

Reviews (Books)

Camarillo, Albert M.

Compton in My Soul: A Life in Pursuit of Racial Equality.

Stanford University Press, 2024.

284 pages. eBook. ISBN: 9781503639317.

Southern California's city of Compton has been nicknamed the "hub city" due to its location at the center of the surrounding communities of Paramount, Lynwood, and Long Beach. In the early 1900s, Compton was considered an "All American city, a designation that was bestowed in 1952 by the National Civic League." (49) While Compton is well known, there is a rich and stark history behind its notoriety. Albert M. Camarillo's new monograph, *Compton in My Soul: A Life in Pursuit of Racial Equality*, is a reflective, personal memoir that navigates the author's childhood, upbringing, and career, while examining the racial inequalities of Compton's incorporation. Due to Camarillo's deep roots in the community of Compton, his narrative is enriched by personal stories, historical analysis, and reflections on race, inequality, and the relentless pursuit of social justice. His story is not just that of one individual; it reflects a broader spectrum of the ongoing struggle for racial equality in the United States. Camarillo is an emeritus professor of History from Stanford University, where he taught for forty-two years and is regarded as one of the pioneers in the development of Mexican American History and Chicano Studies. He earned both his B.A. (1970) and his Ph.D. (1975) in History at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and he has authored several books that examine the Mexican American narratives through an ethnic studies lens.

Camarillo's understanding of the world around him began in the early 1950s in Compton, a city that, at that time, was not as racially diverse as it is today. For Camarillo, Compton was a formative place, where the complex dynamics of race unfolded and helped to shape his opinions of the community that surrounded him. Growing up, he was acutely aware of the tensions between his Mexican American heritage and other groups that lived in the same area. He describes how he learned about America's dark history later on in life, namely, while he was pursuing higher education at UCLA. However, it was through his pivotal upbringing in Compton that he came to understand the convergence of race, class, and identity in a profound and personal way. Through impactful anecdotes, Camarillo explores his early life and offers readers insights into the challenges he faced, including racial discrimination, identity struggles, and the systemic barriers that plagued his community. His book's title—*Compton in My Soul*—captures his deep connection and feelings about his hometown, which provided him with a foundation for his later pursuits in activism and scholarship.

Camarillo's memoir consists of three main parts. Part 1, "Rooted in Compton," explores how his family immigrated from Mexico during the Great Depression and discusses his life before adolescence. In Part 2, "Pursuing a Social Justice Passion," he talks about his early academic career and shares personal anecdotes of becoming involved in the Chicano civil rights movement in Los Angeles County. This involvement helped solidify his passion for social justice and change. Part 3, "Circling Back to My Origins," discusses his attempts to enact

change in his community through understanding the difficulties of growing up in a segregated Compton. His lived experiences further inspired his passion for history and social justice through the exploration of race and ethnic studies.

One of the most compelling aspects of Camarillo's memoir is his assessment of the evolution of his racial identity and his increasing involvement in activism. As a young man, he was drawn to the civil rights movement and the overall push for social justice that was gaining momentum in the 1960s: "My intellectual and social justice awakening involved strife as well as soul searching." (124) On both local and national levels, this served as a decisive movement that inspired his life's work. Camarillo describes how encounters with racism motivated him to seek solutions not only for himself but for his entire community. He describes being in elementary school and experiencing mistreatment by his teacher because of his race, when he accidentally injured a classmate: "I felt a sharp pain in my back. As I screamed, 'Ouch!' and quickly turned to see who had done this, there stood Mrs. Bailey with a horribly mean look on her face and a sharp pencil in her hand that she'd used to stab me." (68) Camarillo's quest for racial equality was driven by a belief that the rights of marginalized peoples could be realized through a combination of education, advocacy, and policy change. His memoir recounts the pivotal moments in his life that steered him toward academia, where he would become an influential scholar on race relations, specifically in Mexican American and African American communities. His commitment to racial justice is evident in his focus on social and political causes, including school desegregation, the empowerment of minority communities, and the push for equal opportunity in employment and housing. What makes his activism particularly moving is his insistence on understanding race relations through a multiethnic lens. Through this method, Camarillo stresses the importance of recognizing the diverse experiences of people of color in America. He believes that addressing inequalities requires acknowledging multiple forms of racism that affect different minority groups, specifically toward African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other ethnic minorities, and creating alliances across these communities to work toward a more inclusive society.

While *Compton in My Soul* is undoubtedly a memoir rooted in personal experience, it is also rich with academic insights. Camarillo, who has spent much of his life studying race and social inequality, enriches his narrative with historical context, connecting scholarly analysis and research to deepen his readers' understanding of racial issues. Through this method, he dissects not just the individual impact of racism but also its structural complexities. Policies, institutions, and historical narratives have perpetuated inequality over time, which he analyzes through reflections of his academic career and the role of higher education. In this way, he provides ways to promote social change that are both enlightening and inspiring. He discusses his work as a historian, his contributions to the study of Mexican American and African American communities, and his commitment to using education as a tool for liberation. His memoir emphasizes the importance of scholarship in shaping public discourse on race and social justice, and it serves as a testimony to the importance of intellectual participation in the fight for equality.

While studying this book, I quickly realized that I had chosen the wrong medium to read it, namely, my Kindle, in an attempt to save space in my ever-growing collection of books. This

was a mistake for a few reasons: first, I felt that I needed to highlight and annotate my thoughts almost immediately because Camarillo's reminiscences in describing his narratives were so fascinating; second, reading on my Kindle made the text undesirable and lacked a personal touch. I am not sure if others do this as well, but with a physical book, I can see how much I have left in a chapter, which motivates me to keep reading and reach my goals for the day. If I were to read this book again, I would, without question, opt for a physical book. In recommending this book, I believe that *Always Running: La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A.* by Luis A. Rodriguez (1993) would complement it beautifully, because it explores similar themes and narratives. Camarillo's writing style provides a clear understanding of the main points and themes, and he easily takes readers through his life experiences. Because Camarillo is a historian, be prepared to encounter a lot of contextual details that facilitate his analysis on the issues of racism and inequality during his early years in Compton. His decision to write his memoir in this way offers readers an insightful look at the intersection of personal experiences and historical analysis.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Jennifer Sanely Galarza of Lakewood, California, earned her A.A.s in History, Political Science, and Social and Behavioral Sciences (2024) at Cerritos College, California, and her B.A. in History (2026) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is a member, former vice president, and former president of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society).*

Chang, Kornel S.

A Fractured Liberation: Korea under U.S. Occupation.

The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2025.
304 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780674258433.

Kornel S. Chang's new book, *A Fractured Liberation: Korea under U.S. Occupation*, provides insights into maneuverings during 1945–1948 at the end of World War II that directly influence today's Korean Peninsula. Chang tells the political and personal stories of this short period of time, while also describing possible turning points that might have led to different outcomes, maybe even a united Korean Peninsula. On August 8, 1945, the Korean people listened in awe to Emperor Hirohito's announcement that Japan would surrender to the Allies. After forty years of Japanese occupation, the Korean people felt free to reestablish their own government and restore their own culture. Disillusionment came quickly. Japanese occupation was replaced by two other occupiers, dividing their nation at the 38th parallel into North Korea, occupied by the Soviet Union's military, and South Korea, occupied by the U.S. military.

All this is a personal story for Chang, a Korean American. His grandparents fled from the northern part of Korea in 1946 to relocate to Seoul, and they later emigrated with their children to the United States, settling in Queens, New York. Family gatherings not only celebrated their Korean culture but also lamented the loss of the opportunity to attain a united Korean state, arguing as to which alternative—communism, capitalism, or something in between—would have been the solution. Growing up, Chang heard and absorbed the question of what might have been, and now, as a professor of History at Rutgers University, he presents it to us. Using a combination of personal narratives, cultural documents, official

records, photos, and scholarly accounts, Chang tells a detailed story, focusing on South Korea in the immediate three years after Japan's surrender. Most of us view the years of Korean occupation in the international context of an emerging Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Chang's narrative, however, focuses on the Korean people themselves, especially the many political groups among them who were struggling for power. He analyzes the role of the U.S. military in the context of competition between these local groups and explains missed opportunities that might have led to a different outcome for Korea. Chang sets the stage for Korea's liberation. At the end of World War II, many Koreans had never known independence. Japan had first made Korea its protectorate and then formally annexed it in 1910. Japanese colonization meant substituting the Japanese language, religion, and other parts of Japanese culture for anything Korean. Chang documents the underlying presence of Korean culture regardless of Japanese efforts to eliminate it. Throughout their country's occupation, Korean activists of every persuasion—whether communists, socialists, nationalists, or anarchists—kept the idea of an independent and unified Korean state alive in people's minds. Chang mentions that many of these activists—both men and women, upper class as well as peasants—held firmly to the idea of Korea's independence, even though their efforts often led to exile, to prison, and, for some, to death. He also emphasizes the divisions and tensions among these activists, divisions due to differing social backgrounds, as well as ideological divisions.

For a few weeks in the late summer of 1945, Koreans saw and felt their independence as a unified state, but that reality would not come to pass. Even before Japan's official surrender on September 2, 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union had reached an agreement to share the occupation of the Korean Peninsula. The United States would occupy the peninsula's southern part, below the 38th parallel, and the Soviet Union would occupy the peninsula's northern part. Both imposed military control. Despite this agreement and the imposition of military control, Korean activists continued their efforts for independence and unification. Chang explains an important characterization that the victorious Allied nations shared with regard to Korea. After World War I, colonization was accepted as a right of victorious nations. Japan wanted to be part of those victorious nations, so Korea became a "colony" governed by Japan, economically and culturally dominated. After World War II, Japan was seen by the United States as a defeated nation that had to be resurrected as a democracy, whereas Korea was seen as a "colony" that could be passed on to victorious nations, namely, the United States and the Soviet Union. Chang refers to this brief period of Korean hope and expectations as Korea's "Asian Spring," when the Korean people could have or should have reestablished an independent Korea as one nation. During the Japanese occupation, the Korean people had not stayed silent. Many groups had emerged, each representing different ideologies and parts of society, including anarchists, traditionalists, democrats, and communists. Their inability to unite and work together to overthrow the Japanese occupation continued into the brief period available to establish one Korean government after Japan's surrender.

The divisions among the Korean activists were one factor that thwarted unity, but another, crucial factor, as described by Chang, were the military leaders of the U.S. occupation forces. General Douglas MacArthur had taken responsibility for rehabilitating Japan but had little

interest in Korea. His main concern in 1945 was that the Soviet Union had immediately moved into the northern part of the Korean Peninsula, as agreed with the United States. Thus, MacArthur needed to move U.S. military troops and a military administration into South Korea before the Soviet Union could decide to occupy the entire peninsula. The closest U.S. military force was the XXIV Corps of the Tenth Army, at that time in Okinawa, Japan, under the command of Lieutenant General John Hodge. Hodge became the leader of South Korea's military government during the transition period, simply because his Corps was the physically closest and could arrive there fastest. MacArthur gave Hodge full authority in South Korea to do whatever he deemed appropriate. Hodge was conservative in his beliefs and actions, considering anything that opposed his approach as rebellious and supporting communism. Once the Japanese surrender had been accepted, the American flag was raised above the government buildings. Any efforts on the part of Koreans to regain their farming land or take control of their factories were opposed by Hodge, who sent troops and police to stop these actions, and had Koreans participating in them, or in protests, arrested. Hodge kept the colonial system, being more comfortable in taking advice from the Korean conservative elites, even though many of these had previously collaborated with the Japanese during their colonial rule. Hodge considered communism the basic threat, and his actions were guided by that belief. He disbanded workers' committees in factories, giving control to many of those who had supported the Japanese, and reappropriated land seized from landlords by peasants.

Chang's concluding chapter summarizes the many decisions taken during this short period of time, mostly by Hodge and his administration. The United States had already made one crucial decision by agreeing to split the peninsula into two separate regions under the control of the Soviet Union and the United States. The second crucial factor was to allow Lieutenant General Hodge to make policy decisions from his own perspective. These actions could have been different under a less rigid, less conservative administration, including allowing the establishment of a government by the Joint Commission and by maintaining the success of land reapportionment and workers' factory committees. Hodge also allowed the return of Syngman Rhee, which led to Rhee's eventual control of South Korea's government. Thus, decisions taken during these first three years after the end of World War II and the end of Japanese occupation set Korea's fate in motion.

Chang's writing style makes his work easy to read, and his references to his own family's involvement make it feel more direct to readers. His use of popular stories, music, photos, and other forms of popular documentation, along with historical scholarship to explain Korean culture, language, and traditions, makes the story both personal and informative. Connecting the story of these few years of transition to present-day Korea is one of the most eye-opening aspects of this book. Korea went from Japanese colonialism to a divided peninsula occupied by two victorious allies who became enemies. For recent generations who have only known today's North Korea and South Korea, this is a must-read book. All we have known are two states, divided by something called a "demilitarized zone" (DMZ). Chang's book provides a deeper understanding of why a divided Korea emerged from World War II from the perspective of the Korean people themselves, rather than just another chapter of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. More research on

this topic might expand beyond the transition period to examine the consequences of some of the decisions made by General Hodge, such as the authoritarian regime of Rhee, which lasted until 1960. It might also include more about how Kim Il-sung took control of North Korea. While both Kim and Rhee established authoritarian administrations, their goals and methods were different and had different consequences. Examining these differences would help us better understand the situation we see on the Korean Peninsula today.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Christopher Musnicky of Redondo Beach, California, earned his A.A. in History (2023) at El Camino College, California. He is currently pursuing a B.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).*

Davis, Elisabeth C.

Catholic Sisters, Narratives of Authority, and the Native American Boarding Schools, 1847–1918.

Lexington Books, 2024.

186 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781666952520.

When I think about Indigenous boarding schools in the United States, both Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania and Sherman Indian School in California come to mind. While both of these are Christian by design (though not really anymore in the case of Sherman), neither was Catholic. Elisabeth C. Davis explores the Catholic Indigenous boarding schools in the United States in her new monograph, *Catholic Sisters, Narratives of Authority, and the Native American Boarding Schools, 1847–1918*. To attain a more holistic history of what it was like in these boarding schools, she analyzes four different schools, located from the Midwest to the West Coast. Davis writes chronologically, for the most part, with the beginnings and endings of her chapters having some overlap in the narrative. She also dives into how these schools began, along with how the Civil War and anti-denominationalism impacted them. Davis is a historian who specializes in women's history, Catholic history, and cultural history. She earned her Ph.D. (2020) and her Master of Science in Library Information (2022) at the University at Buffalo. Her area of expertise is the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century.

The first chapter, "A Brief History of Religion, Assimilation, and Education Prior to 1860," provides readers with background on how Indigenous boarding schools began in America. Davis accomplishes this by comparing traditional Christian schools with these Catholic ones in their approach to students. She emphasizes that the Catholic nuns tried not only to educate the children but also to ascertain what level of whiteness they could achieve by assimilating them into white society, therefore rendering them "civilized." (21) This echoes Richard Henry Pratt's infamous statement, "Kill the Indian, save the man," when he first proposed the creation of Carlisle, and thus launched the Indigenous boarding school program across the United States. ("Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections at the Nineteenth Annual Session Held in Denver, Colorado, June 23–29, 1892," ed. Isabel C. Barrows, Virginia L. Franks Memorial Library, 1892, 47.)

Davis's first case study pertains to the Osage Mission in Kansas between 1847 and 1870. There, a Jesuit by the name of John Schoenmakers was the primary driving force behind creating boarding schools for the Osage people to assimilate them better. Realizing he needed help

with this endeavor, he asked the Sisters of Loretto, a Catholic religious community in Kentucky, to educate the girls at the Indigenous schools. (29) The Sisters focused on teaching the girls domestic tasks and how to fit into white society, which included morals and “good Christian values.” (31–32) Many of the Sisters feared the Osage and having to live near them, resulting in a need to assert control over them through various forms of violence, including corporal punishment, cutting off the children’s hair, and enforcing white values. (33) Although this represented an effort to scare the girls in their charge, they still received pushback from them, mostly during the Civil War, when the Osage got tired of their land being taken away and committed to getting their land back. It was mostly Indigenous women who resisted the Sisters; however, the latter only used this as ammunition in their schools to show the difference between a good Indian and a bad Indian. (41) The stories about the Sisters of Loretto and their relationship with the Osage seem tumultuous and often contradictory. Since the accounts of this relationship largely come from the records that the Sisters kept, it is largely unknown how the Osage people felt about these Catholic women in their community.

The third chapter details the changes that occurred in the boarding schools after the Civil War. It explores imperialist ideas, such as Manifest Destiny, that were promoted to reunite the nation and settle the West. (49–50) Due to Westward expansion, the federal government created President Ulysses S. Grant’s Peace Policy of 1869. Ultimately, this policy placed reservations and Indigenous schools into the hands of religious groups. To ensure that schools would offer similar education, Grant invited representatives from the various denominations that took control over the Indigenous groups to attend education conferences. (51)

Davis’s second case comes in the fourth chapter, “Authority, Narrative, and Performance at the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus Missions in Avoca, Minnesota, 1884–1890.” State and federal policies changed how Indigenous people in the area were able to practice their culture and interact with the boarding schools, but another big invention impacted them as well: the railroad altered the landscape for those living away from both coasts. It made it easier to travel and facilitated the establishment of new towns. (60) The Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ) strove to not only educate immigrants, usually Irish at the time, but also the Indigenous people in the area. This was done so they could become “upstanding citizens [...] which [...] was only possible through education.” (63) Although immigrants and Indigenous people both went through the same education program, their educators had very different plans for them. Immigrants were to become upstanding citizens, well adjusted to American society. Meanwhile, Indigenous people were expected to become docile and always look up to their white counterparts for aid and direction. SHCJ schools had their Indigenous students put on performances about being “noble savages” who had assimilated and held no qualms toward white people. (67) These performances were intended as demonstrations of their success in assimilating the girls in their charge. (72) Yet, while we know that these performances took place, there is no record of how successful they actually were. (70) What is more, Indigenous voices are lacking, as they were not invited back then to contribute to the narrative.

Chapter 5 explores the “Rise of Anti-Denominationalism, 1880–1918,” which was a new policy by the federal government to transform schools from denominationally controlled institutions into secular entities. While Catholic schools resisted this, some of them were slowly being defunded to implement this new idea. The eventual goal was for Indigenous students to attend regular public schools instead of boarding schools; (88) however, this was not something that many Indigenous families opted for when given the choice between a boarding school and a public school. (88) In chapter 6, “Constrictions on the Sisters of St. Francis and the Pawhuska Mission, Oklahoma, 1887–1915,” we learn that, while the Sisters of St. Francis did have some control over their charges, this control was being diminished by the federal government and Indigenous people resisting institutionalization. In the early 1900s, the school received less funding, and its contracts regularly came in late, causing financial issues. (99) Funds also became attached to how many students were enrolled at the school: fewer students meant less money. (102) While the school run by this group of nuns did struggle, this was not a unique occurrence for educational institutions at that time. By 1915, the drive to almost fully defund Catholic boarding schools became apparent, heralding the end stages of their existence.

Chapter 7, “The Sisters of St. Joseph at the Fort Yuma School, 1886–1900,” is a special case when examining Catholic Indigenous schools, for the nuns there became highly involved in tribal politics. They found it important to change Quechan politics to foster better relationships with those around them. When there was a power struggle between a few factions over who should lead the Quechan, the Sisters got involved and recommended someone who would be an ally to them. (117) However, the man they chose, Miguel, later tried to chase them away. (121) It was only once Miguel had been arrested that the Sisters left the region, since the new leader threatened to kill the woman in charge. (122) Thus, the mode of assimilation that the Sisters of St. Joseph chose ended up being a failure. This particular school lasted for the shortest amount of time and fostered resentment much more quickly than its predecessors.

Davis’s book joins those histories that seek to fill silences in the historical narrative, especially those pertaining to Indigenous people. A similar theme permeates *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* by David Wallace Adams (2024). When compared to Davis’s work, Adams’s book has a wider scope and does a better job of utilizing the Indigenous perspective. A resource for readers who enjoy Davis’s book or want to learn more about Indigenous boarding schools is a PBS Utah documentary, which can be found on YouTube: “Unspoken: America’s Native American Boarding Schools,” released in 2023; it uses oral histories from former boarding school students, thus offering a good baseline understanding of the Indigenous boarding schools, the ideals of assimilation, and the pursuit of whiteness in these institutions.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Jade Phillips of Anaheim, California, earned her B.A. in History (2024) at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in Public History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). She also served as an editor for volume 53 (2026) of *The Welebaethan: A Journal of History*.

Dieterich-Ward, Allen.

Cradle of Conservation: An Environmental History of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2024.

140 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 9781932304381.

William Penn, the founder of the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, is quoted as saying, "Leave one acre of trees for every five cleared," but did it really happen that way? Environmental history is powerful, as it studies the relationship between the natural environment and how humanity has interacted with it through time; it allows us to reflect on where we have been and where we should go when it comes to our treatment of the earth. In his 2024 monograph, *Cradle of Conservation: An Environmental History of Pennsylvania*, Allen Dieterich-Ward teams up with the Pennsylvania Historical Association to bring us the fifth installment in a series pertaining to the history of Pennsylvania. Dieterich-Ward is a historian and director of graduate studies at Shippensburg University. *Cradle of Conservation* focuses on Pennsylvania's environmental history since the time when Indigenous people first used the land, through colonial times, the emergence of the United States, the industrialization of the nineteenth century, the era of conservatism, and more modern times.

Cradle of Conservation allows us to reflect on how Americans have related to the land of Pennsylvania over time and highlights its value when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and social distancing made parks and nature trails invaluable to people seeking open spaces. It is divided into five main chapters. Chapter 1, "Creating Penn's Woods," introduces readers to the first "Pennsylvanians" by using Algonquian and Iroquoian creation stories. When Indigenous people first inhabited the region, long before it became Pennsylvania, there was an important relationship between them—for example, the Haudenosaunee and the Lenape—and area's great river basins, including the Great Lakes basin, the Potomac River basin, the Susquehanna basin, and the Delaware basin. These great river systems and the "medieval optimum," which, as the author tells us, was a gradual increase in temperature followed by a time of cooling, facilitated a substantial population increase by about 1500 CE. According to Dieterich-Ward, while Indigenous people revered nature more than the Christians, both religiously and culturally, one should not romanticize their relationship with the natural environment. In fact, they, too, depleted the soil because of their agricultural practices, which, in turn, made them susceptible to warfare and tensions when they set out to seek other lands. This chapter also addresses how the newly arrived Europeans strove not just to survive but to exploit the land for as much monetary gain as possible.

As they expanded into the Americas, Europeans constantly sought new lands. *Cradle of Conservation* does a great job of introducing William Penn and the land grant he received as "Penn's Woods" or, latinized, Pennsylvania. In colonial times, Pennsylvania became a mining hub, and iron ore was one mineral of great significance. Dieterich-Ward takes readers to the historical site of Cornwall Furnace, where coal was processed for the production of iron. As the colony entered the transatlantic trade, the tanning of hides caused environmental damage. In southern Pennsylvania, farmers began producing food for export, particularly wheat, which was shipped to feed enslaved people in the Caribbean and other areas. Wheat was a key food source as it also fed local miners and iron workers. Dieterich-Ward tells us

that colonial Pennsylvanians soon started to mirror the Indigenous people's actions by abandoning fields once crop yields started to decrease due to soil depletion. This led to more and more land being cleared, and furnaces sprouted along the riverbanks. By 1760, Benjamin Franklin wrote in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* that fish were turning up dead in the rivers and that pollution needed to be regulated in some form. According to Dieterich-Ward, by the time of the American Revolution, much of Pennsylvania had passed from being communal Indigenous land to privately owned land.

Chapter 2, "Working Landscapes," conveys just how much of the Pennsylvania landscape was dominated by industrialization in the nineteenth century. Canals, railways, and roadways proliferated, but water travel remained much easier and quicker than overland travel. As canals were built, lumber had to be cut and dams were placed, and they interfered with the natural flow of rivers and, along with the urban centers, created the state's "industrial geography." The author refers to these as "sacrifice zones," defined by scholars as "regions where environmental quality is disregarded to provide cheap and abundant resources for distant areas." (45) By 1800, steam-powered waterworks provided Philadelphia with its first public water supply. This, in turn, facilitated a population increase from 68,000 in 1800 to over 350,000 by 1850. Dieterich-Ward's account of the state's industrialization and changing landscapes is though-provoking.

Chapter 3, "Conservation in the Keystone State," relates that, by the late nineteenth century, city dwellers in Philadelphia and elsewhere started to notice the damage urbanization was doing: due to corruption, the best sewer and water lines were routed to the richest neighborhoods; cities were dirty; and diseases were rampant. Dieterich-Ward describes how various factions of the population now began to work toward improvements, cleaning, giving lectures, and even planting trees. These were the roots of both progressivism, a left-leaning ideology concentrated on social reform, and conservatism, a concerted effort to preserve many of the open spaces left in the country. By the 1920s, there was even more collaboration to conserve "fish, wildlife, water, and forests." People invested in the beautification of cities by maintaining beautiful gardens. Progressives fought to improve the environment, but pollution and natural disasters continued to persist. In response to the Great Depression, the "New Deal" program changed the landscape yet again, as more infrastructure was built. The continued use of automobiles, the increase in pollution, and the concern for the environment led to the environmental movement in the latter part of the twentieth century.

In chapter 4, "Environmental Movements," the author describes how, during the 1930s and 1940s, more and more of the farmland of Pennsylvania was developed for suburbs. During the post-World War II era, environmental challenges were increasingly countered with politics and legislation. In chapter 5, "Post Industrial Pennsylvania," Dieterich-Ward focuses on Pennsylvania after the mines and other manufacturing plants had closed, and addresses the tension between environmental improvements and people trying to make a living. This chapter also touches on the delicate subject of "remediating former industrial sites." In the conclusion, the author reflects on how it remains difficult to balance "natural resource consumption" with conservationism. Continuing issues include fracking and oil drilling, the reuse of old industrial sites, and global warming. Dieterich-Ward argues that humanity still

needs natural spaces, as evident during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, when social distancing was implemented: as everything closed, people sought out the trails, the parks, and the nature reserves that we have today, thanks to the conservatism of the past. It would be a shame to return to a more polluted state, where even nature makes people sick.

The strength of *Cradle of Conservation* is its chronological and easy to follow historical approach. Dieterich-Ward uses a wide range of sources and quotes from well-known historical visitors, including Charles Dickens, and he explores writings in the *Philadelphia Tribune* and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Overall, *Cradle of Conservation* is a great example for history students of how to use scholarly sources to create a narrative, and the book's notes suggest a lot of research material for further study. The book itself does not feel like a quick read because the material is very dense, and it brings forth information in such a way that it does not feel like a textbook nor does it feel like a novel. Even though this book is highly suitable for history students, it is also recommended for the general public. It offers a great introduction to environmental history and the history of the state of Pennsylvania. A similar book, accessible to both history students and the general public, is *An Environmental History of the Civil War* by Judkin Browning and Timothy Silver (2020). Both books are very detailed and constructed in ways that make them both educational and enjoyable.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Dania Trippi of Los Angeles, California, earned her A.A. in History and American Studies (2023) at Santa Ana College, California, and her B.A. in History (2026) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). She is a first-generation college student.

Graeber, David.

Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia.

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2023.

175 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 9781250321879.

The public image of the "pirate" has long been debated by experts and nonexperts alike. Some think of pirates as treasure hunters, following a map into unexplored territory, looking for buried valuables and generational wealth, all while sipping rum and sailing the high seas. Others think of piracy as an unsanctioned business operation that involves armed robberies, kidnappings, and hijackings. Seldom does anyone mention piracy and "democracy"—or "functioning society"—in the same breath. However one thinks of pirates, it is likely different than what David Graeber has discovered through his extensive research of early pirate activities. In the early modern period, European piracy flourished, with pirates flocking to Madagascar and establishing communities, governments, and social systems that have largely been overlooked. In *Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia*, David Graeber explains what pirate life in the late 1600s and early 1700s was like, compares it to the Enlightenment in Europe, and challenges the idea that the Enlightenment was a purely European phenomenon.

The late David Graeber (1961–2020) was a professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics. He used to describe himself as both an anthropologist and an activist who put his thoughts to paper. Graeber published on a variety of topics, however, *Pirate*

Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia is a collection of essays about the fieldwork he carried out in Madagascar between 1989 and 1991. Graeber passed away in 2020, leaving behind this great work, which was put together into a chapter-by-chapter book and published posthumously in 2023. Drawing from an incredible number of archival sources that pair well with his hands-on field research, Graeber skillfully makes his case. As a result, we are left with a detailed analysis of the main towns, characters, clans, and societies that flourished in the Malagasy region.

Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia consists of four parts. In Part I, Graeber sets the stage for his research. He begins by discussing the idea of pirates and some of the characteristics of early Malagasy pirates. The latter were able to obtain their wealth or “booty” by executing raids and then bringing their newfound wealth to Madagascar. The issue for them was how to turn this material wealth into liquid currency. Turning up with literal boatloads of material wealth would have been suspicious, and the authorities would soon have been onto them, so the pirates had to find other ways to use their net wealth for their benefit. Consequently, when pirates landed in Madagascar with their riches, they used their wealth to assimilate with the natives. This practice led to many more connections and trading between the Malagasy people and the pirates. They traded goods and slaves, intermarried, and, before long, developed new societies—societies that were free of official government to begin with and, rather, developed into self-governed regions. Graeber successfully speaks about all of this by sharing the lived experiences of real towns like Foulpointe (Mahavelona) and Sainte-Marie (Nosy Boraha). He also shares valuable information about some of the main figures of these towns, such as Nathaniel North and Ratsimilaho, two people from completely different backgrounds who exemplify the culture clash between European pirates and Malagasy natives, and how they were able to assimilate with one another to create communities.

In Part II, Graeber takes a deeper dive into the Malagasy side of the story. He achieves this by insisting that the Enlightenment was not purely a product of the European mind; the Malagasy people also influenced and reflected the Enlightenment ideas of some of the most renowned Enlightenment thinkers, such as Rousseau and Montesquieu. One of the most evident arguments for this is how Malagasy society viewed and treated women. Women in Malagasy society were allowed to marry whom they chose, which is a very “enlightened” concept, proving Graeber’s claim that such ideals were not purely European. Bearing this in mind, Graeber explains that pirates intermarried with Malagasy women to establish connections and network their way through the society. In Malagasy culture, women and their lineage implied particular power, thus marrying women from powerful families was beneficial for the settling pirates. On the other hand, the women were attracted to the pirates because the latter had a lot of capital. Thus, there were trade-offs for both parties: the pirates gained social status, and the Malagasy women gained wealthy men. An example of the offspring from these alliances was Ratsimilaho, a central figure in Graeber’s work. Ratsimilaho was the son of a Malagasy queen and an English pirate. He became the ruler of the Betsimisaraka Confederation, which Graeber identifies as one of the most prominent examples of an enlightened society on the island of Madagascar, created by both native Malagasy and settlers together.

The study of the Betsimisaraka Confederation and its leader Ratsimilaho, takes up Part III of the text. Graeber notes immediately that the Betsimisaraka Confederation was “to some degree [...] a political experiment, fusing political models and principles derived from the pirates, and from other foreign sources, with the existing political traditions of the coast, to create something with little resemblance to what came before.” (88) According to Graeber, there was really no solid political system in place. At the time, Madagascar was experimenting with a form of socialism, which was rejected by the Betsimisaraka Confederation. Also, there were many rivalries between various pirate clans, which caused conflict. This was not beneficial, so Ratsimilaho organized what became known as the “Great Kabary,” a political meeting that called upon the leaders of pirate clans, particularly the aggressive Tsikoa, and neighboring clashing clans around the greater Saint-Marie area, to stop fighting and help each other, thus establishing the Betsimisaraka Confederation. The Betsimisaraka had a disseminated government, which saw elites and leaders of smaller groups within the Confederation work together and trade with each other. This rejection of a centralized government aligns with Enlightenment ideals. And Ratsimilaho’s reign was not short-lived. The Betsimisaraka Confederation lasted thirty years, a long time in an age when conquering and wars were common. Here, the author does include a refutable point that women were explicitly excluded from this society and only served in lesser capacities, which counters Enlightenment thought and the book’s earlier argument that women played an important role. It shows that, while many enlightened ideas were present in the pirate scene, it was not always a perfect representation. This is central to the author’s argument, and it is refreshing to see him admit flaws, while also following this point up with evidence that women did take part in some aspects of Betsimisaraka life.

In Part IV, Graeber collects his thoughts on his essays. He recognizes that most people credit the Enlightenment to “full flowering in cities like Paris, Edinburgh, Königsberg, and Philadelphia.” (141) Graeber then finalizes his argument, stating that the Enlightenment was, in fact, a worldwide phenomenon that started well before the publicly recognized time of the European Enlightenment, and that the “Pirate Enlightenment,” as he calls it, was a prominent example of this. Graeber highlights political experiments and decentralized power in major pirate confederations and clans as examples. One other point that Graeber targets is the issue of “Libertalia,” namely, the myth of a “pirate utopia” that is said to have existed. Graeber asserts that, while there may not be concrete evidence that Libertalia existed, the “Real Libertalia” was the Betsimisaraka Confederation, which may well have been the inspiration for the legend. Taken together, the author’s arguments are well assembled in his conclusion.

Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia is a truly fascinating work that provides an extremely unique perspective on an otherwise sore subject. No doubt, piracy is a brutal and immoral practice. It involves stealing, slavery, and sometimes death. This makes it so impressive that David Graeber was able to look past all of this and find an intellectual perspective for readers to take in about piracy. Fellow author Marcus Rediker of *The Nation* has also written on the subject in his book titled *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (2004), and he calls Graeber’s work “one of the most creative books ever published on the history of piracy” in his short review on the back of Graeber’s monograph. This kind of appraisal is a confirmation of Graeber’s significant accomplishment and

advanced thinking about both piracy and Enlightenment thinking. As far as the book's structure is concerned, Graeber himself admits that its chronology is not perfect, but the events are organized sensibly to flow with the author's arguments—and the author's arguments are strong, well-supported, and make for a fascinating read.

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Ina, Satsuki.

The Poet and the Silk Girl: A Memoir of Love, Imprisonment, and Protest.

Heyday, 2024.

312 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781597146265.

"It was love for their children that guided my parents' decisions, some of which had painful consequences." (286) Satsuki Ina's memoir, *The Poet and the Silk Girl: A Memoir of Love, Imprisonment, and Protest* (2024), intricately weaves her family's story into the historical backdrop of the unjust World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. Through historical archives and the unearthing of her deceased parents' ephemera of poetry, letters, photographs, and diary entries, Ina's memoir conveys the vulnerable and intimate emotions the Japanese American community faced as they navigated wartime hysteria, incarceration, systemic racism, resistance, and the struggle for survival. Ina's use and interpretation of her parents' letters and diaries are especially beneficial in providing a richer and more human dimension to the historical analysis of World War II Japanese American incarceration, filling the gaps of traditional history and providing a more nuanced understanding of this public injustice. Through its interdisciplinary approach and use of personal narrative, *The Poet and the Silk Girl* not only recovers Ina's family's story but also sheds light on how Japanese American incarceration and its resulting trauma have and continue to shape Japanese American identities across generations.

Dr. Satsuki Ina is a professor emeritus at California State University, Sacramento, a consulting psychotherapist specializing in trauma, a community activist, an Emmy Award-winning documentarian, and a co-founder of the action project Tsuru for Solidarity. Her documentaries, *Children of the Camps* and *From a Silk Cocoon*, both focus on the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. Along with her academic and work experience, Ina's personal background as a Sansei born in the Tule Lake Segregation Center during World War II gives her a unique positionality, allowing her to shed light on the effects that incarceration had on those in camps, including children, and how it affected the generations that followed. With her expertise and lived experiences, she can accurately explain the cultural nuances and why historical silences have long since burdened the Japanese American community. Ina's interdisciplinary approach, which combines history, psychology, and Asian American studies, facilitates a more holistic understanding of the Japanese American incarceration, thereby building upon previous scholarship and contributing to those fields.

Having unearthed her parents' ephemera, Ina is able to piece together the story of her parents' wartime experience and better understand their actions and the consequences of their choices, which have shaped her own life. Chapters 1 through 8 showcase how her

parents' belief and hope in the U.S. government deteriorated over time. Their sense of belonging in America was tried, tested, and ultimately severed as their own government repeatedly let them down. Despite being American-born citizens, Ina's newlywed parents, Shizuko and Itaru, were taken from their San Francisco home and forcibly held in six different prison camps between 1942 and 1946. Like the other prisoners, Shizuko and Itaru had no control over their circumstances. They knew little about the consequences of their decisions, resulting in them being repeatedly traumatized by the shifting sands of government whims. (219) Ina explains that her parents' No-No responses to the loyalty questionnaire were never an indicator of a "crisis of loyalty;" instead, they "reflected a crisis of faith in their own country, faith that their government would protect them and afford them the rights and privileges guaranteed to all U.S. citizens." (86) After years of repeated betrayal of their trust and charges of disloyalty, along with the birth of their two children, Ina's parents decided that the best path for their family's future was to renounce their American citizenship and repatriate to Japan. However, after the war, many renunciants, including Ina's parents, sought to have their citizenship restored, since they had been coerced under duress. Ina's parents eventually had their U.S. citizenship reinstated thirteen years after having been released from the camp. (281)

While Ina's memoir employs a chronological framework, it draws connections between the past and more recent events, thereby enhancing its impact and supporting the author's argument that incarceration continues to affect the Japanese American community and subsequent generations. Chapter 4 opens with an anecdote from Ina's time at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964, during the Free Speech Movement, describing how her mother and father vehemently urged her not to participate in the protests. It was during this time that Ina's parents, who seldom discussed their camp experiences, revealed how they had renounced their citizenship during the war. Ina states, "my mother gently put her hand on mine. When she spoke, I was surprised in the sternness of her voice. 'Do not protest. Bad things will happen.'" (98–99) Ina explains that, like others who survived the punishment of mass incarceration, her mother passed on survival lessons to her children that required them to respect authority and never challenge it, work harder than others to prove their worthiness, and keep their heads down to not attract attention to themselves. (232) This mentality also took shape in the erasure of Japanese identity to appear "more American." In chapter 8, Ina states that it was only in her thirties that she discovered that her first name was not "Sandy" but actually "Satsuki," which she thought was her middle name. After the war and entering school in Cincinnati, teachers advised Ina's parents that she and her older brother needed "real American names" to be "real Americans." (281) Ina's reclaiming of her birth name distraught her mother as "anything seemingly 'un-American' would trigger her fear for our safety and security." (281) For Ina's parents' generation, silence was a form of protection, erasure of Japanese identity was a means of survival, and loyalty could only be proven by keeping one's head down. Japanese American incarceration had hammered these beliefs into their being and unintentionally passed these "dire lessons for how to live and survive in an unsafe world" (286) on to the next generation. To conclude the memoir, chapter 9 discusses Ina's journey of reclaiming her identity and her present-day involvement in activism. She closes her work with a profound statement: "When we weave our stories into

the fabric of our American history, unfettered by euphemisms, distortions, and denials, truth and healing will follow." (287)

Like *The Poet and the Silk Girl*, the film *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (1991) also involves the struggle to uncover one's family story. It centers on the Sansei director Rea Tajiri's search to uncover her family's story due to the absence of oppositional media, the overwhelming presence of dominant media, and her struggle to recall memories that she did not personally experience. With this poetic composition of recorded history and non-recorded memory, Tajiri is left to re-imagine and re-create what has been stolen and lost, prompting questions about collective history, collective memory, and postmemory. Ina and Tajiri were both left in the dark regarding their family stories. However, Ina's parents' ephemera offered the opposing evidence that Tajiri so desperately sought, enabling a more detailed account of Ina's family's story and allowing her questions to be answered. In contrast, Tajiri's film highlights her lack of documentation and unanswered questions, revealing another dimension of the Japanese American experience—one I find relatable as a Yonsei searching for my own answers. Despite their different approaches, both works challenge their audiences to question the long-term effects of the World War II Japanese American incarceration. They complement each other when compared, highlighting the multifaceted experiences of Japanese Americans as they attempt to recover their lost history.

The Poet and the Silk Girl: A Memoir of Love, Imprisonment, and Protest is a heartbreaking and reflective read. One can feel the emotions of Ina's parents, Shizuko and Itaru, through their ephemeral poetry, letters, and diary entries as they navigated such uncertain and tumultuous times. While focusing primarily on Ina's own family and experience as a case study, the memoir invites broader reflection on Japanese American collective memory and identity. Each chapter takes readers on a journey of understanding Japanese American history more intimately, the cultural nuances and complexities of the community, and the psychological impact incarceration had on the victims and the generations that followed them. The central theme of intergenerational trauma and the long-term effects of incarceration is thoroughly depicted and explained without feeling overwhelmingly academic. The narrative retelling of her parents' story and her own journey of healing makes the work compelling and inspirational, humanizing history and ongoing trauma. It is an essential read for students of Asian American history, trauma psychotherapists, and all those who yearn to reclaim their own family history. Sansei and Yonsei continue to suffer from their ancestors' incarceration, as many incarcerated victims avoided discussing their camp experiences with their children and grandchildren due to shame, trauma, and fear. These later generations are left with questions that cannot be answered, as the stories of the Issei and Nisei die alongside them. With the population of incarcerated World War II Japanese Americans dwindling, Ina's memoir is more relevant than ever, encouraging others to discover and claim their own family stories to "collectively challenge the distortions and lies that have suppressed the truth and the facts of our traumatic history" before it is too late. (287)

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MacDonnell, Francis.

Policing Show Business: J. Edgar Hoover, the Hollywood Blacklist, and Cold War Movies.

University Press of Kansas, 2024.

328 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780700637935.

The premise of Francis MacDonnell's *Policing Show Business* is a potent and timely one: it posits that the political divide and turmoil fragmenting the United States today are not unique to our era but were just as intensely prevalent during World War II and its aftermath. MacDonnell's 2024 publication looks critically at the history of Hollywood at the beginning of the Cold War, specifically analyzing the complex and often clandestine dynamics of J. Edgar Hoover's concerted campaign to ensure that the perceived communist agenda was meticulously and ruthlessly expunged from the American entertainment industry. This period represents a crucial intersection of national security fears, cultural production, and the abuse of executive power, establishing a precedent that would have lasting effects on American society and artistic freedom. *Policing Show Business* is of profound importance precisely because it serves as a historical mirror, demonstrating a deep and recurrent ideological schism within the nation. The book's comprehensive examination of the Cold War political divide clearly indicates the current political landscape of the United States as a direct comparable to the struggles of that era, highlighting how polarized political differences continue to challenge the nation's integrity and cultural output. The historical anxiety over "un-American" activities during the 1940s and 1950s finds its modern echo in today's polarization, giving the historical narrative compelling contemporary relevance. The depth of MacDonnell's analysis lies in connecting the historical mechanisms of fear and control directly to present-day social divisions, making the study of the blacklist more than just a closed chapter in history, but rather an ongoing lesson in the fragility of democracy under pressure.

MacDonnell's work brings to light how numerous influential Hollywood figures actively participated in this ideological policing, acting as confidential informants or sharing the political fears of officials determined to keep American film "free of outside influence," defined specifically as communist ideology. Among the most prominent collaborators with the G-men—a colloquial term for FBI agents—were cultural giants such as Walt Disney, John Wayne, and Cecil B. DeMille. These individuals were profoundly influential and willingly aligned themselves with Hoover's campaign, believing they were acting as patriotic gatekeepers. MacDonnell's scholarly rigor is founded on extensive archival research, utilizing FBI documents and correspondence. Excerpts from these materials are particularly illuminating, revealing power dynamics where Hoover maintained a calculated distance, while many stars viewed collaboration as an honor and a testament to their loyalty. Cecil B. DeMille's eagerness to serve the federal cause is starkly illustrated by his letter to Hoover, promising, "I shall be ready at any and all times to be of further service in any way you care to call upon me." This mindset exemplifies the Hollywood elite who saw themselves as patriotic ideological sentinels. The intelligence gained from these loyal stars was crucial in

constructing and maintaining the infamous blacklist: a comprehensive ledger used to mark actors, directors, screenwriters, companies, and even specific movies believed to harbor communist influences. The ultimate objective was nothing less than to prevent American citizens from being “turned toward the ways of communism” through cinematic messaging, establishing a pervasive culture of suspicion.

The public phase of anti-communist fervor began not with the FBI’s internal lists, but with the actions of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Its highly publicized 1947 hearing led to the blacklisting of the “Hollywood 10,” signaling that ideological nonconformity would result in professional ruin. HUAC extended its terrifying reach beyond the movie industry, often targeting individuals with differing political ideologies, effectively using its platform as a tool for political conformity rather than purely investigating espionage. As Cold War anxieties deepened globally, HUAC’s hearings became public spectacles, punishing dissent and further polarizing the industry. The dragnet often targeted anyone who simply held different political ideologies than the Republican party, which controlled the committee. In Hollywood, powerful organizations served as internal allies to ideological conservatism. The Motion Picture Association (MPA) and the Directors Guild actively aided Hoover’s scrutiny. By collaborating with federal investigators, they placed Hollywood’s creative output under intense pressure, ensuring that the anti-communist narrative was promoted or went unchallenged. This collaborative dynamic underscores the terrifying efficacy of the blacklist as a political and economic weapon. The ensuing ideological warfare transformed filmmaking into a battleground for the American soul, setting a profound precedent for how political anxieties could penetrate and control the realm of entertainment. The combined monitoring by the FBI and HUAC enforced a widespread culture of self-censorship, leading to an era of cultural production defined by thematic conformity where the perceived threat of communism overshadowed creative freedom.

MacDonnell’s decision on the book’s structure makes for an immersive reading experience that elevates *Policing Show Business* above a standard historical account. The organization of the material is highly effective: each of the parts and sections builds upon the last, progressively revealing the terrifying scope of Hoover’s influence from initial intelligence gathering to the full implementation of the blacklist. While the table of contents suggests a traditional chronological flow, MacDonnell’s internal chapter progression is sophisticated. The author justifies that some dates are presented out of chronological order to give necessary context and ensure that the emotional and political stakes are immediately clear, prioritizing thematic coherence over a strict sequence of events. This structural choice is key to the book’s effectiveness, allowing MacDonnell to draw connections across disparate events and demonstrate the cumulative impact of political repression. The methodology underscores the book’s commitment to presenting a cohesive narrative about the nature of ideological control, rather than just the sequence of its implementation. The book’s critical strength lies in its archival depth, utilizing quotations pulled directly from FBI archives and personal correspondence. This approach provides a deep and visceral understanding of the events, avoiding the dry enumeration of facts. Instead, MacDonnell gives an inside view into the attitudes of both the patriotic zealots and the fearful targets of their surveillance. By organizing the work around key themes—such as the role of informants, the mechanics of

the blacklist, or the profile of dissent—MacDonnell successfully translates abstract ideological conflict into a series of compelling human struggles. The inclusion of parts dedicated to the legacy of the blacklist and its eventual, gradual erosion provides the necessary structural closure, demonstrating the long-lasting professional and personal damage inflicted on the industry.

Despite the pervasive atmosphere of conformity enforced by the FBI and HUAC, a critical figure who emerged as a powerful counterforce was Dore Schary, the liberal head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). Schary was an enormous ideological threat to Hoover and the MPA, seen as the biggest obstacle to their complete control over Hollywood's ideological output. Using his powerful position, Schary fostered a culture of resistance, deliberately allowing for the creation of message movies—films that injected liberal themes into traditional escapist fare. This was an active act of ideological defiance, characterized by intellectual boldness and managerial protection for writers and directors who shared Schary's progressive viewpoint, briefly carving out a sanctuary within the monolithic studio system. Schary's studio became known for tackling difficult or socially relevant topics, a stark contrast to the escapist and often propagandistic content favored by the anti-communist crusaders. At a time when virtually all movies were under the watchful eye of Hoover and the MPA—films were being scrutinized for a single line of dialogue or a subtle plot point that could be interpreted as un-American—MGM was bravely creating movies that went against the grain. They were placing new spins on the traditional movies that Hollywood had been making, often advocating for themes of social justice, civil liberties, and individual rights. Ultimately, the relentless political pressure proved too great, and Schary was removed as head of MGM. Following his departure, the political opposition he faced was relentless, haunting him until his retirement in 1961. Schary was the face of executive opposition to Hoover, and his story is a poignant testament to the personal cost of standing up for one's principles. He risked everything—reputation, career, and livelihood—to hold fast to what he believed was right. MacDonnell uses Schary's resistance to humanize the political conflict, showing how abstract national security fears translated into professional ruin for an executive who valued creative freedom. His eventual resignation is a somber testament to the total victory of the anti-communist forces in the studio system. The detailed account of Schary's resistance highlights the devastating effectiveness of the Cold War machine, even against those at the pinnacle of cultural power.

The most commendable aspect of MacDonnell's writing is its impartial tone. The text avoids taking a side when assessing Hoover and his war against perceived communism in Hollywood. Given the intensely charged nature of the subject, the author achieves a masterful balance by letting the facts and archival quotes speak for themselves, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions on Hoover's actions. This intellectual honesty is the book's greatest strength, enabling it to function as a genuine historical resource and a thoughtful commentary on the perennial clash between security, loyalty, and freedom of expression in the United States.

The meticulous details concerning power dynamics, the chilling impact of the blacklist on individual careers, and the complicity of powerful institutions make *Policing Show Business*

an essential text for understanding how ideological paranoia can corrode cultural integrity and democratic principles. By presenting evidence without over moralizing, MacDonnell enhances his credibility, providing a nuanced portrait of historical actors motivated by a complex mix of patriotism, ambition, and fear. The book avoids judging past figures solely by modern standards; instead, it places their actions into the heightened context of the early Cold War. This balanced approach allows MacDonnell to detail the abuses of power, the surveillance, the blacklisting, and the infringement on civil liberties, while simultaneously providing the political framework that made these actions seem justifiable to their proponents. Ultimately, this neutral perspective transforms the book into a profound and lasting examination of how the forces of national security, when unchecked, can be wielded to enforce political conformity, making its historical lessons timeless. The author's restraint in judgment ensures that the horror of the blacklist speaks for itself through the documented experiences of those who suffered professional and personal ruin. *Policing Show Business* is a must-read that shows the dangers of political fear and how easily it can divide a company, as well as a nation. The book's comprehensive scope, covering the dual threats of both FBI investigation and HUAC spectacle, coupled with the internal complicity of powerful Hollywood figures, creates a complete picture of the censorship mechanism. The depth of the archival research elevates the work beyond standard Cold War histories, making MacDonnell's monograph a defining work on the intersection of culture, power, and political paranoia in the mid-twentieth-century United States.

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Nolan, Rachel.

Until I Find You: Disappeared Children and Coercive Adoptions in Guatemala.

Harvard University Press, 2024.
310 pages. eBook. ISBN: 9780674270350.

Some of the darkest stories live behind the façades of righteousness. Throughout the twentieth century, humanitarianism influenced interventions, adoptions, and aid programs. Compassion soon fell to coercion, leading to one of Latin America's legacies of violence: systematic trafficking and international adoptions. The unsettling occurrence that led to thousands of children's disappearances has sparked many scholarly works—including Laura Briggs's *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* (2012) and Erin Siegal McIntyre's *Finding Fernanda: Two Mothers, One Child, and a Cross-Border Search for Truth* (2011)—that explore how adoption industries reproduced colonial hierarchies. In 2024, Rachel Nolan published the scholarly monograph *Until I Find You: Disappeared Children and Coercive Adoptions in Guatemala*, uncovering how the disappearance of Mayan children were disguised as rescues who needed homes. From 1960 to 1996, Guatemala experienced a civil war in which the state pursued military campaigns that disproportionately affected the Indigenous Mayan region. Displacement and the weakened legal protection defined everyday life, separating many children from their families. By tracing how false humanitarian aid intertwined with Cold War policies, Nolan

reveals how Guatemala's adoption industry grew out of counterinsurgency and ended only after an international scandal forced change.

Nolan, a historian and journalist who currently teaches international relations at Boston University, is an expert in modern Latin American history, with a focus on U.S.-Latin American relations, and uses an archival and oral history approach. She earned her Ph.D. in Latin American and Caribbean History at New York University (NYU) and has extensive experience reporting on Latin American human rights violations for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. *Until I Find You* is her first book, and it has already reshaped scholars' understanding by showing how national identities are constructed through politically influenced memories to create compelling national narratives, especially in post-conflict periods. Using interviews, criminal case files, and social reports, Nolan's work reconstructs the operations of lawyers, brokers, and orphanages that facilitated thousands of adoptions over a period of thirty years.

Rather than following a simple chronology, Nolan structures her book as a three-part investigation, tracing how disappearance became policy and how memory became resistance. The opening chapters explain how falsified paperwork and a motto emphasizing the "best interest of the child" led to coercion and the legalization of abduction during the Guatemalan Civil War. (34) Children were sent to countries like the United States and Canada, as well as all over Europe. *Until I Find You* then moves into the adoption business, linked to privatization and global demand in the 1980s and 1990s. Nolan details high-profile incidents like the infamous Piñata case, a kidnapping with multiple murders, showcasing how far the adoption rings were willing to go. (91) These organizations made up to \$15,000 per child with little to no remorse, which can be seen in the chilling interviews with adoption lawyers. (90, 172) The book's final chapters center on postwar Guatemala, when mothers and adoptees stood with human rights advocates to confront the crimes that had been committed. One of Nolan's strongest contributions is her focus on revealing that thousands of children had already been placed with families in the United States before efforts to halt these kidnapping adoptions even began. (223) Rumor and memory functioned as an alternative archive. Nolan fills in the gaps in falsified files and missing documents to reveal authentic stories of the Mayan communities. (172) Her ability to transform manipulated and fragmented records into historical evidence helps her achieve the central goal of showing how humanitarianism and violence can be joined together. By using a range of sources from state records to social reports, she gives a comprehensive and reflective history of what happened to the disappeared children in Guatemala.

Until I Find You has several strengths that make it stand out for its scholarship and subaltern narrative. Nolan transforms archival fragments into critiques of power and memory. By reinterpreting adoption files, Nolan illustrates how social workers and lawyers fabricated and falsified paperwork, thereby facilitating the disappearances of children. (28) By shedding light on the false adoption record, once seen as the official story that erased Indigenous identity, she exposes how bureaucracy itself enabled violence. (134) For decades, Latin American elites tried to rid their countries of Mayan communities, but the latter's stories and resistance will no longer be silenced or obscured because of the work of scholars like Nolan. Her interpretive precision turns official documents into moral evidence and advances the historiography on

state archives and humanitarianism. (139) Nolan writes a powerful, empathetic history that allows readers to grasp how institutions normalize coercion.

Another defining strength of *Until I Find You* is its control of narrative and scale. The story of Dolores Preat, kidnapped in 1984 and rediscovered decades later, functions as more than a biography; it becomes a lens for Nolan to expose how morality, capitalism, and empire converge to commodify children. (3) Nolan's argument that "colonial and Cold War violence marched in lockstep" captures the link between humanitarian rhetoric and centuries of anti-Indigenous policies, reframing adoption as a continuation of this colonial domination. (155) Nolan's clarity and restraint let emotion strengthen her analysis rather than overwhelm it, giving the book lasting power and credibility. The combination of narrative intimacy and documentary rigor grounds her argument that the adoption industry's success relied on the same hierarchy of race, gender, and class that fueled Guatemala's decades-long violence.

Nolan uses comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to reinforce her book's strengths. While other scholarly works, including Briggs's *Somebody's Children* and McIntyre's *Finding Fernanda*, discuss how humanitarian language conceals systems of inequality, Nolan broadens the context. By connecting Francoist Spain, Nazi Germany, and settler colonies' Indigenous child removals, she elevates Guatemala's horrific adoptions from a national strategy into a global framework. (155) The way she draws on feminist and postcolonial theories makes *Until I Find You* a model of comparative microhistory that is detailed in its research and creative in its scope. Unlike other works on similar topics, Nolan demonstrates with striking precision how humanitarian language itself became a mechanism of disappearance and other violence committed against the Indigenous communities. Nolan's strong analysis comes from a strong moral conviction that threads through her writing, giving the book an emotional force even as it raises questions about the limits of representing trauma in historical narratives. Her handling of falsified documents, survivor testimonies, and state complicity translates absences into arguments, ensuring that those who disappeared are not only remembered but become actors in the historical narratives. (194) Nolan combines empathy with academic discipline, something few scholars successfully achieve. (195) *Until I Find You* allows history to recognize how far the mistreatment went with Indigenous children, but it opens the door to challenges that accompany such an ambitious scope, which becomes apparent when considering the book's few limitations.

While *Until I Find You* succeeds in reframing humanitarianism and the history of coerced adoptions, its broad scope sometimes stretches the balance between emotional detail and analytical focus. Nolan's decision to weave local testimonies into a global framework sometimes leads to an uneven pacing and her argument being overshadowed by a larger theoretical lens. (168) Her moral clarity can also simplify the mixed motives of adoption lawyers and social workers, whose actions reflected self-interest and their own twisted justice during Guatemala's instability. (171) At certain points, the density of her archival evidence and global comparisons can overwhelm readers, especially during abrupt moves between testimonies and policy discussions. These moments of tension also reflect the scale of Nolan's ambition to put this story into a single frame, which is often difficult for historians to achieve. Beyond this, Nolan faces methodological constraints that reveal the difficulty of

reconstructing history on contested memories and partial archives. Her use of oral histories and rumor over traditional archives raises questions about the limits of memory, even though she is careful to acknowledge these gaps. (193) In the field of oral history, scholars face the question of what is considered fact, but it is essential to remember that there are entire societies who would not have any history were it not for their oral traditions. These issues show how difficult it is to write about a past shaped by incomplete records and lasting trauma, a challenge Nolan tackles with methodological care and moral awareness.

Few works confront the contradictions inherent in humanitarianism with the precision and decolonial effort of *Until I Find You*. Nolan has transformed what might have been a rescue story into a penetrating investigation of how moral authority can serve as a vehicle of domination. Through rigorous research and a strong ethical focus, she has exposed the blurred line between protection and coercion, revealing how humanitarian ideals were ultimately corrupted by the pursuit of power and financial gain. Her narrative does more than just document Guatemala's coerced adoptions; it illustrates the global structures that allowed for additional layers of exploitation and violence against the Mayan communities rather than showing them long-overdue compassion. *Until I Find You* is essential reading for scholars of modern Latin America, particularly those focused on Central America and Indigenous studies. Beyond that, it is a valuable resource for those engaged in human rights studies, adoption and family histories, genocide studies, and memory studies, as well as legal and advocacy communities. *Until I Find You* stands as both evidence and warning—a testament to how truth can emerge from silence and how scholarship can reclaim the voices that history has sought to erase.

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Olsson, Tore C.

Red Dead's History: A Video Game, an Obsession, and America's Violent Past.

St. Martin's Press, 2024.

288 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781250287700.

Tore C. Olsson's 2024 monograph, *Red Dead's History: A Video Game, an Obsession, and America's Violent Past*, is a history professor's attempt at fusing academic history with the media analysis of video games—a reconstruction of post-Civil War America through the lens of Rockstar Games' *Red Dead Redemption II* (2018). The result is a discussion of the United States from Reconstruction to Jim Crow, set against the backdrop of the video game. Olsson's core strength lies in connecting the video game to history, particularly the violent economic and racial transformations of the late nineteenth century. I think he falls short when using *Red Dead Redemption II* to teach history, failing to fully address the field of game design or the developers' own intentions and interpretations. Also, he has little to say about the original *Red Dead Redemption* (2010), to which *Red Dead Redemption II* serves as a prequel. Maybe he is fortunate enough to interview some game developers in his class, but they are not to be found in this book. These absences ultimately shape the book's strengths and limitations as a work of historical interpretation rather than media studies.

Olsson opens by recounting how he returned to gaming during the COVID-19 lockdowns and was drawn into *Red Dead Redemption II*. He acknowledges that much of what he discusses in the book is peripheral to the game itself, but it interested him, nonetheless. For readers, the feeling is mutual. As a professor of History at the University of Tennessee, Olsson leveraged his interest into a course on the period from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, which—due to its positive reception—helped generate this book. Its structure follows the game's geography: the West, the Deep South, and Appalachia. Each region anchors a series of historical essays framed by moments from the game: the Pinkerton pursuit, industrial expansion, racial violence, and the decline of frontier autonomy. Olsson's method resembles that of a guided lecture. Thus, the game functions less as a text for close reading than as a narrative map that links familiar topics in U.S. social and political history. The work's pedagogical origin explains both its accessibility and its methodological limits. Its *Kirkus* book review observes that Olsson "connects the past to the present in ways that are novel and fun," introducing readers to the intersections of industrial capitalism, race, and violence through using familiar pop culture as its vehicle. The book's accessibility and anecdotal pacing invite readers who might never open a monograph on the Gilded Age. Olsson uses the Van der Linde gang's eastward flight as a proxy for the end of Reconstruction and the imposition of Jim Crow, mapping their journey onto the contraction of freedom and the consolidation of state power. Yet his analytical depth fluctuates. Where his historical narrative is strongest—on convict leasing, disenfranchisement, and the Lost Cause—the connection to Rockstar's fictional universe can feel secondary, sometimes appearing only as a transitional hook between chapters.

Olsson's interpretation of the American West grounds the first third of the book. He defines "the West," and positions the game's imagined frontier alongside what he terms the "harnessing of the West," a phrase denoting both economic incorporation and cultural domestication. This term, as Andrew R. Graybill notes in the *Wall Street Journal*, overlaps heavily with Richard Maxwell Brown's earlier concept of the "Western Civil War of Incorporation." Graybill praises Olsson's enthusiasm and narrative skill but criticizes his limited citation of foundational historians, something I also noticed in my readthrough but did not think much of at the time. The omission suggests that Olsson writes for a general readership rather than the historical profession. Still, his thematic choice is sound, namely, the West of *Red Dead II*: corporate railroads, resource extraction, and Pinkerton surveillance all mirror the shift from frontier exceptionalism to systemic exploitation. Olsson highlights this tension effectively, showing that the mythic outlaw exists precisely because the state has closed the frontier.

The book's central section, dealing with the Deep South, is its most substantial. Here, Olsson ties *Red Dead's* Louisiana-inspired Saint Denis and Lemoyne to the real history of Reconstruction's collapse. He surveys racial terror, lynching, and chain gangs with clarity, citing the Thirteenth Amendment's loophole permitting involuntary servitude "as punishment for crime." He contextualizes the game's white convict gangs and absent Black prisoners as an elision of race in late-nineteenth-century carceral labor. These chapters make his thesis explicit: *Red Dead Redemption II* can serve as a starting point for exploring the continuity between slavery and incarceration, even if the game itself skirts that racial reality. As Olsson

argues, the player's white-centered perspective reflects broader patterns of historical forgetting. Yet the limits of his approach become visible here. Robert Whitaker's *History Respawned* review sharply criticizes *Red Dead's History* for "sidelining Red Dead itself" and for neglecting the ostensible scholarship of Esther Wright and John Wills on Rockstar's mythmaking. Whitaker, also known under the alias "Reviewer 2" on his review site, argues that Olsson's failure to engage the aforementioned literature undermines his claim of originality and weakens his critique of the game's politics. The absence is indeed glaring. Wright's *Rockstar Games and American History: Promotional Materials and the Construction of Authenticity* (2022), and the collection *Red Dead Redemption: History, Myth and Violence in the Video Game West* (2023), co-edited by Wills and Wright, came out before Olsson's book and directly address the issues Olsson raises—authenticity, nostalgia, and violence—yet he cites neither. As a result, he sometimes reproduces the game's preferred reading rather than interrogating it. His assertion that Rockstar "resists the recycling of tired myths" overlooks the studio's history of aestheticizing brutality for entertainment in its games. (207)

By contrast, non-academic reviewers have been more forgiving. Writing for *Irresponsible Reader*, H. C. Newton describes the book as "a great way to approach American history" and praises Olsson's engaging prose and wit. Newton notes that Olsson avoids pedanticism, by explaining terms such as "Jim Crow" and "antebellum" for audiences unfamiliar with historical jargon. This accessibility aligns with Olsson's public history ambitions, namely, to bridge the gap between the classroom and entertainment. Indeed, his choice of *Red Dead Redemption II*, a mass-market entertainment product rather than a documentary, mirrors earlier pedagogical uses of film in history teaching. His claim that the game is "the most influential American history video game since *The Oregon Trail*" may sound hyperbolic, but it reflects a genuine cultural reach. (introduction)

Olsson's treatment of race and memory in the later chapters approaches the book's most unsettling material. His discussion of the Lost Cause, Confederate monuments, and vigilante nostalgia exposes how the post-Reconstruction South mythologized defeat as virtue. The game's Lemoyne Raiders, bandits dressed as Confederate holdouts, serve as avatars of this delusion. I wish Olsson had focused more on the development of Confederate monuments, as plenty were built long after the Civil War, but he makes it clear that the statues were intended to intimidate. The final chapters on Appalachia trace how the region's stereotypes—violence, feuds, and backwardness—emerged from industrial incursions and class conflict. Olsson's analysis of the Hatfield–McCoy feud situates it within the broader exploitation of Appalachian resources, paralleling the Van der Linde gang's doomed attempt to survive modernization. The game still serves as a thematic starting point, but here Olsson's writing achieves the clarity of a social historian translating complex processes into narrative form. The book concludes by suggesting that a hypothetical prequel set in the 1870s might align with historical chronology, an implicit admission that Rockstar's execution undermines its own premise to a certain extent.

In over 240 pages, *Red Dead's History* teeters between academic enthusiasm and public-facing simplification. Historians may be underwhelmed by the minimal secondary literature and the lack of game developers as interviewees; meanwhile, general readers will be satisfied

by the combination of accessible prose and serious topics. Olsson's achievement lies less in original scholarship than in demonstrating how digital media can reframe historical inquiry. Graybill's *Wall Street Journal* review rightly calls his approach "an inspiring example of what can be done to bring the past to life," even if specialists might prefer more rigorous contextualization. Taken together, these responses outline the paradox of *Red Dead's History*. It succeeds as outreach, humanizing history through interactive culture, but falters as accurate historiography, repeating rather than dissecting Rockstar's ideological scaffolding. The book's optimism about video games as "powerful tools in teaching serious historical content" is well-founded. (6) When history is made interesting to students or teachers, it will make them more engaged. For students and casual readers, *Red Dead's History* offers an engaging introduction to Reconstruction-era themes. For scholars of historical media, it marks an entry point still waiting for the next, more critically literate step. Overall, Olsson's monograph is recommended—be it for public historians, educators interested in teaching history via popular culture, enjoyers of the *Red Dead* games, and general audiences interested in the intersections of U.S. history and storytelling.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Fergus O'Connor of Irvine, California, earned his B.A. in Cinema and Television Arts (2020) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF, where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He also served as an editor for volume 53 (2026) of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

Polanco, Edward Anthony.

Healing like Our Ancestors:

The Nahua Tiçitl, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Central Mexico, 1535–1660.

The University of Arizona Press, 2024.

282 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780816553426.

Like prisoners freed from Plato's cave, Edward Anthony Polanco asks his readers to step out of their shadowy world of common historical narratives and misinterpretations to look toward the light of Nahua epistemologies. Following the Nahua peoples of Central Mexico, in honor of his Indigenous grandfather, Polanco's 2024 monograph, *Healing like Our Ancestors: The Nahua Tiçitl, Gender, and Settler Colonialism in Central Mexico, 1535–1660*, challenges historians to rethink how the use of language, particularly Nahuatl, Kuna, and Spanish, can reshape the past as we believe we know it. It opens a window into sixteenth and seventeenth-century Central Mexico, revealing hidden complexities that have been lost or omitted from colonial records of medicine and gender since they had been skewed through colonizers' distorted lenses. By reading against the grain and in conjunction with native peoples' own sources, Polanco constructs a history that is inclusive to the Nahua people through linguistic and cultural means. Utilizing linguistic analysis and postcolonial methodology, Edward Anthony Polanco reconstructs the world of the *tiçih* (healers) and *tiçiyotl* (the body of healing knowledge), restoring agency and nuance to Nahua practitioners once dismissed through an Anglo-Christian lens or, in the case of female practitioners, reduced to midwives. Polanco calls for historians to change the way they see language, advocating for the use of alternative languages' terms to "eschew colonial terms." (xxi)

Edward Anthony Polanco is a historian specializing in Indigenous history, Nahua peoples, and the ways in which gender, medicine, and healing interact within the context of colonial Latin America. Polanco earned his Ph.D. in History, with a minor in Anthropology, at the University of Arizona. He holds both an M.A. and a B.A. in History from the University of California, Riverside, and he currently works as an associate professor in the Department of History at Virginia Tech and as the director of the Indigenous Studies program, overseeing the university's Indigenous Studies minor. He has published widely in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and he remains an active participant in the study of Nahua languages and Indigenous studies more broadly. *Healing Like Our Ancestors* was awarded the 2025 Phi Alpha Theta Best First Book Award. It explores Nahua healing traditions, the role of female healers, and the impact of Spanish colonial and settler practices on Indigenous medical systems. As such, it serves as a testament to the resilience of Indigenous knowledge and underscores the importance of decolonizing historical narratives. Polanco seems to be building on and inspired by scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, adding more nuance to the historical discussion she has had with historian Stuart Hall regarding the underexplored roles of female *tiçih*. Historians interested in Polanco's work may indeed be interested in Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), which explores the many techniques, like oral histories, that may be employed by members of Indigenous communities to make their voices heard more broadly.

Polanco's book opens with a vivid account of his visit to the Real Jardín Botánico (Royal Botanical Garden) in Madrid, where plants from both the Old and New Worlds are displayed. He observes that their descriptions are strikingly two-dimensional, noting that the placards for the potato and tobacco emphasize only "[their] European 'discovery' in the Americas and the untapped knowledge about its [i.e., the potato's] nutritional attributes, unknown to Europeans until the eighteenth century. One short sentence explained that papas [potatoes] had been domesticated in the Chilean and Peruvian Andes eight thousand years ago." (3–4) Polanco critiques this Eurocentric framing for overlooking the plants' cultural and medicinal significance. For instance, tobacco had long served Indigenous peoples as a remedy for asthma, pain, and uterine irregularities. By contrasting these rich Indigenous understandings with flattened European narratives, Polanco establishes his central argument about the persistent erasure of Indigenous epistemologies.

Chapter 1, "The Hispanizing of Definitions of *Tiçih* and *Tiçiyotl*," explores how the Spanish settlers who interacted with the locals portrayed the scientific and healing works of the Nahua people. He calls them by the name they wish to be called, *tiçih* (healers) of the *tiçiyotl* (traditional Nahua healing practices), to return agency to them and avoid using terms shaped by Western ideas of medicine and culture. Using the Nahuatl terminology allows him to present a more accurate account of their practices and the social roles these *tiçih* held. The female *tiçih*, for instance, were often underrepresented or mischaracterized in Spanish-language sources, which mentioned them almost exclusively as midwives. This framing diminishes their authority, reshaping them to fit European understandings instead of Nahua realities. Polanco draws on colonial sources such as Bernardino de Sahagún's *Historia general* and early Nahuatl–Spanish dictionaries, reading them critically to show how translation distorted Indigenous knowledge systems. Translators have reduced the female *tiçih* by

masculinizing the term when translating it into Spanish. Polanco clarifies that *tiçih* was a gender-neutral term encompassing diverse healing and spiritual practices, with women playing major roles in communicating with life forces and diagnosing illness. In doing this, he reveals women's role as central to Nahua systems of healing and balance. His decision to leave key Nahuatl terms untranslated serves as both an ethical and scholarly resistance to colonial simplification. Through these sources, Polanco demonstrates how language itself became a colonial instrument of control. Translators, priests, and lexicographers reframed *tiçiyotl* within the vocabulary of European medicine. This imposed hierarchy diminished the legitimacy of Nahua healing practices while reinforcing Spanish authority. In restoring terms like *tiçih* and *tiçiyotl*, Polanco returns voice and complexity to Nahua healers whose work bridged the physical and spiritual realms. Although the study's attention to definitions enriches its analysis, the frequency of such explanations sometimes disrupts the argument's flow; using endnotes could help maintain readability.

Chapter 2, "The Trivializing of Women in Records of *Tiçiyotl*," explores the ways in which case studies, as detailed in Spanish sources, treated these female healers. Polanco illustrates how Western notions of healing differed from the Nahuas' perspectives. European practices at the time saw the body as a balance of the four humors: "[blood], phlegm, yellow bile, and black [bile], and some illnesses were deemed to be either hot or cold. Hot illnesses were treated with cold remedies, and cold illnesses with hot remedies. This resonated with, but differed from, Mesoamerican ideas of hot and cold." (78) Accordingly, Spanish officials, such as the physician Francisco Hernández, in his *De antiquitatibus Novae Hispaniae* and in his *De historia plantarum Novae Hispaniae*, detailed the dangerous practices that the Nahua midwives recommended to women who had just given birth. Their practices aligned with the ideas of hot and cold, but rather than counteracting either temperature, "*tiçih* asked women who had recently delivered children to take a steam bath, followed by an ice bath. Furthermore, *tiçih* permitted new mothers to use cold and astringent medications to 'supposedly' revitalize the kidneys." (38) Hernández's reaction reveals that colonial physicians viewed Indigenous medicine as threatening and inferior, a knowledge system to be reinterpreted or erased to uphold European and Christian authority. His text underscores the cruelty and epistemic violence that Catholic authorities inflicted upon women *tiçih* following the discovery of their "heretical" practices. The case of Ana of Xochimilco, a *tiçitl* or medicine practitioner, is particularly striking. Ana was accused of consorting with the devil after performing a healing ritual in which she pinched an ill woman's body to remove supposed illness-causing objects, specifically, pieces of paper she claimed had been placed there by Tezcatlipoca (the god of war). While Ana's actions aligned with established Nahua medical and spiritual traditions, inquisitors reinterpreted them through a Christian lens that equated Indigenous cosmologies with diabolism. Her forced confession that "the devil had misled her" (79) exemplifies the pressures Indigenous women faced to renounce their practices under colonial interrogation and to conform to the spiritual hierarchies imposed by the Church. Her actions, interpreted by inquisitors as blasphemous, demonstrate a coherent system of diagnosis and ritual intervention deeply rooted in Nahua understandings of illness and balance. Through cases such as Ana's, Polanco exposes how colonial institutions

weaponized Western religious thought to dismantle Indigenous authority, particularly that exercised by women healers.

Chapter 3, "The Framing of Tlapohualiztli as Guesswork and Diabolic Activity," is significant because it reconstructs Indigenous epistemologies of healing, diagnosis, and spirituality as coherent systems of knowledge rather than the mere "superstitions" that Spanish sources had made them out to be. Through skillful and highly detailed engagement with colonial and Nahua sources, Polanco reclaims the intellectual and cultural sophistication of *tiçitl* (healers, diviners), showing how colonial writers distorted the latter's practices through Christian moral frameworks. One beautiful aspect of this chapter is its employment of Nahua artwork from the Codex Magliabechiano, which Polanco incorporates as a source to showcase a female *tiçitl* performing cultural rituals to predict the fate of a sickly man. The man is seen to cry upon the results, as there is "a small void in the center of the corn and beans, implying that the woman [...] has informed the man [...] that he will perish." (125)

Chapter 4, "The Invisibilizing of *Titìçih* in the Extraction of Native Materials," is similarly important, though it shifts away from predictions of fate, delving instead into the significance of Nahua *tiçiyotl* remedies for ailments, especially the environmentally sourced remedies Nahua *tiçitl* curated for struggling women going through arduous labor. There were multiple ways these healers could alleviate and mitigate the pain of this process, including the use of the *cihuapaht* plant, for example: "[the] *Historia general* describes *cihuapahtli*, which grew everywhere [...] an infused beverage created by boiling the leaves in water would help a woman give birth." (164) Unfortunately, this text, alongside others, fails to mention specifically who applied these remedial techniques, which Polanco attributes to "an erasure or concealment of Nahua practitioners when discussing Nahua "'medical' materials," urging readers to "read between the lines and cross-reference multiple sources to understand the full scope of *titìçih* in Nahua communities." (166) Overall, Polanco's research powerfully decolonizes historical narratives and restores Indigenous agency, especially that of women healers. His call for linguistic and methodological precision challenges historians to confront colonial biases embedded in their sources.

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Pomerantsev, Peter.

How To Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler.

Public Affairs, 2024.

304 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781541774728.

Propaganda is not something that occasionally appears; it persists. According to Peter Pomerantsev, "[i]t is a tool to tap into human fears, vulnerabilities, and secrets, often violent and cruel desires, and twist them to the benefit of the powerful forces they serve. Fact-checking doesn't stand a chance." (xv) As we live through an era of rapidly expanding internet use, in which the validity of information and the denial of facts continue to grow,

Pomerantsev seeks to define how propaganda is used to both divide and unite populations. His new book, *How To Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler*, follows the life of Sefton Delmer (1904–1979), a German-born British subject who grew up in Berlin during World War I and went on to become a journalist-turned-propagandist during the rise of the Nazi Party and World War II. Delmer's secret radio station, *Gustaf Siegfried Eins* (GS1), was designed to attack Nazi morale from within and pit the German population against party leaders. Delmer employed what was considered "black propaganda" (164)—or covert operations—to spread this information under the guise of a German named *der Chef* (i.e., "the boss"). Pomerantsev, a Ukrainian-born British journalist, uses Delmer's methods as an analytical lens through which to reflect on our modern era of disinformation, digital manipulation, and authoritarian media.

Pomerantsev is in a unique position to write about the consequences of propaganda. Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, his family moved to West Berlin in 1978 after his father had been arrested by the KGB for disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda. Growing up in Munich and then London, Pomerantsev eventually moved to Moscow in 2001, where he worked in television until 2010. His work in Russia has made him acutely aware of how common manipulation of reality is in our digital age. He is clearly drawn to morally gray individuals who inhabit the space between honesty and strategy, sincerity and performance, such as Sefton Delmer. Pomerantsev's background in media production and policy research enables him to craft a vivid narrative that carries undertones of analytical concerns about how belief is formed and fractured in times of crisis. He writes that, in Weimar Germany, "[t]he Nazis' evidence-free claim to 'purity' could be alluring in a time of disorienting change [...] it promised a simple way of knowing who you were." (28–29) In his book, Pomerantsev directly compares the propaganda and word use of the Nazis to that of the Russians throughout the buildup to and during the ongoing Russo-Ukraine war, stating that, "[i]n the propaganda to justify the 2022 Russian invasion [...] any Ukrainians who [...] [did] not admit to being 'one people' with Russia had to be eliminated." (29)

Pomerantsev is not a typical historian. His focus is less on archival completeness and more on human resonance. Therefore, *How To Win an Information War* is written with a hybrid lens of history and lived psychology. It is arranged in relatively chronological order, with interludes on different themes interspersed throughout the chapters. It begins with Delmer's early life in Germany and his journalistic career between World War I and World War II, where he first encountered Hitler and the Nazi machine. These formative years made it clear that Delmer's later mastery of propaganda was deeply rooted in his intimate understanding of how it worked upon the general population. Pomerantsev describes how "Hitler's power stemmed not so much from his ability to win people over with clever arguments, but from his articulating the feelings that already lay within them and taking them on an emotional journey from feeling humiliated to humiliating others." (42) Delmer viewed people's relationship with propaganda as "slightly faking their fanaticism—and their fascist leaders are also somewhat fake." (47)

The wartime portions of the book are the most vivid. Pomerantsev reconstructs for his readers how Delmer's radio networks, approved by British intelligence, were mock stations

designed to sound like authentic German voices of protest. Delmer's broadcasts were theatrical, blending dark humor, scandals, and a sense of colloquial authenticity. They targeted German soldiers' frustrations with their leaders and the cynicism developing among civilians. The idea behind such a tactic was that "[o]ne needed to climb into Germans' relationship with the Nazis—not lecture them from outside." (63) Pomerantsev describes how once the Nazis gained control and were once again able to use the radio, "they could further spread their new language. Words like *Führer*, *Volkgemeinschaft*, and *Volksgenosse* entered Germans' everyday vocabulary," (86) which was "[t]he sort of language that would work effectively in today's social media." (86) Such an argument warns us that, as technology has transitioned from radio to social media, propaganda has remained relatively consistent.

From a historiographical standpoint, the book works through synthesis. Pomerantsev draws upon a range of source materials, including Delmer's memoirs, wartime documents, personal letters, and period broadcasts, to craft a narrative that not only feels authentic but also convincing in its reconstruction. However, the book's power lies in its interpretive framing. Pomerantsev's approach to history is a moral allegory. Each chapter, each story is chosen for what it reveals about the mechanisms of persuasion. It almost works as a microhistory. The life of Sefton Delmer can be viewed within a broader cultural and ethical context. Although some readers may hope for a deeper engagement with existing historiography, such as a comparative analysis between Allied and Axis propaganda, I believe that pursuing such an approach would have yielded a different book. Pomerantsev's effectiveness lies in drawing a line of continuity between wartime radio and today's social media ecosystems, which invites historians to see propaganda as an evolving technology of the human mind rather than an isolated phenomenon. Pomerantsev compares how with social media, "creating 'sock puppets' like *der Chef* is easy [...] botnets, troll farms, and online mobs have become ubiquitous from Mexico to Manila." (136) Another strength of the book is Pomerantsev's ability to capture Delmer's personality: his showmanship, his wit, and his occasional arrogance.

How To Win an Information War belongs to a growing list of works that explore propaganda as both a historical phenomenon and a contemporary concern. It distinguishes itself from other works by focusing on a single practitioner rather than an institution and by treating propaganda as a moral rather than a technical problem. Unlike dense archival studies, Pomerantsev's narrative is living and breathing with personality and reflection, and it does something rare: it humanizes the machinery of information warfare. I found the book also to be comparable to the cultural histories of wartime art and film, where questions of persuasion and representation intertwine in a similar fashion. Pomerantsev's Delmer is a figure as theatrical as he is strategic. He is a creative artist working in the shadow of moral compromise. Thus, the book bridges the fields of propaganda studies, biography, and intellectual history, appealing to readers across multiple disciplines.

Pomerantsev's *How To Win an Information War* is a historical work that refuses to be confined by its period. Reviving Sefton Delmer's life and craft, it illuminates the enduring struggle over the truth of public life. The combination of biography, analysis, and moral inquiry makes a rich contribution to both historical and contemporary debates. For historians, the book

effectively uses a single case study to raise questions regarding ethics, media, and national identity. Those interested in communication and political culture can follow the history of disinformation that predates the internet. For general readers, it delivers a narrative that is exciting, suspenseful, and sobering. Sefton Delmer was a man who fought lies with lies, emerging victorious but haunted. Major themes of the book include the moral cost of persuasion, the power of performance, and what remains in the aftermath of victory.

The book's only real limitation is that the narrative momentum can often be halted by the scholarly depth, considering that Pomerantsev prioritizes insights over documentation. His writing does not aim to settle current debates on the topic, but rather to reopen them. It forces readers to confront their own complicity in the stories they believe and spread. Overall, *How To Win an Information War* teaches us that the contest for truth is never purely intellectual. The fight for truth is emotional, ethical, and requires imagination. We cannot simply state the truth or use better facts; we must meet people where they are and understand why they need to believe alternative facts in the first place. I fully recommend this book to those looking to understand the lasting lessons of how to "win" the information war; it makes this book an essential read in an age where propaganda has once again defined the political battlefield. Scholars, those interested in the long-term effects of social media, and all who have major concerns with how propaganda is being used across the world would benefit from adding this book to their collection. Additional books to look out for on the subject include Pomerantsev's other book, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (2019), and Thomas Rid's *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (2020). Ultimately, Pomerantsev's *How To Win an Information War* is a contemporary and elegantly written study of propaganda's moral paradoxes

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Prentice, David L.

Unwilling to Quit: The Long Unwinding of American Involvement in Vietnam.

University Press of Kentucky, 2023.

242 pages. eBook. ISBN: 9780813197760.

"Let me make this one point, some public men are destined to be loved, and other public men are destined to be disliked." (122) This quote comes from the now unpopular Richard Nixon interview with CBS, in which he discussed his handling of the Vietnam War and domestic unrest. To Richard Nixon, the Vietnam War came at a time when there was growing civil unrest at home, while U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia was seen as a strategic necessity to combat the potential domino effect that North Vietnam could have on the entirety of Vietnam. Fifty years after the Vietnam War, it is remarkably easy to be blinded by our own hindsight and the dominant historical perceptions of the matter. David Prentice's new book, *Unwilling to Quit: The Long Unwinding of American Involvement in Vietnam* (2023), aims to lift this veil and shed more light on the intricacies and truths of the time in both the United States and Vietnam. One of the strengths of this work is its ability to flesh out the characters

and motives of certain historical figures, who are often overlooked and diluted due to an America-centered stance, such as the president of the Republic of Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu. Prentice's analysis of diplomatic affairs utilizes an extensive array of source material, made possible through government publications, archives, interviews, memoirs, and historical speeches. This creative combination of sources from both the press and official government channels provides a more intimate and well-rounded perspective of the war.

David Prentice is a historian at Oklahoma State University. He holds a Ph.D. in the history of the United States' foreign relations and has published widely in journals and numerous edited volumes. The monograph under review here, *Unwilling to Quit*, examines the complex domestic and international contexts surrounding the United States' withdrawal from Vietnam. It belongs to a series of thirty-six books, titled "Studies in Conflict, Diplomacy and Peace," and it is invaluable for its unique insights that looks at the inner workings of South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the United States' political spheres, utilizing many sources that were also recently declassified, to provide quite a well-rounded and global depiction of the Vietnam War. Thus, his monograph runs contrary to many works that focus primarily on either the United States or Vietnam, making this more balanced perspective on the whole ordeal.

One of the main points of contention that arose around the time Nixon had assumed office was the public upset surrounding the number of U.S. soldiers that were being drafted and killed in Vietnam. Vietnamization focused on shifting the burden of the war to South Vietnamese forces, allowing for a gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops. Prentice explains how this process, while implemented by Nixon, was largely influenced by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird in his formulation of the Vietnamization strategy. The goal of Vietnamization was to maintain the United States' global credibility while reducing the domestic discontent with the war. This is a key theme that runs through Prentice's book, and it illustrates how U.S. officials and policymakers struggled to balance strategic objectives abroad with political pressures at home. Prentice's work is invaluable to historians interested in researching the Vietnam War due to its well-rounded scope of research—employing perspectives from North Vietnam and South Vietnam, as well as accounts from U.S. government officials. *Unwilling to Quit* explores the complex political, military, and diplomatic process behind the United States' eventual withdrawal from the Vietnam War, particularly focusing on the period between 1969 and 1971. It challenges simplistic narratives that view President Richard Nixon's policy of "Vietnamization" as an inevitable, teleological process. Instead, Prentice contends that the Nixon administration's withdrawal of American troops was neither straightforward nor preordained, but was instead fraught with contradictions, domestic pressures, and international dilemmas. Prentice utilizes newly declassified documents and an expanded array of perspectives, including Vietnamese sources, which adds considerable substance to this monograph. In doing so, Prentice sheds new light on the interplay between domestic and foreign influences shaping U.S. strategy in Vietnam and contributes to the historiographical debate over the efficiency, motives, mind games at play, and consequences of Vietnamization.

Chapter 1 examines the context in which Nixon assumed the presidency in January 1969. Nixon inherited a stalled war, rising casualties, public fatigue, and a complex international

situation. Successive American presidents had deepened the United States' entanglement in Vietnam, making it even more difficult to find a clear or easy solution. Prentice elaborates on the struggles that Lyndon B. Johnson had faced as president, assuming office at a rocky moment in Vietnamese politics. Nixon was left with limited choices, namely, either escalating the conflict to secure a military victory or begin disengaging, a path his predecessors had largely refused to take. As Prentice notes, Nixon struggled to end an unpopular war while preserving U.S. credibility and safeguarding South Vietnam from a communist takeover. In chapter 2, Prentice analyzes the internal divisions within Nixon's administration in early 1969. While figures such as National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger advocated escalating the conflict to force Hanoi to the negotiating table, Defense Secretary Laird stressed the importance of phased de-escalation and the need to address domestic antiwar sentiments. Nixon himself remained torn between these approaches, initially siding more with Kissinger's tactics, thus planning covert bombings in Cambodia to "punish the North Vietnamese for the ongoing mini-Tet offensive, [to] prod them to negotiate." (41)

Chapter 3 highlights the surge of student and youth activism in 1969, a year marked by widespread antiwar demonstrations and counterculture movements. These protests intensified Nixon's domestic challenges but also offered his administration opportunities to frame dissent as a threat to American values. Nixon himself interpreted the unrest as symptomatic of a broader cultural decline, remarking, "[t]his is the way civilizations begin to die." (53) The year saw escalating campus violence: "[t]here were at least eighty-four bombings, attempted bombings, and acts of arson on campuses in the first half of 1969, twice as many as the previous fall. America's high schools were the scenes of twenty-seven bombings and attempted bombings [...] Talk of armed revolution was as common as hot dogs at a baseball game [...] Most of this turmoil was unrelated to Vietnam, but the unrest increased fears that a dramatic, public escalation of the war in Indochina would worsen the disorder." (53) Prentice ties these events closely to the broader wave of home-front protests, cultural unrest, and polarization. Chapter 4 takes up the biggest chunk of the work, diving into the progression of Vietnamization and the cultural shifts in both American and Vietnamese societies regarding the war. The summer of 1969, Prentice argues, marked a critical time as Nixon navigated between escalation, negotiation, and the enduring challenge of Vietnamization. As domestic dissent grew in the United States, Nixon planned to bolster public support for the war. Military plans for escalation were developed in secret, and Nixon delayed troop withdrawals as a show of toughness toward North Vietnam. Prentice highlights the complex political dynamics and strategies surrounding the Vietnam War during this period, as the United States' and South Vietnam's global reputations were on the line.

Chapter 5 takes us into the fall of 1969, when the debate over Vietnamization and "Duck Hook"—the code name for an operation to bomb North Vietnam's ports and food supplies—reached its climax. President Richard Nixon faced tough decisions regarding the war in Vietnam, including troop withdrawals, escalating military actions, and negotiations with Hanoi. While some advisors like Henry Kissinger favored decisive escalation, there was dissent within the cabinet, as Laird staunchly disagreed, with his heart still set on Vietnamization. As tensions escalated both domestically and abroad, Nixon ultimately decided to abandon "Duck Hook" and embrace Vietnamization as the administration's strategy moving forward.

This decision, influenced by various factors such as public sentiments and congressional scrutiny, marked a significant turning point in the Vietnam War. As seen in chapter 6's coverage of the period between late 1969 and early 1970, America saw a surge in cautious optimism surrounding the Vietnam War due to the implementation of Vietnamization. As the North Vietnamese and United States navigated the complexities and uncertainties of the conflict, the optimism in America contrasted with the renewed determination in Hanoi, where leadership remained determined to continue the fight until victory, even as they faced internal challenges and setbacks.

Prentice contributes to the growing body of scholarship that incorporates Vietnamese perspectives into the historiography of the Vietnam War. His work should be of interest to all historians looking to close the gap in knowledge on Vietnamese war-time diplomacy and its interplay with policymakers in the United States. Prentice's book complements Cheng Guan Ang's work, *The Vietnam War from the Other Side: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective* (2002). Overall, *Unwilling to Quit* is an excellent read that provides a fascinating take on the interplay between the governments of the United States and Vietnam during Richard Nixon's presidency.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Brianna Sparks of Westminster, California, earned her B.A. in History (2024) and her M.A. in Public History (2026) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where she is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). She also served as an editor for volume 53 (2026) of *The Welebaethan: A Journal of History*.

Schultz, Kevin M.

Why Everyone Hates White Liberals (Including White Liberals): A History.

Chicago University Press, 2025.
279 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780226824369.

Do white liberals make your skin crawl, leave you embarrassed, cause you to cringe, or rile you up, and would you do just about anything other than embrace them? It does not matter whether you are a Black Lives Matter activist or a three-time Trump voter: everyone has an opinion on what a white liberal is. Ironically, Kevin M. Schultz's 2025 monograph, *Why Everyone Hates White Liberals (Including White Liberals): A History*, points out that you likely cannot define liberalism. More importantly, you certainly cannot get society to agree on what liberals stand for. If that is the case, where did the term "liberal" come from? In his book, Kevin M. Schultz walks us through how the term was born in the 1930s, why it dwindled in the late 1960s, and how it was attacked by the Republican Party as the equivalent of communism until the end of the twentieth century. Schultz concludes this history of liberalism in the United States by displaying how "sticking it to liberals" has become conservatives' predominant political tactic in the twenty-first century. Schultz is an award-winning historian, whose work focuses on twentieth and twenty-first century American history with a special emphasis on political culture. He is the former president of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History and, as of October 2025, the chair of the Department of History at the University of Illinois, Chicago. As a respected scholar in the field, he is eminently qualified to analyze the history of liberalism in the United States.

The book's introduction and first chapter, "It's Just a Word" and "The Birth of the White Liberal," respectively, focus primarily on the origins of liberalism and what the term triggers in people when they hear the word. Put best by Schultz, "it quickly became clear as I did my research that how one defines a white liberal is really just a Rorschach test of one's own political allegiances." (7) In these opening sections, Schultz surveys what people's views on white liberals reveal about their likelihood of being emotionally influenced by certain groups or media organizations. Interestingly, Schultz suggests that most Americans have liberal views that reach across the aisle but would not dare embrace the term because they consider it repulsive. However, this is a small portion of a much broader field of what the word "liberal" means and where it originates. As it turns out, the first real introduction of the word "liberal"—and "white liberal" in particular—came from the thirty-second president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). FDR started calling himself a liberal and his plan for the future of the United States "liberalism." Make no mistake, Roosevelt understood that his New Deal plan was borderline socialism; Schultz points out that the reason why FDR coined the term "liberalism" was to make it more difficult for opponents to call it out as socialism. Using "liberalism" was a diversion from socialism with its strong negative connotations. That said, Roosevelt's opponent, former Secretary of Commerce Herbert C. Hoover, wanted to argue on the field of capitalism versus socialism. Knowing that this would create a bad frame for his plan, FDR spun the entire rhetoric into a binary battle between conservatives and liberals. This is crucial because it set up the parameters for the American binary political system and its eventual deep polarization. So, not only did FDR "birth" the white liberal, but he can also be credited with launching liberalism as a whole in American politics. Schultz finds that, by the end of the 1950s, liberalism was largely regarded with fondness, because of the positive sentiments built into the label due to the economic success the country was experiencing after World War II. However, this giddy age of the self-proclaimed liberal swiftly came to an end at the turn of the decade.

The 1960s did not emerge as a continuation of popular liberalism because certain conservatives, including political commentator William F. Buckley Jr., changed American politics forever by critically altering Republicans' strategy. In chapter 2, "I Smell the Blood of a Liberal," we learn that Buckley—a young conservative who was not the brightest intellectual—actually contributed quite a bit to changing the political landscape of the decades to come. As Schultz points out, "Buckley knew that what would unify his ragtag bunch of conservatives better than anything else would be to locate an enemy they could all agree on and then pillory it mercilessly." (35) It is not difficult to see how this particular strategy would both support the ongoing McCarthyism (1947–1959) and spell the beginning of the end for "liberal" as a proudly held identity. Truth be told, popular history does not really reflect President Truman's effectiveness in eliminating communists from the government in the late 1940s. But, as Schultz notes, this was mostly due to Truman's lack of public relations, compared to Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. By the early 1950s, Whittaker Chambers, a journalist, was stirring up the rhetoric by arguing that liberalism was the Democrats' last step before full-blown communism. Since this rhetoric continued throughout the 1960s, many Americans left their proclamation of liberalism behind them and soon refused to be associated with its ideals completely.

Both Republicans and Democrats distanced themselves from the term, but for different reasons. According to Schultz, conservatives saw those who still claimed the title of liberal for themselves as dupes of communism. (59) Meanwhile, leftists also developed a disdain for those white liberals who were still aligning themselves with it as their identity. Diving further into this, Schultz finds that white liberals were, for the most part, genuinely confused as to why fellow leftists were beginning to look down on them, observing that Black activists disdained white liberals mostly out of fatigue when it came to explaining structural racism: white liberals were simply too moderate. Then, in the 1980s, a new term—or brand—arose that few, if any, Americans had never heard of, namely, “neoliberalism.” On paper, this new faction of political views seemed somewhat genius. Neoliberals prioritized the economy, deregulation, lower taxes on individuals, and businesses. Well-known politicians, including Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Senator Joe Biden from Delaware, embraced neoliberal ideology. Considering the era’s focus on balancing budgets and the complicated nuances of social issues, it was difficult for conservatives to continue their old strategy of pinging leftists as communists. After all, what communist nation would ever lower taxes? The lesson Democrats learned, at least for the time being, was to become proud centrists and slander only their own party’s radicals as liberals. So, the label “liberal” never went away; it was just replaced, rebranded, and skewed. However, liberals had no cornerstone to lean on, so the term became very wishy-washy. According to Schultz, the term “liberal” really should have died by then, as it had lost most of its original meaning. However, it would not need to die until conservatives changed their strategy once again, sealing the fate of white liberals.

Instead of the later 2010s becoming an extension of Barack Obama’s era of centrism, conservatives changed their strategy and elected Donald Trump in 2016 with the new goal of “owning the libs.” At this point in time, the term “liberal” was used to categorize just about anything and anyone on the left as a manifestation or pawn of communism. Was evidence required for these claims? Absolutely not. Evidence did not matter, as Schultz argues, because liberals were historically weak. Thus, the Republicans’ strategy became: paint your enemies as weak, blame them for likely bipartisan problems, and hope it sticks. And it did stick, rendering it the most successful political strategy from the right in this century thus far. It makes Democrats work too hard to refute claims, so they spend less energy on what they actually want done for the country, while further polarizing the country. Schultz ends this book with his vision for the future. Ever since FDR ushered in a political culture of “us vs. them,” the ball has been rolling toward a divided America. With political parties fanning division, Schultz argues that a social democracy needs to rise. Let the white liberal ideology die. It ventured too far toward idealistic freedom, always falling short. Its image is beyond saving. Letting it die might just allow the framework for a true multiparty system to rise, which, in Schultz’s eyes, might very well save the United States from destruction.

For people interested in political culture, I would strongly recommend this book because it provides deep insights into why certain ideologies arose and where our current political culture comes from. *Why Everyone Hates White Liberals* also does a wonderful job of putting yourself into the shoes of those with differing opinions; it is always more important to know “why” someone thinks the way they do rather than “what” they actually think. Throughout the book, you read quotes from historical figures you might have never heard of, but in

retrospect, they added tremendous value and somewhat shaped our culture today. If this review has sparked any interest in the topic, I would also recommend *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* by Gary Gerstle (2022); it is a good read and examines political culture very similarly. Overall, Kevin M. Schultz has done an amazing job with *Why Everyone Hates White Liberals*, and if you like the subject, you will definitely find his writing style captivating.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Colin Ashe of Dana Point, California, earned his A.A. in Social and Behavioral Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Liberal Studies (2024) at Saddleback College, California, and his B.A. in History (2026) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

Sheehan-Dean, Aaron.

Fighting with the Past: How Seventeenth-Century History Shaped the American Civil War.

The University of North Carolina Press, 2025.
210 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 9781469690759.

"We do not alter the past itself, of course, but we change the meaning of the past by connecting it to the present." (148) A great power lies in the reinterpretation of past events in the modern world. History is commonly used to warn others about the potential consequences of an action that mirrors a past event, or it can be utilized to strengthen an argument through an appeal to the greatness of the past. The cultural memory of the past is often favored over pure historical facts and is an effective tool in shaping the beliefs and identities of social groups. In *Fighting with the Past: How Seventeenth-Century History Shaped the American Civil War*, Aaron Sheehan-Dean shows that this phenomenon, which continues to persist in the twenty-first century, was omnipresent during the American Civil War. Specifically, nineteenth-century Americans, plagued by a bloody civil war, looked toward the English Civil Wars of the seventeenth century to "'define,' 'justify,' 'anticipate,' and 'understand'" their current predicament. (2) Sheehan-Dean argues that history was itself a battleground during the American Civil War, with Northerners and Southerners both appealing to English history to defend their respective positions.

Aaron Sheehan-Dean is a professor of History and Southern Studies at Louisiana State University. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Virginia, and his research primarily focuses on mid to late nineteenth-century U.S. history. His current research interests revolve around violence, morality, and the laws of war, and his latest publications are almost exclusively focused on the U.S. Civil War. Recent books by Sheehan-Dean include *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (2018) and *Reckoning with Rebellion: War and Sovereignty in the Nineteenth Century* (2020). Although *Fighting with the Past* primarily concentrates on how Americans employed the historical memory of the past to understand their position during the war, Sheehan-Dean utilizes different aspects of seventeenth-century English history to support his argument.

Fighting with the Past is organized by how nineteenth-century Americans used the English past before, during, and after the U.S. Civil War to compare it to their contemporary political situations. Sheehan-Dean shows that Confederates associated themselves with the Royalists of the 1640s, while the Radical Republicans in the North heavily favored the imagery of Oliver

Cromwell, a figurehead they attached to because of his aggressive and violent strategies to remake English society. (143) Still, these attachments to Royalist and Parliamentary causes were not strictly defined. Sheehan-Dean explains that more moderate Republicans aligned with the Parliamentary ideas of “popular rights,” but they were less militaristic and Cromwellian in the postwar goals of remodeling society. (144) Southerners used Cromwell’s invasion of Ireland to spread fearmongering about Lincoln, who, in their eyes, would wreak havoc and violence against the South. Sheehan-Dean notes the strategic aspects of how both sides of the conflict weaponized history to fall into their favor. Northerners aligned with the Parliamentary rebels but found paths to delegitimize acts of rebellion, while Southerners, siding with the Royalists, legitimized acts of rebellion. (158) *Fighting with the Past* shows further ironic retellings of the past, where history becomes a flexible source to be manipulated.

Fighting with the Past consists of eight core chapters outside of the introduction and conclusion. In chapter 1, Sheehan-Dean sets the stage with an outline of how Americans came to understand the English Civil Wars and history in general during the nineteenth century. He explains the flexibility of historical consciousness and understanding during the nineteenth century and in the modern era. Chapters 2 and 3 explore how the cultural differences between North and South manifested in the formation of identities based on the English Civil Wars, and how the violence of the English past could be legitimized—or delegitimized—in the context of an American war. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on how the past was referenced in preparation for war, with both sides aligning themselves with varying aspects and players of the English past. The imagery of Oliver Cromwell was particularly controversial for the Republicans, especially among abolitionists who celebrated his “willingness to use terror and murder” to achieve his goals. (83) Chapter 6 includes the infighting between Northern conservatives and their radical counterparts, where conservatives could use seventeenth-century English history to attack policy. Sheehan-Dean explains that, because 1640s English society did not involve race, conservatives could critique Republican motives in a “purely political” sense. (91)

Chapters 7 and 8 of *Fighting with the Past* deal with the postwar era and how Americans looked to the conclusion of the English Civil Wars and the Stuart Restoration. After the bloody American Civil War, Northerners had to justify the immense suffering and death for the cause. Drawing on English history, they were able to rationalize the war as a reality to reshape the nation. (124) Some standout sections in *Fighting with the Past* are when Sheehan-Dean explores the imagery of King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell. Southerners considered the execution of the English king a regicidal act of anarchy, while Northerners applauded the Parliamentary opposition as a “virtuous resistance to tyranny.” (40) The pervasiveness of seventeenth-century English history in the speeches of nineteenth-century American politicians and in newspapers is astonishing. Sheehan-Dean notes that English history—to nineteenth-century Americans—was deeply attached to the American experience. (137) From the migration of English Puritans to North America, the American Revolution, and a shared language, the history of the United States and Britain was deeply intertwined in the minds of contemporary American writers. For his study, Sheehan-Dean relies on journals and newspapers from the Civil War and the writings of “historically minded individuals” who were

well familiar with English history. (19) Charles Sumner and Wendell Phillips, two Radical Republicans, are frequently cited because of their recurrent writings throughout the war that refer to the past. Samuel Cox, a Northern Democrat, often rivals Sumner and Phillips with his analogies to the English past that favor different perspectives. (20) Sheehan-Dean incorporates an impressive amount of period newspapers and periodicals. The use of newspapers shows that references to the English past were not limited to educated politicians who were well versed in European history. Although a majority of sources come from individuals during the American Civil War, there are some sources from the English Civil Wars. Sheehan-Dean's use of nineteenth-century historical books on English history is intriguing since this is where American politicians and writers learned about seventeenth-century England. *Fighting with the Past* relies on a diverse range of scholarship that covers both the seventeenth century in Britain as well as the American Civil War.

Fighting with the Past is a truly unique text with an approach that stands out from other works on the American Civil War. Publications that compliment Sheehan-Dean's argument include Paul Springer's monograph, *Propaganda from the American Civil War* (2019). Although Springer's text is not focused on the memory of English history, it provides a variety of source documents throughout the war with analysis. James McPherson's classic work on the American Civil War, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988), offers a much deeper dive into the individuals and events of *Fighting with the Past*. Those who are unfamiliar with the history of the American Civil War may find Sheehan-Dean's book difficult to comprehend since he does not explain the progression and key moments of the war in much detail. *Fighting with the Past* does attempt to contextualize and explain the events of the English Civil Wars; however, the complexities of this period are, at times, difficult to grasp, given the limited scope of Sheehan-Dean's book (210 pages). Two works cited in *Fighting with the Past* include Michael Braddick's *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (2008) and Blair Worden's *The English Civil Wars, 1640–1660* (2009). *Fighting with the Past* is an excellent study, but readers may lose much of its impact without sufficient background knowledge.

Fighting with the Past is a distinctive study that adds an intriguing perspective to the American Civil War. It highlights the powerful impact of historical thinking and shows that "history holds undeniable power." (1) It is a must-read text for American Civil War aficionados because it uncovers how historical memory played a part for both the North and South. Although it may be difficult to follow if one is not familiar with the basics of the English Civil Wars and the American Civil War, I highly recommend *Fighting with the Past* to anyone curious about the influential power of the past. Aaron Sheehan-Dean's approach is quite unlike anything I have seen on the American Civil War, and he offers an intriguing perspective to view the tumultuous years of the 1860s. Comparisons, interpretations, and appeals to the past will always be part of the human experience. *Fighting with the Past: How Seventeenth-Century History Shaped the American Civil War* makes a stark point of how influential and significant history was to the people living during the American Civil War, and it reminds us that associations with the past are still relevant today.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Arjun Kraft of San Marcos, California, earned his B.A. in History (2022) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), and his M.A. in History (2026) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He also served as an editor for volume 52 (2025) of *"The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

Van Nguyen, Dean.

Words for My Comrades: A Political History of Tupac Shakur.

Doubleday, 2025.

452 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780385550024.

Tupac Amaru Shakur, famously known by his stage name 2Pac, ascended to the upper echelons of fame during his tumultuous career as a West Coast rapper. His story resembles that of a great Greek tragedy: a childhood sculpted by his mother's radical past, a rise to stardom as a brilliant but troubled artist, and a final crescendo with his murder in September 1996. Dean Van Nguyen's book, *Words for My Comrades: A Political History of Tupac Shakur*, breaks down the imposing character and wild history of Tupac Shakur, a boy who spent his early years shifting around the concrete jungle of New York City before moving to the "gilded ghettos" (180) of the Bay Area. Shakur's worldview was shaped by his Black Panther mother and her Panther family, the absence of his biological father, and the exploding hip-hop movement of the 1990s in the wake of the civil rights and Black power movements. Dean Van Nguyen is a music journalist from Dublin, Ireland, who focuses on identity, cultural and racial relationships, and whose publications include *Iron Age: The Art of Ghostface Killah* (2019) as well as writings for *The Irish Times*, *The Guardian*, *Pitchfork*, and others.

The chronology of Shakur's political history in *Words for My Comrades* starts long before his birth, vividly depicting the formation of the Black Panther Party and the call to radical resistance of post-civil rights movement attitudes. Van Nguyen utilizes original interviews conducted by himself with the Shakur family, former Black Panther Party members, and individuals who were a part of Shakur's formative years. Van Nguyen introduces his readers to Tupac, a "Panther Cub," (4) whose gestation took place during his mother's incarceration and trial as one of the Panthers. (21) Named for the Incan martyr Túpac Amaru II (c. 1742–1781), he was the glowing ember in the dying fire that was the revolution. His name "Shakur," while not given to him by blood, tied him to a long line of Black revolutionaries that would shape his artistic endeavors. His art would reach far beyond the California coast, redefining what it meant to be a revolutionary worldwide. An example of this was Shakur's impact on Irish resistance, his humble origins, and violent demise, likening him to martyrs of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

In part one, "The Meaning of Afeni," Van Nguyen explains Afeni Shakur's family history, the formation of and her participation in official Black resistance organizations, and the U.S. government's crackdown on leftist organizations. Chapter 1, "Of Jim Crow Soil," introduces us to Afeni Shakur, born Alice Faye Williams, and her early volatile childhood in the southern United States, before her mother left her father, taking Afeni and her older sister up north to the South Bronx. Like her son later on, Afeni expressed an interest in the arts but was unable to find community within the white, upper-class demographics of the schools she attended,

instead turning to violence and drug use. The death of a close friend pushed her toward sobriety and employment, one day leading her to Manhattan's 125th Street, where she encountered Bobby Seale, a founding member of the Black Panther Party. Two of the party's founders, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, had both been radicalized by Malcolm X's assassination (1965) and were dissatisfied with the efforts of other organizations. Thus, these Merritt College students came together in October 1966 to form the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Newton's involvement in the shooting of two patrolmen, the murder of Martin Luther King Jr., and the death of founding party member "Little" Bobby Hutton during a confrontation with the Oakland Police brought national attention the movement. These contentious times pushed the organization to create community youth and health centers, dubbed "survival programs," (55) where Afeni became a section leader, leading rent strikes and running free breakfast programs for schoolchildren. Here, Afeni met Lumumba Shakur, a man she later married, and Sekou Odinga, an ex-gang member turned leader of New York's Black Panther chapter. Afeni's place among the Panthers was complex, both as a leader and a woman in a movement led by men who expected her to conform to particular gender expectations.

In chapter 3, Van Nguyen discusses a burglary performed by the anti-war activist Citizens' Commission to investigate the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI)'s office in Media, Pennsylvania. The commission exposed the government's surveillance of students, Black activists, and leftist organizations, as well as a direct order from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover to "neutralize" Black nationalist organizations. The FBI files contained the term COINTELPRO, eventually exposed through a Freedom of Information Act request as a Red Scare Era program of nationwide surveillance, infiltration, and harassment by Hoover's FBI. As a result of these infiltrations by undercover police officers in April 1969, Afeni, her husband Lumumba, and nineteen other Panthers were indicted on 186 counts, which included attempted arson, attempted murder, and a slew of conspiracy charges that would leave her facing an over 300-year prison sentence. After two years, the longest trial in New York State history, Afeni, along with the rest of her Panther sisters and brothers, was exonerated on May 12, 1971. This was the peak of Afeni's notoriety until the release of her son's song, "Dear Mama." Lumumba left her after discovering Tupac was not his son, but that of a man named Billy Garland, who would never have a permanent place in Tupac's life.

Part two, "To Which Nation Do You Belong," begins with the origins of hip-hop as an intersection of rap and radical politics, as well as Tupac's artistic emergence. The popularity of groups such as the Sugarhill Gang and Public Enemy shifted rap into the mainstream. Tupac was brought up in a tumultuous environment due to his mother's addiction issues, resulting in him finding outlets outside his home for artistic expression. Rap would seem to be his destiny, gaining popularity from early works such as *Brenda's Got a Baby* and the release of his first full length album *2Pacalypse Now*, which reflected the harsh reality of abuse, poverty, and police brutality. By 1992, Tupac had moved to Los Angeles. While finding fame, he remained concerned with the movement his mother had previously been a part of. Spurred by the L.A. Riots, the abundance of killings due to gang violence, his Panther upbringing, and a new outlook, Tupac created the "Code of Thug Life." This code, although meant for L.A.'s gangbangers, evolved into his way of defining his life as a societal outcast.

Tupac's first solo hit, "I Get Around," released in the summer of 1993, was the song that launched his career as a major artist. He went on to release his second album, *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.*, with more hard-hitting songs such as "Last Wordz," "The Streetz R Deathrow," and "Keep Ya Head Up," commenting on police brutality and the victimization of Black women. As his fame grew, his actions and his music grew more volatile. The opportunity to rub elbows with Madonna and Sting did not soften his "gangster rap" persona, as his unreleased album *Me Against the Word* proved to be prophetic. In 1993, he was involved in fights with former music video directors, the shooting of two off-duty police officers, and a rape accusation, faced a potential 25-year sentence, and was shot four times in an attempted robbery. These events paralleled the experiences of Black Panther members of his mother's era, many of whom emerged from long prison sentences to join the movement. Tupac's later conviction on felony sex abuse charges left him facing up to four years in jail, causing him to contemplate running like his step-father and other Panthers had done before him. Suge Knight's intervention in Tupac's career and his time at Death Row Records ignited an all-out West Coast vs. East Coast war, culminating in Shakur's murder on September 7, 1996. As Van Nguyen looks over Tupac's legacy, his death seems almost inevitable, mirroring the demise of previous Shakur and Panther leaders, executed by the system of hatred they had attempted to fight against. His demise certainly solidified his place in the history of revolution.

In part three, "Hands Up: Afterlife, Legacy, and Future Not Set," Van Nguyen grapples with Tupac's legacy, Black activism in the twenty-first century, and Afeni Shakur's legacy as more than the mother of a pop culture martyr. Van Nguyen masterfully draws connections between the conspiracy that enveloped Afeni's life as a Panther and her son's ambiguous assassination. Her revolutionary dreams, though never fully coming to fruition, manifested themselves in her son who fell victim to the culture of violence that the Panthers had attempted to combat. Van Nguyen does not shy away from the grim details of a revolutionary life, doing justice to the radical story of Tupac, Afeni, and the Black Panther Party. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the counterculture movement of the 1960s as it provides a brilliantly written and raw take on the evolution of race relations in the United States. Options for further reading on the decolonization, civil rights, and Black power movements in the United States include *Black Moses: A Saga of Ambition and the Fight for a Black State* by Caleb Gayle (2025), which delves into Edward McCabe's plan to create a Black state within the United States; *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley (1965), constructed from a series of interviews surrounding X's formative years, leadership within the Nation of Islam, and the civil rights movement; as well as *The Wretched of the Earth* by the philosopher Frantz Fanon (1961), a psychoanalysis of the effects of colonization on national and personal identity.

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