

Book Reviews

Tanaka, Yuki. *Japans Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during WWII and the US Occupation. Asia's Transformations. Routledge, 2001.*

This book, brings to light a horrifying new aspect of WWII that is rarely ever known about or brought to light when learning about the war in the South Pacific. We know for the first time during WWII was when civilians became actual military targets by conflicting nations. Nazi Germany on the Western and Eastern front in Europe were mass murdering Jewish people and others by the millions in concentration death camps. All the while the war raged on throughout the South Pacific where the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy fought to the death killing thousands of Japanese and allied forces on famous battles such as Okinawa and Iwa Jima to name a few. Lastly, the first atomic bombs in history were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which can be argued ended one war (WWII), but bringing to light a whole another form of what we now as nuclear war and the beginning of the Cold War era of the late 40's, 50's and 60's. However, despite all of these facts, Yuki Tanaka has brought to light the thought-provoking issue of what women's roles were during wartime and how they were brutally raped and forced into sexual slavery and in many cases severely beaten or killed for their refusal to participate in what became known as Japans comfort women system.

Tens of thousands of Asian women were subjected to this cruel world of enforced prostitution to "comfort" both Japanese soldiers and US soldiers once Japan became occupied after their surrender in 1945. Some of the women races that were exploited by the Japanese military and forced to participate in their comfort women system were: Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Filipina, Dutch, Indonesian, and Javanese to name a few. This book points out the extreme racism that the Japanese culture felt for many of these "inferior" Asian races in their opinion. Many of these women were kidnaped, or lured under false pretenses to the comfort women stations that were set up all over China and Korea in the 1930's and 40's. They were in big, small, and medium sized towns. Essentially wherever the Japanese military occupied territories during WWII these comfort stations were not far away. The comfort women were lied to, exploited and diseased as a result of this inhuman treatment given to them by the Japanese soldiers during the Second World War

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As previously mentioned, the book points out that rather than acquiesce to the cruel world of prostitution and sexual slavery many women would commit suicide or attempt to run away from the camps. But not knowing the native language in the foreign place that they were at made this option very difficult. However, if they were caught they were severely beaten or maimed as a result. Forced once again to please many men sexually. The sad part about all of this is that not only were brothel managers in on the scheme of recruiting these comfort women, but also local police authority who should have been protecting its citizens were also in on it. High-ranking military officials came up with this having these comfort stations as a way to help their soldiers who were so far from home with their sexual frustration. The main goal in creating these pleasure houses as outlets for the soldiers, was to prevent the mass rape of conquered women civilians especially in China. They also served for leisure activity for the men and a way for them to show off their aggression and manliness both before and after battles.

Japan's Comfort Women also brings to light the terrible working conditions in which these women of all ages for forced into every single day. Most all of the women were not paid for their "jobs" and if they were it was usually half or less of the total amount to them and the rest to the brothel house manager. The women were almost always in constant debt for their clothing, bedding, food, medical, and other supplies that they needed in order to work. Asian women and also Dutch white women who occupied the Dutch East Indies, now known as Indonesia, during WWII were mere sex commodities and nothing more. All the men, who raped, abused, and beat them, had no problem dehumanizing them since they were considered, "women belonging to their enemies." Of the hundreds and thousands of women that were forced into this sexual exploitation, to this day they have not received any justice or reparations for the crimes that were committed against them as human beings. This in my opinion is the saddest part of it all, which those responsible were not apprehended for the awful things that they did to these poor women once the war was over. For this reason alone I believe this issue should be brought to light so that the women, who went through this ordeal, can come to terms and get some closure of a very hard topic.

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Summers Sandoval, Tomás F. Jr. *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.

Tomás F. Summers Sandoval's *Latinos at the Golden Gate* is the first book length historical study of San Francisco's Latin American population. The book's primary focus is the unification of the city's Latin Americans from the California Gold Rush to the Post-World War II era. Summers Sandoval argues that "a diverse population of mostly Spanish-speaking immigrants coalesced to express pan-ethnic solidarity and identity rooted to the geography of the city" (p. 2). This pan-Latin American unity and identity—what the author terms *latinidad*—crossed lines of national origin, immigration status, and often class. Summers Sandoval is able to construct this groundbreaking community history of San Francisco's Latin Americans through thorough archival research, census records, as well as insightful and humanizing oral histories.

Latinos at the Golden Gate follows a clear chronological organization. The first chapter, "But Things Will Soon Take Change," documents the growth of San Francisco as an urban metropolis that attracted a wide range of Latin Americans like Chileans, Peruvians, and Mexicans via previously set communication, trade, and migration routes during the Gold Rush. With great detail, Summers Sandoval discusses how as Euro-Americans perpetrated "racial violence...an assortment of Latin American elites promoted cohesion and unity" (p. 49). Hence, Latin American elites used the community's linguistic and religious commonality to unify Latin Americans in order to challenge oppression. To extract early pan-Latin American community formation, Summers Sandoval skillfully uses census records from the 1840s to the 1860s, materials from the Bancroft Library, and timely newspapers such as *The Alta California*.

For Chapter Two, "El Esplendor, Brillantez e Influencia de Nuestra Raza," the author utilizes, again, census records and various newspapers like *La Bandera Mexicana*. Importantly, materials from the Archives of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, including parishioner letters and petitions, are cited in this chapter. From such sources, Summers Sandoval ably details how Latin Americans unified to build their own parish, which became a cultural space that further united the community from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. "We Can't Go Home" covers the mid-twentieth century and the growth of the Latin American population to include Central American and Puerto Rican people. Latin

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Americans remained unified through the Catholic Church along with mutual aid societies centered in the Mission District. This chapter relies on extensive archival material and government documents. Most significantly, though, are oral histories that add a powerful, personal touch to the book's narrative.

Chapter Four, "All Those who Care about the Mission, Stand Up with Me!" explores the rise of the grassroots Mission Coalition Organization from the late 1960s into the 1970s. The organization "helped create an environment where all its [Latin American] members could begin to understand their common interests as well as realize the power of their common efforts" in order to assure urban renewal, or gentrification, did not destroy their community (p. 145). Chapter Five, "¡Basta Ya!," remains in the 1960s and 1970s, but here Sandoval takes into account the actions of the radical Latin American youth of San Francisco, and at times the whole Bay Area, "that expressed their own version of *latinidad*" (p. 151). In Chapters Four and Five, Summers Sandoval demonstrates his skills as a researcher, carefully choosing solid sources for a period from which more information is available. These include moving oral histories of community activists, government documents from the Archives of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, community organization documents from the personal archives of Mike Miller, and activist publications such as *¡Ya Basta!* from which Chapter Five draws its title.

Summers Sandoval takes a sympathetic—perhaps even a polemic—tone towards Latin Americans and people of color in general. This is made clear in Chapter Five when he writes about "[t]he *murder* [italics added] of Matthew Johnson" by a Euro-American police officer (p. 163). Yet, describing the killing of a Euro-American police officer in an altercation with Latin American youths, the author only cites him as being "shot to death" (p. 176). Clearly, *murder* is a much more powerful and accusatory word than "shot to death." However, this reviewer did not find Summers Sandoval so overly biased as to completely omit any wrong-doing by Latin Americans or rifts within the Latin American community. A sympathetic tone towards Latin Americans and other people of color is not surprising considering that many of the sources the author relies on are oral histories, letters, and various publications directly from the Latin American community.

Notably, Summers Sandoval incorporates nine visual sources in the book, including maps, illustrations and pictures. The latter two originated from the author's archival research as well as personal images lent to the author. The visual sources help the reader imagine the daily lives of San

San Francisco's Latin Americans amidst the struggles of racial violence and poverty along with the triumphs of the community in organizing itself. In particular, the maps are indispensable in demonstrating the physical space Latin Americans have occupied to those not familiar with San Francisco's geography.

Summers Sandoval succeeds in creating an innovative monograph that illustrates how San Francisco's Latin Americans built a pan-ethnic identity and community through self-organizing as they intermingled in their new cosmopolitan home. *Latinos at the Golden Gate* emerges out of a strong research base. The detailed Reference section of the book lists seven Californian archival collections, seventeen oral histories conducted by the author and others, twenty-two newspapers, government publications (federal, state, and municipal), films, and numerous secondary sources that include unpublished manuscripts and dissertations. One can hope this book serves as an inspiration for scholars to chart other yet to be historicized Latino communities.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

This Republic of Suffering brings to the foreground the most fundamental characteristic of the American Civil War: death. During the course of the war over 650,000 soldiers died, which is a loss of life that exceeds American fatalities in all other wars combined. And it is the "work" involved in this mind-numbing death toll, to use author Drew Gilpin Faust's words that forged the post-bellum nation.

The primary work of the war was killing and dying on the battlefields. Faust argues that death was not a passive or natural event in Victorian America, for the cultural construction of a "good death" created obligations for the dying. For example, it was important to communicate an acceptance of your fate and a faith in God in order to assure your spiritual readiness for the afterworld. Likewise, killing, which can be seen as somehow "natural" due to its prevalence throughout history, required significant work due to the injunction of the sixth commandment among largely Christian soldiers. In order to justify murder it was necessary to create notions of "noble war" or fall back on the logic of revenge.

Work, however, didn't stop at the edge of the battlefield, for non-combatants also had to deal with the incredible logistics of death. The

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combination of violence and disease resulted in over six million pounds of human bodies that required burial—a task that involved issues of class and race, as officers were disproportionately buried in coffins and black soldiers often had the unenviable task of burying the decomposing remains. Additionally, as the number of dead increased it became necessary to find new ways to count and name the deceased. In the North, the government and large organizations such as the Sanitary Commission led the efforts, while the South largely depended upon private interests. Faust contends that the North's values of governmental responsibility and individual rights were formed largely through this work of dealing with the dead, and that these values came to be regarded as fundamentally American.

Another way death shaped post-bellum America was by challenging some of its core beliefs. The United States was largely a Christian nation (four times as many people went to church every Sunday than voted in the pivotal 1860 presidential election), but the seemingly senseless carnage of the war forced many Americans to question God. Men like Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. began to find meaning for the war in terms of patriotic sacrifice. Of course, this was harder for Southerners, for how can you sacrifice for a country that no longer exists? Faust argues that this lack of meaning for Southerners led to the cult of the “Lost Cause,” which affirmed “that the hundreds of thousands of young southern lives had not, in fact, been given in vain” (193). Others turned away from beliefs entirely. Ambrose Bierce, Emily Dickinson, and Herman Melville, although not representative of the American populace at large, became the vanguard of existentialism largely as a result of the Civil War's violence.

The idea that the Civil War profoundly influenced American culture is not novel; however, Faust is convincing throughout *This Republic of Suffering* that the phenomenon of mass death played an integral part in this transformation. At times, in her effort to emphasize the changes, she portrays antebellum America as too homogeneous. For example, Faust's portrayal of the *ars moriendi* appear universal, even though she briefly acknowledges that “the deathbed of an impenitent and unpardoned sinner...is one where (chaplains) are often called to stand.” (27) The book would benefit from further analysis of the relationship to death among non-Christians.

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**Sani, Raja Abd Allah, and Marilyn Booth. *Girls of Riyadh*.
New York: Penguin Press, 2007.**

The women, their stories, the new understanding of Saudi culture and the women in Islam is enchanting throughout, '*Girls of Riyadh*.' The delightfully new and intriguing author, Raja Alsanea develops several different stories throughout her book and shows lives rarely discussed.

Set in both Saudi Arabia and the United States, at present day, so many captivating and encircling stories which just begin to touch the surface of what life may be like for a non-native English speaker, in America and the girls who grow up in Saudi Arabia. Gamrah, Sadeem, Michelle, and Lamees develop as women throughout this new genre and style of writing. With a soap opera air and young adult flair, Rajaa Alsanea keeps the reader interested and once you become comfortable in one story, she brings our attention back again, with yet another drama. The seemingly unheard of e-mails and controversy surrounding the gossip of Riyadh, makes the book intriguing and entertaining. For those who are fans of journal keeping and journal reading, this interpretation is a must. Opening each chapter with what seem like mini-confessionals; these tid-bits of insight remain appetizing throughout the entirety of "*Girls of Riyadh*."

Famous poet, Nizar Qabbani, finds their way into this novel. Worthy of several mentions and footnotes, one may grow to enjoy the author's references of such a poet, almost more than the drama of Riyadh itself. The romantic and sensual nature of the poetry often sets the mood for a revealing, heartfelt chapter. It remains only fitting that such a provocative poet, who advocates for the social freedoms of women and rebukes male chauvinism, to be so included in "*Girls of Riyadh*." With this book, one may discover the Saudi culture that is separate and unique from other parts of the Arab world. As well as revealing the obvious notion that culture- what is expected of individuals and their families, their religion, and yes, their attire, are all separate, but also intertwined in a beautiful and unique way. Because of these interesting intersectionalities, this book may open minds and broaden horizons- all from the comfort of your own home.

This book was not originally published in the western world, but growing popularity in the Middle East created a hunger for the story in America. This book does an important job here in America, and that is to show how truly similar our day to day lives, love lives, school lives, and lives as

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women are related. For truly understanding and accepting each other may only be possible with unique insights into the daily lives of Saudi women.

Several hypocrisy's within both Saudi and American culture, which affect these women profoundly and differently are expelled within these chapters. These seemingly elusive constraints and pressures, which are shown through these distinctive Saudi women's lives, certainly reflect on American women's lives within western culture today.

The stories and relationships within '*Girls of Riyadh*' which may be seen as shallow or a bit silly and awkward, rather than momentous or serious, show us a side rarely discussed today- the woman's side. The woman's side remains highly stereotyped and shallow, yet Raja Alsanea creates an impeccable narrative, hard to beat, and in most cases, spot on. The myth of the silent woman or complacent woman becomes shattered as the reader may realize, these women, their stories, while truly unique and eye opening can only be the beginning of many beautiful and meaningful stories. Indeed there must be more stories to come to the western world and more to be excavated as to what it must be like, look like, feel like, to live in Riyadh, to be a woman in Saudi, to be a woman in Islam.

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