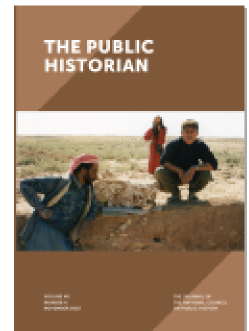
The Rosewood Massacre: An Archaeology and History of Intersectional Violence by Edward Gonzalez-Tennant (review)

Al Hester



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Bryant Fulton and novelist Charles Waddell Chesnut, penned a defense of the black community and set the story right as to the motivation and facts of the coup. Fulton's book, *Hanover, or, the Persecution of the Lowly*, and Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition* fictionalized the 1898 coup and its peculiar impact on black freedom and historic memory.

What arises in *Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina* is how whites and African Americans differ on the historic accounts of the past and the meaning and reverence of public spaces. Opposing historic memories play out for over a century. The attempt to commemorate the 1898 coup revealed the deep-seated difference in public discourse of the city's continued racial divide.

Samuel W. Black, Senator John Heinz History Center

The Rosewood Massacre: An Archaeology and History of Intersectional Violence by Edward González-Tennant. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018. 1 + 226 pp.; illustrations, references, index; clothbound, $79.95.

Although the title of this book suggests that it is about a single event that took place in 1923 in Rosewood, Florida, it quickly becomes apparent that it has a much broader scope. As Edward González-Tennant explores the meaning of racial violence in the United States, the author keeps his study closely tied to that moment and place while simultaneously covering a much wider time period and geographical scope. His starting point is an early twentieth century race riot (or pogrom) that led to the complete destruction and near-erasure of Rosewood, a small African American community located on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Beginning on New Year's Day in 1923 and ending one week later, a white mob attacked the residents of Rosewood, causing numerous deaths and the uprooting of a flourishing community that existed since the nineteenth century. Throughout the book González-Tennant balances a finely detailed microhistory of this tragic event with a broadly ranging exploration of social science theories about violence, race, and intersectionality.

González-Tennant is interested in more than simply chronicling the narrative of the massacre, which has been detailed by a number of prior historians and journalists, as well as by a state-funded report commissioned in the 1990s. Instead, for much of the book, he examines the patterns of American racial violence over time, noting that while the types of attacks and what they were called changed (massacres, pogroms, lynchings, race riots, etc.), the violence has continually taken three main forms regardless of time and place. He refers to these as interpersonal, structural, and symbolic violence. González-Tennant explains that "structural and symbolic violence may not be physical, but their effects have material consequences nonetheless" (56). In this sense, racism and social inequality become types of violence that are just as damaging as a lynching. The interaction of these three

forms of violence also helps explain the continuity of racial violence from the past to the present. This approach allows the author to argue that there is an unbroken line connecting incidents like the Rosewood massacre to more recent events such as recurrent police killings of unarmed African American men.

In his text, González-Tennant frequently returns to Rosewood as a specific place and moment, and towards the end of the book he describes his almost decade-long fieldwork in the community. This work has included traditional archaeological investigations, collections of oral history interviews, and the development of a historic properties geographic information system (GIS) based on the painstaking reassembly of property records. His brief summary of his archaeological findings at the former masonic lodge at Rosewood, which revealed physical evidence of the massacre, is fascinating, however his work with the historic properties via GIS may be even more important. As González-Tennant notes, the act of mapping is itself a form of memorialization that can help descendants of former Rosewood residents grapple with the past and answer their significant questions, such as where their ancestors lived.

In addition to more traditional fieldwork, González-Tennant also developed a digital project in which he used gaming software to create an immersive, virtual reconstruction of Rosewood. Some historians have argued that digital heritage projects sometimes create a "digital divide" rather than automatically facilitating community engagement.[1] González-Tennant argues otherwise, and cites an example in which his digital reconstruction of Rosewood did just the opposite. After learning of the project, a Rosewood landowner who had previously distrusted other researchers became inspired by the digital storytelling, and expressed a willingness to collaborate. This contact opened other doors in the community, which in turn generated more trust and interest. González-Tennant credits this success to both the power of digital heritage as well as transparency about his methods and goals.

Public historians will find a wealth of useful ideas here, especially in the chapters on his fieldwork and digital heritage projects. Of particular note is his discussion about the sustainability of collaborative archaeology that seeks to involve descendants associated with difficult pasts. Researchers have often discovered that building trust with descendant communities is crucial to a successful collaboration. González-Tennant argues that this requires long-term commitments over many years, and that short-term projects often feel extractive and exploitative to the communities involved. For González-Tennant, "simply framing a project as collaborative is not a panacea; the creation of engaged projects requires substantial investments of time and energy on the part of researchers" (172). To do otherwise runs the risk of privileging the scholar's interests over of the community's interests and needs, and ultimately endangering future collaboration. González-Tennant

1 Andrew Hurley, "Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology: Public History Meets the Digital Divide," *The Public Historian* 38, no. 1 (February 2016): 69.

appears to have established long lasting relationships with Rosewood's descendant community, and in the process provides his readers with a model for doing community history, and more importantly, an opportunity for racial reconciliation at a site of intense tragedy.

Al Hester, South Carolina State Park Service

Historic Capital: Preservation, Race, and Real Estate in Washington, D.C. by Cameron Logan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. xxvii + 292 pp.; illustrations, notes, sources, index; paperbound, $27.00.

In our current era of Washington-elite bashing, Cameron Logan offers an alternative history of those neighborhoods and residents in the nation's capital rendered nearly invisible by an expanding federal government even as the city became majority black after World War II. In those postwar decades, Logan argues, Washingtonians sought to leave their own stamp on the city and exert their political and economic rights by first restoring old row-houses, then preserving local neighborhoods, and finally taking the lead in remaking and remembering their cityscape.

It is a story, Logan asserts, that combines concerns with rapid urban growth, shifting tastes in architecture—from Georgetown's Federal townhouses to Victorian row-houses in Dupont Circle—and the city's long quest for home rule and African American agency. But it is also a story of the losses suffered primarily by African American residents and neighborhoods as property values accelerated in the wake of restoration and preservation efforts often categorized as gentrification. Logan traces the story of preservation in Washington back to the 1920s and 1930s when Georgetown was emerging from what Logan described as a "dowdy backwater" into a fashionable residential neighborhood with prized colonial- and Federal-era townhouses, the property values of which represented a bulwark against overdevelopment and commercialization (8). Private property ownership, in fact, became an important tool in maintaining the character of local neighborhoods between the 1940s and the 1970s, as the federal government expanded its footprint and as Washington became a majority black city. It was during this period that issues of political representation and local control were increasingly tied to debates over controlling and preserving older sections of the city, from Dupont Circle and Capitol Hill to Shaw, the U Street Corridor, and Southwest, and as those debates intensified so did questions about how to define historical and aesthetic significance of both buildings and neighborhoods—and who was to assume the authority to do so.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Washington had become, as Logan asserts, "a city that in many respects was created by its preservation movement" (209). Local activists had largely succeeded in rejecting large-scale urban renewal and modernization and in preserving specific neighborhoods on local terms indicating a sense of belonging and proprietorship, but the goal of both controlled