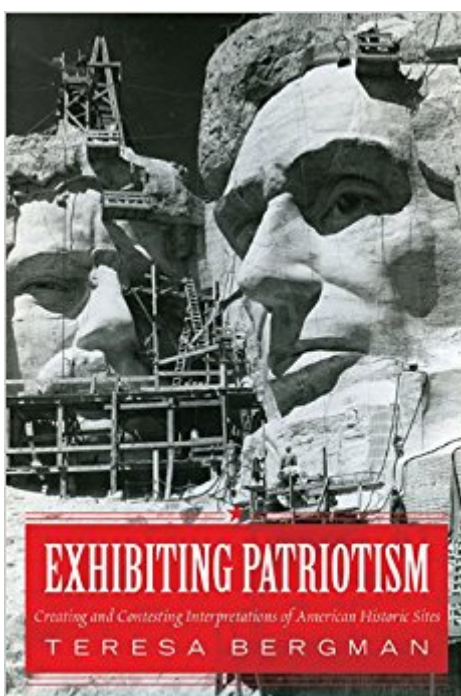


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# Exhibiting Patriotism: Creating And Contesting Interpretations Of American Historic Sites



## Synopsis

American nationalism, patriotism and citizenship are proudly on display at historical sites across America—but they are also contested and reshaped by visitors and their engagement with those places. In *Exhibiting Patriotism*, Bergman analyzes exhibits, interpretive materials, and orientation films at major US sites, from Mt. Rushmore and to the USS Arizona Memorial, where controversy has erupted over the stories they tell about the past. She shows how historic narratives are the result of dynamic relationships between institutions and the public, and how these relationships are changing in an era when museums are becoming more visitor-centered, seeing visitors as partners in historical interpretation. Drawing on film theory, memory studies, visual communication, and visitor studies, Bergman offers an important analysis for scholars and professionals in American studies, museum studies, public history, and communication and media studies.

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## Customer Reviews

"*Exhibiting Patriotism* makes an important contribution to our understanding of how the past is crafted and presented to the public. Teresa Bergman insightfully explores the subtle links between what we see at museums and historic sites and who we think we are as a nation. Her scholarship demonstrates that history really matters and how extensive is the ongoing contest between various groups of citizens to define just what it should be."--John Edward Bodnar, Chancellor's Professor of History, Indiana University "Our national monuments, and the onsite films that frame our

understanding of them, receive well-deserved scrutiny in Teresa Bergman's book. The sometimes strained efforts to acknowledge multiple constituencies and unrepresented minorities reveal how the Lincoln Memorial, Mt. Rushmore and other treasures possess chameleon-like identities that continue to evolve."--Bill Nichols, San Francisco State University, author of "Introduction to Documentary" "Taken together, the case studies offer a rich portrayal of the issues involved in reconceptualizing patriotism as a multicultural endeavor in an age of visitor-oriented museum practice. The book is written in a style accessible to undergraduates, and offers concrete examples of real world issues in the museum field. Summing Up: Recommended. All academic levels/libraries."--CHOICE ...Surveying visitors is an increasing demand of professional organizations, including the accreditation commission of the American Alliance of Museums. Exhibiting Patriotism provides good examples of why this work is necessary, and it outlines some of the pitfalls that may be expected along the way. Furthermore, Bergman's research is current she visited sites as recently as 2012 and this book demonstrates that these issues have not died since the revolution in academia in the 1960s or the culture wars of the 1990s. Museums continue to wrestle with these problems and deal with them in innovative ways. Criticism like this, especially from someone outside the museum field, is necessary to remind us of the ways we can improve our own museums. History News "[This] impressively researched volume of case studies is a welcome addition to the literature on the history of public history-making. Drawing on archival sources, direct observation, and interviews, Bergman provides detailed accounts of the origins, transformations over time, and current conditions of five American sites/institutions where shifting and often conflicted interpretations of patriotism, nationalism, and citizenship have played out in the public sphere The most valuable contribution of this volume are its fine-grained accounts of the myriad ideological and political forces that have informed the shifting construction of historical meaning." John Dorst, Journal of Anthropological Research" --This text refers to the Unknown Binding edition.

Teresa Bergman is an Associate Professor in the Communication Department at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and a former documentary filmmaker. She earned her B.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, her M.A. at San Francisco State University and her Ph.D. at the University of California, Davis. She teaches courses in documentary film criticism and production as well as critical theory and qualitative research methods. Her research focus is on the intersection of location, memory and representation at sites of public memory.

Exhibiting Patriotism takes a case study approach to examining the shift from collections-driven

institutions to visitor-centered museums. Teresa Bergman, who has a background in film theory and visual communication, pays special attention to the films shown at these sites, which typically serve as framing devices to set visitor perceptions and expectations. The focus her study is on sites a) that are significant to construction and definition of US national identity, b) where there has been controversy of its interpretation, and c) where there are no financial constraints on the ability to replace those interpretations. Bergman notes that many of the controversies have their root in the original conceptions of the location, along with changing understandings of patriotism, citizenship, and nationalism. Introduction of shared authority with stakeholders has resulted in positive changes in many cases. However, Bergman cautions that this sharing should stop short of abandoning all authority; the challenge for museums is to find the right balance between the desires of multiple publics and responsible interpretation. Bergman's primary sources are site visits, films, interviews, and archival records of site development and interpretation. Robert Archibald's *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (American Association for State and Local History), was used as a template for evaluating requested interpretative changes at the Lincoln Memorial. *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*, by Kirk Savage, figures prominently in Bergman's depictions of the concept and construction of the Lincoln Memorial. I would like to see Berman's model for site evaluation applied to the World Trade Center and OK City memorials to see how her results would compare to Sturken's more cynical observations in *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*.

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