



Public Memory, Race, and Ethnicity

G. Mitchell Reyes

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Scholars across the humanities and social sciences who study public memory study the ways that groups of people collectively remember the past. One motivation for such study is to understand how collective identities at the local, regional, and national level emerge, and why those collective identities often lead to conflict. 'Public Memory, Race, and Ethnicity' contributes to this rapidly evolving scholarly conversation by taking into consideration the influence of race and ethnicity on our collective practices of remembrance. How do the ways we remember the past influence racial and ethnic identities? How do racial and ethnic identities shape our practices of remembrance? 'Public Memory, Race, and Ethnicity' brings together nine provocative critical investigations that address these questions and others regarding the role of public memory in the formation of racial and ethnic identities in the United States. The book is organized chronologically. Part I addresses the politics of public memory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on how immigrants who found themselves in a strange new world used memory to assimilate, on the interplay of ethnicity and patriarchy in early monumental representations of Sacagawea, and on the use of memory and forgetting to negotiate labor and racial tensions in an industrial steel town. Part II attends to the dynamics of memory and forgetting during and after World War II, examining the problems of remembrance as they are related to Japanese internment, the strategies of remembrance surrounding important events of the Civil Rights Movement, and the institutional use of memory and tradition to normalize whiteness and control human behavior. Part III focuses on race and remembrance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, analyzing Walter Mosley's use of memory in his literary work to challenge racial norms, President George W. Bush's strategies of remembrance in his 2006 address to the NAACP, and the problems of memory and racial representation in the aftermath of the Katrina disaster. Taken together, the essays in this volume often speak to each other in remarkable ways, and one can begin to see in their progression the transformation of race relations in America since the nineteenth century.

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