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Guns of Peace and an Early Campaign against Smallpox

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Abstract

This article analyses the religious and other motivations of Robert Hingson and Brother's Brother Foundation in their work on smallpox eradication and international health more broadly. It examines Hingson's development and early usage of the jet injector in mass vaccination campaigns. It also highlights that in offering logistical support to Hingson's efforts in Liberia, the US government participated in smallpox eradication earlier than existing narratives have suggested.

The most significant health initiatives in the thirty years after the end of the Second World War were the campaigns to eradicate malaria and smallpox. US doctor Robert Hingson; Brother's Brother Foundation; and the US government were central to these efforts.¹ In 1958, Hingson organized a multiple-month, around-the-world mission to assess medical needs internationally and contribute where possible. This undertaking facilitated later medical interventions abroad and the creation of an organization, Brother's Brother Foundation, to send American medical professionals on short-term missions. Explicitly Christian in nature, Hingson and his organization represented a new type of medical missionary. They did not live among their patients for years, as had earlier missionaries. Instead, aided by technological innovation and logistical support from the US government, their missions aimed for rapid medical intervention rather than deep, sustained contact.² They benefited in particular from the development of the jet injector – an affordable and efficient means to achieve mass

¹ Randall M. Packard, *A history of global health: interventions into the lives of other peoples* (Baltimore, MD, 2016), p. 134; and David Kinkela, *DDT and the American century: global health, environmental politics, and the pesticide that changed the world* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011), pp. 84–105.

² Brother's Brother Foundation presaged the evangelical emphasis on short-term missions in subsequent decades. Rachel M. McCleary, *Global compassion: private voluntary organizations and U.S. foreign policy since 1939* (New York, NY, 2009), p. 83; and Melani McAlister, *The kingdom of God has no borders: a global history of American evangelicals* (New York, NY, 2018), p. 198.

immunization. Their methods, termed vertical interventions by global health scholars, were particularly well suited to smallpox eradication, which they pursued in Liberia in advance of and later elsewhere alongside the World Health Organization (WHO)'s international campaign. In contrast to narratives focused on the geopolitical motivations for smallpox elimination efforts, examining Hingson, Brother's Brother Foundation, and their 1962 medical mission to Liberia reveal the religious motivations for smallpox eradication as well as the early contributions of the US government.

Brother's Brother Foundation built upon a long history of religious inspiration underlying humanitarianism, although eighteenth-century missionaries intended 'to save souls, not to lessen earthly distress'.³ Similarly, Brother's Brother Foundation was part of a lengthy tradition of 'medical men' active in humanitarianism as historian Amanda Moniz has shown.⁴ Among Hingson's motivations were a professed desire to follow the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself, and one observer characterized the missions as bringing together 'Christian Brotherhood' and 'modern medical science'. Hingson remarked, 'I must apply my medical knowledge as far as I can reach.'⁵ Hingson and his interdenominational colleagues served as medical missionaries in new ways.⁶ His work represented a shift away from formal proselytism, and Brother's Brother Foundation fitted with the turn toward short-term missions that has accelerated into the twenty-first century.⁷ Beyond missionaries, religious liberals became more secular, and they began to work with allies in other denominations.⁸ Historian Andrew Preston

³ Amanda B. Moniz, *From empire to humanity: the American revolution and the origins of humanitarianism* (New York, NY, 2016), pp. 3, 5.

⁴ Like Hingson and his colleagues, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century humanitarian activists travelled abroad to facilitate their philanthropic work. Moniz uses the term 'philanthropic tourists' to describe them. *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 170.

⁵ Cyril E. Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1968), p. 22; and Parran to Hingson, 31 Mar. 1959, folder 1258, series XIX, Thomas Parran papers, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA (hereafter Parran papers).

⁶ There are examples of Americans working as medical missionaries as early as 1834, such as Peter Parker in China, but the phenomenon became more prevalent later. John R. Haddad, *America's first adventure in China: trade, treaties, opium, and salvation* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), pp. 100–8. Melani McAlister has shown the impact of the 'Hocking Report', which in 1932 urged American missionaries to move away from their traditional focus on conversion to an emphasis on social services such as medical care. The report was part of a broader re-evaluation of mission work and the relationship between missionaries and the people they served and/or sought to convert. After Hocking and with the onset of decolonization, American missionary activity evolved away from the 'Christian imperialism' that Emily Conroy-Krutz and others have documented. McAlister, *The kingdom of God has no borders*, 21; Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian imperialism: converting the world in the early American republic* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), p. 52; and Paul E. Pierson, 'The rise of Christian mission and relief agencies', in Elliott Abrams, ed., *The influence of faith: religious groups and U.S. foreign policy* (New York, NY, 2001), p. 158.

⁷ Pierson, 'The rise of Christian mission and relief agencies', p. 161; and McAlister, *The kingdom of God has no borders*, pp. 195–212.

⁸ Andrew Preston, *Sword of the spirit, shield of the faith: religion in American war and diplomacy* (New York, NY, 2012), p. 465.

describes a process of interdenominational collaboration among liberal Protestants on social justice, human rights, foreign assistance, and disarmament in the early years of the Cold War.⁹

Hingson and his colleagues represented these broader changes taking place within American Protestantism in the early Cold War with missionaries increasingly turning to 'ecumenical' activities in which one would serve as a 'specialist who adds technical skills to his basic desire to serve'.¹⁰ In describing his 1962 Liberia mission to a medical colleague, Hingson wrote, 'We do not forget that we represent the broader segment of the United States population dedicated to the principles of Christianity and its practical translation through improving health, education and living conditions among those who are ill fed, ill housed and ill clothed.'¹¹ Like other liberal Protestants at the time, Hingson had a broad conception of who as his 'neighbour' deserved his love and assistance. This international vision, which is similarly reflected in the attitudes of Americans engaged in human rights activism and other humanitarian activity in these years, helped save the lives of Liberians as well as enhance American soft power.¹²

US government support for Hingson's private initiatives reveal the ways in which humanitarian and development efforts tied to international health evolved in the 1960s in connection with trends in American denominations and US foreign relations. In its global health efforts, however, Brother's Brother Foundation was not simply an independent non-governmental organization (NGO). Instead, the US government offered key logistical support to Hingson's efforts.¹³ Brother's Brother Foundation initiatives inevitably achieved a degree of 'soft power' for the United States at a time when the United States sought allies in the Cold War and subscribed to development as one approach to prevent the spread of communism.¹⁴ Hingson has given his own motivations as religious and moral, but his missions reveal complementary and competing religious, humanitarian, and development interests at work.

In its early decades, Hingson's organization responded to widespread health challenges. He and Brother's Brother Foundation revolutionized medical missionary work. Due to changes in transportation, medical technology, and the support of the US government, they were able to undertake mass

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 475, 481–2.

¹⁰ David Ekbladh, *The great American mission: modernization and the construction of an American world order* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), p. 171.

¹¹ Hingson to Parran, 6 Apr. 1962, folder 1258: Hingson, Dr Robert A., series XIX, Parran papers.

¹² Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: how human rights activists transformed U.S. foreign policy* (New York, NY, 2018), p. 5; and Michael Barnett, *Empire of humanity: a history of humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), pp. 144–7.

¹³ Hingson's work with Brother's Brother Foundation coincided with a 'new era of vaccination' domestically in the United States in the 1960s, characterized by a focus on childhood vaccination and federal government involvement. Elena Conis, *Vaccine nation: America's changing relationship with immunization* (Chicago, IL, 2015), pp. 2, 7.

¹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics* (New York, NY, 2004).

immunization campaigns in varied places.¹⁵ Brother's Brother Foundation's approach, however, was distinct from the 'new humanitarianism' of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) that challenged the sovereignty of states.¹⁶ In contrast, Hingson worked alongside the Liberian and other governments. Hingson's efforts also differed from those of MSF in that the Operation Brother's Brother doctors did not engage in witnessing or speaking out about atrocities. Instead, they were struck by the quieter but deadly toll of disease, malnourishment, and insufficient medical care.¹⁷ Using the language of historian Lasse Heerten, for Hingson and his colleagues 'distant suffering' became 'a close concern'.¹⁸

There is considerable scholarship outlining the context for Hingson's initiatives; historians have analysed a long history of US and Americans' engagement with international health dating back to the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ What scientist and medical doctor Peter J. Hoetz calls 'American vaccine diplomacy' began in the aftermath of the Second World War as the United States sought to rebuild Europe through the Marshall Plan, and his work is one contribution to what we might characterize as the competition narrative in understanding the US role in global health during the Cold War.²⁰ Other studies that have analysed US involvement in global health in a Cold War context have largely emphasized the country's participation in international collaboration to eradicate malaria and smallpox.²¹ More

¹⁵ Theodore M. Brown, Marcos Cueto, and Elizabeth Fee, 'The World Health Organization and the transition from "international" to "global" public health', *American Journal of Public Health*, 96 (2006), p. 65.

¹⁶ Lasse Heerten, *The Biafran War and postcolonial humanitarianism: spectacles of suffering* (New York, NY, 2017), p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 322–3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Luther L. Terry, 'The appeal abroad of American medicine and public health', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1966), p. 79; Marcos Cueto, *Cold War, deadly fevers: malaria eradication in Mexico, 1955–1975* (Washington, DC, 2007); Nicole Pacino, 'Stimulating a cooperative spirit?: public health and U.S.–Bolivia relations in the 1950s', *Diplomatic History*, 41 (2017), pp. 305–55; John Farley, *To cast out disease: a history of the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation (1913–1951)* (New York, NY, 2004); Paul A. Kramer, *The blood of government: race, empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), p. 170; Warwick Anderson, *Colonial pathologies: American tropical medicine, race, and hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, NC, 2006); Amanda Kay McVety, *The rinderpest campaigns: a virus, its vaccines, and global development in the twentieth century* (New York, NY, 2018); Randall Packard, 'Visions of postwar health and development and their impact on public health interventions in the developing world', in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International development and the social sciences: essays on the history and politics of knowledge* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), p. 94; Neel Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities: disease interventions, empire, and the government of species* (Durham, NC, 2016), p. 5; and Matthew Connelly, *Fatal misconception: the struggle to control world population* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), p. 11.

²⁰ Peter J. Hoetz, 'Vaccines as instruments of foreign policy', *EMBO Reports*, 21 (2001), p. 864; Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities*, p. 21; and Cueto, *Cold War, deadly fevers*, pp. 5, 7. See also Packard, 'Visions of postwar health and development and their impact on public health interventions in the developing world', p. 98.

²¹ Packard, *A history of global health*, p. 134; Erez Manela, 'A pox on your narrative: writing disease control into Cold War history', *Diplomatic History*, 34 (2010), pp. 300, 318.

recently, historian Erez Manela has argued that both strains could be simultaneously present in that the global smallpox campaign ‘transcend[ed]’ the Cold War and had a Cold War dimension for ‘hard-line anti-communists’. It enabled the US government to demonstrate its medical capabilities and prevent the spread of communism.²²

Hingson’s correspondence does not reveal Cold War motivations for his efforts, but nonetheless the image of the United States benefited from Hingson’s campaigns. Hingson’s approach was distinct from many of the dominant ways that Americans engaged with international health in the twentieth century. To the extent that his vaccination campaigns advanced US empire, it was informal not formal; rhetoric about protecting Americans through disease control abroad was absent; and the countries in which Hingson operated were on the outer periphery of American attention in the Cold War. Rather, Hingson’s world vision illustrates Manela’s argument that in the twentieth century interested observers came to see disease as a global rather than local or national problem or, put another way, came to feel that even geographically distant disease should be treated as a ‘close concern’.²³

Although there is a wide literature on Americans involved in global health, Robert Hingson and Brother’s Brother Foundation have not received any meaningful attention from scholars. The availability of archives presents some challenges; for example, Hingson’s personal papers at the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology in Schaumburg, Illinois, chronicle his medical research rather than the motivations for his humanitarian activities. Unfortunately, Brother’s Brother Foundation does not have accessible archives. Yet, a patchwork of government and private records demonstrate the ways in which Hingson’s medical contributions advanced health internationally and US foreign policy indirectly. Examining Hingson’s vaccination campaigns in Liberia and elsewhere demonstrates the humanitarian organization’s shift from relief to development, US government partnerships with non-state actors, and the deep degree of military/private partnerships. This article also reveals Hingson’s development and early usage of technology critical to smallpox’s eradication.

I

Robert Hingson grew up in Alabama and studied at the University of Alabama and then Emory University for his MD, graduating in 1938. His professional model was William Gorgas, the Alabama native and US army physician who rid Cuba of yellow fever by eradicating the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that transmitted it.²⁴ A chance medical consultation for Treasury Secretary Henry

²² Erez Manela, ‘Smallpox and the globalization of development’, in Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, eds., *The development century: a global history* (New York, NY, 2018), pp. 97–8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁴ Cueto, *Cold War, deadly fevers*, p. 2; H. Haskell Ziperman, ‘A medical history of the Panama Canal’, *Surgery, Gynecology & Obstetrics*, 137 (1973), pp. 110–11; and Bryant, *Operation Brother’s Brother*, p. 25.

Morgenthau in the North Atlantic facilitated a fellowship in anaesthesiology at the Mayo Clinic. He served in the United States Public Health Service during the war and worked in medical schools in Colombia, Venezuela, and the United States in the years that followed.²⁵ Beyond his medical research and innovations, Hingson was also deeply committed to his faith. During his university years, he articulated a wish to devote himself to a life of service in the model of his religious belief.²⁶

As an anaesthesiologist, he was focused on minimizing patients' suffering in diverse ways. One observer theorized that Hingson was moved to experiment with ways to reduce the pain of childbirth by his mother's own difficult experience.²⁷ Hingson also initiated some of the first clinical trials with the jet injector, which changed immunization campaigns in subsequent decades. As part of Hingson's efforts to develop the jet injector, he practised on cadavers and gave himself 2,000 shots.²⁸ Early vaccination drives involving the jet injector were noted even in the halls of Congress with Representative Frances P. Bolton, a Republican from Ohio, discussing the innovation in the *Congressional Record*.²⁹

The multiple-dose jet injector (Figure 1) enabled the vaccination of 1,000 people per hour, a dramatic increase over earlier delivery methods and essential to mass immunization campaigns in communities with limited health infrastructure.³⁰ In addition to permitting increased numbers of patients reached, the innovation of the jet injector, or hypospray, offered other advantages over using a needle and a syringe. Most notably, the jet injector was less painful; half of patients reported a 'complete absence of pain'. In addition, the jet injector did not require sterilization before use.³¹ Its nickname, 'peace gun',

²⁵ Abram to Moyers, 7 Sept. 1965, Hingson, Dr Robert, box 263, office files of John Macy, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, TX (hereafter LBJL); biographic data, Hingson, Dr Robert, box 263, office files of John Macy, LBJL; and Henry Rosenberg and Jean K. Axelrod, 'Robert Andrew Hingson: his unique contributions to world health as well as to anesthesiology', *Bulletin of Anesthesia History*, 16 (1998), p. 10.

²⁶ Betty Ann Hogue, 'BSU alumnus Robert A. Hingson: world renowned doctor, inventor, and medical professor', *Baptist Student* (Feb. 1957), p. 6.

²⁷ Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, p. 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁹ 'Jet inoculation as a public health tool in the control of contagion and epidemics', *Congressional Record*, 15 Apr. 1958.

³⁰ 'Robert Hingson, founder of Brother's Brother Foundation', Brother's Brother Foundation, www.brothersbrother.org/bbfs-founder (accessed 23 June 2017); and Robert A. Hingson, Hamilton S. Davis, and Michael Rosen, 'The historical development of jet injection and envisioned uses in mass immunization and mass therapy based upon two decades of experience', *Military Medicine*, 128 (1963), pp. 516–24. Aaron Ismach also played a role in developing jet injectors. Erez Manela, 'Globalizing the great society: Lyndon Johnson and the pursuit of smallpox eradication', in Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, eds., *Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the new global challenges of the 1960s* (New York, NY, 2014), p. 170.

³¹ Robert A. Hingson, 'The development of the hypospray for parenteral therapy by jet injection', *Anesthesiology*, 10 (1949), pp. 66–75; Robert A. Hingson, 'America's challenge in the field of public health', *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 50 (1958), pp. 114–16; Robert A. Hingson, Hamilton S. Davis, and Michael Rosen, 'Clinical experience with one and a half million jet injections in parenteral therapy and in preventive medicine', *Military Medicine*, 128 (1963), pp. 525–8; and



Figure 1. A young boy in Cameroon receives smallpox and measles vaccinations via jet injector in 1968. Courtesy of the Public Health Image Library, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Photo by J. Donald Millar, MD, DTPH.

came from two Burmese children – one of whom told her brother in 1958 when experiencing it while being inoculated for typhoid, ‘But it’s not a bad gun; it’s a peace gun.’³² It is significant not only that the jet injector was a weapon of peace amidst the violence of the Cold War but also that it was wielded by civilians in non-governmental capacities.

In 1958, Hingson led the first American interracial, interdenominational, and interdisciplinary team of medical professionals to undertake a mission internationally. They embarked on an around-the-world trip to assess medical needs, travelling ‘45,000 miles by plane, ship, train, jeep, land rower [sic], bus, donkey, camel and on foot’.³³ Along the way, they stopped in Japan, the Philippines, Burma, South Korea, India, Hong Kong, Egypt, Kenya, Iran, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Nigeria, and Liberia. Each stop revealed the particular medical challenges faced by that community – in Korea the ill rested in unsanitary conditions, in the Philippines many suffered from intestinal parasites, and in India the hospitals were severely under-equipped with patients sleeping ‘on the floor under beds’.³⁴ The travellers donated months of their time to visit hospitals,

Hingson, Davis, and Rosen, ‘The historical development of jet injection and envisioned uses in mass immunization and mass therapy based upon two decades of experience’, pp. 516–24.

³² Bryant, *Operation Brother’s Brother*, pp. 39, 63.

³³ ‘Project brother’s keeper’, *Baptist World*, 5 (1958), p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

perform operations, administer vaccines, and deliver medical supplies, among other activities.³⁵ The team visited 100 hospitals and undertook 120 operations.³⁶ According to one measure, the group gave 90,000 people inoculations during its travels.³⁷ In Burma, the group administered typhoid vaccines to several hundred children.³⁸ They also met with national health officials and often were received by high-level government officials.³⁹ In addition to providing medical treatment and assessing country's healthcare needs, the doctors would also 'give their own Christian testimony' to the communities they visited by delivering sermons, among other activities.⁴⁰ In an interview, Hingson shared his 'feeling of personal responsibility as a Christian doctor'.⁴¹ Hingson described 'Christian concern and conscience' as well as terrible need – he cited the stark health and medical disparities between the United States and other countries in the world.⁴²

Hingson and Brother's Brother Foundation repeatedly demonstrated a commitment to religious and racial inclusion in the composition of their missions.⁴³ According to Hingson, the mission members represented the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, and Baptist denominations.⁴⁴ They hailed from across the country, including Louisiana, Oregon, Alabama, Ohio, and Kentucky. And the group was integrated racially. Dr Eugene H. Dibble, director of the John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, was black. Hingson's commitment to a diverse medical team may have been informed by his personal and professional experiences. Based on one account, Hingson was raised by a former slave who encouraged him to study medicine and made him attentive to the disproportionately poor health care that African Americans received.⁴⁵ In his medical research, Hingson had

³⁵ Hingson successfully solicited medical supplies from American pharmaceutical companies. See, for example, Hingson to Wright, 27 May 1957, folder 5.6A, part 2, box 57, Baptist World Alliance Archives, American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta, GA (hereafter BWA Archives); Hingson to Dixon, 6 May 1958, *ibid.*; Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, pp. 62–7; and 'Bishop to Preach on Vietnam War', *Washington Post*, 15 Apr. 1967, p. E13.

³⁶ Josephine Robertson, 'Nigerian infant owes life to mission skill', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 13 Oct. 1958; and Robert A. Hingson, 'The American pharmaceutical industry reinforces project brother's keeper in the direction of world peace', folder 1258: Hingson, Dr Robert A., series XIX, Parran papers.

³⁷ Hingson had earlier practised by vaccinating Cleveland school children against polio. Rosenberg and Axelrod, 'Robert Andrew Hingson', p. 11.

³⁸ Josephine Robertson, 'U.S. physician's "peace guns" captivate Burmese children', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 10 Aug. 1958, p. 1; and 'Project brother's keeper', p. 5.

³⁹ 'Project brother's keeper', p. 3.

⁴⁰ 'Twenty-seven countries on medical mission itinerary', *Baptist World*, 5 (1958), p. 6; and 'Project brother's keeper', p. 3.

⁴¹ Third Draft, 7 June 1960, 'Project: brother's keeper', folder 5.6E, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, pp. 56–7; and Hingson to Kennedy, 4 Oct. 1961, 711.11-KE/4-3062, box 1458, central decimal file, 1960–3, record group 59 general records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter RG 59 and NARA).

⁴⁴ Hingson, 'The American pharmaceutical industry reinforces project brother's keeper in the direction of world peace'.

⁴⁵ Rosenberg and Axelrod, 'Robert Andrew Hingson', p. 10.

examined and sought to address the greater mortality among African American women giving birth under anaesthesia.⁴⁶

The mission was funded and publicized by the Baptist World Alliance. In addition to offering financial support, Robert Denny, an official with the Baptist World Alliance, co-ordinated the logistics of the mission.⁴⁷ A check for \$20,000 also came from the foundation of Maxey Jarman, a prominent Baptist.⁴⁸ Hingson demonstrated his deep personal commitment to the mission by mortgaging his home to fund the travel.⁴⁹ The US government supported the group by transporting three tons of medical supplies from Hawaii to the Philippines.⁵⁰ As a signal of public interest in the trip, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* dispatched a staff writer, Josephine Robertson, to cover the mission. Members of the trip also catalogued it on film and in a motion picture.⁵¹

After their trip, participants shared their experiences via speeches to educational, civic, and religious groups; they also screened sections of the film footage taken on the journey.⁵² One doctor, Gabe Payne, framed the mission as 'Operation: Human Need'. In the first year, members of the mission shared their work with over 180,000 Americans.⁵³

In the months that followed the mission's end, foreign communities in which the tour had stopped articulated considerable medical needs, and the doctors involved created a committee to address those they catalogued on their journey.⁵⁴ Supported by the Baptist World Alliance, Hingson established Brother's Brother Foundation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He outlined the organization's goals as 'inter-racial cooperation in the United States'; 'international friendship'; organizing 'cooperative projects' in the developing world; aiding missionaries; and publicizing 'the solution of human problems'.⁵⁵ The foundation's objective was to utilize US medical resources in global health

⁴⁶ Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, p. 50.

⁴⁷ Third Draft, 7 June 1960, 'Project: brother's keeper', folder 5.6E, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁴⁸ Jarman to Denny, 3 June 1958, folder 5.7D, box 57, BWA Archives; Third Draft, 7 June 1960, 'Project: brother's keeper', folder 5.6E, *ibid.*; 'Project brother's keeper', p. 1; and Josephine Robertson, 'Project brother's keeper', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 22 June 1958.

⁴⁹ Bryant to Denny, 16 Sept. 1967, folder 5.6D, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁵⁰ Third Draft, 7 June 1960, 'Project: brother's keeper', folder 5.6E, box 57, BWA Archives. The US government began funding ocean freight costs for the transportation of humanitarian supplies in 1947. Axel R. Schäfer, 'Religious non-profit organizations, the Cold War, the state and resurgent evangelicalism, 1945–90', in Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, eds., *The US government, citizen groups and the Cold War: the state-private network* (London, 2012), p. 181; and J. Bruce Nichols, *The uneasy alliance: religion, refugee work, and U.S. foreign policy* (New York, NY, 1988), p. 207. The government continued this provision, including it in the 1951 Mutual Security Act and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. McCleary, *Global compassion*, pp. 76, 173.

⁵¹ 'Project brother's keeper', p. 4.

⁵² Hingson to Jarman, 26 Mar. 1959, folder 5.6A, part I, box 57, BWA Archives; and Hingson to Maum, 25 Jan. 1961, folder 5.6B, *ibid.*

⁵³ Hingson to Baptist World Alliance medical mission team mates and our missionary colleagues overseas, 1 June 1959, folder 5.6A, part I, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁵⁴ Hingson to Friends, 1 Oct. 1958, folder 5.6A, part 2, box 57, BWA Archives; and Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ 'A plan for the development of operation Brother's Brother into a foundation', folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives.

challenges. As part of this effort, Hingson assembled a team of medical professionals (doctors, technicians, and nurses) who were ready to deploy on seventy-two hours' notice to offer medical assistance overseas. Their principal planned activity was mass inoculation via jet injector.⁵⁶ In his formal proposal to create this foundation, Hingson identified each 'suggested trustee' by faith and race, revealing his consciousness about ensuring racial and religious diversity in the organization.⁵⁷ The inspiration for its name was a Nigerian medical student who told Hingson, 'We don't need a keeper; we need a brother.'⁵⁸

II

Brother's Brother Foundation's first and most significant mission was a campaign to vaccinate Liberians against smallpox in 1962. It was a precursor to and in some ways served as a pilot study for the global smallpox eradication programme that followed. Although the Brother's Brother Foundation mission to Liberia has been overlooked in the literature, it marks an early American effort at smallpox eradication several years before the 1965 starting point given for US involvement in the eradication programme.⁵⁹

The reasons for undertaking a mission to Liberia are not transparent in the available records.⁶⁰ Yet, the two countries were entwined historically, economically, and diplomatically. Americans had long been present in Liberia as colonists, missionaries, and industrialists. Indeed, 14,000 African Americans moved to Liberia in the nineteenth century with some sailing across the Atlantic on a course similar to that which Hingson's team undertook.⁶¹ Liberia had become dependent on the United States and eventually the Firestone Corporation in the early twentieth century, and it owed the United States millions of dollars on a loan to build a port in Monrovia during the Second World War.⁶² At the same time, Liberian leaders faced entreaties from the Soviet Union.⁶³ Furthermore, the United States had security agreements with Liberia, including a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and the Military Mission Agreement. The US presence in Liberia in the 1960s was significant with

⁵⁶ Hingson to Kennedy, 4 Oct. 1961, 711.11-KE/4-3062, box 1458, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁷ 'A plan for the development of operation Brother's Brother into a foundation'.

⁵⁸ 'Robert Hingson, founder of Brother's Brother Foundation'.

⁵⁹ Manela, 'A pox on your narrative', p. 300.

⁶⁰ Liberian records available through the University of Indiana unfortunately do not shed much light on the degree to which Hingson's mission was initiated by Liberian leaders or by Hingson. Although both were mentioned in correspondence by Hingson, the role of Republic Steel Company, which owned the Liberian Mining Company, and Firestone, which leased one million acres of land for rubber production, is unclear.

⁶¹ Claude A. Clegg III, *The price of liberty: African Americans and the making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), p. 6; and Conroy-Krutz, *Christian imperialism*, p. 162.

⁶² D. Elwood Dunn, *Liberia and the United States during the Cold War: limits of reciprocity* (New York, NY, 2009), pp. 13-19; and Oral History Interview Thomas F. Johnson, 18 Mar. 2003, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project.

⁶³ Memorandum of conversation, 25 June 1957, Department of State, *Foreign relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, XVIII: *Africa* (Washington, DC, 1989).

hundreds of US officials and thousands of private citizens.⁶⁴ Finally, Hingson and Dibble had stopped in Liberia as part of the 1958 around-the-world tour, learning about the high rates of malaria infection there and lack of resources to treat Liberia's smallpox cases.⁶⁵ Based on his time there, Hingson shared that Liberia's 'health needs were greater per capita than those observed in any other nation in our survey, exclusive of Korea', which was still recovering from civil war.⁶⁶

Hingson devoted considerable time to organizing the Liberia operation, working with several partners to plan and fund the trip. He met with Liberia's surgeon general in March 1961 to discuss how a gift of Hingson's 'peace guns' could be used. Hingson communicated with President William V. S. Tubman and Vice President William R. Tolbert, Jr, for much of 1961 before a formal invitation came from Liberian leaders for Hingson to lead a delegation there.⁶⁷ Tolbert served as the Baptist World Alliance's vice president, which could have precipitated initial conversations about Hingson's involvement.⁶⁸ As he prepared the mission, Hingson consulted with State Department officials, the US surgeon general, and other US officials engaged in international health.⁶⁹

Hingson also discussed a potential mission to Liberia with American executives from Firestone, the principal employer in Liberia, and US-based Republic Steel, which owned the Liberian Mining Company. The executives offered free accommodation for those participating.⁷⁰ In writing about Liberia's health needs, Hingson pointed simultaneously to what the country offered the United States, including landing fields during the Second World War and considerable rubber and steel.⁷¹ He made the connections between local industry and Liberia explicit in planning the medical mission: 'In view of the fact that much of Cleveland's wealth through rubber and steel exports comes from the area of the world in greatest need, namely Liberia.'⁷² Hingson echoed this theme in a letter to the Liberian president saying, 'In your historic past your resources have contributed to America's greatness.'⁷³ Hingson's outreach reveals either a tactical effort to enlist the support of American corporations

⁶⁴ Dunn, *Liberia and the United States during the Cold War*, p. 70.

⁶⁵ 'Project brother's keeper', p. 11.

⁶⁶ Robert A. Hingson, 'The physician and the burning of Rome', *American Practitioner and Digest of Treatment*, 10 (1959), p. 1688.

⁶⁷ Denny to Jarman, 7 Dec. 1961, folder 5.7D, box 57, BWA Archives; and Robert A. Hingson, 'Operation Brother's Brother', *Hamilton Spectator*, 20 June 1964, p. 29.

⁶⁸ 'Brother's brother II', *Baptist World* (Feb. 1962), p. 6. There was a long history of Baptist missionaries in Liberia. William A. Poe, 'Not Christopolis but Christ and Caesar: Baptist leadership in Liberia', *Journal of Church and State* 24 (1982), pp. 535–6.

⁶⁹ Hingson to Denny, 22 Mar. 1961, folder 5.6B, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Hingson, 'The physician and the burning of Rome', p. 1688. In a different context, Hingson notes American 'luxury Cadillacs could not roll without the labor and lives of these rubber tree slaves'. Hingson to Denny, 3 Oct. 1959, folder 5.6A, part I, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁷² Hingson to Ferreri, 10 Mar. 1960, folder 5.6B, box 57, BWA Archives.

⁷³ Hingson to Tubman, 6 Apr. 1962, correspondence: Hillebrand-Hittle, box 30, papers of Admiral George W. Anderson, 1917–76, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.

by emphasizing the potential financial gain to them of healthier Liberian workers or it represented a genuine belief that the security and economy of the United States would be enhanced by this campaign. Hingson was joined in the planning and execution by former Surgeon General Thomas Parran who noted that the Kennedy administration's conceptions of international assistance neglected health, asserting instead 'that a disease-ridden population is an unproductive population', linking again the group's humanitarian work to development goals.⁷⁴ Hingson's correspondence reveals a philosophy in which democracy and health are interconnected: 'It is my prediction that the freedoms you have championed in Africa through the influence of Operation Brother's Brother II will now be extended into the realm of freedom from disease.'⁷⁵ In addition, alluding to the long, close history of American-Liberian relations, Hingson referred to Liberia as the United States's 'little brother nation'. Tying his trip more explicitly to the Cold War, Hingson asked, 'How can we criticize Russia or the Chinese when we permit such a condition to exist among our freed slaves?' He also wrote vividly about the 'misery' he had encountered there and conveyed a conviction that the special Liberian-American relationship as well as the moral standing of the United States could be bolstered by smallpox eradication efforts.⁷⁶

In the months before Hingson and his team arrived in Liberia, the threat from smallpox had escalated. In April 1961, American mining interests reported a smallpox outbreak and requested State Department assistance in facilitating the shipment of vaccines to arrest the disease's spread.⁷⁷ Several months later, the US embassy in Monrovia cabled, 'Smallpox epidemic Monrovia. Send 12 packages vaccine immediately.'⁷⁸ The next day, US officials reported that thirty people had died within the past six weeks.⁷⁹ Fortuitously Hingson's team arrived soon after the outbreak of the smallpox epidemic; the campaign's goal was to vaccinate one million Liberians.⁸⁰

Although State Department telegrams characterized the trip as 'strictly private', the two co-ordinated with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Monrovia.⁸¹ US representatives in Liberia facilitated the mission, including by offering an orientation when the medical

⁷⁴ Parran to Hingson, 20 Oct. 1961, folder 1258: Hingson, Dr Robert A., series XIX, Parran papers.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Hingson to Denny, 3 Oct. 1959, folder 5.6A, part I, box 57, BWA Archives. Jarman again funded Hingson's efforts with repeated donations of several thousand dollars. Jarman to Hingson, 15 Dec. 1961, folder 5.7D, box 57, BWA Archives; and Jarman to Denny, 19 Jan. 1959, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Department of State to AmEmbassy Dakar, 13 Apr. 1961, 876.55/4-1361, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁸ Monrovia to secretary of state, 16 Aug. 1961, 876.55/8-1661, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁹ Monrovia to secretary of state, 17 Aug. 1961, 866.55/8-1761, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁰ Department of State to Monrovia, 29 Dec. 1961, 876.55/12-2961, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA. The mission received some funding from the Baptist World Alliance. Hingson to Parran, 6 Apr. 1962, folder 1258: Hingson, Dr Robert A., series XIX, Parran papers.

⁸¹ Monrovia to secretary of state, 12 Jan. 1962, 876.55/1-1262, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA; and Department of State to Monrovia, 19 Jan. 1962, *ibid.*

professionals arrived.⁸² USAID also funded the 50,000 doses of smallpox vaccine shipped from Wyeth Laboratories.⁸³ USAID's involvement fits with the relatively high support funnelled to Liberia through the agency. Of all the countries in Africa, Liberia received one of the highest levels of AID funding from the United States – \$21.2 million in 1963.⁸⁴ In addition to USAID personnel, Assistant Secretary of State Brooks Hays assisted the mission; US officials in Liberia regarded the county as 'the State Department's jewel in all of Africa'.⁸⁵

The US navy also aided the mission; it characterized the work of transporting personnel and 200 tons of material to Liberia as part of former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower's People-to-People programme.⁸⁶ When Eisenhower announced the initiative, he declared that one of the principal ways for 'people to get together and to leap governments' was through 'doctors helping in the conquering of disease'. For Eisenhower, the People-to-People initiative was 'the truest path to peace'.⁸⁷ As a result, Hingson, his team, and extensive medical supplies travelled to Liberia aboard the USS *Diamond Head*, which normally sailed along the US coast to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.⁸⁸ Writing later to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Hingson noted the personal sacrifice the US sailors had made in foregoing eight days of shore leave to transport them.⁸⁹ The sailors also served

⁸² Orr to Adler, 12 Jan. 1962, Brother's Brother, container 2, entry #P616, subject files, 1961–9, record group 286 records of the Agency for International Development, NARA; and Orr to McConnell, 16 Jan. 1962, *ibid*.

⁸³ Edwin Murray, Robert A. Hingson, Lewis E. Abram, Theodore Parran, and H. Q. Taylor, 'Mass vaccination against smallpox in Liberia', *Bulletin Supplement*, folder 1730: Liberia, series XXXVIII, Parran papers.

⁸⁴ Dungan to Kennedy, 6 Mar. 1963, Department of State, *Foreign relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, XXI: Africa (Washington, DC, 1995).

⁸⁵ Oral History Interview Edward R. Dudley, Jr, 15 Jan. 1995, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project.

⁸⁶ USS *Diamond Head* (AE-19) Ship's History, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC; secretary of the navy to all ships and stations, 11 June 1959, *ibid*.

⁸⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Remarks at the People-to-People Conference', 11 Sept. 1965, *American Presidency Project* (accessed 13 Aug. 2020). See also Zachary A. Cunningham, 'Project Hope as propaganda: a humanitarian nongovernmental organization takes part in America's total Cold War' (MA thesis, Ohio University, 2008), p. 65. The People-to-People programme should also be seen in the context of Eisenhower's plan to share fissionable material with other countries, nicknamed 'Atoms for Peace', which were intended to demonstrate the United States as seeking international peace. See Mara Drogan, 'The nuclear imperative: Atoms for Peace and the development of U.S. policy on exporting nuclear power, 1953–1955', *Diplomatic History*, 40 (2016), pp. 948–74.

⁸⁸ The navy's involvement was also connected with the New White Fleet movement, which was initiated by Commander Frank Manson, with whom Hingson's brother James had roomed at the Naval War College. The New White Fleet never materialized, and the hospital ship initiative Project Hope has often been characterized as its only successor. But Hingson's mission to Liberia likely benefited from Manson's vision. Hingson to Bryant, 13 Jan. 1961, folder 5.6B, box 57, BWA Archives; Frank Manson, 'Author of the big plan explains', 27 July 1959, *LIFE*, pp. 20–1; and Cunningham, 'Project Hope as propaganda', p. 58. On earlier US military support for humanitarian activity, see Julia F. Irwin, 'Raging rivers and propaganda weevils: transnational disaster relief, Cold War politics, and the 1954 Danube and Elbe floods', *Diplomatic History*, 40 (2016), pp. 893–921.

⁸⁹ Hingson to Rusk, 16 Jan. 1962, 876.55/1-1662, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960–3, RG 59, NARA.

as guinea pigs during the journey as Hingson and his colleagues experimented to determine the maximum acceptable dilution of the smallpox vaccine as Hingson had discovered after departure that he had only 10,000 doses rather than the one million promised.⁹⁰

The navy's official history asserts that Hingson's mission to Liberia was spurred by a request from the Liberian government to the US government for assistance. It claims that Hingson 'was placed in charge of the project and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Arleigh BURKE, placed DIAMOND HEAD at his disposal'.⁹¹ In Burke's private correspondence to Hingson, he offered Hingson 'the first available ship' sailing for the West Coast of Africa and praised Hingson's work as revealing 'the true image of our country' and demonstrating Americans' 'love and concern...for their friends throughout the world'.⁹² There are no other records that suggest the US government tapped Hingson for this role (rather than that he initiated the mission). Unfortunately, messages between ships and naval commands are considered temporary records, therefore Burke's thinking in utilizing the *Diamond Head* for transportation to Liberia cannot be discerned. The ship was under the command of Captain James Monroe Hingson, Robert's brother, which might have weighed in its selection. Later coverage of the trip suggests the two Hingson brothers made a joint application under the navy's person-to-person programme.⁹³ Captain Hingson also shared a namesake, his ancestor James Monroe, with Liberia's capital, Monrovia, which may have heightened the personal significance of the mission for him.⁹⁴

The *Diamond Head* left Virginia on 1 February and arrived in Liberia on the 11th where it was greeted by Tolbert, the Liberian vice president.⁹⁵ The medical professionals who arrived in Liberia represented many faiths and denominations; given that Hingson mentioned this diversity in key communications, it was clearly significant for him.⁹⁶ Despite this professed commitment to

⁹⁰ Murray, Hingson, Abram, Parran, and Taylor, 'Mass vaccination against smallpox in Liberia'; Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, pp. 93–4.

⁹¹ USS *Diamond Head* (AE-19) Ship's History, Naval History and Heritage Command, Washington, DC.

⁹² The previous month, Burke had met Vice President Tolbert at a State Department dinner. Burke to Hingson, 22 June 1961, folder 1258: Hingson, Dr Robert A., series XIX, Parran papers; and Hingson to Seale, 30 Oct. 1961, *ibid.* Tolbert also had met Kennedy in the Oval Office during his Washington visit. George Arthur Padmore, *The memoirs of a Liberian ambassador* (Lewiston, NY, 1996), p. 120.

⁹³ The navy was frequently involved in a wide range of humanitarian operations in those years, including disaster relief, assisting refugees, and offering emergency medical assistance. In its own account of its humanitarian operations, the most similar activities undertaken involved transporting humans who needed urgent medical care or navy personnel who engaged in campaigns against yellow fever in Ethiopia and broader illnesses in Colombia and Haiti, for example. Adam B. Siegel, *A sampling of U.S. naval humanitarian operations* (Alexandria, VA, 2003), pp. 19–20.

⁹⁴ J. Eugene White and Clarence Duncan, 'The guns of peace', *Christian Herald* (July 1963).

⁹⁵ USS *Diamond Head* Ship Log, 11 Feb. 1962, National Archives, College Park, MD. Before the USS *Diamond Head* departed Norfolk, Virginia, the chargé d'affaires of Liberia visited the ship. USS *Diamond Head* Ship Log, 31 Jan. 1962, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁶ Hingson to Rusk, 16 Jan. 1962, 876.55/1-1662, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960–3, RG 59, NARA; and Hingson to Anderson, 10 Apr. 1962, folder 1730: Liberia, series XXXVIII, Parran papers.

diversity, those reporting on the mission perpetuated discriminatory racial attitudes. In a special journal issue on the mission, the editor described the trip as a 'medical safari' and referred to 'Liberian natives'.⁹⁷ Such language could suggest the participants engaged in observing exotic people (rather than animals) and reveals the potential for colonial or hierarchical attitudes toward the patients.

For Hingson, the Brother's Brother mission to Liberia represented the best expression of 'American medicine and Christian humanitarian dedication', demonstrating that his work had a political and a religious agenda.⁹⁸ In addition to medical supplies, including twenty tons of penicillin donated by Eli Lilly, the Americans also brought 40,000 books to distribute throughout Liberia.⁹⁹ Hingson was keenly aware of the economic impact such efforts could have. He wrote to George Anderson the chief of naval operations that 'a 200 million dollar operation of free enterprise' was protected because the country avoided a quarantine.¹⁰⁰

Cyril E. Bryant, managing editor of *The Baptist World*, penned a sympathetic history of Brother's Brother Foundation and related observations that the effort was successful in part because Liberians came to attribute status to the bandages, donated by Johnson & Johnson, applied in the aftermath of a vaccination. According to the mission's participants, the Band-Aids, one million of which were supplied, became 'badges of honor' that Liberians sought out to signal their vaccination. In total, five teams spread out across Liberia, and some stayed up to six weeks in the country. One innovation by the group was to target athletic competitions where large crowds gathered. Facilitated by Liberia's army and health service, Brother's Brother Foundation estimated reaching 80 per cent of the country's population, which led to a sharp decline in smallpox cases there. Previously, only 20 per cent of Liberians living in rural areas were vaccinated.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the two thousand cases in 1961, in 1963, only forty cases were reported.¹⁰²

Hingson informed President Kennedy that Operation Brother's Brother II had succeeded in inoculating over 300,000 Liberians against smallpox.¹⁰³ From the White House's perspective, Hingson's 'inspiring work' improved

⁹⁷ *Bulletin Supplement*, folder 1730: Liberia, series XXXVIII, Parran papers.

⁹⁸ Hingson to Peal, 16 Jan. 1962, 876.55/1-1662, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁹ Hingson later claimed delivery of 200,000 schoolbooks and credited Republic Steel as playing a significant role. Hingson to Tubman, 10 May 1965, folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives; Hingson to Rusk, 16 Jan. 1962, 876.55/1-1662, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA; and 'Eli Lilly Co. sends Liberia medicine', *Daily Reporter*, 19 Jan. 1962.

¹⁰⁰ Hingson to Anderson, 10 Apr. 1962, folder 1730: Liberia, series XXXVIII, Parran papers.

¹⁰¹ Murray, Hingson, Abram, Parran, and Taylor, 'Mass vaccination against smallpox in Liberia'.

¹⁰² Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, pp. 91-8; and *ibid*.

¹⁰³ Hingson to Kennedy, 30 Apr. 1962, 711.11-KE/4-3062, box 1458, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA. Liberians continued the inoculation efforts, which as Hingson put it made 'Liberia the first African nation to be essentially shielded against this disease'. Hingson to O'Donnell, 7 Sept. 1962, 876.55/9-1362, box 2769, central decimal file, 1960-3, RG 59, NARA. By 1965, Hingson's assessment of the Liberians spared smallpox had grown to one million. Hingson to Tubman, 10 May 1965, folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives.

global health and fostered 'Libero-American friendship'.¹⁰⁴ As with the *Cleveland Plain Dealer's* extensive coverage of the Baptist World Alliance's earlier trip, there was considerable domestic media attention for Hingson's and his colleagues' work, most notably with a 29 April 1962 television programme entitled, "'Guns of Peace", filmed highlights of a voyage of medical ship USS Diamond Head to Liberia'.¹⁰⁵

The Brother's Brother mission to Liberia also was profiled in *Christian Herald*, at one point 'the most widely read religious newspaper in the world'.¹⁰⁶ It revealed the religious motivations for the mission, recounting that in a press conference in Monrovia Hingson explained the goal of the visit was to aid Liberians with 'schools, sanitation, sprays, self-respect and salvation'. According to the *Christian Herald*, Hingson listed 'salvation' last because 'it could be better understood and accepted after the other things had been taken care of'.¹⁰⁷ The *Christian Herald* journalist also reported how the medical mission bolstered foreign missionaries in Liberia 'as a reward of their faith'.

In terms of objective measures, the vaccine injections did prove to be highly effective, although Hingson's colleagues acknowledged that his own judgement about the mission's success would undoubtedly be 'somewhat biased'.¹⁰⁸ After meeting with Liberian officials in 1964, Hingson reported that four smallpox hospitals were 'torn down since they have no patients'. In his view, 'Unquestionably this disease is now controlled' in Liberia.¹⁰⁹

Hingson proposed a return visit on the fifth anniversary of Operation Brother's Brother II to Tubman – to revaccinate Liberians in connection with the WHO's drive to eliminate smallpox. He also suggested addressing polio, tetanus, measles, and worms in Liberia and even raised the possibility of undertaking a mission to neighbouring Sierra Leone at the same time. He maintained his commitment to marrying health interventions with spiritual ones, suggesting 'passing out of a small Bible or Testament or at least a copy of a Gospel' during the return mission to Liberia.¹¹⁰

Hingson's queries, however, did not receive positive responses from Monrovia, potentially due to voices questioning the earlier campaign's efficacy.¹¹¹ Initial efforts to replicate Hingson's purported results of 98 per cent effectiveness failed, prompting concerns about the success of the injector

¹⁰⁴ O'Donnell to Hingson, 1 Oct. 1962, folder 22, box 1224, White House Central Name File, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

¹⁰⁵ 'TV programs', 29 Apr. 1962, *New York Times*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁶ Heather D. Curtis, *Holy humanitarians: American evangelicals and global aid* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ White and Duncan, 'The guns of peace'.

¹⁰⁸ Ward to Parran, 15 Apr. 1962, Parran papers; and Murray, Hingson, Abram, Parran, and Taylor, 'Mass vaccination against smallpox in Liberia'.

¹⁰⁹ Hingson to Denny, 20 July 1964, folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives.

¹¹⁰ Hingson to Tubman, 10 May 1965, folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives; and Hingson to Tolbert and Tolbert, 10 May 1965, *ibid*.

¹¹¹ Denny to Hingson, 3 Sept. 1964, folder 5.6C, box 57, BWA Archives. Thereafter, Hingson and Brother's Brother Foundation shifted their attention to Central America, including drives in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

and his dilution of the vaccine. Subsequent tests executed by the US Public Health Service confirmed Hingson's earlier claims and served as evidence for the methods by which medical professionals pursued smallpox eradication.¹¹² Jet injectors, like those used in Liberia, and other advances made smallpox vaccination 'far cheaper, easier, and more effective'.¹¹³ Whereas smallpox killed two million people per year in 1967, by 1977 WHO's Smallpox Eradication Programme achieved zero cases.¹¹⁴

III

Historians have shown that NGOs and non-state actors such as missionaries had long aided the US government in achieving its development and modernization goals, and missionaries, foundations, and other groups increased their modernization efforts in the early years of the Cold War.¹¹⁵ Regarding this time period, other scholars have argued the United States often saw overseas assistance, including in health, as a 'tool' of its Cold War foreign policy.¹¹⁶ In those years, health was increasingly regarded as a condition for development and was therefore a key component of US policies.¹¹⁷

Hingson's and Brother's Brother Foundation's approach to development was distinct from many other projects in that their missions were compressed in time, relatively low tech, and only subtly focused on enhancing production. Instead, they devoted their time to enhancing medical care and disease prevention. This emphasis connects their work to a broader international, volunteer movement that sought to alleviate poverty, racial inequality, and other social ills between 1958 and 1965.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Bryant, *Operation Brother's Brother*, pp. 99–101, 136.

¹¹³ Ian Glynn and Jennifer Glynn, *The life and death of smallpox* (New York, NY, 2004), p. 197; and Packard, 'Visions of postwar health and development and their impact on public health interventions in the developing world', p. 112.

¹¹⁴ Manela, 'Globalizing the great society', pp. 165–6.

¹¹⁵ Ekbladh, *The great American mission*, pp. 23, 154; Amy L. S. Staples, *The birth of development: how the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization changed the world, 1945–1965* (Kent, OH, 2006), p. 2; McCleary, *Global compassion*, p. 3; Brian H. Smith, *More than altruism: the politics of private foreign aid* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), p. 3; Schäfer, 'Religious non-profit organizations, the Cold War, the state and resurgent evangelicalism, 1945–90', pp. 175, 181; Helen Laville, 'The importance of being (in)earnest voluntary associations and the irony of the state–private network during the early Cold War', in Laville and Wilford, eds., *The US government, citizen groups and the Cold War*, p. 47; and McVety, *The rinderpest campaigns*, p. 45.

¹¹⁶ Julia F. Irwin, *Making the world safe: the American Red Cross and a nation's humanitarian awakening* (New York, NY, 2013), p. 2. Historian David Engerman has emphasized that development aid 'helped shape new patterns of relations between nations'. David C. Engerman, 'Development politics and the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 1 (2017), p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Packard, 'Visions of postwar health and development and their impact on public health interventions in the developing world', p. 94. See also Amanda Kay McVety, 'Wealth and nations: the origins of international development assistance', in Macekura and Manela, eds., *The development century*, p. 38.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All you need is love: the Peace Corps and the spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), p. 8.

Hingson and Brother's Brother Foundation were characterized by the three aspects that political scientist Michael Barnett argues mark humanitarianism: offering assistance internationally, 'transcendent' motivation, and the proliferation of organizations and processes to facilitate this aid.¹¹⁹ Traditionally, Brother's Brother Foundation engaged in 'transformative' relief – that which improves conditions broadly for the future. Yet in Liberia, where Hingson faced a potential smallpox epidemic, the focus was more on 'restorative' relief – that which saves lives.¹²⁰ Brother's Brother Foundation was notably distinct from the radical and frustrated impulse that produced Médecins Sans Frontières in the wake of the war and famine in Biafra at the end of the 1960s.¹²¹ Hingson and his colleagues were instead aligned with liberal approaches to Protestantism, humanitarianism, and development, as many other humanitarian organizations were in the 1960s.¹²² In Liberia, Hingson's efforts went beyond relief and not only improved the health of others but also facilitated US business and furthered US foreign policy. In these cases, we can read disease in the words of American Studies scholar Christina Klein as 'a metaphor for underdevelopment', which could enable the spread of communism.¹²³

The role of Brother's Brother Foundation in Liberia's immunization campaign fits into growing transnational connections forged by US-based NGOs in the 1960s.¹²⁴ According to historians Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, 'The 1960s gave rise to increasingly large and ambitious international organizations and networks of activists, many of which were dedicated to addressing problems such as poverty, hunger, population growth, disease, human rights and environmental pollution.'¹²⁵ Similarly, the historian Akira Iriye emphasizes the 'unprecedented degree of interactions across borders' in the years after the Second World War.¹²⁶ Iriye suggests that these activities created a 'global community', which in the case of Brother's Brother Foundation, its peers, and its supporters, focused on global health.¹²⁷ The work Brother's Brother Foundation was doing facilitated these

¹¹⁹ Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, pp. 10, 12.

¹²⁰ Julia F. Irwin, 'The "development" of humanitarian relief: US disaster assistance operations in the Caribbean Basin, 1917–1931', in Macekura and Manela, eds., *The development century*, pp. 40–57.

¹²¹ Barnett, *Empire of humanity*, pp. 143–5.

¹²² David P. King, *God's internationalists: World Vision and the age of evangelical humanitarianism* (Philadelphia, PA, 2019), pp. 110–11; Matthew Hilton, 'Charity and the end of empire: British non-governmental organizations, Africa, and international development in the 1960s', *American Historical Review*, 123 (2018), p. 493; and Heike Wieters, 'Reinventing the firm: from post-war relief to international humanitarian agency', *European Review of History*, 23 (2016), pp. 116–35.

¹²³ Christina Klein, *Cold War orientalism: Asia in the middlebrow imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), p. 98.

¹²⁴ Secrest to Johnson, 1 Sept. 1965, Hingson, Dr Robert, box 263, office files of John Macy, LBJL.

¹²⁵ Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, 'Introduction', in Gavin and Lawrence, eds., *Beyond the Cold War*, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Akira Iriye, 'Introduction', in Akira Iriye, ed., *Global interdependence: the world after 1945* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), p. 4.

¹²⁷ Akira Iriye, *Global community: the role of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), p. 192.



Figure 2. A jet injector in the collection of the Smithsonian. Courtesy of Division of Medicine and Science, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

imaginings of an international community.¹²⁸ By 1970, eighty-two organizations in the United States worked overseas on health issues.¹²⁹

Aided by the innovative jet injector, between 1958 and 1980, Brother's Brother Foundation immunized more than ten million people.¹³⁰ Between its founding and 1996, when Hingson died, the organization distributed \$560 million of medical and humanitarian supplies, serving forty million people.¹³¹ For his efforts, United States representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Morris Abram, among others, wrote to the Johnson White House, suggesting it name Hingson surgeon general.¹³² In further evidence

¹²⁸ Klein, *Cold War orientalism*, p. 85.

¹²⁹ Hugh L. Carey, 'A war we can win: health as a vector of foreign policy', *Bulletin N.Y. Academy of Medicine*, 46 (1970), p. 347.

¹³⁰ 'Robert Hingson, founder of Brother's Brother Foundation'.

¹³¹ Wolfgang Saxon, 'Robert Andrew Hingson, 83, a pioneer in public health', *New York Times*, 12 Oct. 1996.

¹³² Abram to Macy, 11 Aug. 1965, Hingson, Dr Robert, box 263, office files of John Macy, LBJL.

of the public–private nature of his work, US President Ronald Reagan honoured Hingson with a Volunteer Action Award, characterizing the awardees as ‘part of an American tradition of neighbor helping neighbor’.¹³³ A jet injector is now in the collection of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History (see [Figure 2](#)).¹³⁴

Hingson and Brother’s Brother Foundation took advantage of changes in transportation costs as well as shifts within Protestantism to become roving doctors, travelling by air and across seas to address pressing health crises.¹³⁵ Their humanitarian work contributed to shifting medical missionary approaches in the mid-twentieth century and capitalized on US government programmes that facilitated such work for development and public diplomacy ends. Even more crucial to international health was the development and deployment of Hingson’s ‘peace gun’ in the nascent campaign against smallpox and other diseases. Their Liberia mission ultimately had far-reaching significant as an unwitting pilot study for the subsequent campaign against smallpox when concern for one’s brother and then one’s neighbour expanded with ramifications on a global scale.

Acknowledgements. The author expresses her appreciation to Lauren Carruth, Daniel Fine, Julia Irwin, Jennifer Johnson, Amanda McVety, Amanda Moniz, and Andrew Preston for their feedback and suggestions; to Jaclyn Fox, Matthew Hartwell, Patrick Kendall, and Ingrid Korsgard for their research assistance; and to American University’s School of International Service for research support.

¹³³ Ronald Reagan, remarks, 30 June 1987, www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/063087b (accessed 15 Oct. 2018).

¹³⁴ Alexandra Lord, ‘The peace gun’, 27 Aug. 2015, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/peace-gun> (accessed 15 Oct. 2018).

¹³⁵ Akira Iriye, ‘The transnationalization of humanity’, in Iriye, ed., *Global interdependence*, pp. 738–9; and Jennifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the air: aviation and the American ascendancy* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), pp. 271, 279.

Cite this article: Snyder SB (2021). Guns of Peace and an Early Campaign against Smallpox. *The Historical Journal* 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000121>