

Orchestrated Conflict & Real Resistance:

The Revolutionary Nature of Buffy the Vampire Slayer's Community

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In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the traditional relationship between vampires and slayer illustrates how the powerful maintain their standing by creating structural conflict between two groups perceived as threatening. This system, however, is overturned through the actions of the eponymous heroine and the friends who surround her. The creation of the first slayer represents an effort by elder men to tame both vampires and women. In infusing her with the demon essence, they create a woman set apart from the community of other women, a warning to those who would be strong as well as a commandment not to be strong. Once they have so altered her, they direct her strength towards taming the (other) demonic menace of vampires, an act which bears resemblance both to the use of a guard dog and to the common historical practice by which those in power set oppressed (demonic) people against each other in order to deflect the strength that might otherwise be directed against them and to control their populations so that this strength may never become political dominance. Later, the Watchers' Council takes on the role of directing the slayer, just as their British nation once took on the role of chief global colonizer. Buffy Summers overcomes this taming through the creation of a female-dominated community, which eventually allows her to share her strength, and through her ability to look on vampires as individuals rather than as mere anonymous members of a population that must be eliminated because of its threatening nature. Buffy being an American foregrounds the ambivalence of her actions' relationship to colonialism. Is she overthrowing an oppressive order as the American colonists once defeated the British? Or is she merely establishing a new colonizing power? Though the TV show ends before the answer becomes clear, some hints may be found in her dealings with the Initiative in season four.