“I am ready to head back to the front lines again, as if there were some force pulling me there. How can I explain it?...Some think I have a boyfriend on the front, but I don't know anyone, I want to fight! I want to see real war.”

-Sgt. Roza Shanina, Sniper

MODERN MILITARY WOMEN

Unfortunately, the participation of Soviet women in combat was largely ignored once the war ended. The female units were the first to be demobilized, with the women expected to return home and become mothers. Their service was deemed shameful due to incorrect assumptions about their actions at the front. In the end, the victory was not shared with them and they became invisible participants in the war.

“How did the Motherland meet us? I can’t speak without sobbing...It was forty years ago, but my cheeks still burn. The men said nothing, but the women...They shouted to us, ‘We know what you did there! You lured our men with your young cunt! Army whores, military bitches.’ They insulted us in all possible ways.” -Klavdia S-va, Sniper

This blatant erasure of women at the front and the shame associated with their actions, leads to gaps in military history concerning women and their accomplishments in the war. This is one reason these Soviet women are often unheard of, and therefore not cited in the current debate. These women provide a perfect historical example advocating for the capabilities of female soldiers under fire, demonstrating that women can and do play significant, deadly roles on the battlefield. When women are held to the same standards and receive the same training as men, they perform as well as their male counterparts, holding the same motivations: wanting to defend their country from an invading force and seeking revenge against the enemy.

Thankfully, the military is working to end its sexist policies, but not quickly enough.

Lyudmila Pavlichenko Paragraph

Lyudmila Pavlichenko arrived in the U.S. on August 27, 1942.

Washington D.C. hosted an International Student Assembly, and Pavlichenko was chosen to be part of the Soviet delegation, along with Nikolai Krasavchenko and Vladimir Pchelintsev. Their first stop was to meet with Eleanor Roosevelt and Justice Robert Jackson in D.C. After the student assembly, Pavlichenko toured the U.S. speaking in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Seattle, Denver, Los Angeles and San Francisco, making speeches advocating for a second front against Hitler in Europe. The American media was enamored by her and fascinated that a woman would volunteer to fight in combat. But instead of asking Pavlichenko about her wartime experiences as a sniper, the journalists were more concerned with how she curled her hair and applied make up at the front, while criticizing her unstylish uniform. As a result, Pavlichenko often brushed aside those “silly questions” and demonstrated how far the U.S. would have to come to take women in battle seriously.

Poetry Poster

Yulia Drunina, medic armed with a rifle, Poems

The Unharvested Rye Sways, 1942

The unharvested rye sways.

Soldiers march through it.

And we girls, resembling boys,

Also march.

No, those aren't huts burning.

That's my youth on fire.

Girls, resembling boys,

March through the war.

All my Life, 1976

All my life

I languish, envious

Of that girl

Thin and awkward,

That young medic

Who marched through the war

In heavy army boots

With a rifle.

Timeline

1941

- June 22: Germany invades the Soviet Union marching towards Leningrad, Moscow, & Kiev.
- Aug. 23-Sept. 26: Battle of Kiev. Leads to German victory and occupation. Massacre of Babi Yar as a result.

- Sept. 8: Siege of Leningrad begins.
- Nov: U.S. begins lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union.
- Dec. 7: Japan attacks U.S. at Pearl Harbor.
- Dec: Soviets halt the German advance on Moscow.

1942

- Jan.-Feb: Soviet Army pushes the Germans away from Moscow.
- May: Germany sends troops south, towards Stalingrad and the Crimean oil fields.
- June 4-7: The Battle of Midway takes place between Japanese and U.S. navies.
- Aug. 23: Battle of Stalingrad begins.
- Aug. 27: Lyudmila Pavlichenko arrives in Washington D.C.
- Nov.8: U.S. forces land in North Africa.

1943


- Feb. 2: Battle of Stalingrad ends with German defeat.
- Feb.-Mar: Soviets push the Germans out of Crimea
- Apr.-May: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, failed Jewish revolt against German occupation.
- July-Aug: Battle of Kursk, Soviet Union gains the initiative for the remainder of the war.
- July 9: The Allies invade Sicily.

- Sept.-Nov: Battle of the Dnieper, Soviet victory reclaims much of the Ukraine.
- 1944
- Jan. 27: Siege of Leningrad ends after more than 2 years and 4 months.
 - Jan.-Mar: Soviet Union launches major offensives reaching Poland and Romania.
 - June 6: D-Day. Allies land in Normandy.
 - June-Aug: Soviets reach Hungary and Bulgaria.
 - Oct.-Dec: Soviets liberate the Baltics.
 - Dec. 16: The Battle of the Bulge begins between U.S. and German troops.
- 1945
- Jan. 27: Soviets liberate Auschwitz extermination camp.
 - Feb. 23: Marines raise the flag on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima.
 - March 22: U.S. forces cross the Rhine into Germany.
 - April 24: The Soviet Union surrounds Berlin, entering the city.
 - April 30: Hitler commits suicide, along with many of the Nazi high command.
 - May 8: VE Day. Allies accept Germany's unconditional surrender
 - Aug. 6, 9: U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the 8th, the Soviet Union declares war on Japan, invading Manchuria.
 - Sept. 2: VJ Day. Japanese formally surrender aboard the USS Missouri, officially ending the war, with Soviet and U.S. victories.

Exhibit Visual Aids

Additionally, these are some images of the panels and banners displaying maps, photographs, newspaper articles, propaganda poster, poetry poster, promotional flyers, and a list of artifacts used.

WOMEN IN COMBAT: The Soviet Example



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Many of the artifacts are courtesy of the Idaho Military History Museum, David Walker, and Lorin Noble.



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY



**ФАШИЗМ—
ЗЛЕЙШИЙ ВРАГ
ЖЕНЩИН.**

*Fascism, the most
evil enemy of
women by Nina
Vatolina*

ВСЕ НА БОРЬБУ С ФАШИЗМОМ!


Yulia Drunina, Poet and Medic armed with a Rifle

The Unharvested Rye Sways, 1942 All my Life, 1976



The unharvested rye sways.
Soldiers march through it.
And we girls, resembling boys,
Also march.

No, those aren't huts burning.
That's my youth on fire.
Girls, resembling boys, March through
the war.

All my life
I languish, envious
Of that girl
Thin and awkward,
That young medic
Who marched
through the war
In heavy army boots
With a rifle.



Yulia Drunina

Other Wartime Jobs Held by Women

- Communications Personnel
- Political Officers
- Combat Engineers
- Anti-Aircraft Crews
- Medical Staff in Field Hospitals
- Drivers, Scouts

Not to mention those in guerilla insurgent groups, home defense, administration, factory production, and other support staff.

The lack of records obscure exact numbers of women who served in the war, but most scholars agree that approximately one million Soviet women bore arms, roughly 8% of Soviet forces, with half of those women serving at the front.

Above: Main Banner, Top Right: Propaganda Poster, Bottom Right: Poetry Poster

Display Case Panels



SNIPERS

One of the most popular and well-documented jobs for women in the Red Army was that of sniper. The Central Women's School of Sniper Training was established in 1942 and graduated more than a thousand women. These graduates, and other self-trained snipers, were deployed in pairs to the front: one as a spotter and one as a shooter. They operated the sniper version of the 1891/30 Mosin-Nagant rifle with a 3.5x PU scope. Many female snipers earned acclaim, becoming a famous part of the eastern front.



"I am ready to head back to the front lines again, as if there were some force pulling me there. How can I explain it?...Some think I have a boyfriend on the front, but I don't know anyone, I want to fight! I want to see real war."

-Sgt. Roza Shanina, Sniper



AIRWOMEN

During the war Soviet airwomen served as pilots, navigators, mechanics, and ground crews. Marina Raskova mobilized three female air force units in October 1941: the 586th Fighter Aviation regiment, the 587th Bomber Aviation regiment, and the 588th Night Bomber regiment. The 588th gained notoriety amongst Germans due to their tactic of idling the aircraft engines before reaching their targets. They would silently glide in to release their bombs. The Germans deemed them the "night witches." All three regiments flew a combined total of more than 30,000 combat sorties and served until the end of the war in 1945.



"I didn't even think twice...I had a profession that was needed at the front. I didn't think, didn't hesitate for a second. In general I met few people then who wanted to sit out that time."

-Sgt. Anna Semyonovna Dubrovina-Chekunova, Pilot



MACHINE GUNNERS

While some women joined the infantry as medics and snipers, others served as machine gunners. They operated both heavy and light machine guns, providing much needed covering fire for advancing forces. The Soviet Union was still entrenched in traditional gender stereotypes so in addition to operating machine guns, many women were also expected to treat the wounded among their units. Consequently, many machine gunners were also considered medics, and vice versa.



"I got as far as Warsaw...And all on foot...The infantry, as they say, is the wartime proletariat. We crawled on our stomachs...We went sick, coughing, sleepy, dirty, poorly dressed. Often hungry...But we won!"

-Lt. Liubov Ivanovna Liubchik, Machine Gunner



MEDICS

One of the most common jobs held by Soviet women was that of combat medic. Combat medics are not to be confused with nurses, medical assistants, and doctors working in field hospitals. Medics were armed and part of the infantry, expected to participate in battle when not treating the wounded. They carried their comrades off the battlefield and administered medical aid, all while under fire.



"Altogether I carried 481 wounded soldiers from under fire. One of the journalists counted them up: a whole infantry battalion...We hauled men two or three times our weight. When they're wounded they're still heavier...So you hoist some 180 pounds on your back and carry it...Go for the next one."

-Maria Petrovna Smirnova, Medica



TANKERS

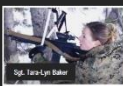
Armor was yet another area where women made their mark. Women were trained as part of tank crews, often taught to drive and fix mechanical issues in tanks. Having knowledge of how to operate and fix tanks made these women valuable assets. Tankers were responsible for destroying fortifications, machine gun nests, and other tanks.



Home in Minsk: "Everybody shouted, women cried, 'A man's been killed! A man's been killed!' And I sat alone in the car I couldn't understand why everybody was crying. I didn't feel it was terrible. I had seen so many people killed at the front...I didn't react. I got used to living among them. The dead were always nearby...We smoked near them, we ate. We talked. They were not somewhere out there, not in the ground, like in peacetime, but always right here. With us."

-Sgt. Bella Isaakovna Epstein, Tank Driver

Unfortunately, the participation of Soviet women in combat was largely ignored once the war ended. The female units were the first to be demobilized, with the women expected to return home and become mothers. Their service was deemed shameful due to incorrect assumptions about their actions at the front. In the end, the victory was not shared with them and they became invisible participants in the war.



"How did the Motherland meet us? I can't speak without sobbing...It was forty years ago, but my cheeks still burn. The men said nothing, but the women...They shouted to us, 'We know what you did there! You lured our men with your young cunt! Army whores, military bitches.' They insulted us in all possible ways." -Klavdia S-va, Sniper

This blatant erasure of women at the front and the shame associated with their actions, leads to gaps in military history concerning women and their accomplishments in the war. This is one reason these Soviet women are often unheard of, and therefore not cited in the current debate. These women provide a perfect historical example advocating for the capabilities of female soldiers under fire, demonstrating that women can and do play significant, deadly roles on the battlefield. When women are held to the same standards and receive the same training as men, they perform as well as their male counterparts, holding the same motivations: wanting to defend their country from an invading force and seeking revenge against the enemy.

Thankfully, the military is working to end its sexist policies, but not quickly enough.



1941

- June 22: Germany invades the Soviet Union marching towards Leningrad, Moscow, & Kiev.
- Aug. 23-Sept. 26: Battle of Kiev. Leads to German victory and occupation. Massacre of Babi Yar as a result.
- Sept. 8: Siege of Leningrad begins.
- Nov: U.S. begins lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union.
- Dec. 7: Japan attacks U.S. at Pearl Harbor.
- Dec: Soviets halt the German advance on Moscow.

Memorial of the battle of Stalingrad

1942

- Jan.-Feb: Soviet Army pushes the Germans away from Moscow.
- May: Germany sends troops south, towards Stalingrad and the Crimean oil fields.
- June 4-7: The Battle of Midway takes place between Japanese and U.S. navies.
- Aug. 23: Battle of Stalingrad begins.
- Aug. 27: Lyudmila Pavlichenko arrives in Washington D.C.
- Nov.8: U.S. forces land in North Africa.

Liberation of Auschwitz

1943

- Feb. 2: Battle of Stalingrad ends with German defeat.
- Feb.-Mar: Soviets push the Germans out of Crimea.
- Apr.-May: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, failed Jewish revolt against German occupation.
- July-Aug: Battle of Kursk. Soviet Union gains the initiative for the remainder of the war.
- July 9: The Allies invade Sicily.
- Sept.-Nov: Battle of the Dnieper. Soviet victory reclaims much of the Ukraine.

Rehring, June 1945

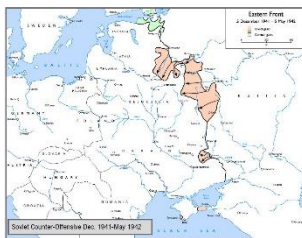
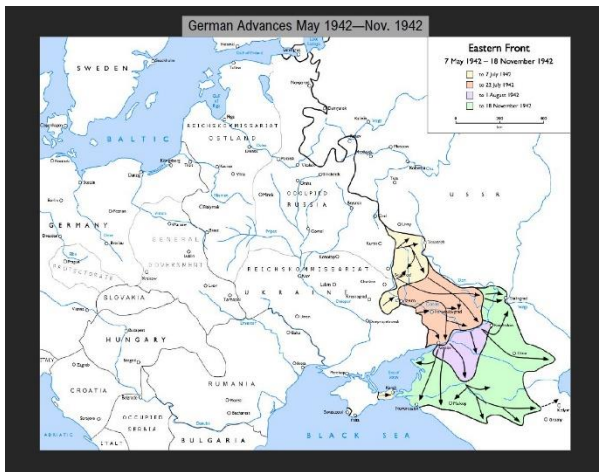
1944

- Jan. 27: Siege of Leningrad ends after more than 2 years and 8 months.
- Jan.-Mar: Soviet Union launches major offensives reaching Poland and Romania.
- June 6: D-Day. Allies land in Normandy.
- June-Aug: Soviets reach Hungary and Bulgaria.
- Oct-Dec: Soviets liberate the Baltics.
- Dec. 16: The Battle of the Bulge begins between U.S. and German troops.

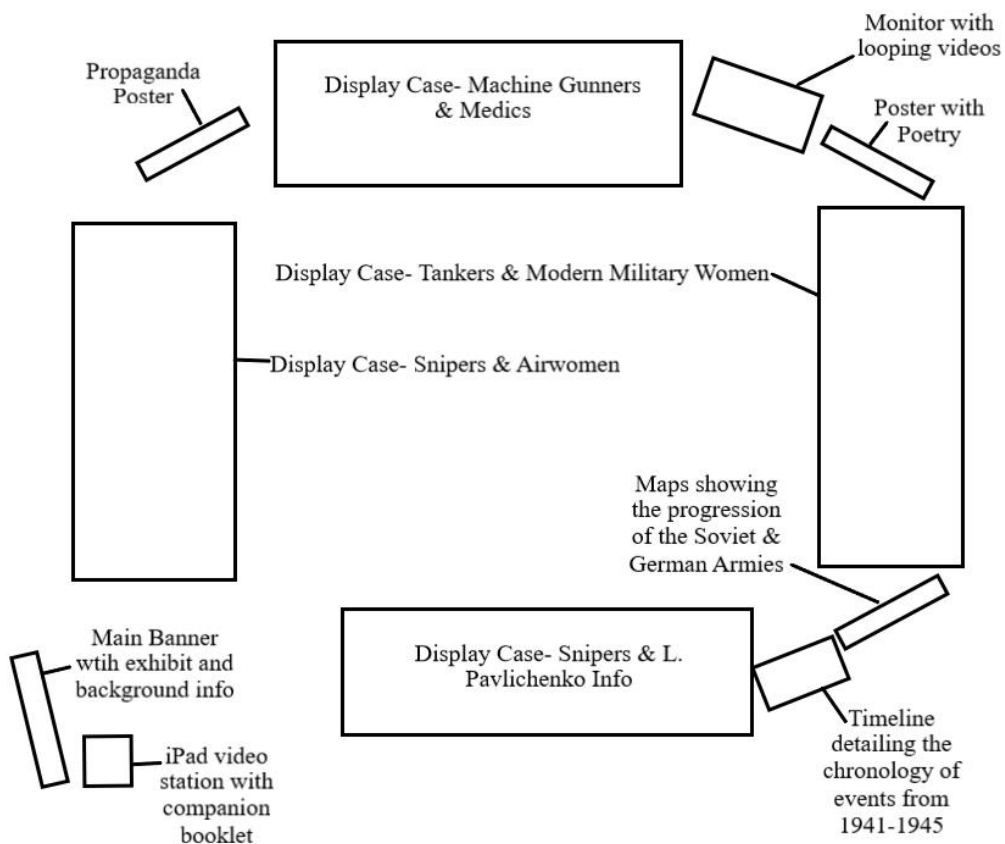
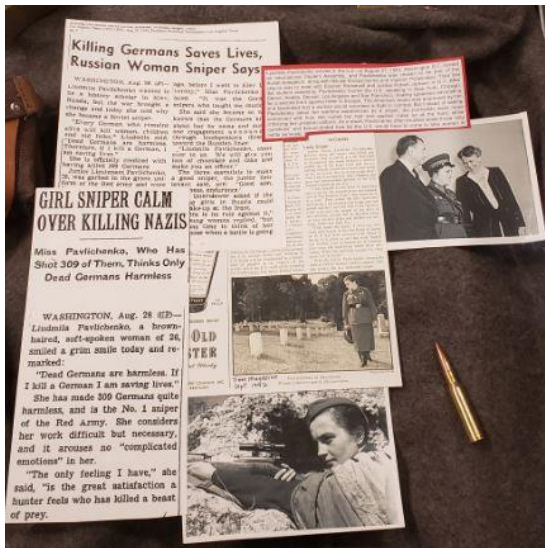
Soviet flag over Berlin

1945

- Jan. 27: Soviets liberate Auschwitz extermination camp.
- Feb. 23: Marines raise the flag on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima.
- March 22: U.S. forces cross the Rhine into Germany.
- April 24: The Soviet Union surrounds Berlin, entering the city.
- April 30: Hitler commits suicide, along with many of the Nazi high command.
- May 8: VE Day. Allies accept Germany's unconditional surrender.
- Aug. 6: U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the 8th, the Soviet Union declares war on Japan, invading Manchuria.
- Sept. 2: VJ Day. Japanese formally surrender aboard the USS Missouri, officially ending the war, with Soviet and U.S. victories.



Top Left: Timeline, Top Right (3): Large Maps, Bottom Left (4): Small maps



Top Left: Pavlichenko paragraph and newspaper headlines.
 Top Right: Promotional flyer
 Bottom: Exhibit diagram

Artifacts by Display Case

Snipers: Mosin-Nagant rifle, 7.62 x 54 rimmed ammo, cartridge carriers, ammo clips, ammo box, gun cleaning kit, and photographs.

Airwomen: Medals, flight cap, and photographs.

Machine Gunners: Radio, photographs, and helmet.

Medics: Photographs and medical kit.

Tankers: Mess kit, entrenching tool, hat, ammo can, and photographs.

Modern Military Women: Newspaper article.

Besides the artifacts in the display cases, crates, footlockers, ammo cans, burlap, and cammo netting were used to create environmental design within the exhibit. Additionally, a monitor was placed next to a display case, playing two videos with subtitles on a loop. Those same two videos, plus a song, can be viewed and listened to at the iPad station, with more information available in the companion booklet.

All of this content, including the videos, is available on the website, sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com. This allows for the information to still be available for those wishing to see it who are not in Boise. Photos of the exhibit, including artifacts, as well as links to Boise State Public Radio, *The Arbiter*, Albertsons Library, and the exhibit's social media accounts are also on website, demonstrating all the promotional efforts for the exhibit and accompanying presentation.

APPENDIX B

A Text Version of the Exhibit Companion Booklet

This Appendix represents the text of the exhibit companion booklet. The booklet includes video transcripts, individual biographies, an equipment list, and a few sources used, with information on where to find the entire project bibliography, excluding the photographs.

Table of Contents

Video Guides

- Lyudmila Pavlichenko Speech
- Woody Guthrie- “Miss Pavlichenko”
- Maria Lapina Interview

Select Biographies

- Lilya Litvyak
- Lyudmila Pavlichenko
- Nina Onilova
- Mariya Borovichenko
- Mariya Oktybrskaya

Equipment List

Sources

One of Lyudmila Pavlichenko’s Speeches during her 1942 U.S. Tour

Russian: I want to tell you that we will win. That there is no such force that could prevent the victorious march of free peoples of the world. We must unite. I offer my hands to the great soldiers of America.

English: Hello soldiers, forward to victory!

Translated by Andrei Tipa

Photo caption:

Above: Pavlichenko with Eleanor Roosevelt and Justice Robert Jackson in Washington D.C. in August 1942.

Right: Pavlichenko with the other Soviet delegates, Nikolai Krasavchenko, and Vladimir Pchelintsev.

“Miss Pavlichenko” by Woody Guthrie

Fell by your gun,
Fell by your gun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

Miss Pavlichenko's well known to fame,
Russia's your country,
Fighting's your game.
The world will love you, long time to come,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

Fell by your gun,
Fell by your gun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

In the mountains and canyons quiet as a deer.
Down in your forest, knowing no fear.
Lift up your sight, down comes a Hun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

Fell by your gun, yes,
Fell by your gun
For more than three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

In the hot summer's heat, or the cold winter snow,
All kinds of weather, you track down the foe.
Your face is the pride, is the new morning sun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

[https://folkways.si.edu/woody-guthrie/miss-pavlichencko/american-folk-](https://folkways.si.edu/woody-guthrie/miss-pavlichencko/american-folk-childrens-struggle-protest/music/track/smithsonian)

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Interview with Maria Lapina, a Red Army Combat Medic

Maria Lapina: “We were so happy that those two armies joined up and that we had encircled the Germans. And we knew we had them and they were done for. They wouldn’t be going anywhere. However many troops Hitler sent we still knew for sure that the German army would stay put and that it would surrender.”

Narrator: “For the first German prisoners the war was over. But it was no reason to breathe easy.”

Lapina: “Did I pity the Germans? Of course not. No. How could I feel pity for them? If I was going somewhere with my machine gun and they carried a wounded man past me I’d say “Bastards, why did you ever come here?” And they’d walk past, all very shabby, dirty, huddling in those rags of theirs. Pity them? We didn’t invite them here.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRyUD84b4NE>.

“We were silent as fish. We never acknowledged to anybody that we had been at the front. We just kept in touch among ourselves, wrote letters. It was later that they began to honor us, thirty years later...to invite us to meetings...But back then we hid, we didn’t even wear our medals. Men wore them, but not women. Men were victors, heroes, woosers, the war was theirs, but we were looked at with quite different eyes. Quite different...I’ll tell you they robbed us of the victory. Men didn’t share the victory with us. It was painful.” -Valentina Pavlovna Chudaeva, Antiaircraft Artillery.

Select Biographies

Lilya Litvyak is considered the most famous Soviet female fighter pilot. She learned to fly before the war and eagerly signed up for combat training at 20

years old in October 1941. Once qualified, she was assigned to the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment in January 1942. She mostly flew bomber escorts, but during the Battle of Stalingrad she became the first woman in the world to shoot down an enemy aircraft. Litvyak quickly gained the distinction of “fighter ace.” On August 1, 1943 her aircraft was damaged over enemy territory and she disappeared. Her body was not found until 1979. In 1990 she was granted the Hero of the Soviet Union medal, along with her other awards, Order of the Red Banner and Order of the Red Star. Livyak is credited with 12 personal kills and 3 shared kills in 168 combat sorties.

Lyudmila Pavlichenko joined the Red Army the day after Germany invaded the Soviet Union at the age of 24. Assigned to the 25th Chapayev rifle division, she quickly excelled in combat, eventually commanding a sniper platoon, training new men on the skills needed to be a sniper. Promoted to Junior Lieutenant, Stalin awarded Pavlichenko the Order of Lenin for her actions in the defense of Odessa and Sevastopol accumulating 309 confirmed kills. She was wounded in June 1942 and that was the last action she saw in combat. Once recovered, Pavlichenko represented the Soviet Union to take part in an international student assembly hosted by the United States. Pavlichenko traveled the country making speeches about the need for a second front in Europe and answering questions from reporters. Once back in the military in January 1943, she continued to train snipers, but did not return to the front. She died in October

1974 at age 58, with the honor of receiving the Order of Lenin twice and being designated a Hero of the Soviet Union.

Nina Onilova enlisted in the Army as a medic at the age of 20. Deployed to the front in August 1941 with the 54th Razin Regiment, she quickly proved herself with a machine gun. Onilova participated in the defense of both Odessa and Sevastopol. In November 1941 Onilova crawled from her trench across 20 meters of open ground to throw Molotov cocktails, setting a tank on fire. These actions earned her acclaim across the Soviet Union. Then on February 28, 1942 she destroyed two enemy machine gun nests and covered her unit's retreat alone. Onilova then took a mortar blast to the chest, mortally wounding her. She died on March 8, 1942 having earned the Order of the Red Banner, and posthumously granted Hero of the Soviet Union in 1965.

When the war broke out Mariya Borovichenko enrolled in nursing school. As the Germans advanced on Kiev, she escaped, gathering valuable information she passed along to the 5th Airborne Brigade. With her intelligence, they were able to destroy some of the enemy's artillery. Borovichenko proved useful as a scout and a medic so the 5th Airborne allowed her to accompany them. In addition to her medical knowledge, she demonstrated that she could also handle weapons, firing on the battlefield as she treated the wounded. In September 1941 while on a scouting mission she captured 10 Germans singlehandedly. Borovichenko's final

battle was in July 14, 1943. After knocking out an advancing tank with an anti-tank grenade, she was killed by shrapnel shielding a wounded officer. In 1965 she received the Hero of the Soviet Union award.

Mariya Oktyabrskaya joined the war effort in 1943 at age 38, after learning about the death of her husband in the war. She sold all her possessions to donate a T-34 tank to the Red Army. Oktyabrskaya's stipulations were that she had to drive it and that it be called "Fighting Girlfriend." She attended 5 months of training, becoming a driver and mechanic, then was sent to the 26th Guards Tank Brigade in September 1943. In her first action, her tank was the first to breach the enemy positions, destroying numerous machine gun nests and artillery emplacements. She continued to distinguish herself until her last battle in January 17, 1944. Oktyabrskaya drove her tank into German territory, knocking out fortifications. The tank was hit by an anti-tank round, disabling the track. She repaired the track amid heavy fire but was hit by shrapnel before returning to the tank. Oktyabrskaya died 2 months later on March 15, 1944, being awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously in August 1944.

Some of the Equipment that These Women Used

Weaponry

- 1891/1930 Mosin-Nagant rifle with 3.5x PU scope
- Tokarev SVT-40 rifle
- Tokarev TT-33 pistol
- PPSH-41 submachine gun
- Pulemyot Maxima M1910- Maxim machine gun

- Degtyaryov light machine gun: DP-27

Planes

- Lisunov Li-2
- Polikarpov *Po-2*
- Yakovlev Yak-1
- Petlyakov Pe-2

Equipment

- T-34 tank
- T-60 tank
- IS-2 tank

Sources

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Smirnova-Medvedeva, Z.M. *On the Road to Stalingrad: Memoirs of a Woman Machine Gunner*. Translated by Kazimiera J. Cottam. Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1997.

Sakaida, Henry. *Heroines of the Soviet Union 1941-45*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003.

For full exhibit bibliography visit
<http://sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com/further-reading/>.

Booklet Visuals

The following images are the companion booklet pages. These pages are also available to view on the website.



BOISE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

WOMEN IN COMBAT: THE SOVIET EXAMPLE

A History Exhibit in Fulfillment of the Master of Applied Historical Research Degree by Hayley Noble

MARCH 23 TO MAY 20, ALBERTSONS LIBRARY, BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

A public presentation will be held on March 29 at noon in the library's Special Collections on the subject. For more information visit <https://sovietwomenincombatwii.wordpress.com/>



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Right: Pavlichenko with the other Soviet delegates, Nikolai Krasavchenko, and Vladimir Pchelintsev.

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Fell by your gun,
Fell by your gun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

Miss Pavlichenko's well known to fame,
Russia's your country,
Fighting's your game.
The world will love you, long time to come,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.



Fell by your gun,
Fell by your gun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

In the mountains and canyons quiet as a deer,
Down in your forest, knowing no fear,
Lift up your sight, down comes a Hun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.



Fell by your gun, yes,
Fell by your gun
For more than three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

In the hot summer's heat, or the cold winter snow,
All kinds of weather, you track down the foe,
Your face is the pride, is the new morning sun,
Three hundred Nazis fell by your gun.

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"We were silent as fish. We never acknowledged to anybody that we had been at the front. We just kept in touch among ourselves, wrote letters. It was later that they began to honor us, thirty years later...to invite us to meetings...But back then we hid, we didn't even wear our medals. Men wore them, but not women. Men were victors, heroes, woosers, the war was theirs, but we were looked at with quite different eyes. Quite different... I'll tell you they robbed us of the victory. Men didn't share the victory with us. It was painful."
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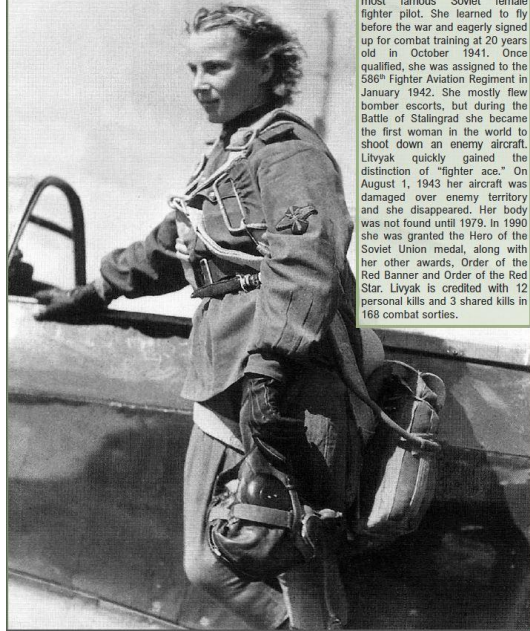
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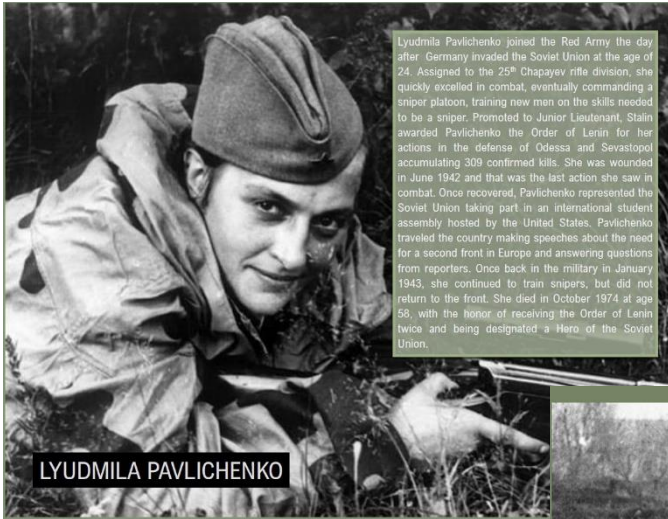
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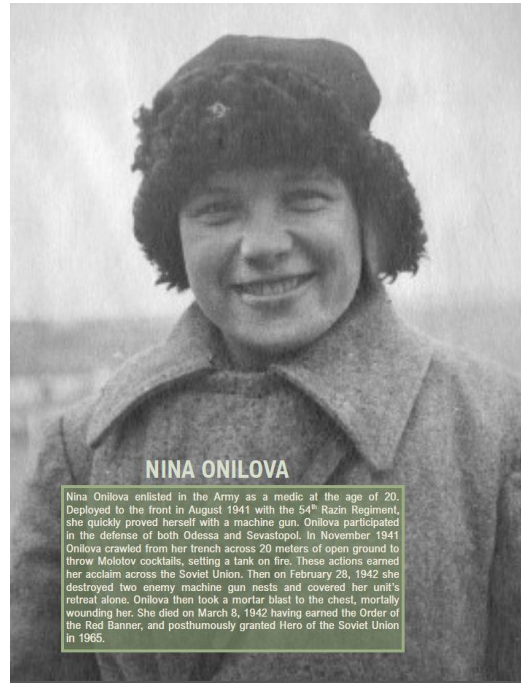
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91/30 Mosin-Nagant rifle

Planes

- Lisunov Li-2
- Polikarpov Po-2
- Yakovlev Yak-1
- Petlyakov Pe-2



T-34 medium tank



Yak-1 Fighter

Equipment

- T-34 tank
- T-60 tank
- IS-2 tank

Sources

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Pennington, Reina, ed. *Amazons to Fighter Pilots: A Biographical Dictionary of Military Women*. Vol. 1. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003.

Pennington, Reina. *Wings, Women, and War: Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.

Sakaida, Henry. *Heroines of the Soviet Union 1941-45*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003.

Smirnova-Medvedeva, Z.M. *On the Road to Stalingrad: Memoirs of a Woman Machine Gunner*. Translated by Kazimiera J. Cottam. Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1987.

For full exhibit bibliography visit

<https://sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com/further-reading/>



APPENDIX C

Website and Social Media Pages

The website contains all the panel text and visual aids, along with links to view the videos, promotional efforts, and a full bibliography. From the website, the exhibit's Facebook and Instagram pages are also accessible.

Website: sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com

The screenshot shows the homepage of the website 'Soviet Women in Combat during WWII'. The title is prominently displayed at the top, with a subtitle 'Website accompanying Women in Combat: The Soviet Example exhibit'. Below the title is a navigation menu with categories: HOME, AIRWOMEN, SNIPERS, MACHINE GUNNERS, MEDICS, TANKERS, FURTHER READING, and EXHIBIT. A large black and white photograph of two women in military uniforms is featured. Below the photo, there are links to articles promoting the exhibit in the Boise State News & Library Post and an interview on Boise State Public Radio. A central graphic announces the 'EXHIBIT OPENING MARCH 23, 2019' for 'WOMEN IN COMBAT: THE SOVIET EXAMPLE' at Albertsons Library, Boise State University, compiled by Hojey Hobie. At the bottom, there are sections for 'POSTS' (listing February 2019, December 2018, and November 2018), 'SOVIET WOMEN IN COMBAT ON FACEBOOK', and 'INSTAGRAM'. The footer includes social media links for Facebook and Instagram, and a WordPress.com logo.

Soviet Women in Combat during WWII

Historic accompanying Women in Combat: The Soviet Example exhibit

HOME AIRWOMEN SNIPERS MACHINE GUNNERS MEDICS TANKERS FURTHER READING EXHIBIT

Airwomen



During the war Soviet airwomen served as pilots, navigators, mechanics, and ground crew. Marina Raskova mobilized three female air force units in October 1941: the 586th Fighter Aviation Regiment, the 587th Bomber Aviation Regiment, and the 588th Night Bomber Regiment. The 588th gained notoriety among Germans due to their tactic of killing the aircraft engines before reaching their targets. They would silently glide in to release their bombs. The Germans deemed them the "night witches." All three regiments flew a combined total of more than 30,000 combat sorties and served until the end of the war in 1945.



"I didn't even think twice...I had a profession that was needed at the front. I didn't think I should hesitate for a second. In general I met two people there who wanted to sit out that time."

Sgt. Anna Smayonovna Dal'revina Cherkasova, Pilot



Lilya Litvyak is considered the most famous Soviet female fighter pilot. She started her career flying liaison and instructor's sorties before the war even began. In October 1941 Marina Raskova formed the Women's Combat Aviation Regiments and Litvyak eagerly signed up for training at 20 years old. Once qualified, she was assigned in the 501st Fighter Aviation Regiment in January 1942. She mostly flew bomber escorts, but during the Battle of Stalingrad she became the first woman in the world to shoot down an enemy aircraft.



Transferred to the 437th Fighter Aviation Regiment, she proved herself among her male comrades. Litvyak quickly gained the distinction of "lighter ace." On August 1, 1943 her aircraft was damaged over enemy territory and she disappeared. Her body was not found until 1979, with confirmation of her identity in 1986. In 1990 she was granted the Hero of the Soviet Union medal, along with her other awards, Order of the Red Star. Litvyak is credited with 12 personal kills and 5 shared kills in 168 combat sorties.

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121

POSTS

- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

SOVIET WOMEN IN COMBAT ON FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



Soviet Women in Combat during WWII

Historic accompanying Women in Combat: The Soviet Example exhibit

HOME AIRWOMEN SNIPERS MACHINE GUNNERS MEDICS TANKERS FURTHER READING EXHIBIT

Snipers



One of the most popular and well-documented jobs for women in the Red Army was that of sniper. The Central Women's School of Sniper Training was established in 1942 and graduated more than a thousand women. These graduates, most often self-taught snipers, were deployed in pairs in the front: one as a spotter and one as a shooter. They spotted the sniper women of the 109th SS Maria Nagai called with a 25A PC scope. Many female snipers earned acclaim, becoming a famous part of the eastern front.



"I am ready to head back to the front line again, so if there were some force pulling me there, how can I explain it?...Some think I have a boyfriend on the front, but I don't know anyone. I want to fight. I want to see real war."

Sgt. Rita Shantia, Sniper



Lynchee Park looked joined the Red Army the day after Germany reached the Soviet border of the age of 24. Before that was she studied history at New York University and received marksmanship training during her teenage years through a paramilitary after school organization. Initially told to be a medic, she convinced the Red Army officials that she qualified to be a sniper in the infantry. Assigned to the 25th Cavalry



division, she quickly excelled in combat, eventually commanding a sniper platoon, and was charged with training new recruits. She was the first woman to be a sniper.

Promoted to Junior Lieutenant, Nikita awarded Parkhachenko the Order of Lenin for her actions in the defense of Moscow and Sevastopol during the war. She was wounded in June 1942 and that was the last action she was in combat.

Once recovered, Parkhachenko was chosen to represent the Soviet Union as part of the modern marksmanship training to take part in an international student assembly hosted by the United States. The Soviet students arrived in Washington D.C. on August 27, 1942, greeted by Eleanor Roosevelt. Parkhachenko went on to visit New York, Chicago, Detroit, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, making speeches about the war and a record book on Turkeys and accompanying questionnaire responses. After six United States, she continued the tour to Canada and Britain, returning to Moscow in January 1943. Once back in the military, she continued to train snipers but did not return to the front. In October 1951 she returned to Kuznetsov University to finish her dissertation. Once completed, she became a historian at the Navy, researching first history and her retirement in June 1955, with the rank of major in the reserve. Parkhachenko wrote her memoirs from 1967 to 1972. She died in October 1974 at age 76, with the honor of receiving the Order of Lenin twice and being designated a Hero of the Soviet Union.

122

POSTS

- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

SOVIET WOMEN IN COMBAT ON FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



Soviet Women in Combat during WWII

Website accompanying Women in Combat: The Soviet Example exhibit

HOME AIRWOMEN SNIPERS MACHINE GUNNERS MEDICS TANKERS FURTHER READING EXHIBIT

Machine Gunners



While some women joined the infantry as medics and snipers, others served as machine gunners. They operated both heavy and light machine guns, providing much-needed covering fire for advancing forces. The Soviet Union was still entrenched in traditional gender stereotypes so in addition to operating machine guns, many women were also expected to treat the wounded among their units. Consequently, many machine gunners were also considered medics, and vice versa.

"I got as far as Warsaw...And all on foot...The infantry, as they say, is the warrior proletarian. We crawled on our stomachs...We were sick, coughing, sleepy, dirty, poorly dressed. Often hungry...But we won!"

-Lt. Lidbov Ivanovna Lidbochk, Machine Gunner



Nina Ostrova enlisted in the Army as a medic at the age of 20. Deployed to the front in August 1941 with the 54th Karén Regiment, she quickly proved herself with a machine gun. Ostrova participated in the defense of both Odessa and Sevastopol. Prior to the war she received machine gun training as part of her paramilitary night classes she took after working her shifts in a textile factory. She was determined to be the next "Anka," a machine gun heroine depicted in the Civil War film *Chapayev*.

Ostrova's chance to demonstrate her skills came when she closed a jammed machine gun and moved down approaching Germans, defaming the wounded she was treating. After that she continued to be an asset to the regiment and commanded a machine gun crew. In November 1941 Ostrova crawled from her trench across 20 meters of open ground to throw Molotov cocktails, setting a tank on fire. These actions earned her acclaim across the Soviet Union. Then on February 28, 1942 she destroyed two enemy machine gun nests and covered her unit's retreat alone. Ostrova then took a mortar blast to the chest, mortally wounding her. She died on March 8, 1942 having earned the Order of the Red Banner, and posthumously granted Hero of the Soviet Union in 1965.

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- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

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Soviet Women in Combat during WWII

Website accompanying Women in Combat: The Soviet Example exhibit

HOME AIRWOMEN SNIPERS MACHINE GUNNERS MEDICS TANKERS FURTHER READING EXHIBIT

Medics



One of the most common jobs held by Soviet women was that of combat medic. Combat medics were not to be confused with nurses, medical assistants, and doctors working in field hospitals. Medics were armed and part of the infantry, expected to participate in battle when not tending the wounded. They carried their comrades off the battlefield and administered medical aid, all while under fire.



"Altogether I carried 481 wounded soldiers from under fire. One of the journalists counted them up: a whole infantry battalion...We hoisted men two or three times our weight. When they're wounded they're still heavier...So you hoist some 180 pounds on your back and carry it. Unload it...Go for the next one."

Maria Petrovna Smirnova, Medic

When the war broke out Mariya Borovichenko enrolled in nursing school. As the Germans advanced on Kiev, she escaped, getting valuable information she passed along to the 5th Airborne Brigade. With her intelligence, they were able to destroy some of the enemy's artillery. Borovichenko proved useful as a scout and a medic to the 5th Airborne allowed her to accompany them. In addition to her medical knowledge, she demonstrated that she could also handle weapons, firing on the battlefield as she treated the wounded.



Borovichenko continued to prove her skills as a medic and as a scout. In September 1941 while on a scouting mission she captured 10 Germans singlehandedly and provided intelligence back to her superiors. Borovichenko's final battle was in July 31, 1943. After knocking out an advancing tank with an anti tank grenade, she was killed by shrapnel shattering a wounded officer. In 1965 she received the Hero of the Soviet Union award.

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- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

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Tankers

Armor was yet another area where women made their mark. Women were trained as part of tank crews, often taught to drive and fix mechanical issues in tanks. Having knowledge of how to operate and fix tanks made these women valuable assets. Tankers were responsible for destroying fortifications, machine gun nests, and other tanks.



Home in Minsk: "Everybody shouted, we women cried. A man's been killed! A man's been killed! And I sat alone in the car. I couldn't understand why everybody was crying. I didn't feel it was terrible. I had seen so many people killed at the front... I didn't react. I got used to living among them. The dead were always nearby... We smoked near them, we ate. We talked. They were not somewhere out there, not in the ground, like in pacemans, but always right here. With us."

-Sgt. Bella Isaakovna Epshtein, Tank Driver



Mariya Oktyabrskaya joined the war effort in 1943 at age 36, after learning about the death of her husband at the hands of the Germans. She sold all her possessions to donate a T-34 tank to the Red Army. Oktyabrskaya's stipulations were that she had to drive it and that it be called "Fighting Girlfriend." She attended 3 months of training, becoming a driver and mechanic, then was sent to the 26th Guards Tank Brigade in September 1943.



In October, Oktyabrskaya saw her first action. Her tank was the first to breach the enemy positions, destroying numerous machine gun nests and artillery emplacements. She continued to distinguish herself until her last battle in January 17, 1944. Oktyabrskaya drove her tank into German territory, knocking out fortifications. Her tank was hit by an anti-tank round, disabling the track. She repaired the track and heavy fire but was hit in the head by shrapnel before returning to the tank.

Oktyabrskaya was in a coma for 2 months before dying on March 15, 1944, being awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously several months later.



POSTS

- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

SOVIET WOMEN IN COMBAT ON FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



Exhibit

Click to view some articles promoting the exhibit: Boise State News & Library Post

Hear my interview about the exhibit on Boise State Public Radio here.

Here are some photos from the exhibit currently on display in the Boise State University Albertsons Library



To View Exhibit Visuals Click the links below:

Exhibit Display Panels, Exhibit Booklet

Red Army Nurse Interview Video, Pavlichenko Speech Video, Woody Guthrie Song Audio



POSTS

- February 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018

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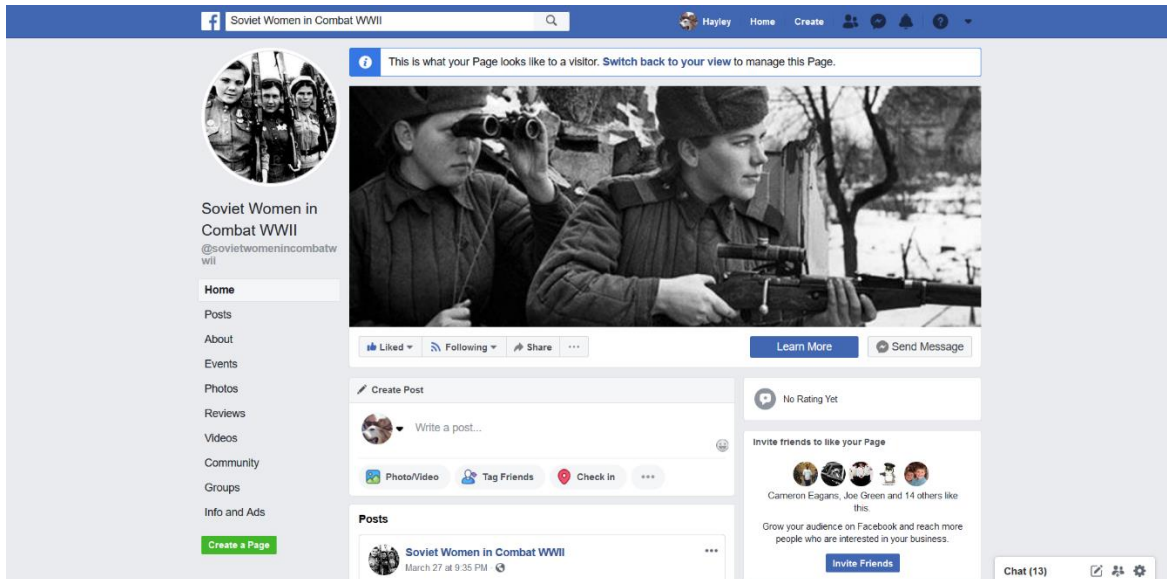


INSTAGRAM

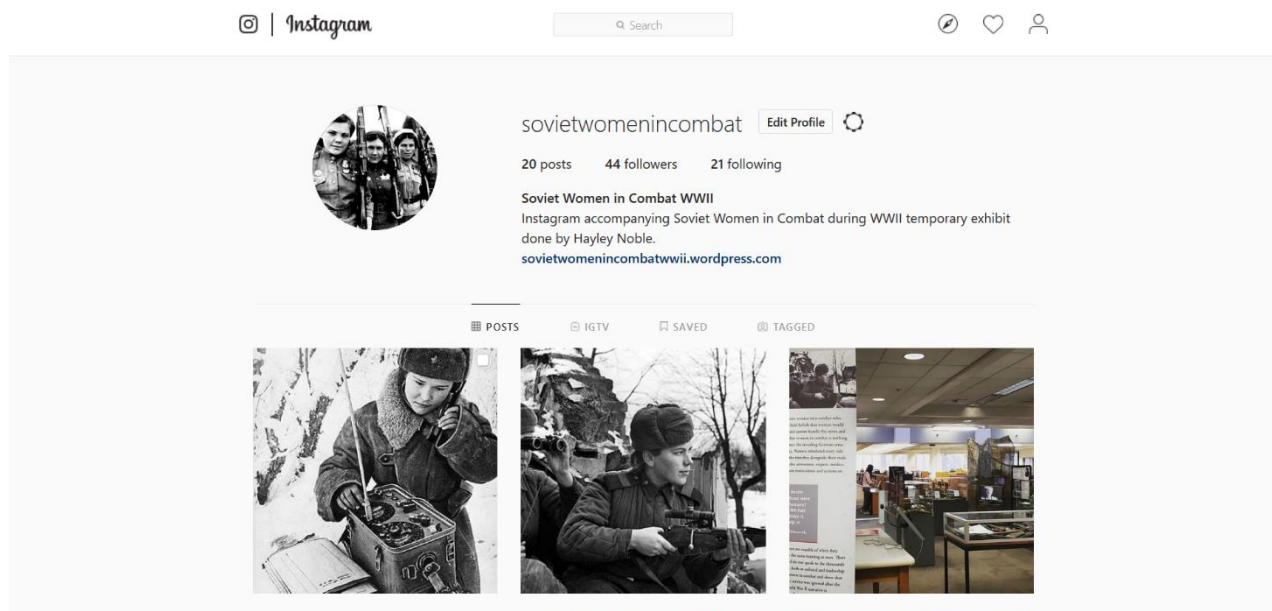


Facebook URL: facebook.com/sovietwomenincombatwii

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for 'Soviet Women in Combat WWII'. The page header includes the name, a search bar, and navigation links like 'Home' and 'Create'. A notification banner at the top states, 'This is what your Page looks like to a visitor. Switch back to your view to manage this Page.' The profile picture is a circular image of two women in military uniforms. The cover photo is a large image of two women in combat gear, one using binoculars and the other operating a machine gun. The page layout includes a left-hand navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'Posts', 'About', 'Events', 'Photos', 'Reviews', 'Videos', 'Community', 'Groups', and 'Info and Ads'. The main content area features a 'Create Post' section and a feed of posts. The first post is from the page itself, dated March 27, with the text 'Check out this interview I did for more details on the exhibit.' It includes a collage of images related to the exhibit, such as a poster for 'SOVIET EXHIBIT' and a woman with a rifle. The second post is dated March 28 and says 'Tune in today to Idaho Matters on Boise State Public Radio at 12:45 MT to hear me discuss the exhibit! Boise State Public Radio Click the link to hear the interview https://www.boisestatepublicradio.org/.../boise-state-exhibit... #IdahoMatters #sovietwomenincombatwii'. The third post is dated March 29 and features a woman with a radio, with text 'BOISE STATE PUBLIC RADIO NEWS 91.5 FM' and 'IDAHO MATTERS'. The right-hand sidebar contains sections for 'No Rating Yet', 'Invite friends to like your Page', 'Community', 'About', and 'Page Transparency'. A 'Chat (13)' button is also visible on the right.



Instagram Handle: @sovietwomenincombat





sovietwomenincombat Edit Profile

20 posts 44 followers 21 following

Soviet Women in Combat WWII
Instagram accompanying Soviet Women in Combat during WWII temporary exhibit
done by Hayley Noble.
sovietwomenincombatwwii.wordpress.com

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