

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums. By Amy Lonetree.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3710t46h>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 38(2)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

2014-03-01

**DOI**

10.17953

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same time recognized only as dependents and wards” (86). Genetin-Pilawa’s effort to explain this part of Parker’s thinking seems to be a particular weakness of the book, such as when he says, in “Parker’s experience, Native communities lacked the political, economic, and military might to force external agents of colonialism (land speculators and other private interests) to negotiate fairly or to compel the federal government to honor its treaty agreements” (86). Yet Genetin-Pilawa fails to provide any information demonstrating that Parker thought bringing Indian treaty-making to an end was a means of solving any of the problems Indian nations and peoples were facing, or strengthening their political and legal position, or making the US government more effective at protecting Indian interests. Framing Indian people as “helpless and ignorant wards” was certainly not a path toward solving the problems that Genetin-Pilawa has identified. And such language is hardly a demonstration of Parker’s advocacy on behalf of Indian peoples, though there are instances in the book showing that he did make efforts to work on behalf of the Indians, especially when they were facing conditions of starvation.

Genetin-Pilawa also details the activism of Thomas A. Bland, an editor of the Indian reform newspaper the *Council Fire* and an untiring advocate for Indian nations. He founded the National Indian Defense Association (NIDA), which favored a gradual path to Indian assimilation and therefore worked against the coercive assimilation of American Indians into the society of the United States. The author explains that Bland’s “ideas represented a viable alternative to the existing trends in Indian policymaking, which valued increasing confinement and diminishing tribal sovereignty” (113). The main opponent of Bland and the NIDA was the Indian Rights Association (IRA), which was pushing hard in favor of the Dawes Act and coercive cultural assimilation. The political fight between the NIDA and the IRA is very well covered in the book.

C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa’s *Crooked Paths* is well worth reading. It ought to be viewed as a welcome addition to the history of nineteenth-century US Indian law and politics. The author deserves high marks for *Crooked Paths*.

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**Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums.** By Amy Lonetree. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. 219 pages. \$24.95 paper, \$65.00 cloth.

*Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* offers an excellent, “firsthand witness” account of the transformation

of United States museum representations of Native culture and history over the last twenty years (171). In it, Amy Lonetree recognizes the increasing role of Native community collaboration as part of changing museum practices, rightly connecting much of the drive for these changes to the growth of Indian activism and increasing demands for the rights of self-representation as a fundamental exercise of sovereignty—a critical realization that is rarely made. She draws on direct experience as a scholar and museum professional working with the Mille Lacs Indian Museum, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways. The book carefully assesses the growth of new Indian museology, especially the use of community collaboration and authoritative Native exhibition voices. The book also focuses on how Native museum practices can create sites for active decolonization to address “the legacies of historical unresolved grief” through difficult, and sometimes painful, “truth telling” (5).

Lonetree ties the growth in collaborative practices to an increasing post-modern emphasis on challenging and decentering authoritative institutional voices, and an expanding international discourse on human rights, including NAGPRA. The “tribal museum movement” and the changing relationships between Native peoples and museums are “important act[s] of self-determination” (18). But the book also calls for an attentive critique of collaborative museum practices. Foregrounded stories of successful collaboration may also “mask persistent neocolonial relations within the museum world” (24). Lonetree questions exhibition narratives that celebrate survivance or the use of dialogic and multivocal narratives as an end to themselves, or as a corollary for contemporary Native peoples and cultural practices. Native survival is important—“we are still here” is a powerful message—but the context of survival also matters. Against what colonial forces have Native people struggled? What are their ongoing legacies? Perhaps most importantly, what role do museums have in practicing active decolonization?

The Mille Lacs Indian Museum (MLIA) early recognized the need for collaboration between the Minnesota Historical Society (MLH) and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. During a time of major institutional revision and redesign, the MLIA developed exhibitions using authoritative first-person Native voices to locate Ojibwe people both historically and contemporarily and to challenge popular stereotypes about Indian people and Indian life. Conceived as both tribal resource and a public attraction, the redesigned site may miss chances to confront hard truths. For Lonetree, an exhibit devoted to the history of the local trading post, a repository for many objects eventually given to the MHS, presents an example of a missed opportunity “to provide a more rigorous review of the colonial entanglements that the site embodies” (64). *Decolonizing Museums* recognizes, however, that the MLIA served as an

important example of changing museum practice and as one model for the future National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

Lonetree uses her experience at the NMAI—as first a researcher for the “Our People” gallery and later as a returning scholar—to critically engage its new Indian museological practices. Fundamental to its exhibition design efforts, the NMAI sought to “transfer . . . curatorial authority to Native people” (84). Lonetree sees a contradictory tension between the proclaimed transfer of curatorial authority and its practice, suggesting that it sometimes occluded processes between museum professionals and Native community exhibition selectors. More importantly, Lonetree critiques the NMAI for choosing to focus primarily on stories of survival, missing the opportunity to tell the hard truths of colonialism. She compares the museum to the nearby United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), arguing that the NMAI fails in truth-telling by not “provid[ing] the fundamental context for survival” (110). Further, Lonetree suggests the NMAI “conflates an Indigenous understanding of history with a postmodernist presentation of history” (109). This “hodgepodge of conflicting views” is often confusing, and its challenges to colonialism too implicit or too embedded in the strategies of narrative for its general audience to grasp (169).

These are important critiques. But some of the analysis centers on the museum’s inability to fully control the effects of its main narratives, and to direct them in a confrontational and unavoidable way. Comparing the relatively open plan of the NMAI to the channeled visitor experience of the USHMM seems somewhat lopsided—once one enters the USHMM’s exhibition galleries, there is really only one way out. If the NMAI fails to provide proper context for the ongoing practices and legacies of colonialism, as a directed effort of decolonization, the open gallery traffic plans and multiple narratives also provide a number of possible points for visitor engagement. The USHMM’s main narrative includes the United States as a triumphant savior in the national imaginings of its role in World War II. This is very different from an accurate history of European and Euro-American genocides and ethnocides as fundamental elements of colonialism waged against Native Americans.

Finally, as an element of considering the NMAI’s gallery “Evidence,” Lonetree suggests: “Unless visitors knew about these human-caused catastrophes [of colonialism] beforehand, they could potentially leave as unaware of them as when they arrived” (119). Negotiating this gap—between museums as sites for the production of new knowledge and as sites for the confirmation of existing knowledge (regardless of how counter-factual)—is the basic and ongoing challenge at the heart of museum work itself. Carefully crafted narratives are often ignored, exhibition sequences thwarted, and presented evidence and painstaking argument overlooked or read against the institutional grain.

Lonetree identifies the Ziibiwing Cultural Center (ZCC) as a space that successfully incorporates a decolonizing agenda. It engages historical trauma and historical unresolved grief to speak the “hard truths” of colonialism, framed through Anishinabe oral traditions. The ZCC stresses community collaboration in telling its stories to create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about indigenous past and present. Lonetree makes the distinction that the ZCC is explicit in its decolonizing narratives, successfully using disquiet and discomfort as important elements of the visitor experience.

Lonetree asserts that the ZCC treats topics in ways “ways that are critical to changing the historical relationship between Indigenous people and museums” (149). While the focus on loss and the “painful not-knowing” of erased histories is effective in galleries devoted to picturing the effects of colonization, the Center’s treatment of repatriation and sovereignty is worthy of closer examination (145). Acknowledging that elements of the gallery are disappointingly small visually, she asserts: “for those knowledgeable about the issue, the ‘Spirit of Sovereignty’ section provides further context” (151). This observation seemingly contradicts the earlier critique of the NMAI’s failure to provide all contextual information necessary to understand the exhibit.

Perhaps some of the difference here involves making an implicit distinction between museums and cultural centers. While it is difficult to draw a hard line between the two, it appears that many of the ZCC successes highlighted stem from its ability to directly address both its host community and visitors from elsewhere. Paradoxically, the NMAI’s large pool of visitors does not offer this same opportunity. Within the context of the national capitol—as one possible visitation site within a network of public Smithsonian institutions on the National Mall—a more directly confrontational exhibition narrative could fall short of encouraging visitors to engage with colonialism’s hard truths. Affirming the ZCC as a “living cultural center” (155), the book largely focuses on the successes of the Center’s programs in concert with its exhibition narratives, perhaps begging the question: would these exhibits be as successful, or would the ZCC be read as such a successful museum, if it had only the exhibitions without the programs?

Amy Lonetree has been “a firsthand witness to [the] transformation toward clear Indigenous voices and empowerment through museums,” and *Decolonizing Museums* makes an important, necessary, and uniquely comprehensive contribution to the literature on Native museums in the United States (171). The book’s focus on museums as sites for active decolonizing, as “[s]ites of oppression [that] have the potential to transform into sites of revitalization and autonomy,” is also enormously important (173). While the relationship between changing museum practices and the growth of Indian activism is critical, so is the availability of new income streams made possible since the 1988 passage of the

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Each of these institutions benefited profoundly from gaming revenues, allowing many wishes to redirect museum practices to take tangible shape. The comparative institutions in this analysis offer a wide array of histories, relationships, and possibilities. But they are not open to provide the same visitor experiences or community effects. *Decolonizing Museums* is an important text that clearly benefits from, and articulates, careful research and field experience. Lonetree's experience with these three institutions provides an excellent and focused opportunity for analyzing and discussing the tangible effects and experiences of new Indian museology.

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**Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War.** By Noah Riseman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 304 pages. \$50.00 cloth.

A recurring characteristic in the history of warfare has been the ability of major powers to entice, coerce, or otherwise motivate their colonial subjects to participate in various capacities as laborers, special auxiliaries, and/or as front line combatants. This important service has only recently caught the attention of scholars, who in the last twenty years or so have raised a number of complex and provocative questions about indigenous soldiers risking their lives and livelihoods in the service of their colonial oppressors. How and why did the major powers accomplish this? Why did colonial subjects participate? How were they treated? What were the consequences of their participation? Noah Riseman adds to this growing body of scholarship by examining the roles of indigenous soldiers from Australia (the Yolngu of Arnhem Land), Papua New Guinea (native Papuans and New Guineans), and the United States (Navajo code talkers) in the campaign against Japan during World War II.

Employing a "parallel-dimensions approach" to his comparative historical study, Riseman seeks to highlight the similarities and common trends among the three groups in terms of certain theoretical arguments (4). Chief among these is the exploitive practices and policies of colonial powers that did not respect or appreciate indigenous cultures, or the fighting skills of indigenous fighters, but nonetheless used them to advance the ongoing war effort against Japan. While Riseman acknowledges the risks of devaluing the wartime contributions and sacrifices of thousands of indigenous soldiers by characterizing their service as "exploitation" and "collaboration," the main thrust of his work seeks to illustrate that "the employment of indigenous soldiers as weapons in