

THE AFTERMATH PROJECT

AMERICAN MEMORY

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INTRODUCING "AMERICAN MEMORY"

A series of landscape photographs of important historical sites across America that are startling in their exploration of memory and conflict, and the intersection of the past and the present. At the core of Lichtenstein's work is his belief that "the first step towards healing a deep wound is acknowledgement. Without that, it is impossible to move forward." Among the many photos in Lichtenstein's work-in-progress that impressed the judges was a photo of three women in Confederate-era dress seated on a bench at the exact bus stop where Rosa Parks began her historic ride in 1955, launching the American civil rights movement (the women were participants at a recent Confederate Flag rally in honor of the 150th anniversary of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis, the Confederate leader). The judges found Lichtenstein's project to be a highly original take on aftermath issues, and also found his images to be sophisticated and thought-provoking.

BEAR BUTTE



<p>Bear Butte in South Dakota is where the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes received their creation myth, and is still a religious site of great importance, despite being only a few miles from the biker bars and rallies of Sturgis.</p>

<p>This photograph is of Bear Butte, a rock outcropping on the northern edge of the Black Hills in South Dakota. Both the Sioux and Cheyenne Indian Nations believed that their creator handed down the rules of behavior from the top of this butte, and it remains a sacred site, covered in prayer flags, for many plains Indians. It is here, camped next to Bear Butte in the 1850's, that the Sioux warrior Crazy Horse had his first vision that made him dedicate the rest of his life to protecting this sacred land from the white invaders. The history of the Black Hills, and Crazy Horse's struggle to defend them, is one of outright aggression and thievery. Although these hunting grounds had been left to the Sioux by treaty, the discovery of gold in the area meant that any treaties the United States made were not worth the paper they were printed on. This is one of several photographs I made while following the life of Crazy Horse, a man I've always admired. He never allowed himself to be photographed, never agreed to scout for the army against other tribes, and was buried in secret after he was murdered. Just a few miles down the road in this photograph, there is a strip of biker bars that service the annual Sturgis motorcycle festival. The Full Throttle Saloon has a giant statue of a cowboy drinking a beer in front, and has been the setting of a reality television series on the biker life. Listening to the roar

of the Harley engines, it is very possible to realize what victory and defeat, in the truest sense, can mean.</p>

CABIN POND



There is no marker or monument at Cabin Pond, a small swamp in rural Southampton County, Virginia where the slave Nat Turner first received a vision that it was his assigned task to free America's slaves with a rebellion. Cabin Pond is also where Turner planned the rebellion in the summer of 1831, and where he fled to hide after its failure several weeks later. He was captured about a mile away.

This picture is of Cabin Pond in rural Southampton County, Virginia. I took it in memory of Nat Turner, a slave who organized and led a slave rebellion in the summer of 1831.

Nat Turner was a preacher and a slave who assiduously read the bible. While spending time at Cabin Pond, he had a vision that God commanded him to free his fellow slaves. He used the secluded location of this small pond to plan his rebellion. Because the rebels murdered white men, women and children, killing over 60 people, on the plantations that they came upon, he remains a controversial figure, and one who struck tremendous fear in slaveholders who were often vastly outnumbered on their rural plantations. After the rebellion was brutally crushed, and Turner was captured hiding less than a mile from Cabin Pond, Virginia passed a series of laws vastly restricting slave movement and making it illegal to teach slaves to read.

The southern states wanted to erase the memory of Turner's rebellion, and even to this day, they largely succeeded. Cabin Pond was not an easy location to find and photograph, and there are no historical markers letting you know you are there. With the assistance of a local, I drove down a dirt road, pulled over to the side where instructed, and hiked through some tall bushes to what is more of a swamp than a pond. For me, bushwhacking through the scrub is what this whole project was all about; remembering what others would have us forget.

GALVESTON



A crowd listens to the annual reading of the the Emancipation Proclamation by local officials at a ceremony for Juneteenth, a Texas holiday that commemorates the day in 1865 when slaves were told by a Union General in occupied Galveston that the Emancipation Proclamation, written two years earlier by Abraham Lincoln, had set them free.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the war time Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in the eleven southern states of the Confederacy. Because the nation was still at war, however, this remained just a piece of paper in the large sections of territory not under the federal government's control. The slaves of Texas were not freed until two and half years later, on June 19th, 1865, when a Union general landed in Galveston and read the Emancipation Proclamation from the balcony of a local home. This event is still celebrated in Texas as the Juneteenth, or June 19th, holiday.

I like this photograph for two reasons. First, in an age of reality television and video games and celebrity worship, I was impressed to find a place where people come out to listen to a 19th century document being read out loud. The second reason is more personal. In searching the crowd for whom I should photograph, I saw the couple in this picture. I hope that someday we will reach a place where race has little meaning, but until that day, every time I see an interracial couple, it is a watermark for me, for what is freedom if not the ability to love who you want?

GILA RIVER



Along with some scattered, rusting nails and construction debris, these cement pilings scattered across the Arizona desert are all that remains of the Gila River Relocation Center, one of ten camps built to house Japanese Americans imprisoned during the Second World War.

This concentration camp was built on Indian reservation land, despite strong objections from the tribal government, and in 1944 housed over 13,000 prisoners in the dry desert south of Phoenix. Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin Roosevelt, ordered that Japanese American citizens living on the west coast be rounded up, have their property confiscated, and spend the war years interned in primitive camps guarded by the military. Compared to some of the other camps, conditions at Gila River were tolerable for the prisoners who managed to overcome the isolation, boredom, heat, and scorpions.

I have family that live in Phoenix, and sometimes visit them on holidays. On two or three visits, I casually looked for this site, knowing it was on the Gila River Reservation, but never knowing

exactly where. But it was difficult to find. There are no signs, and the desert and irrigated farmland seems to stretch on forever. Then one year I received decent directions, and realized how close it was to the Interstate exit. It always seems like that-I can drive by a place dozens, hundreds, of times in ignorance of what happened there, and then when I discover something, the place is never the same. My world has grown richer.

MANKATO



This photograph is of Sioux riders arriving in the town of Mankato, Minnesota, on the 150th anniversary of a mass hanging where thirty-six warriors were executed on a single day, the largest group hanging in American history.

The hanging of the Sioux in downtown Mankato on the day after Christmas, December 26th, 1862, ended a rebellion by the Dakota, who were starving after promised provisions never arrived on the reservations. Because the Sioux attacked as many homesteads as they could, Minnesota settlers were so traumatized by the uprising that even today, it is still on the books that it is illegal for the Sioux to enter the state of Minnesota.

It's difficult to describe how cold I was when I took this picture. The people from the northern mid-west seem to be used to the freezing temperatures, but I could barely move my fingers enough to press the shutter. As I walked into town, I could hear the beautiful singing of members of the Sioux Nation, marking the occasion with songs for the dead. One woman told me that unlike the Lakota further west, the Dakota language is almost dead, there are so few speakers today.

MANZANAR



Aiko Morimoto, a survivor of a Japanese internment camp, sits on a cot in a rebuilt barracks at the National Park Service's Manzanar camp in California, remembering her childhood.

The Federal Government has restored a small section of the Manzanar Japanese internment camp in Owens Valley, California. Every year Japanese Americans have organized a pilgrimage to the camp for victims and their families of Executive Order 9066, which in early 1942 set the stage for the imprisonment of over 110,000 Japanese American citizens, in what is widely considered one of the worst historic violations of the Constitution.

When I was looking for photographs for this series, I tried to avoid museums and places where history had already been officially designated. I'm more interested in what is unwritten than what has already been categorized and labeled. But I'm also a fan of museums that leave things alone, or just rebuild things as they were-Auschwitz, the Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was shot, and Manzanar. I only encountered Aiko touring a cabin because I showed up to an official ceremony early. Aiko had spent several years of her childhood in the Topaz camp in Utah. "It is good they have built this" she said to me. "But it is not the same. The dust, the bugs, the heat...no one would come visit if it were really the same."

MIERY



This picture is of a small stone monument placed by the state of Rhode Island to mark the spot where the Indian leader King Phillip was tracked down and killed in 1676.

King Phillip was a Wampanoag warrior and chief who led a rebellion that succeeded in burning down most of colonial New England in the 1670's. With the help of Indian scouts who had converted to Christianity, a colonial militia was eventually able to track Phillip down in the isolated Miery swamp, located outside of what is now Bristol, Rhode Island. Philip's hands were chopped off and given to the scouts, his head was displayed on a stake at the entrance to Plymouth for twenty years, and his wife and son were captured and sold into slavery in the Caribbean. The proceeds from the sale of hostile Indians were split amongst the leaders of the colonial militias.

I've always found King Phillip's War to be a fascinating time in American history. The Indians were not at such a disadvantage that their defeat was inevitable. But even then, they were fighting against each other and struggling with members of the tribe who wished to assimilate with the Europeans. When I visited the Miery swamp to make this photograph, two hawks were circling directly above me. Just birds hunting, I thought.

MONTGOMERY



At the exact bus stop where Rosa Parks boarded her famous city bus trip to fight segregation in 1955, participants in a Sons of Confederate Veterans "Confederate Heritage Rally" wait to march up Dexter Avenue in downtown Montgomery to recreate the inauguration of Jefferson Davis 150 years later.

In this photograph, three women dressed in reenactment costumes, sit on a bench in downtown Montgomery, Alabama, waiting for a rally to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the inauguration of the Confederacy's President, Jefferson Davis.

By coincidence, this bench is also the exact spot where Rosa Parks waited to board a city bus in 1955, 100 years after the Civil War ended.

These two events, the inauguration of Jefferson Davis and Rosa Parks' arrest for attempting to integrate a city bus, continue to be directly connected by people who deny that racism has played a significant role in American history.

As a photographer, I do not carry a soapbox with me, and tend to keep my own opinions, at least when photographing, to myself. I believe it is important to treat people with respect. But at this rally, speaker after speaker claimed that the Civil War had nothing to do with slavery, and that they had gathered in Montgomery to honor the "President of the last true free Republic". By misrepresenting the past, it becomes that much easier to justify the present.

SAND CREEK



This is a photograph of grove of Cottonwood trees, which I took in memory of the Sandcreek Massacre, where an encampment of peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho were attacked and slaughtered by a Colorado militia under the command of John Chivington in November of 1864.

The Indian village, under the leadership of Black Kettle, had been told to camp along Sand Creek in eastern Colorado in order to receive protection from the United States army. But Chivington's militia was a drunken ramble of the home guard during the Civil War, and was determined to kill as many Indians as they could. Before the attack, two officers, seeing that the village was flying a US flag and was mostly women and children, held back their men. Afterwards, when controversy swirled around the events of the attack, both of these officers were murdered so that they could not testify at a formal inquiry.

Today, the wide-open prairie outside of Eads, Colorado, has been purchased by the Federal Government and the site is now a small National Park. Every Thanksgiving a group of Cheyenne and Arapaho youth organize a run to Denver, about 170 miles away.

I never know what I am going to find, or what I should look for, when I visit these memorial sites. Across from the Park is a small railroad crossing, and when I was there, in 2009, it was still marked “Chivington”, named after the man who led the attack. That can be the difference between being a writer and a photographer. While I thought that sign was fascinating, it did not really make a photograph. Sometimes when I look at trees, especially old ones, I think, what have you seen? What secrets could you tell? But they never do.

SCOTTSBORO



This photograph is of a wall in the Sheriff's office in Jackson County, Alabama. I was there because the county seat is Scottsboro, Alabama, where the most famous Civil Rights case of the 1930's took place.

In March of 1931 a small scuffle occurred between a group of whites and some black teenagers riding the rails of a freight train traveling to Memphis. A local posse was organized, the train was stopped, and nine black “boys” were arrested. There were also two white women on the train, who quickly, and falsely, accused the blacks of rape. In the south, this accusation was often met with a lynching. But in the Scottsboro case, the teenagers were brought to jail, given a quick trial, and sentenced to death. After years in prison, waiting for their execution, a legal appeal spearheaded by Civil Rights lawyers from the north, was successful and the teenagers were freed after the women admitted to making their story up.

Some places that I visit for this series, you can feel the tension of history, and people are not always welcoming. But at that the Jackson County Court House, they could not have been more welcoming. A clerk looked up some old paperwork and told me where I could find the original courtroom where the Scottsboro trial took place. I photographed the chairs that the jury would have sat in, and then wandered around looking for something to catch my eye. In the Sheriff's office was a wall of portraits of the past Sheriff's of Jackson County. Located in the heart of the “black belt”, I immediately felt like it was a powerful symbol of American democracy, which for so many years was never a democracy at all.

SEMINOLE



I took this photograph of two young girls at an annual barbeque for the black Seminole in the small south Texas town of Bracketville. All the Seminole living there are descendants from a few families of United States cavalry scouts that defended the U.S.-Mexican border in the 1870's.

The story of the black Seminole is the story of an epic American journey. Slaves from the plantations of South Carolina would escape into the wilds of Florida and join the Seminole Indian tribe, becoming full members and valued warriors. This migration was a great threat to the American slave owners, and two wars were fought to conquer the Seminole lands. Like most of the other southern Indian tribes, the Seminoles were finally forced into a brutal trek to Oklahoma in the 1840's, where some poor land had been set-aside for them. But once there, Americans would raid the reservation seeking out darker skinned former slaves, kidnapping them, and selling them back into slavery. Under the leadership of John Horse, many of the black Seminole fled to Mexico where they were given land by the Mexican government. After the Civil War, some of the returned to the United States when they were offered jobs as scouts for the United States Calvary along the Texas border. From South Carolina to Florida to Oklahoma, to Mexico and back to Texas, these brave men and women fought and survived across the American frontier, redefining what it meant to be African, Indian, and American.

When I saw these two girls, I knew I had to take their picture. In their faces I saw a history of this country that is not as neat and clean and as easily defined as our racially obsessed society would have you believe. People are people. Put them together, and they will mix and mingle and find joy and laughter in life despite all attempts to deny it to them.

TILL



A field of cotton waits to be harvested on the outskirts of Money, Mississippi. This is a tribute photograph taken in memory of Emmett Till and his great uncle, Moses Wright.

During the summer of 1955, a 14-year-old black boy from Chicago named Emmett Till was visiting with relatives in the small Mississippi Delta town of Money. While buying candy at a local store, he either whistled at the white lady who ran the store, said "bye baby", or in some other trivial way broke the strict racial and sexual barriers that existed in the South. It really makes no difference, because whatever juvenile infraction Emmett had committed, he quickly became a part of something much larger than himself. He was kidnapped, beaten, and

murdered, his disfigured body dumped into the nearby Tallahatchie River. Because his mother insisted on an open casket funeral, for the world to witness first hand the brutality of segregation, and because his killers were quickly set free, even as they freely admitted to the crime, anger over the injustice of Emmett's murder motivated a future generation of young Civil Rights activists-as did the bravery of Emmett's great uncle, a local sharecropper named Mose Wright who dared to point out in open court the white men who had come in the night to kidnap his nephew.

When traveling to a historical site, I'm always thinking about how to photograph something that happened many years ago. Money Mississippi was, and is, a cotton town. All that remains there now are fields of cotton and a cotton gin. While two white men-Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam-murdered Emmett Till, with the help of local white and black friends and neighbors, it was the cotton that really killed the boy, and so many others before him. A cash crop requiring intense manual labor could only have been a child of slavery. To travel in the Delta today is to visit one ghost town after another. The large industrial farm machines that replaced the field hands accomplished what the white supremacists could not, driving the region's African Americans up the Mississippi, towards the jobs.

TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE



On the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911, volunteers chalk the names of the victims on the sidewalk in front of where their homes were throughout the New York City's Lower East Side.

On March 25 of 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, a sweatshop in New York City's Greenwich Village, caught fire. One hundred and forty-six garment workers died, many of them jumping to their deaths because the stairway and exit doors had been locked to keep the mostly young, underpaid Jewish and Italian immigrant workers on the sewing machines. The outrage over this event helped to build the modern labor movement in America.

Later in the day, after I followed this volunteer through the crowded streets of lower Manhattan, where immigrant families from Sicily and Eastern Europe settled at the turn of the 20th century, including my own grandmother, it rained. The chalk began to run, and when I was walking around a few days later, there was no sign that the names of the young women had ever been written on the sidewalk. For me, that is history.

TUBMAN



This picture is of an abandoned slave cabin along the banks of the Combahee River in South Carolina.

This cabin sits on the land of a former slave plantation that fugitive slave Harriet Tubman raided in 1863, freeing over seven hundred slaves from the area. Before the Civil War, Tubman was one of the most fearless guides of the Underground Railroad, frequently returning to the South to lead slaves to freedom in the North. When war broke out, she accepted a commission as an officer in the Union Army, and led a Union boat up the Combahee, deep in the heart of the Confederacy. Word quickly spread on the huge rice plantations along both banks of the Combahee that freedom was near, and slaves rushed to the boat. Many of the men would soon join the Union troops and help finish the war.

Original slave cabins are very rare in the South. Almost all of them have been torn down or destroyed over the years. So when I went to photograph the Combahee River in memory of Harriet Tubman's historical raid, I was very happy to find this one, located on private property. I was told that the bricks structure meant its original owners had tried to build better housing for their slaves than the typical wooden shacks found on most plantations. Inside the cabin was an old desk and some trash. Families had been living here as late as the 1970's.

See the full project: <http://theaftermathproject.org/project/american-memory>