

Returning the Colonial Gaze.

Photography and Counterhegemonic Subject Positions in the Philippine American War (1899-1902)

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Returning the Colonial Gaze examines how African American and Philippine soldiers used the medium of photography in the Philippine American War to challenge hegemonic forms of representation. It works with photograph and paper collections from U.S. American, Spanish, and Philippine archives.

The project originates in the assumptions that photographs were of crucial importance for the demands of African American soldiers and Philippine revolutionaries in this war to find recognition as respectable, honorable, and politically able subjects. Even though both groups converged in this war as opponents, they used the means of photography for similar purposes. By taking photographs of their war service that were published in picture books, magazines, newspapers, and memoirs, African Americans and Filipinos strove to make visible notions of martial masculinity, honor, and civic ability that challenged their subordination by racist discourses and practices.

My examination takes up the call to conceptualize the history of colonialism as a history of entanglement. By carving out the simultaneity, multiplicity, and political relevance of diverse photographic positionings in the Philippine American War, it seeks to “provincialize” (Dipesh Chakrabarty) the dominant white Western framing of the visual history of this war.