

# Fighting for american manhood



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Omar Perez-Velazco Hist. 460 Dr. McDonough February 18, 2013 Since the beginning of time the topic of human gender its differences has been a controversial subject that always attracts attention. After the Spanish-American War, many men were seen as heroes, some even put into important positions in our nations' government. Men like McKinley and Roosevelt, for example, used such praise and recognition to reinforce their positions of President and, later on, Vice President, respectively. One of the men who benefited from this line of thought was President McKinley, who no doubt was delighted to find that being a commander in chief during a war restored his image as a capable leader" (110). Roosevelt was a man with power, being the assistant secretary of the navy, but he gave it up to join 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, more commonly known as the Rough Riders. He received nationwide praise and everyone knew him as a hero. " Two years later, Roosevelt's military record helped him win the vice presidential slot on the Republican ticket" (112).

Women held many important roles during this war, such as nurses. While women were vital to the war effort, many people did little to spread the news. " In magazines and newspapers of the time, stories glorifying soldiers and sailors are hard to miss. In contrast, stories covering women's wartime contributions are difficult to find" (128). How does considering gender change our views of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars? This is the argument that Kristin Hoganson makes in *Fighting for American Manhood*.

I believe that without the aid of women in the camps, the wars would have gone much differently. " This book shows how international relations affected

ideas about gender, how gendered ideas about political authority affected American democracy in an imperial era, and how high politics served as a vibrant locus of cultural struggle" (14). I can agree with the author on all these points and I believe that women and also minorities during the wars had a great impact from their local factories and towns. *Fighting for American Manhood* collects its information from a wide variety of sources, some being magazines and journal articles, and others being more in depth, like family letters. There is also a large quantity of political cartoons from the time, depicting such people as President McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and the iconic Uncle Sam. Some of the primary sources, the letters, come from places like the Alabama Department of Archives and History, or the Cincinnati Historical Society, which provided information in the form of the Wheeler Family Papers, and the Joseph Benson Foraker Papers, respectively.

While a lot of these family accounts were safely in the hands of the state, many other accounts from the day were residing in university libraries, such as the Harvard University Houghton Library, and the University of North Carolina Wilson Library: Southern Historical Collection, from which Hoganson uses the Theodore Roosevelt Collection, from the Charles Eliot Norton Papers, and the Edward Ward Carmack Papers, respectively. The secondary sources that the author compiled were mostly magazine entries and newspaper articles, like those from the *New York Times*, or the *Washington Post*.

The chapter that I found most interesting was Chapter 6 - The Problem of Male Degeneracy and the Allure of the Philippines. I was just amazed with the United States when our government, using the power of the Treaty of

Paris, decided for the Philippines that they wanted to be ceded into the United States. " The peace treaty with Spain, signed on December 10, ceded the Philippines along with Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States. The treaty, known as the Treaty of Paris, then went to the U. S Senate for ratification.

But the Filipinos who had been fighting for independence from Spain did not want to be ceded" (133). This angered the Filipino nationalists and almost brought an all out war. The reasons that the U. S government officials gave to try and justify their takeover of these territories also surprised me and showed me just how far some countries will go to expand, both physically and mentally. " Imperialists based their assertions that the Filipinos were unfit for independence on three stereotypes that gave meaning to racial prejudices by drawing on ideas about gender.

All three presented the Filipinos as lacking the manly character seen as necessary for self-government" (134). These men were considered less than human, along with Native and African Americans. I thoroughly enjoyed this chapter because of all the different aspects it covers related to gender and the ceding of the Filipino territories. The chapter that I found least interesting was Chapter 2 - Cuba and the Restoration of American Chivalry. While the information in the chapter was important to get the main argument across, it just didn't appeal to me, and it didn't get any better in my opinion as I kept reading.

American citizens fantasized about the Cuban rebels, about how chivalrous the men were and how responsible and loyal wives the Cuban women are. " In contrast to American men, who seemed to be losing sight of knightly

values in their single-minded pursuit of riches, Cuban men appeared to exemplify chivalric character” (47). American men drew inspiration from these fantasies, often showing how Cuban men drew their inspiration from women in illustrations and cartoons. “ Their images as acquiescent, traditional women made Cuban women seem to be perfect feminine foils for assertive American women.

In addition to appearing well worth defending, Cuban women appeared eager for rescue” (46). This chapter was important to getting the point across but I felt like it was sort of out of place. Fighting for American Manhood is a very interesting read and it really makes me think. When did anyone ever really stop and think so deeply about how gender can affect wars? The book is unique and I recommend it to anyone who wants to study the topic of gender affecting war.