



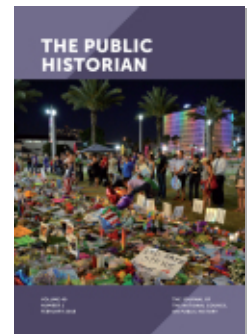
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Memorializing Pearl Harbor: Unfinished Histories and the Work of Remembrance by Geoffrey M. White (review)

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(Review)

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Read and Wyndham's clear prose and narrative approach will draw general readers as well as students to human realities in a distant place. Public historians and heritage professionals will appreciate the many ways the book engages with "worldwide debates about why and how . . . deeds of state violence to its own citizens [should] be remembered" (11). And as this reviewer can attest, the authors have abundantly vindicated their advantages as "outsiders" negotiating "competing circles of class and party" to "peer through the fabric of secrecy and mistrust that still exists so strongly in Chilean society" (17).

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Memorializing Pearl Harbor: Unfinished Histories and the Work of Remembrance by
Geoffrey M. White. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. vii + 340 pp.;
illustrations, notes, index, appendix; clothbound, \$99.95; paperbound, \$26.95.

In *Memorializing Pearl Harbor: Unfinished Histories and the Work of Remembrance*, Geoffrey M. White, a Hawaii-based anthropologist, draws on his decades of engagement with the memorials and museums that commemorate and interpret the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The work centers on the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, which includes the remains of the USS *Arizona* and its memorial. *Memorializing Pearl Harbor* goes beyond the typical boundaries of museological site analysis to offer an extensive history of Pearl Harbor as a memorial and narrative space, as well as to examine the attack's place in American memory. The result is a book that will be of great interest to public historians and anyone with an academic interest in the increasingly contested stories at the bedrock of American nationalism and how they intersect with minority and international narratives.

White describes the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor as "a story that speaks to core symbols and sentiments in the national imagination, to American identity and patriotism" (2). This is an important theme throughout the work but one that has been covered elsewhere. White's distinct contribution rests with his focus on "entanglements"—the messy intersection of national myths with local and personal histories and narratives. Although Pearl Harbor occupies a significant place in American public memory, the story of how and why a major bastion of American military power existed there in the first place is largely unknown. White broadens discussions of Pearl Harbor and its memorialization by bringing in indigenous Hawaiian stories. He writes, for example, "one of the things that Pearl Harbor commemoration does is cover over a history of occupation that, from the perspective of Native Hawaiians today, is even more painful than the calamity of Pearl Harbor for those who suffered losses in the attack" (5). In a broad but nuanced analysis, White's book successfully interrogates the ways in

which indigenous Hawaiians have typically been excluded from Pearl Harbor narrativization and mythologization. Engagement with this theme of erasure and the challenges of incorporating indigenous perspectives into what have become foundation national narratives sets White's work apart. The book is both an excellent example of memorial ethnography and an important history of American memory cultures.

Memorializing Pearl Harbor begins with a brief history of the attack, efforts at memorialization on the site, and the "material realities [which] circumscribe the memorial's sacred space" (9). White has conducted fieldwork and interviews at the memorial site since the early 1990s and his account contains a wealth of detail. In fact, park officials have told White that the USS *Arizona* site has been the most controversial in the entire National Park System. He describes binders filled with letters of complaint and accounts from park rangers of "innumerable stories of anti-Japanese behaviors and sentiments" on site—everything from accusations that museum narratives were "too soft" on Japan to angry objections to Japanese Americans being allowed to work at the memorial (14). This ill will diminished over the course of the 1990s, and White's work is effective at placing Pearl Harbor in the context of Japanese and American mutual images, as well as the history of the local Japanese American community.

The first chapter is devoted to "Survivor Voices" and focuses on the tensions between honoring the dead and narrating and contextualizing the history of the attack. Here, and throughout the work, White does an excellent job of evoking the material space of the memorial, particularly the "spatial opposition between the secular activities of the visitor center onshore, and the 'sacred' site of the memorial" (35). White offers a particularly nuanced engagement with the passing of the Pearl Harbor generation and the impact of this change on practices and relationships at the site itself.

Chapter 2 follows these themes through two decades of Pearl Harbor anniversary ceremonies, particularly how new and ongoing American conflicts have influenced narratives and memorial practices, interrogating the close links between the memorialization of past conflicts and military patriotism. White adds nuance, however, with a detailed account of efforts by Japanese veterans to promote reconciliation and the typically positive local reactions, as well as the inclusion of Japanese commemorative practices such as a display of origami cranes, which evokes Hiroshima memorialization and casts the war as a shared tragedy.

Chapter 3 is entitled "Memorial Film: Envisioning Race and Nation" and focuses on a documentary film shown on-site since 1992. It details controversies over the film's presentation of Japanese Americans. Chapter 4 centers on the "visitor" experience, such as Pearl Harbor as a tourist site and the conflicts that have occurred when "sacred places" overlap with "tourist pleasures." The final chapter "Making a New Museum," focuses on the new visitor center and exhibit pavilions, which opened in 2010. This is the site of White's most detailed engagement with the issue of indigenous erasure and representation.

Finally, White was the organizer of a National Park Service and National Endowment for the Humanities–sponsored conference on Pearl Harbor’s place in history and memory that was attacked by Fox News as “anti-American” and insulting to American veterans (245). White details this manufactured scandal, using it to return to the book’s diverse narrative threads. Underscoring the controversial nature of public history, White stresses its importance and potential power in an era of “culture wars.”

In such a diverse and engaging work there are bound to be contexts that could not be included. More discussion on how Pearl Harbor fits into the broader sphere of museum and other public engagement with the past in Hawaii, for example, would have been helpful in establishing whether or not the Pearl Harbor sites are exceptional in limiting indigenous voices and presenting the American military presence as a sort of natural emergence or if this is a larger problem in Hawaii’s museum and public history terrain. In addition, most of the engagement with Japan focuses on veterans, with some brief comment on how Japanese experts were consulted at several stages of the memorial’s development. There are some fascinating references to the Japanese tourist presence—signs in Japanese, a wreath left by a Japanese high school class, and the negative reactions of some Americans to them—but further exploration of the reactions of Japanese tourists to the site and the ways in which Pearl Harbor, as space and American mytho-narrative, intersects with Japan’s own controversies over history, would have added to the discussion.

These are by no means glaring absences, however. White’s book is an ambitious melding of ethnographic and historiographical writing and an important contribution to current discussions of memory and representation of the past.

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Surviving Wounded Knee: The Lakotas and the Politics of Memory by David W. Grua.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. vii + 276 pp.; illustrations, notes,
bibliography, index; clothbound, \$36.95; eBook \$24.99.

Americans and Lakota alike were shocked when they learned that on December 29, 1890, the Seventh Cavalry had killed some two hundred members of Big Foot’s band along a two-mile stretch near Wounded Knee Creek. Although newspapers and military officers quickly lauded the actions of the brave men of the Seventh Cavalry, controversy soon erupted over the cavalry’s actions as stories of the slaughter of unarmed men, women, and children began to reach the East Coast. The massacre at Wounded Knee continues to interest historians as they try to understand exactly what transpired on that fateful day. The difficulty in reconstructing events is that much of the documentation comes from non-Lakota sources including military personnel, reservation agents, newspaper reporters, religious leaders, teachers, and local white residents. In addition, conflicting stories