Conflicting Narratives
A Wreck at *The Crossroads*

Geoff Nunn

Prof. Kenneth B. Pyle
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"There were two points everyone agreed on. One, this is a historically significant aircraft. Two, no matter what the museum did, we'd screw it up." –Martin Harwit[1]

Introduction

On 6 August 1945, the *Enola Gay* dropped the first and second to last atomic bomb to be used in a combat role. This moment marked one of, if not the defining, moments of the 20th Century. The event rested at the intersection of two eras. It punctuated the end of a Hot War, which had begun fifteen years earlier and engulfed the world by 1941; and ushered in the beginning of a Cold War, which would leave civilization in the anxious shadow of nuclear extinction for the next half century. Not only did the bomb incinerate much of the city of Hiroshima, but the mushroom cloud seared its imprint into the fabric of history and memory.

Fifty years later, The National Air and Space Museum (NASM) attempted to address the pivotal event of the century by staging an exhibit centered on the *Enola Gay*. They were planning an exhibit to open in May of 1995, just in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The exhibit title, *The Crossroads: The End of World War II, The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War*, encapsulated the intent of museum curators to join the stories of the two eras around the iconic object that linked them. The exhibit team was responding to a change sweeping the greater museum community, which put an increasing emphasis on public education as a fulfillment of

[1] in Michael Hogan, "The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation," in Michael Hogan, ed., *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 202

their social contract. Exhibit planners sought to include the latest in scholarly research in hopes of creating a reasonable dialogue on a decidedly difficult subject.

Veterans' groups also wanted to see the *Enola Gay* exhibited, but on entirely different terms. For them, the plane had brought about the end of a bitter struggle which had taken the lives of their countrymen and friends. Now approaching the end of their lives, the veterans wished to see the icon they believed granted them the past fifty years of their lives. The 50th anniversary of the end of the war demanded a commemorative voice. The veterans wanted an exhibit that honored their service and the service of their friends who perished in the fight for Freedom.

The story the NASM exhibit team sought to tell and the one the veterans demanded are very different in tone and content. Some would suggest they are incompatible. The friction between these two conflicting tales led to the greatest museum controversy in history. The NASM exhibit team would be pitted against powerful veterans' organizations in a struggle that would spread to the halls of Congress and the media at large. The battle was more than a disagreement over how the *Enola Gay* should be displayed; it was a fight to determine who would define American culture at a time when national identity was in question.

In this battle as in all wars, no party is faultless. Museum curators failed to fully contextualize the events surrounding the bombing. They could have rectified their mistakes had it not been for a foolish act of extreme political naiveté. On the other side, veterans were guilty of demonizing the intentions of the exhibit team and ignoring their attempts to engage in honest dialogue. The media was guilty of failing to look critically at the facts available to them, favoring the sensational story instead. Finally, Congress was

guilty as usual of looking after their own political interests over the greater good. The failure of these parties to engage in reasonable dialogue ultimately led to the cancellation of the exhibit and the resignation of NASM's director, Martin Harwit. As in all wars, the greatest victim is society as a whole. The conflict over *Crossroads* deprived the public of both a chance to learn and an opportunity to bring closure to an event that fundamentally changed the world.

NASM: A Museum in Transition

The National Air and Space Museum[1] was created in 1946 when President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 722 into effect. The Congressional Charter for the new Air Museum made its mission to

> Memorialize the national development of aviation; collect, preserve, and display aeronautical equipment of historical interest and significance; serve as a repository for scientific equipment and data pertaining to the development of aviation; and provide educational material for the historic study of aviation.[2]

This founding document instructs the museum to serve as both historical educator and public memorial. The founding collection for the new museum was donated by the commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, Henry H. "Hap" Arnold and included such historically significant aircraft as the *Wright Flyer* and the *Spirit of St. Louis*. The National Air and Space Museum would eventually become known as a "showcase for the aerospace industry and the military."[3] Ironically, Arnold was also responsible for

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[1]At the time, the museum was called the National Air Museum. The term "Space" would not be added to the title until 20 years later. *NASM @ 25 Chronology*, National Air and Space Museum. <http://www.nasm.si.edu/museum/history/nasm25th/chronology/1995.htm> (29 November 2005).
[2] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied* (NY: Copernicus, 1996), p. 14
[3] Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (NY: Metropolitan, 1996), pp. 21-22.

founding the Air Force Association, which would be instrumental in bringing about the cancellation of the original exhibition of the *Enola Gay*.[1]

NASM operates under the umbrella of the Smithsonian Institution, which had been formed one hundred years earlier when an Englishman by the name of James Smithson bequeathed his life fortune to the United States, a country he had never visited. Smithson's will instructed that this surprise bequest be used, "to found at Washington, under the name of the 'Smithsonian Institution,' an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." This institution would, in the course of a century and a half, develop into a community of "a dozen museums and half a dozen additional research centers devoted to science, history and art." [2]

During the 1980s and 90s, NASM and the Smithsonian Institution as a whole, were in a period of change that was sweeping across the greater museum community of the United States. Up until this point, museums had been seen as mere repositories for artifacts characterized by displays of objects accompanied by little to no interpretive information. In 1984, the American Association of Museums (AAM) issued a report entitled *Museums for a New Century* which encouraged museums to take a more active role in public education as part of their social contract. By 1992, the AAM developed a set of recommendations stating that museums should consider education to be central in policy statements and exhibits and should seek to enrich the public's knowledge of collections and the cultures from which they are garnered.

In *History Wars*, Edward Linenthal reveals the way these trends were expressed at the Smithsonian. During this time period, "Many of the curators had become convinced

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 14
[2] Ibid., p. 23-4.

that museums could, 'play a role in reflecting and mediating the claims of various groups, and perhaps reconstruct a new idea of ourselves as a nation.'"[1] The AAM's guidelines and the views of the Smithsonian's curators were prompted by various factors including an increased societal awareness of multicultural issues, a desire to break away from hegemonic social mythologies in the interest of historical accuracy and education, and less altruistically, due to cutbacks in federal funding for the arts and an increased pressure on the greater museum community to prove to the public that museums provide a beneficial and relevant service to the community.[2]

1984 was the same year the Smithsonian's Board of Regents appointed Robert McCormick Adams as Secretary in order to "raise the institution's standards of scholarship."[3] Adams had previously been a professor at the University of Chicago where he worked in the Oriental Institute and Department of Anthropology.[4] During his tenure at the Smithsonian, he sought to address "broader issues of public interest."[5] This meant moving away from more traditional, object-centric displays in favor of more interpretive exhibits that would challenge the visitor to think critically about history.

Three years later in 1987, Adams hired Martin Harwit to be the director of NASM with that goal in mind. Harwit was an astrophysicist, trained at MIT who had worked on the hydrogen bomb program. Immediately prior to his appointment, he had been chair of the astronomy department at Cornell University and had helped to found the University's history and philosophy of science and technology program. Even before the hiring

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 22.
[2] Wilson O'Donnell, "Museum Education." Lecture, (University of Washington. Burke Museum, Seattle. 29 Nov. 2005)
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 26
[4] *Robert McCormick Adams,* Minnesota State University (9 Dec. 2003), <http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/abcde/adams_robert.html> (29 November 2005)
[5] Harwit, pp. 27, 433.

process was complete, Harwit and Adams began speaking about the potential exhibition of the *Enola Gay*.

The Enola Gay: A Conflicted Symbol

Since the B-29's fateful mission in 1945, the *Enola Gay* has been a powerful symbol steeped in controversy. The Smithsonian acquired title of the aircraft on July 3, 1949 at which time it was accessioned into the collection of the National Air Museum. The museum, just three years old, did not yet have a building of its own and would not gain congressional approval to construct one until ten years later. The actual construction would not begin until 1970 when funding for the project would finally be approved. [1]

In 1949, the most significant objects in the National Air Museum's collection, such as the *Wright Flyer* and the *Spirit of St. Louis*, were housed in the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building.[2] The remainder of the museum's collection was stored in temporary sheds found by Paul Garber, the museum's first curator of aviation. For the relatively small aircraft, which made up the bulk of the collection, locating adequate storage was a relatively easy endeavor. The *Enola Gay*, however, is 99 feet long, 141 feet in wingspan and 28 feet in tail height, which presented a much more difficult task.

Unable to find suitable storage, the Smithsonian was forced to ferry the *Enola Gay* about the country storing it outdoors at various airfields. On 2 December 1953, the *Enola Gay* arrived at a remote part of Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland where she would remain until 1960. During this time, the plane would be vandalized. Unable to directly look after the security of the plane due to the restricted access allowed at Andrews, Paul Garber decided to disassemble the plane in order to protect it from further

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 14-15, 430.
[2] NASM @ 25 Chronology, <http://www.nasm.si.edu/museum/history/nasm25th/chronology/1995.htm>

degradation. In 1980, when members of the 509th composite air group visited the facility where the parts were housed, their concern over the state of the plane led several of them to accuse the Smithsonian of neglect and prompted veteran's groups to begin lobbying for the proper display of the *Enola Gay*. [1]

Until this time, noone really seemed interested in displaying the bomber. In 1970, when Barry Goldwater –described by Robert Post as "NASM's patron saint"- was pushing for congressional approval to fund construction of the museum building, he stated, "that he did not want the *Enola Gay* exhibited *at all*."[2] He went on to declare that, "What we are interested in here [for the museum] are the truly historic aircraft. I wouldn't consider the one that dropped the bomb on Japan as belonging in that category." Congressman Frank Thompson expressed a similar sentiment: "I don't think we should be proud of [the use of atomic weapons] as a nation. At least it would offend me to see it exhibited in the museum."[3] Among the administration of the Smithsonian, "no secretary prior to the 1980s was interested in displaying the *Enola Gay* either, nor were any of the men who were put in charge of the museum."[4] The hesitance of public figures and Smithsonian staff to display this aircraft which took part in one of, if not the defining moment of the 20th century reveals both the tremendous symbolism associated with the object and the ambivalent feelings the American psyche holds towards the aircraft as a symbol of the nuclear age.

The symbolic power of the *Enola Gay* is largely responsible for the intensity of the conflict surrounding it. Historian Pamela Walker Laird asserts, "It was the presence

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 15-16.
[2] Robert C. Post, "A Narrative for Our Time: The *Enola Gay* 'and after that, period," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 45. No. 2. (April 2004), p. 383.
[3] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 13. Brackets in original.
[4] Post, p. 384

of the *Enola Gay* –a remarkable artifact of awe-inspiring size, destructive power, and mythic status in the national narrative- that gave this wrenching controversy its name and its force."[1] The sheer power of the massive, gleaming airplane, and all that it represented, raised many anxieties over how it should be displayed.

The Smithsonian's curators and supporters felt it was vitally important to display this aircraft within an historical context in order to avoid the appearance that they were celebrating nuclear destruction. Stanford Historian of technology, Joseph Corn emphasizes the problem with the Smithsonian's more traditional manner of displaying aircraft with minimal interpretive text: "Without any context, the artifacts became, according to Corn, 'Veritable icons' that the museum unabashedly celebrated." Admiral Noel Gayler, expressed similar concerns as part of the exhibit's Research Advisory Committee with regard to the *Enola Gay*: "He worried that no matter how sober the exhibit, 'the impression cannot be avoided that we are celebrating the first and so far only use of nuclear weapons against human beings.'" [2] Harwit vehemently states the case for an interpretive display in *An Exhibit Denied* in which he writes, "If a national museum portrays warfare, it needs to show youngsters more than gleaming machines described as able to fly higher, faster, and farther, with more maneuverability and 'fire power capable of inflicting heavy punishment.' People die in war! Children should realize that."[3] The importance of avoiding a seemingly celebratory display is further compounded by the Smithsonian's position as a national institution.

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[1] Pamela Walker Laird, "The Public's Historians." *Technology and Culture,* Vol. 39, No. 3 (Chicago: July 1998), p. 476.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, pp. 16, 22
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied,* p. 243

As America's national museum for aerospace technology, NASM's exhibits reflect on the views of the country as a whole. "Thomas L. Freudenheim, Assistant Secretary at the Smithsonian puts the *Enola Gay* squabble in a broader context of the political mandate of the museum, which, 'as a national museum... cannot therefore take only one point of view on this question, given the diversity of opinion in this country'"[1] Harwit echoes this statement,

> The public would never view an exhibit at a national museum as reflecting solely the views of a single curator. Visitors to the National Air and Space Museum saw an exhibition as representing a museum, if not a Smithsonian, or even a national consensus.[2]

As America's national museum, NASM and the Smithsonian were and are expected to reflect the values of the nation as a whole. Therefore, it was imperative that exhibit team take the utmost care in developing the exhibit in order to prevent a national or international incident.

Indeed, concerns about the overpowering nature of the *Enola Gay*'s presence were also expressed across the Pacific in Japan. "One of the main Japanese fears was that the *Enola Gay*, by virtue of size alone, would dwarf any exhibit on the Hiroshima aftermath."[3] Harwit was particularly sensitive to how this exhibit would be perceived by the Japanese. Historian, Michael Hogan recalls how, "One Japanese resident in Washington wrote the mayor of Hiroshima that the *Enola Gay* belonged in 'the

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[1] Thomas F. Gieryn, "Balancing Acts: Science, *Enola Gay* and History Wars at the Smithsonian," in Sharon Macdonald, ed., *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (NY: Routledge, 1998), p. 202
[2] Harwit. *An Exhibit Denied,* p. 38
[3] Ibid., p. 167

Holocaust Museum.'"[1] Harwit hoped to address these strong feelings and suggested, "the exhibit could offer a partial resolution of the 'unarticulated issues' that had long haunted Japanese-American relations, and that it could make August 6 –traditionally a day of 'protest and recrimination'- into a day for reflection."[2] Unfortunately, the care that the exhibit team took to avoid angering the Japanese caused them to overlook the strong opinions of groups closer to home.

The Smithsonian's important role as a national mouthpiece was also felt by perceived most keenly by veteran's groups who vehemently disagreed with the Smithsonian's display and who would make their displeasure known through the avenues of congress and the national media. Ironically, veterans' groups were responsible for instigating the plans to display the *Enola Gay* in the first place. Donald Rehl and Frank Stewart, veterans of the 509th composite group founded the *Enola Gay* Restoration Association (EGRA) in 1984. This group began working with NASM in 1988 to raise funds for the upcoming exhibit. [3] For veterans, "the giant B-29 was a lifesaver, a peacemaker… that deserved center stage in an exhibit marking the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Japan."[4] It held a very different symbolic meaning within their particular personal and social contexts.

Veterans expressed a desire to see the Smithsonian, "display the bomber 'proudly and patriotically,' much as [NASM] displayed the Wright Brother's first airplane or Lindberg's *Spirit of St. Louis*." [5] They preferred that the plane be presented in the traditional manner with minimal interpretation in order to allow the object to speak for

[1] Hogan, "The Enola Gay Controversy," p. 203.
[2] Linenthal. *History Wars.* p. 19
[3] Harwit. *An Exhibit Denied.* pp. 430, 432.
[4] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 201
[5] Ibid. p. 204.

itself. Brigadier General, Paul Tibbets, the pilot who flew the *Enola* Gay on its atomic mission in 1945 stated at a 1994 award ceremony, "I suggest that the Enola Gay be preserved and displayed properly- and alone, for all the world to see."[1] The perception that the Smithsonian was hiding the *Enola Gay* from the public and the disparity between the exhibit veterans wanted and that foreseen by the exhibit's planners would lead EGRA to launch a campaign which would amass over 8,000 signatures on a petition "asking the Smithsonian to either display the aircraft properly or turn it over to a museum that will do so."[2] Eventually, powerful lobbying organizations such as the Air Force Association and the American Legion would flex their political muscles to assure that if the Smithsonian did not tell their story, they would tell no story at all. The battle for control of the exhibit was more than a conflict between two differing opinions. It was a cultural conflict which, according to James Davison Hunter, was "ultimately about the struggle for domination." The victor of which would gain "the power to define reality."[3]

Two Stories: A Battle for National Identity

The conflict between the exhibit NASM curators were planning and the one veterans expected to see arose out of the disparities between the commemorative story of the 50th anniversary of the end of "America's most honorable and successful war"[4] and the historical narrative of the causes and consequences of the atomic bomb. Linenthal states, "Artifacts like the *Enola Gay*... tend to establish a 'commemorative membrane'

[1] Paul Tibbets, (Statement of 9 June 1994), in *Enola Gay* (02 May 2002), <http://www.theenolagay.com/plane.html> (30 November 2005)
[2] John T Correll, "War Stories at Air & Space: At the Smithsonian, history grapples with cultural angst." *Air Force* (April 1994) found in *Enola Gay Archive,* Air Force Association, (2005) <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp> (30 November 2005)
[3] in Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 19-20.
[4] John Leo, "The National Museums of PC," *U.S. News and World Report* Vol. 117, No. 14 (10 October 1994), p. 21.

around exhibit space within which the language of commemorative respect is often expected to dominate." Tom Crouch and Michael Neufield, *Crossroads'* authors, planned "for the exhibit's 'intellectual heart' to be the painstaking examination of the various controversies that now surround the decision to drop the bomb… and its 'emotional heart' to be the horror of what the bomb did to the Japanese." For veterans, this was unacceptable.[1]

Linenthal asserts that "For [veterans], the exhibit's 'emotional center' should have been the suffering of U.S. troops inexorably fighting their way across the Pacific until the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war that had begun at Pearl Harbor to a merciful end."[2] Former B-29 pilot, Ben Nicks voiced a common accusation by veterans that the NASM curators were using the exhibit as "simply a transparent excuse to moralize about nuclear warfare." He continued by insisting that, "A museum's role is to present history as it was, not as its curators would like it to be."[3] Such venomous accusations point to the level of threat the historically critical exhibit had to veterans' sense of personal identity much less their concept of America.

The exhibition's purpose as the planners saw it was, "To convey to the general public some of the moral and political dilemmas of the decision to drop the bomb."[4] To raise such questions invokes deep seated anxieties over the state of American identity in the post Cold War world.

In the mid-1990s, America's military superpower often seemed almost irrelevant.

Accordingly, the need felt by World War II veterans to memorialize America's

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars,* pp. 20-21, 39.
[2] Ibid. p. 29.
[3] in Correll, "War Stories at Air and Space," <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>
[4] Michael Neufield in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 202.

> once vaunted military prowess taps into deeper fears about collective identity and purpose for the United States in the future.[1]

Linenthal declares, "the *Enola Gay* controversy exposed the centrality of the 'Good War' to a sacred narrative of American history that has become increasingly distant and imperiled."[2] That narrative states that President Truman ordered the *Enola Gay* to drop the atomic bomb in order to avoid a costly invasion of the Japanese homeland that would have cost 500,000 to one million American lives. Veterans clung to this story and defended it by, "appealing to the authenticity of personal experience."[3] They would overwhelmingly declare, "I know. I was there."

The veterans' point of view was essentially subjective, which is not to say it wasn't valid. Their convictions were made all the more powerful by the very real emotions associated with American collective memory of the end of World War II. These emotions were an integral part of the context surrounding the atomic bombing and were particularly strong given the timing of the exhibit. According to Pamela Walker Laird, "Half century anniversaries of catastrophes, including wars, carry heavy emotional loads, even in the calmest of times, as survivors and their families seek closure."[4] A letter written by Lt.-Gen. James V. Edmundson to *Air Force* magazine is typical of the standard argument of veterans:

> I commanded a B-29 group on Tinian… As an American who was stationed at Hickam Field on December 7, 1941, who fought at such places as Midway, Tulagi and Guadalcanal… I deeply resent an agency of my government telling the

[1] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 33.
[2] Linenthal, introduction to *History Wars*, p. 6.
[3] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 201.
[4] Laird, "The Public's Historians," p. 475

> American people that the war aims of the Japanese were more noble than those for which so many of my friends died.

This resentment arose at having deeply ingrained memories called into question. According to Michael Hogan, veterans "equated their collective memory with historical reality."[1] For them, the recollection of what they experienced during the war was more than a mere memory. It was historical "Truth" confirmed by their recollection of the experience and "restated over and over by public figures and community leaders"[2] for the past fifty years.

American political leaders began shaping public memory of the event just hours after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, when President Harry S. Truman released a presidential statement[3] announcing the event to the American public. Truman's statement made a number of assertions about his reasons for dropping the bomb and the nature of the target which, according to historian and exhibit advisory committee member, Barton Bernstein, "intentionally distorted facts." Truman characterized

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[1] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 201.

[2] Akira Iriye, "Introduction: Historical Scholarship and Public Memory," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 4 No. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 90.

[3] Truman's, public statement of August 6, 1945 reads as follows:
"Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped on [atomic] bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T…(continued on next page…)
The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces…
We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan's power to make war.
It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 [the Potsdam Proclamation] was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as they have not yet seen."
Text in Barton Bernstein, "The Struggle Over History: Defining the Hiroshima Narrative." in Philip Nobile, ed., *Judgement at the Smithsonian* (NY: Marlowe, 1996), pp. 128-9.

Hiroshima as "an important Japanese Army Base" and declared that the Potsdam Declaration was issued to "spare the Japanese people from utter destruction." [1]

Another essential part of the American memory that differs significantly from the historical statistics NASM planned to include in the exhibit is the common belief that an invasion of Japan would have cost 500,000 to one million American lives. Harwit states, "After the war Truman often spoke of half a million to a million American casualties, and sometimes of half a million to one million American dead. Those were the figures that the veterans also cited in letters they wrote to the museum."[2] Akira Iriye, professor of history at Harvard University and member of the exhibit Advisory Committee nicely summarizes American collective memory with regard to the atomic bomb as the following:

> The war was fought for a good, wholly justifiable cause. Japan was undisputably (sic) the aggressor in Asia and the Pacific as Germany was in Europe. Japan's treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor got the nation involved in the war, which ended with atomic bombing. American soldiers, weapons, technology and ingenuity were massively and successfully employed to punish Japanese militarism for its aggression and atrocities.

This myth has been perpetuated by America's leaders since the war. On 1 December 1991, President George Bush stated, "No apology is required [for the atomic bomb], and it will not be asked of this President, I can guarantee you. I was fighting over there… [Truman] made a tough decision, and it was right because it spared *millions* of Americans lives." In April 1995, President Bill Clinton "carefully" confirmed this official rhetoric:

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[1] Bernstein, "The Struggle Over History" pp. 128-39.
[2] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 240.

"the United States owes no apology to Japan for having dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Sadao Asada states that Clinton then said, "'based on the facts he had before him,' Truman's decision was the right one for ending the war." Hiraoka Takashi, mayor of Hiroshima, accused Clinton of "following the idea of successive presidents."[1] For a president to break with such an ingrained cultural belief would amount to political suicide. So, American memory of the war is perpetuated through the statements of the highest governmental figures, which in turn further ingrains the story in the American collective conscious.

The curators at NASM sought to live up to the museum's charter which called on them to "provide educational material for the historic study of aviation." According to Akira Iriye, "historians… have an obligation to examine and reexamine the past on the basis, not of national memories, but of the evidence that is available to all."[2] This obligation and desire to present as accurate an account as possible is reiterated by Thomas Gieryn:

> There is little news, I suppose, in hearing that scholars/curators hope to achieve exhibits that reflect a diversity of opinion about science and the *Enola Gay*, that refrain from imposing a party line on museum visitors, that present events as having both good and evil consequences. Such attitudes towards the representation of history are enshrined as norms governing this community of scholars and knowledge makers.[3]

Edward Linenthal, however, questions the possibility of true objectivity:

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[1] in Sadao Asada, "The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches: Japanese and American Perceptions of the A-Bomb Decision, 1945-1995." *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations,* Vol. 4 No. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 105

[2] Iriye, "Historical Scholarship and Public Memory," p. 92.

[3] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts" p. 203

> The notion that once upon a time there were 'neutral' museum exhibits or artifacts that 'spoke for themselves' is, of course, illusory. 'Agendas' and 'points of view' have always been embedded in exhibits, even those that appeared authoritatively neutral and 'objective.'[1]

All of the people involved in the exhibit brought a very subjective personal context to their work.

For example, Harwit's exhibit concept surely must have been influenced by his experience witnessing the first test of a hydrogen bomb. Furthermore, Tom Crouch had a history of developing exhibits such as *A More Perfect Union,*[2] which challenged the conventional beliefs of the visitor. Pamela Laird asserts that "academics" can not "imply… that the competition for cultural authority is beneath their dignity. Scholars are not above politics, and we owe it to ourselves and our fellow citizens to recognize that we have a lot to offer to the political arena."[3] Indeed, the exhibit's planners were following a shift in policy that was spreading across the Smithsonian which strived to have museums, "play a role in reflecting and mediating the claims of various groups and perhaps help construct a new idea of ourselves as a nation."[4] Such an endeavor is essentially political in nature. Unfortunately while the curators sought to enlighten the public and provoke a thoughtful dialogue on a difficult subject, veterans would see their efforts as a threat to American exceptionalism and would characterize NASM's effort as, a "countercultural morality pageant put on by academic activists."[5]

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars,* p. 26
[2] *A More Perfect Union*, which opened on the bicentennial anniversary of the creation of the U.S. Constitution "dealt with the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II" in ibid. p. 23.
[3] Laird, "Public's Historians," p. 479
[4] in Linenthal, p. 22
[5] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 218

Exhibit Planning: Bridging the Gap

The exhibit Harwit first envisioned was one which traced the history of strategic bombing from its roots in the years leading up to World War II, through its culmination in the dropping of the atomic bomb. One of the first titles Harwit conceived was, "From Guernica to Hiroshima –Bombing in WWII."[1] By the time the exhibit planning documents were being written, the focus had "shifted from strategic bombing to the use of atomic weapons and the opening of the nuclear age."[2] NASM curator and co-author of the original *Crossroads* script, Tom Crouch told National Public Radio, "'Part of the purpose of the exhibition'…was 'to get people to think about the origins' of the 'nuclear age and everything that's come with it over the past half-century.'"[3] Harwit was "certainly aware" of the controversial nature of such subject matter and took the great pains to form a "strong consensus."[4] Pamela Laird suggests that throughout the planning process, "Harwit and the NASM staff generally, if not always optimally or soon enough, followed the now standard procedures regarding consultation with stakeholders and scholars."[5]

Harwit began by reaching out to various groups in an effort to involve them in the planning process. In October of 1987, Harwit created the Research Advisory Committee, "bringing a wide range of views and a broad expertise to its task." The group was chaired by Dr. Herbert Friedman, an early pioneer of space research and member of the National Academy of Sciences. The group also included Admiral Gayler, who expressed strong reservations about the potential exhibit. During the closing session of the committee, he

[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 28.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 19.
[3] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 205.
[4] Linenthal, p. 18.
[5] Laird, "Public's Historians," p. 475.

argued that, "There is a technology that, I think we would all agree around this table, can only be described as bad, and that is the technology of nuclear weapons." Gayler feared that an exhibit of the *Enola Gay* would "tarnish the reputation of the museum." Dr. David Challinor, the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary for Science shared his concern and warned of the "generational" gap in the perception of the plane. They were opposed by Prof. James Hansen, a historian of technology at Auburn University and Alex Roland also a historian of technology at Duke, who both acknowledged the controversial nature of the subject, but who felt the historical significance of the object merited its display. Harwit acknowledges the prophetic nature of the advisory committee's discussion, "Most of the arguments the museum would encounter in the seven years to follow were already raised within weeks of my [Harwit's] arrival at the museum."[1]

In addition to seeking the expert advice of the advisory committee, Harwit sought to build bridges both with the American public and the Japanese. In 1988, the Smithsonian announced to the general public that NASM was planning an exhibit that linked the *Enola Gay* with the destruction of Hiroshima and "probably" to the history of strategic bombing, "to provide a comparative perspective." The announcement served in part to quell growing complaints from veterans' groups who accused the Smithsonian of "neglect" and of hiding the *Enola Gay* from the public. Harwit was also hoping it would, "evoke a response from any people violently opposed to us putting the airplane on exhibit."[2]

An even "more worrying unknown" for Harwit was the way an exhibit would be received by the Japanese. In 1988, Morihisa Takagi, president of Nippon Television

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 30-34.
[2] Ibid., pp. 56-7.

warned, "The Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings remain firmly imprinted in the Japanese consciousness, much as the Holocaust does with the Jewish people." Harwit appreciated his concern and writes in *An Exhibit Denied*, "If we, as a national museum, exhibited the *Enola Gay*, we needed to consider Japanese sensitivities to avoid the risk of precipitating a potentially serious international incident between the United States and Japan." [1] In an effort to ensure that the Japanese voice was represented as part of the exhibit, Harwit and Crouch traveled to Japan in April, 1993. There, they visited a number of museums to secure loans of several artifacts including a child's charred lunch box containing food that was carbonized in the bomb blast, and a watch that was stopped at the moment of the explosion.[2] Harwit hoped that, "the museum would soon reach a point where all constituencies, 'would be willing to trust us with their support.'"[3] Unfortunately, Harwit's efforts to include a Japanese voice in the exhibit would be seen as anti-American bias to many critics.

Harwit also used some of the Smithsonian's other interpretive exhibits to test the public's reaction to this new style of display. In the fall of 1989, Harwit mounted "a sixteen-month-long series of talks, panel discussions, symposia, and films on 'Strategic Bombing in World War II.'"[4] In November of 1991, NASM put up an exhibition on WWI aviation titled, *Legend, Memory, and the Great War in the Air* which, according to Tom Crouch was intended to, "contrast the 'myths and misconceptions that have grown up around [World War I] with the reality of life and death in the air, 1914-1918'" The National Museum of American History's exhibit, "*A More Perfect Union* dealt with the

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[1] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 56.
[2] Ibid., pp. 150-175.
[3] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 34.
[4] Harwit, p. 59.

internment of Japanese ancestry during World War II." Harwit saw these exhibits as "trial balloons" and their success "convinced him that the public was, in fact, ready to engage an exhibit that dealt with the dropping of the bomb and the end of the war."[1]

There were, however, "undercurrents of discomfort with the National Air and Space Museum" and some "negative reactions", particularly to the World War I exhibit.[2] *Air Force Magazine* editor, John Correll would voice these smoldering concerns during his attack on the *Crossroads* exhibit. His article, "War Stories at Air and Space" criticizes the *Legends* exhibit for emphasizing "the horrors of World War I," and for taking "a hostile view of airpower in that conflict."[3] As with *Legends*, *Crossroads* would be lambasted for being a negative exhibit.

The seven year planning process culminated in the creation of a sixteen-page exhibit planning document entitled, "50 Years On" which outlined the various topics and questions the exhibit would address. The document was written by the exhibit curators Michael Neufield and Tom Crouch. Harwit describes the motivations of the authors: "As I saw it, Tom Crouch, who had done many excellent exhibitions before, hoped once again to enthrall the visitor with human interest stories." He goes on to suggest that Crouch, "saw an opportunity to show the tragedy that the atomic bombings had wrought." For Mike Neufield, "the objective appeared to be to bring our everyday visitors the latest scholarship on the decision to drop the bomb." Harwit suggests that "the museum, could only offer visitors a range of views and their rational foundations." Given the apparent

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[1] Linenthal. *History Wars*. p. 18.
[2] Ibid. p. 23.
[3] Correll, "War Stories," <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>

motivation of the exhibit's authors, the question remains, who was looking after the interests of the veterans?[1]

Controversy: An Unfinished Script

During the summer of 1993, when the planning documents were being drafted, the top level administrators at both NASM and the Smithsonian were concerned with that very question. Adams wrote to Harwit saying, "I cannot accept, that this will be 'an exhibit about the wartime development of the atomic bomb, the decision to use it against Japan and the aftermath of the bombings.'" Linenthal states that Adams felt the exhibit "should instead commemorate the end of the war, calling attention to the crucial role of atomic weapons in the Pacific." Adams also expressed his uneasiness that the script did not address "in adequate depth what were perceived as the horrors experienced by the Americans during all of the island invasions culminating with Okinawa."[2] Smithsonian regent, Barber Conable told Adams' assistant, Jim Hobbins that he was "not all together pleased with the paper 'Fifty Years On' because it focuses too much on the cost of dropping the bomb and too little on what the costs would have been of not dropping it." Hobbins then passed this information on to Harwit. On July 2, Harwit issued a memorandum to Tom Crouch regarding a revised draft of the planning document.

> Where is it that a visitor ever has a chance to formulate an independent opinion? Where does a visitor have a chance to see for himself whether the war in the Far East differed from that in Europe, or for that matter from other wars throughout history?

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 192.
[2] in Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 34.

Two weeks and an additional draft later, Adam's sent a memorandum to Harwit expressing his continuing concern. After Harwit circulated the memo to his curators, Tom Crouch responded asking, "Do you want to do an exhibition intended to make veterans feel good, or do you want an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don't think we can do both."[1] This question appears repeatedly in the various analyses of the exhibit as a sort of prophesy of the storm to come.

The "storm" hit the Smithsonian on November 19, 1993 when Monroe W. Hatch, executive director of the Air Force Association and John T. Correll, editor of Air Force Magazine met with Harwit, Crouch and Neufield at NASM. According to Harwit, Correll and Hatch, "immediately lit into us [Harwit, Crouch and Neufield]." Hatch had found fault with an earlier draft of the planning document the previous August, at which time he had begun a contentious dialogue with Harwit in which he accused the concept paper of dwelling "to the effective exclusion of all else, on the horrors of war." He also derided the document because it "treats Japan and the United States as if their participation in the war were morally equivalent. If anything, incredibly, it gives the benefit of opinion to Japan, which was the aggressor..."[2] This statement regarding a draft copy of the exhibit proposal would become one of the major talking points for critics throughout the course of the controversy.

At the November meeting, Hatch felt that the NASM team was ignoring his concerns about the exhibit. Linenthal describes the positions of the AFA and the curators during this meeting:

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied,* pp. 182-4, 189.
[2] in ibid., p. 201

> As Harwit and the curators saw the problem, the Air Force Association, representing an extreme position, sought to ignore the fifty year history of controversy surrounding the decision to drop the bomb, to sanitize what had happened under the mushroom cloud, to defend strategic bombing against criticism, and, above all, to protect the heroic image of the air force.

The Air Force Association, on the other hand, thought:

> Museum representatives seemed to be saying one thing –that they were open to criticism and suggestion, that the exhibit would honor American servicemen- while doing another –basically ignoring their criticisms.[1]

Hatch and Correll laid out the key concerns which critics would continue to have throughout the debate. In a memo dated 23 November 1993, Correll states:

> We said the concept paper was not balanced, and that it did not provide adequate background or accurately depict the context in which the decision to drop the bomb was made…
>
> We also said the concept goes out of its way to spotlight Japanese suffering, with major focus on death and destruction as seen from the ground.[2]

The core accusations of critics with regard to the exhibit structure were that the exhibit depicted America's role in the war in an overly negative manner, that the exhibit lacked balance and that the curators failed to contextualize the events within the reality of 1945. These accusations came to the forefront at the meeting on 19 November and would provide the support for critics' later accusations of "revisionism" and "political correctness."

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 36
[2] John Correll, "Meeting at Air and Space," memo (23 Nov. 1993) in *Enola Gay Archive* (2005) <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/11-19-93.asp> 03 Dec 2005

During the meeting with the AFA, Harwit committed one of the greatest blunders of the entire controversy. He agreed to send an unedited copy of the draft script to Hatch and Correll once it was prepared. "Outside parties," states Robert Post, "had rarely been given such a privilege, but afterward it would become a commonplace demand by self-proclaimed 'stake-holders.'"[1] The NASM team agreed to provide the director of a powerful political special interest group and the editor of the group's affiliated publication, both of whom were openly hostile to NASM's cause, with a copy of the script draft *before* it had a chance to be reviewed by their expert advisory committee! Post declares, "[The script] should never have gone out the door without a ferocious review and rewrite."[2] The exhibit planners should have waited until their advisory board got the chance to review and make recommendations on the script. At the very least, Harwit should have consulted with the museum's public relations office to coordinate any dissemination of the script through them. Instead, he simply requested that Hatch and Correll not circulate the copy. This decision would provide the fuel for critics' attacks throughout the conflict, even long after the contentious parts of the script had been edited out during the revision process.[3]

The draft script was finished on January 31 at which point it was simultaneously circulated to the AFA and the museum's external advisory committee. My analysis of the script will address each of the key arguments used by critics within my description of the section to which they most pertain. I chose to do this, because although the script being discussed is only the first draft, –nine revisions would follow- it is this draft which was

[1] Post, "A Narrative for Our Time," p. 376.
[2] Ibid., p. 378.
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 207, 319.

repeatedly referenced by critics months after the offending information had been tempered or eliminated all together.[1]

The document was structured into five different sections. A brief introduction entitled "Today is V-E Day" included photos depicting celebrations in response to the end of the European war. It went on to acknowledge fears of a struggle in the Pacific that "could go on into 1946." The introduction finally acknowledged that the necessity of dropping the bomb to end the war remains a controversial subject to this day and closed by saying "one thing was clear. The Pacific War would end in a way that few could anticipate on V-E Day."[2]

Unit 1, titled "A Fight to the Finish" then established the context of the Pacific War in 1945. The section "spoke of the horror of island fighting on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, of kamikaze attacks –dramatized by the display of a Japanese *Okha* piloted bomb- of the firebombing of Japanese cities, and of the racial antipathy that had produced 'virulent hatred on both sides.'"[3] Critics made extensive use of examples from this section to accuse curators of depicting American troops as "brutal, vindictive" and as "ruthless invaders, bent on revenge."[4] Critics especially latched on to a statement included in the third paragraph of the unit which stated, "'For most Americans,' the script says, 'it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism.'"[5] This statement, which curators insist was taken out of context, appears in virtually every analysis and critique I have read on the exhibit.

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 44.
[2] Philip Nobile, ed., *Judgement at the Smithsonian,* (NY: Marlowe, 1995), p. 3.
[3] Linenthal, p. 30.
[4] Correll in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 208.
[5] Correll, "War Stories" <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>

My own analysis of this section finds that many of the critics' concerns were justifiable. The following is the entire first passage which includes the statement curators claim was taken out of context:

> In 1931 the Japanese Army occupied Manchuria; six years later it invaded the rest of China. From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese Empire would be constantly at war.
>
> Japanese expansionism was marked by naked aggression and extreme brutality. The slaughter of tens of thousands of Chinese in Nanking in 1937 shocked the world. Atrocities by Japanese troops included brutal mistreatment of civilians, forced laborers and prisoners of war, and biological experiments on human victims.
>
> In December 1941, Japan attacked U.S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and launched other surprise assaults against Allied territories in the Pacific. Thus began a wider conflict marked by extreme bitterness. For most Americans, this war was fundamentally different from the one waged against Germany and Italy – it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western Imperialism. As the war approached its end in 1945, it appeared to both sides that it was a fight to the finish.[1]

Although the statement as quoted by Correll and most critics fails to acknowledge the surrounding text, which establishes the overall ferocity of the Pacific War, it is inconceivable that curators would not realize the potential for insult such a statement possessed.

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[1] Nobile, *Judgement*, p. 3.

Furthermore, the above cited text is the only time Japanese atrocities are addressed in over 300 pages of script. Critics and advisors alike would accuse the script of ignoring "years of aggression and wanton atrocity and brutality"[1] by the Japanese. They declared that "the display failed to reflect the sentiments and realities that existed in 1945."[2] Michael Neufield defended the decision to only briefly address Japanese aggression by asking why critics wanted to imply that America "dropped the A-bombs as revenge for Pearl Harbor, Bataan, the Rape of Nanking? That is the equivalent of saying that one atrocity/war crime deserves another."[3] This statement is especially ironic given the script's assertion that for America "it was a war of vengeance." Ultimately by passing over Japanese atrocities, the curators failed to fully contextualize the events surrounding the bombing which made critics' claims of political bias and historical distortion much more reasonable.

Unit 2, "The Decision to Drop The Bomb" was considered the "intellectual heart" of the exhibit[4] and included its own set of problems for critics. This section presented the history of the Manhattan Project and included a copy of Einstein's letter to Roosevelt warning him of the potential for using "chain reactions for the construction of extremely powerful bombs."[5] This unit also addressed a number of "Historical Controversies." These speculative sections addressed the questions, "Would the Bomb Have Been Dropped on the Germans?" "Did the United States Ignore the Japanese Peace Initiative?" "Would the War Have Ended Sooner if the United States Had Guaranteed the Emperor's Position?" as well as exploring the importance of the "Soviet Factor", the feasibility of a

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[1] Correll in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 209.
[2] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 26.
[3] in Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 47.
[4] Ibid., p. 39.
[5] in ibid., p. 30.

"Warning or Demonstration?" the inevitability of an invasion "If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Dropped" and the ultimate question of whether or not the decision to drop the bomb was "justified."[1] While Mike Neufield, the author of this section, did not explicitly state his opinions, the wording in these sections could be seen as "tendentious and moralizing," a criticism that was used by historian Richard Kohn to characterize the overall tone of the script. Robert Post further summarizes Kohn's critique stating, "…in its remarks about what 'scholars have argued' the script repeatedly violated a truism about museum visitors not framing 'their observations according to historiographical discourses.'"[2] Curators sought to make the exhibit "much more than a display of historical artifacts." They wanted it to be "an exercise in historical thinking."[3] While the curators' efforts were noble, they were fruitless. Timothy Luke believes that "The big problem for museums is simple: getting visitors to think beyond the diverting occupations of entertainmentality more often than not induces rage rather than cultivating reasonable reflection."[4] In the case of *Crossroads*, that is exactly what happened.

Perhaps the most notable point of contention for Unit 2 was the section which addressed the projected casualty figures for an invasion. The script states, "Military staff studies in the spring of 1945 estimated thirty to fifty thousand casualties –dead and wounded- in 'Olympic,' the invasion of Kyushu." It then acknowledges that these studies "underestimated Japanese defenses" and goes on to cite Admiral Leahy's estimate from June 18. 1945 which suggests, "If the 'Olympic' invasion force took casualties at the same rate as Okinawa, that could mean 268,000 casualties (about 50,000 dead) on

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[1] Nobile, *Judgement*, pp. 29-56.
[2] Post, "Narrative," p. 378.
[3] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 204.
[4] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 36.

Kyushu."[1] Even John Correll verified these figures in his report, "The Decision that Launched the *Enola Gay*", in which he states:

> A June 18 estimate from the military chiefs said that casualties in the first thirty days of the Kyushu invasion could be 31,000. Adm. King estimated 41,000. Adm. Nimitz said 49,000. MacArthur's staff said 50,000." However, Correll then equivocates upward to the inflated figures that are such an intrinsic part of American Memory when he writes, "Casualty estimates for Olympic and Coronet combined ranged from 220,000 to 500,000+.[2]

Correll cites David McCullogh's biography *Truman* as his source for the casualty figures rather than any official document. Harwit recalls that many letters from veterans claimed, "the United States would have suffered one to two million deaths had our troops been called on to invade the Japanese home islands."[3] Michael Hogan describes the reaction of Anthony Sokolowski, a veteran from Orlando, who "was offended when he heard a 'Smithsonian intellectual historian' report on television that only forty-six thousand Americans would have been killed or injured in an invasion of Japan, not the hundreds of thousands commonly assumed."[4] The debate over casualty figures eventually lead museum curators to alter their findings.

An August 1994 revision, "tried to balance lower and higher estimates" by using a range "from 30,000 to 500,000." According to Historian and Smithsonian curator, Stanley Goldberg, "Harwit and the American Legion representatives eventually

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[1] Nobile, *Judgement*, p. 49.
[2] Correll, "The Decision That Launched the Enola Gay," <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 240.
[4] in Hogan, "Controversy," p. 207.

negotiated a figure -229,000- for the expected number of U.S. casualties."[1] The debate over potential casualties which has been central to the historiography of the atomic bombings since 1945 was just as prevalent in the controversy over the exhibit.

The least controversial and largest section of the script, Unit 3 was titled, "Delivering the Bomb". This unit would feature the restored forward fuselage of the *Enola Gay*, with a casing from a *Little Boy* type uranium bomb displayed beneath the bomb bay doors. Harwit recalls, "This would be accompanied by a history of the construction of the B-29 bombers… the story of the training of the 509th Composite Group, which eventually carried out the missions on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and a description of those missions."[2] John Correll acknowledges that in this section of the script, "The 509th Composite Group, the unit that dropped the two atomic bombs, is covered extensively and with respect." He does however take a jab at NASM for their partial display of the aircraft stating, "The restored aircraft will be there all right, the front fifty-six feet of it, anyway…" [3] Paul Tibbets also refers to the truncated display in his attack on the exhibit:

> Thus far the proposed display of the Enola Gay is a package of insults. Resting on an arrangement that will be shaped like a cradle, the sixty-some feet of fuselage and forward bomb bay - without wings, engines and propellers, landing gear and tail assembly - makes for an awesome sight. If nothing else, it will engender the aura of evil in which the airplane is being cast.[4]

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[1] in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 207.
[2] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 213.
[3] Correll, "War Stories" <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>
[4] Tibbets, (statement) <http://www.theenolagay.com/plane.html>

Both of these statements hearken back to the earliest struggle over the restoration of the object itself.[1] Ultimately the museum's choice of a partial display was dictated by constraints of space, time and funding.

Unit 4, "Ground Zero", dubbed the "emotional center" of the exhibit, was, in the words of Edward Linenthal, "meant to jar visitors out of the cockpits of American B-29s and into the horror of the bombing itself."[2] This section produced a strong negative response from veterans who declared, "By stressing the death and destruction at Ground Zero, the exhibit… made the Japanese look like victims."[3] This section was to include the objects borrowed from the Peace Museum in Hiroshima including "a school child's uniform, coins and bottles fused from the heat, a half-destroyed image of the Buddha, a fused rosary from Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, hairpins, infant garments, and the lunch box of a schoolgirl."[4] The section would also include "life size pictures of Japanese dead and wounded" as well as "personal narratives of those who survived."[5] Paul Tibbets states, "It will leave you with the impression that you have to feel sorry for those poor Japanese."[6] The graphic depiction of the suffering of the Japanese at Ground Zero would lead to numerous accusations of a lack of balance in the exhibit.

The vast majority of the debate over *Crossroads* focused on the exhibit's balance or lack thereof. Harwit defines balance as "the selection of facts and objects included in the exhibition."[7] For the exhibit's curators, balance involved "incorporating diverse

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[1] For an indepth account of this debate, see Harwit's *An Exhibit Denied*, chapters 1-6.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 31.
[3] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 206.
[4] Linenthal, p. 32.
[5] Hogan, p. 204.
[6] in ibid., p. 206.
[7] Harwit, p. 52.

perspectives" and became "the means for telling the whole story."[1] The exhibit planners sought to balance, "personal narratives against 'the reality of atomic war and its consequences.'"[2] This required them to essentially balance public memory with historical analysis. Harwit wrote to Donald Rehl, stating, "This exhibit will give a balanced account of the decision to drop the bomb, the 509th Composite Group, the missions themselves and the aftermath. All points of view will be represented, including of course the viewpoint of veterans such as yourself."[3] The balance of the exhibit would rely on the interplay of a triad of "the object, the written word, and the commemorative video testimony" to create its effect on the visitor. He goes on to accuse critics of "Concentrating solely on the written word and Xerox copies of photographs." The exhibit team claim to have achieved balance, but for critics the script appeared "excessively sympathetic to the Japanese."[4]

While curators saw balance as the inclusion of all points of view, critics believed it referred "to equivalent displays of potent images and artifacts that would recreate the whole moment in which the *Enola Gay* was asked to make its historic run."[5] In this sense, balance is critically linked to context. Specifically, critics believed the lack of balance arose from the choice to ignore "the record of Japan's aggression in the 1930s" as well as the failure to sufficiently emphasize "[Japan's] surprise attack on Pearl Harbor."[6] Sadao Asada refers to this as the "Pearl Harbor-Hiroshima syndrome" and states that "Such a moral equivalent between Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima-Nagasaki is familiar to many

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[1] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 201.
[2] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 210.
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 137.
[4] Ibid., p. 215.
[5] Gieryn, pp. 204-5.
[6] Hogan, p. 210.

Americans." This phenomenon, Asada suggests, "was very much in evidence in the Smithsonian controversy."[1] Curators chose not to emphasize a link between Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombings because "[the purpose of] their show was not meant to be a history of the war in the Pacific, but rather to 'freeze' a transformative moment in the twentieth century."[2] Critics, however, wanted a script that addressed Japanese aggression, "so that the decision to drop the atomic bombs would at least appear reasonable, legitimate, justifiable and perhaps even necessary –avoiding the unbalanced inference that they were (definitively) atrocities or a second Holocaust."[3] By failing to pay proper attention to Japanese aggression early in the war, Curators failed to properly balance all points of view as the attack on Pearl Harbor was clearly a very real part of America's emotional context even if it was not necessarily a motivating factor in officials' decision to use the bomb.

The final part of the script, Unit 5, "The Legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" dealt with the role of the bombings in the eventual surrender of Japan and touched on "the beginning of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race…"[4] Curators intended this section to:

> speak to the children and grandchildren of those who had lived through World War II, for whom Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked the start of a fabulously expensive arms race with 'megaton warheads, the DEW line, 45-minute warnings,

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[1] Asada, "Mushroom Cloud," pp. 104, 106.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 47.
[3] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 205.
[4] Linenthal, p. 32.

> first strike, Mutually Assured Destruction,' radioactive fallout, and the danger of nuclear winter.[1]

The choice to link the *Enola Gay* to the beginnings of the Cold War would prompt critics like John Correll and pundit John Leo to accuse the curators of promoting "an agenda of cultural revisionism"[2] attempting to insert "the familiar ideology of campus political correctness… into our national museum structure"[3] Timothy Luke suggests that,

> In posing a moral conflict at the center of the Manhattan Project, and in exposing political contradictions in a liberal democratic state choosing to conduct nuclear warfare against civilian targets in a fascist empire, the original *Enola Gay* script remembered World War II in Strangelovian Cold War terms…[4]

This perception would prompt former B-29 pilot Burr Bennett to ask, "Is it honest to judge what happened in 1945 by the morality of today?"[5] Pamela Laird states, "Rhetoric about 'revision,' like that about 'political correctness,' helps some critics build barriers against public openness to academic stories."[6] Such rhetoric implies "ulterior motives" in order to "suggest that behind the script… lies a hidden agenda that goes beyond the pursuit of balance or improved public understanding."[7] Critics' accusations of "revisionism" and "political correctness" would prove particularly useful in their attack on the exhibit. Still, there is tremendous irony in political lobbying organizations such as the AFA and the American Legion accusing the Smithsonian of having a politically motivated agenda.

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[1] Hogan "Controversy," p. 205.
[2] Correll, "War Stories" <http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/03-001.asp>
[3] John Leo "The National Museums of PC," *U.S. News & World Report,* Vol. 117, No. 14 (10 Oct. 1994), p. 21.
[4] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 32.
[5] in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 205.
[6] Laird, "Public's Historians," p. 479.
[7] Gieryn, p. 217.

Public Reaction: Reaping the Whirlwind

The exhibit advisory committee met on 7 February 1994 to discuss the first draft of the script, which had been circulated a week earlier. The committee was "made up of academic and service historians and one combat veteran of the Pacific War."[1] The eight men on the committee were selected to represent a broad range of views and to address their various fields of expertise during the formative evaluation process. [2] Harwit describes the comments received by the committee as "generally encouraging", but indicates that he was "disappointed that most of the committee members concentrated on only one or two topics of current academic research interest, leaving whole portions of the exhibit untouched."[3] Linenthal recalls that the committee discussed "ways to enliven the section on the decision to drop the bomb," but that "no substantive objections to the structure or tone of the script were made."[4] Edwin Bearss wrote, "As a World War II Pacific combat veteran, I commend you and your colleagues who have dared to go the extra mile to address an emotionally charged and internationally significant event in an exhibit that besides enlightening, will challenge its viewers." Akira Iriye, who was unable

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 36.
[2] The Committee included: Edward Bearss, chief historian of the National Park Service and the man behind the 50th anniversary commemorations at Pearl Harbor. Edward T; Linenthal, professor of religious studies at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, who had conducted extensive studies on the ways communities commemorate sacred places and events; Barton J. Bernstein, professor of history at Stanford and a leading historian on the decision to drop the atomic bomb; Martin Sherwin, author of *The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*, who had analyzed the diplomatic issues involved in Truman's decision to drop the bomb; Victor Bond, an internationally recognized radiation physiologist at the Brookhaven National Laboratory; Stanley Goldberg who was the biographer of General Leslie Groves and who had "successfully mounted an exhibit on the fortieth anniversary of the atomic bomb at the National Museum of American History"; Richard Hallion, the military historian in charge of the United States Air Force Center for Air Force History (He would later join the ranks of veteran's in decrying the exhibit amidst claims of betrayal from Harwit and the NASM staff); Akira Iriye, professor of history at Harvard, who was able to provide "insight on both American and Japanese perspectives"; and Richard Rhodes who was "arguably the world's most expert scholar on the origins and development of both the atomic and hydrogen bombs." Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 217-18.
[3] Ibid., p. 219.
[4] Linenthal, p. 36.

to attend the meeting, faxed his comments to Harwit: "It seems to me that all the statements are carefully written and reflect the authors' obvious intention to present as judicious an interpretation of controversial events as possible."[1] Martin Sherwin even suggested that the exhibit "might still prove too celebratory in nature." Linenthal suggests that Richard Hallion, chief of the air force historical program also seemed "comfortable with the script." While he offered "no substantive objections during the day long meeting," he did submit a two-page critique to the exhibit team.[2] Although Harwit would characterize Hallion's critique as "generally favorable"[3] an examination of the document indicates a real concern over each of the key points to which veterans took offense.

Hallion's critique opened by stating, "Overall this is a very impressive piece of work, comprehensive and dramatic, obviously based on a great deal of research, primary and secondary."[4] However, he then went on to express concern that,

> Through sheer repetition, the script gives the impression that the Truman administration was more concerned with the atomic bomb as a diplomatic weapon against the Soviet Union than as a route to shorten the war and avoid heavy American casualties.

He also recommended that "There should be more images focusing on the Japanese brutality to subject peoples 1931-1945." Hallion then addressed the statement which would form the center of critics' attacks: "'For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism.' Is this relevant to 1931-1941? Who

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[1] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 219-20.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 37.
[3] Harwit, p. 221.
[4] in ibid., p. 222.

was the aggressor here? The U.S.?" Hallion also takes issue with the script's discussion of the controversy over the decision to drop the bomb:

> 'The Japanese and American lives that would have been lost in an invasion have often been used to justify the atomic bombing of Japan.' The point is that Truman made the decision based primarily on the estimated American invasion casualties. He wanted to prevent, in his own words, 'an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other.'

At the end of the document, Hallion included a hand written note which read, "Again- an impressive job! A bit of 'tweaking' along the lines discussed here, should do the trick…"[1] Harwit took Hallion's opening overview and closing note as an endorsement of the script and would use the quotations in a press release. He would go on to express shock when John Correll would write in the May issue of *Air Force* magazine that Hallion told him (Correll), "The exhibit as currently structured is not one we would have done."[2] Hallion would then be "in effect accused by Harwit of double-dealing when – in the course of later denunciations of the exhibit as unbalanced –he denied that he had praised the proposed script."[3] While Hallion did include favorable remarks in his evaluation, his critique of the script clearly expresses concern with the content of the exhibit, a fact which Harwit unfortunately understated.

The veterans' public assault on the exhibit began in the spring of 1994. The April issue of *Air Force* magazine featured John Correll's essay, "War Stories at Air & Space." Linenthal describes the article as "a slashing attack on every aspect of the proposed exhibit and its creators." He goes on to state, "Correll's essay was, in effect, a declaration

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[1] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 222-24. emphasis in original
[2] in ibid., p. 249.
[3] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts" pp. 212-13.

of war, the first salvo in what would become a sustained campaign against the exhibition."[1] The tactics Correll used to wage this war "were the routine stuff of American politics: scare tactics, ad campaigns, publicity and lobbying on Capitol Hill."[2] Early in 1994, W. Burr Bennett, Jr. wrote to Chief Justice Rehnquist and Barber Conable, members of the executive committee of the board of regents for the Smithsonian and accused the exhibit of violating its congressional mandate to portray "The valor and sacrificial service of the men and women of the Armed Forces… as an inspiration to the present and future generations of America."[3] The mandate to which Bennett referred was actually part of the founding legislation for a National Armed Forces museum that had "been authorized by Congress in 1961 but never funded"[4] and so did not apply to NASM's governance. Nevertheless, Correll included Bennett's quote about the mandate in his attack. In May of 1994, the American Legion joined the AFA and "went on record in opposition to the exhibit." A letter drafted by the legion's national commander, William M. Detweiler to President Clinton accused the exhibit of portraying the Japanese as victims of "racism and revenge."[5]

The AFA brought the full force of its political machine to bear against NASM. A curator at NASM and former member of the AFA described the group as an "effective lobbying organization representing the views of the Air Force to Congress, other members of the military coalition in the capital, and to the general public."[6] Jack Giese, the AFA's chief of media relations described the process the attack followed:

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[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 40.
[2] Gieryn, "Balancing Acts" p. 220.
[3] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 146.
[4] Post, "Narrative," p. 377.
[5] Linenthal, pp. 47-8.
[6] Ibid., p. 35.

> As AFA got information… it was pumped immediately to Congress… As soon as we did something, we fed them. We fed all levels. Any Joe Blow off the street. Any American who called got the same treatment as the media or anybody else.

He then described how they broke their message into "sound bites" such as, "it was an act of vengeance. We were portrayed as the bad guys." "Tell history the way history happened." "We are worried American youth will get a distorted view of what America did in the War." Giese asserts that NASM's attempts to refute claims using "rational discussion" failed because they did "not know the media" they were in. If anyone expressed concern over the historical accuracy of the AFA's claims, they would be told to "Call Dick Hallion" who had publicly aligned himself with the veteran's groups by the late spring. Over the course of nine months:

> John Correll, Jack Giese, and Stephen P. Aubin by their own count gave twenty eight radio interviews and, with Monroe Hatch himself putting in an appearance for the international CNN coverage took part in thirty further television interviews. This included one appearance by Richard Hallion on CNN America. Print coverage for the remainder of the year exceeded 330 articles.

Simultaneously, an increasing number of letters was showering Congress. Harwit asserts, "the museum did not have the ability to compete adequately" with the "unmatchable time, manpower and money" of the veterans' war machine "I like to believe we fought valiantly but were badly outgunned." [1]

With the veterans beginning their assault on the exhibit, "it was not long before Congress also got involved."[1] The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration sent

[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 250, 319-21.

Harwit a letter on 24 March 1994 expressing their "concern" about the content of the exhibit. On March 30, Senator Nancy Kassebaum wrote to Robert Adams: "It has come to my attention that a number of B-29 veterans and Air Force organizations are unhappy with the Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum's planned 1995 exhibition of the *Enola Gay*..." She then recommended, "In order to resolve this situation, I suggest the famed B-29 be displayed with understanding and pride in another museum."[2]

On 10 August 1994, Harwit, along with Connie Newman, Mark Rogers and Mike Fetters[3] were summoned to Capitol Hill to meet with a group of Republican congressmen. At that meeting, the congressmen declared "that the museum had no business getting involved in important historical matters." After the meeting, congressmen Tom Lewis (R-Florida) and Sam Johnson (R-Texas) would issue statements to the press calling into question Harwit's personal views on atomic weapons.[4] That same day, Harwit received word that Representative Peter Blute, (R-Massachusetts) had "led a bipartisan group of twenty-four representatives who denounced the proposed exhibit as 'anti-American.'"[5] A letter drafted by the group cited statistics on the content of the exhibit which were included in a still unpublished AFA analysis of the script. The letter also invoked the figure of "one million American casualties." Harwit states, "The hand of the Air Force Association could not have been clearer if this letter had been written on AFA stationary."[6]

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[1] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 215.
[2] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 246-7.
[3] Newman, Rogers and Fetters are the Undersecretary of the Smithsonian, Director of the Smithsonian Office of Government Relations, and NASM's Assistant Director for Public Affairs, respectively. Ibid., pp. xxii, xxiv.
[4] Ibid., pp. 253-6.
[5] Hogan, p. 215.
[6] Harwit, p. 257.

The events of August were followed up on 19 September when Resolution 257, spearheaded by Senator Nancy Kassebaum was introduced. The resolution accused the current exhibit of being "revisionist and offensive to many World War II veterans."[1] The museum was clearly facing not only a "vitriolic conflict over a museum exhibition but a public relations disaster for the Smithsonian and a real threat to its budget, most of which came from congressionally appointed funds."[2] The threat would become much greater after the November elections when the Republicans would be "starting a revolution in the House" and Johnson would gain a seat on the Smithsonian's board of regents. [3] The events of August and September marked the beginning of the end for the exhibit. By that time, the planning team had hopelessly lost the public relations battle and could only hope to negotiate a conditional surrender.

Throughout the spring and summer, the media -kept continuously fed by the AFA's press packets- fanned the flames of political controversy. Pamela Laird summarizes the treatment of the situation in the press stating: "In the *Enola Gay* battle of these history wars, lobbyists and the mainstream press seemed to distill instinctively from the NASM scripts precisely what would inflame their audiences of veterans and ordinary citizens."[4] "As the press interpreted the script," writes Linenthal, "vets felt that it said their lives had been purchased through racism and treachery, that their last fifty years were counterfeit, and they blamed the museum for this."[5] An article in the *Wall Street Journal* declared that the Smithsonian "now is in the hands of academics unable to view American history as anything other than a woeful catalogue of crimes and aggressions

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied,* pp. 258-9.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 44.
[3] Harwit, p. 319.
[4] Laird, "Public's Historians," p. 480.
[5] Linenthal, p. 39.

against the helpless peoples of the earth."[1] Michael Hogan suggests that, "For the *Wall Street Journal* and its conservative allies… the *Enola Gay* exhibit was only the latest indication of the Smithsonian's 'mania for revising American history.'"[2] Accusations of revisionism and political correctness saturated the media's assault on the exhibit.

Still, some reports did present the exhibit in a more favorable light. A September 5 editorial in the *New York Times* stated, "The problem with endless tampering by Congress is that some critics will not be satisfied with anything short of complete vilification of the Japanese and uncritical glorification of the American war effort."[3] The August 29 issue of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was also critical of "'meddlesome' politicians who sought to impose their orthodoxy on historians"[4] Another article in defense of the museum came from Robert Reno, a columnist for *Newsday.* On 2 September 1994 he wrote, "The Smithsonian would be fully justified in mounting a major exhibit commemorating Hiroshima and the splitting of the atom as events of unspeakable malignity that have brought humanity more grief than the 14th Century plagues"[5] Unfortunately, favorable reports of NASM's efforts in the press were greatly outweighed by antagonistic portrayals.

An article written in July 1995 for *American Journalism Review* by Tony Capaccio, editor of *Defense Week*, and Uday Mohan accused the press of irresponsible reporting during the conflict. Capaccio and Mohan state,

> The controversy was largely fueled by media accounts that uncritically accepted the conventional rationale for the bomb, ignored contrary historical

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[1] in Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 28.
[2] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 217.
[3] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 316.
[4] Hogan, p. 216.
[5] in ibid., p. 216.

> evidence and reinforced the charge that the planned exhibit was a pro-Japanese, anti-American tract...
>
> And while the public was continually informed about the veterans' groups' take on the exhibit plans, news organizations failed to report that a number of historians had actually praised the museum for its efforts.[1]

Edward Linenthal elaborates on the media's mistreatment of the exhibit:

> For many critics, the few sentences in the first script about why the two sides fought 'proved' that the museum was, indeed, trying to rewrite history... Months after the passage had been excised from the script, it still appeared regularly in journalistic attacks.[2]

Not only did the press neglect to look critically at the facts being debated, but they also continued to fixate on the sound bites thrown to them by the AFA which were gathered from the first draft of the script which was being "endlessly revised"[3] throughout the spring and summer of 1994.

The Revision Process: A Thankless Task

On 13 April 1994, the museum curators met with General Kicklighter, Director of the 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee, and the service historians from the various branches of the armed forces. Those present included: Edward Drea of the U.S. Army Center for Military History; Wayne Dzownchyk, historian for the Joint Chiefs; Mark Jacobson, Marine Corps Command and Staff College; and Kathleen Lloyd of the Naval Historical Center. Richard Hallion, the Air Force Historian was absent from this meeting. Edward Linenthal describes the tone of the meeting as

[1] in Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 310.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 44.
[3] Ibid., p. 44.

"contentious" and states that, "once again Harwit and the curators heard bitter complaints about the 'balance' and 'context' of their show." [1]The reports given by the military historians prompted Harwit to "see the deeper problem" the exhibit designers were facing in their efforts to "produce a balanced exhibition." This realization in turn moved Harwit to take new measures to revise the script. [2]

Harwit began by creating a second review group called the "Tiger Team." Upon reviewing the script, the Tiger Team determined it was "too sympathetic to Japanese, too harsh on Americans." They also found the script to be "too speculative."[3] A second draft of the script, which was finished in May included photos of Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March as part of a new introductory section titled "War in Asia and the Pacific 1937-1945." By August, "thirty of the forty-two Tiger Team recommendations had been fully implemented, seven had been implemented in part, and only five had not been addressed."[4] The incorporation of the Tiger Team's recommendations began to win over some groups, though the press continued to accuse the museum of "ignoring its critics."[5]

By August, the museum's continuing consultations with the Tiger Team and military historians seemed to be paying off. Navy commander Luanne Smith, General Kicklighter's assistant informed her boss that: "The Air and Space museum has been extremely accommodating to making changes to their script contrary to what is being claimed by exhibit opponents."[6] Harwit goes on to say, "By this time only the Air Force historian was opposing the exhibition."[7] Michael Hogan indicates that though exhibit

[1] Linenthal, *History Wars*, pp. 41-42.
[2] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 263-5.
[3] Linenthal, p. 43.
[4] Ibid., pp. 44-5.
[5] Ibid., p 46.
[6] in Harwit, p. 305
[7] Ibid., p. 306.

planners had gained the support of "prominent historians," By the end of September, "it had become clear that the Smithsonian's strategy had not succeeded."[1]

Endgame: The Exhibit Crumbles

On 21 September 1994, the museum entered into script negotiations with the American Legion. Harwit had brokered a deal with the Legion at their Labor Day convention getting them to stay their condemnation of the exhibit pending their discussions.[2] The negotiations with the American Legion and the ongoing revisions that resulted would soon lead "groups of scholars [to] react angrily to what they perceived as the Smithsonian's caving in to various pressures."[3] One of the major points of contention for both scholars and the Legion was the issue of casualty figures, which is central to virtually every discourse on the bomb.

As discussions continued, the Smithsonian, now under new Secretary, I. Michael Heyman began to find support wavering amongst historians. Stanley Goldberg resigned from the advisory committee declaring, "I simply cannot be a party to the exhibit which has now emerged from the Air Force Association's crusade."[4] In late September, leaders of the American peace movement met with curators asserting that "They were outraged when the Smithsonian 'caved in' to the more compelling remonstrances of the American Legion."[5] Then, in November, "a group of well-known scholars and writers… met at the museum to argue for restoration of elements they thought inappropriately removed from the script."[6] Scholars began to make their voices heard only after the NASM team was

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[1] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 222.
[2] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 326-32.
[3] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 51.
[4] in ibid., p. 51.
[5] Hogan, p. 223.
[6] The scholars included Barton Bernstein, Gar Alperovitz, Kai Bird, and Robert Jay Lifton. Linenthal, p. 51.

negotiating terms in an attempt to salvage any exhibit at all. Where were the historians when the curators still had a chance?

The Japanese also began to express concern that fall. The Senate resolution passed the previous August created growing doubts about the museum's use of the artifacts from Ground Zero. The Japanese insisted on a face-to-face meeting with Harwit and the curators to reassure themselves of the museum's intentions. Unfortunately, the museum team feared that a trip to Japan would intensify accusations of a pro-Japanese sentiment. Soon, even a visit by Japanese delegates in Washington was deemed to politically risky. Negotiations with the Japanese stalled in December, complicated by the "increasingly conservative attitude in the United States" which culminated in the Republican takeover of Congress.[1]

Finally, in response to growing criticism from scholars and historians, "Harwit decided to revise a portion of the script that estimated the number of casualties expected in an American invasion of Japan." Harwit put the new estimate at 63,000.[2] On 9 January 1995, Harwit wrote to Hubert Dagley, Director of the American Legion's Internal Affairs Commission announcing the change. In response, "The Legion denounced the Smithsonian for backing away from its earlier agreement with the veterans and immediately withdrew its support for the exhibit."[3] Edward Linenthal asserts that Harwit's revision of "iconic numbers… reinforced a suspicion that, according to Dagley, 'we could not rely on the assurances of either Smithsonian or [NASM] officials.'"[4] The Legion then made their displeasure known by drafting a letter to President Clinton and

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[1] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, pp. 361-71.
[2] Hogan, "Controversy," p. 226.
[3] Ibid., p. 226.
[4] Linenthal, *History Wars*, p. 57.

asking the new Republican Congress to investigate what they called a "turn toward 'political correctness' at the Smithsonian."[1] Linenthal writes, "Even before Heyman announced on January 30, 1995, that the exhibit would be cancelled and replaced by a drastically scaled back one, members of Congress had called for Harwit's resignation."[2]

Harwit resigned on May 2 stating: "I believe that nothing less than my stepping down from the directorship will satisfy the Museum's critics and allow the Museum to move forward with important new projects."[3] The political forces aligned against the exhibit had at last proven too much and ultimately, neither the commemorative, nor the historical voice won out.

Aftermath and Conclusion: A Public Disservice

Edward Linenthal writes, "In the end, everyone believed that memory and history had been abused."[4] Harwit's interpretive exhibit had been replaced by one which Secretary Heyman described as "a much simpler one, essentially a display, permitting the *Enola Gay* and its crew to speak for themselves… with labels that don't get into the wisdom, necessity and morality of using atomic weapons."[5] The minimal interpretive text included with the exhibit regarding the plane's mission reinforces the viewpoint of American memory:

> Tibbets piloted the aircraft on its mission to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. That bomb and the one dropped on Nagasaki three days later destroyed much of the two cities and caused tens of thousands of deaths. However the use of the bombs led to the immediate surrender of Japan

[1] Hogan, "Controversy," pp. 226-7.
[2] Linenthal, *History Wars,* p. 58.
[3] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied,* p. 424.
[4] Ibid. p. 59
[5] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 30.

> and made unnecessary the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands. Such an invasion, especially if undertaken for both main islands, would have led to very heavy casualties among American and Allied troops and Japanese civilians and military. It was thought highly unlikely that Japan, while in a very weakened military condition, would have surrendered unconditionally without such an invasion.[1]

According to Pamela Walker Laird, "Heyman should have known better than to say a memorialized artifact spoke for itself."[2] All Heyman really managed to do was silence the critics' accusations of revisionism and political correctness. Mike Wallace would defend the original exhibit in 1996 by writing that "the only political correctness… was the censorship that shut down the real exhibition and prevented people from judging it for themselves"[3] Heyman's capitulation to the political forces aligned against him served only to increase the gap between history and public memory.

The commemorative story of the anniversary of the end of World War II, for which veteran's groups lobbied throughout 1994, and the historical accounting of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are considered by some to be incompatible. Certainly, the way the controversy over *Crossroads* played out would lend credence to that supposition. The status of the Enola Gay as an icon not only of the end of World War II, but also the beginning of the Cold War along with the timing of the exhibit on the 50th anniversary of the plane's mission intensified the significance of the debate. Ultimately, the controversy surrounding the *Enola Gay* was more than a struggle over how best to

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[1] "Enola Gay: Former Exhibition," National Air and Space Museum, (20 March 2000) <http://www.nasm.si.edu/exhibitions/gal103/gal103_former.html> (5 December 2005)
[2] Laird, "Public's Historians," p. 478.
[3] in Gieryn, "Balancing Acts," p. 220.

display the historic aircraft; it was a struggle to determine who would control America's attempt to redefine itself in a post Cold War world. Despite the heated context in which this debate took place and the significant differences in the viewpoints of the various players, I believe the exhibit could have succeeded if certain things had been done differently. The NASM team was motivated by an increased emphasis on the role of public education in museums. However, despite their efforts to include all points of view, curators failed to pay sufficient attention to the full context of the Pacific war. Harwit, in turn, committed the tremendous political blunder of releasing an unedited script to hostile critics before these imbalances could be corrected. Critics desired an exhibit that honored their struggles and sacrifices as the occasion of the 50th anniversary demanded. However, by attempting to turn our national center of learning into a dispenser for mainstream propaganda, veterans groups undermined the very values for which they had fought fifty years earlier. Finally, I fault the media for misrepresenting the museum's intentions to the general public and for failing to critically address both sides of the issue. In the end, the cancellation of the *Crossroads* exhibit is a detriment to the nation as a whole because, not only does it stifle the advance of knowledge, but it prevents us from attaining closure to a complex and morally ambiguous part of our history.

Bibliographic Essay

While conducting my research for this paper, I found no shortage of sources and analyses of the controversy. I found that my greatest challenge was reading past the tremendous personal bias of most of the authors. As with the contenders in the controversy itself, the surrounding analysis polarizes itself into two camps: those who vilify the political strong-arming of veterans groups, and those who vilify the revisionism of the academic curators. With that in mind, I attempted to read each account of the controversy critically in order to better formulate my own opinion.

My primary source for determining how the controversy played out was *An Exhibit Denied*, NASM director Martin Harwit's personal account of the events surrounding the exhibit. Harwit clearly wrote this book as a means of defending his actions over the course of events. However, he also includes the full text of various internal correspondences regarding the controversy, several of which –Hallion's critique, for example- actually work against his argument when critically read. All of the verbatim citations make *An Exhibit Denied* like five sources in one. As a result, this work Harwit's book is cited repeatedly in most of the secondary analyses.

Also useful as a primary resource was Philip Nobile's *Judgment at the Smithsonian.* This book includes the full text of the first draft of the *Crossroad's* script and so proved invaluable for formulating my own opinion on the document and the surrounding controversy. The afterward by Barton Bernstein was also helpful in providing general evidence on the discrepancy between American memory and historical research on the atomic bombing. The overall tone of Nobile's book however is one which places the curator's efforts up on a pedestal.

Two other incredibly useful summaries of the controversy are Tom Engelhardt and Edward Linenthal's work, *History Wars* and Michael Hogan's essay "The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation," which is found in *Hiroshima in History and Memory.* These works presented abbreviated overviews of the controversy and included useful analysis on the symbolic significance of the *Enola Gay* as well as the implications the curators' means of display had for American public memory. Linenthal's work was particularly useful due to his inside position as an advisory committee member on the exhibit. Overall, these two works were written from the most objective point of view and did a good job of balancing all points of view.

The beginning of my writing process for this paper serendipitously coincided with a pair of lectures in my Introduction to Museology class on the subjects of exhibition and education. These lectures were instrumental in placing the motivations of the NASM exhibit team in a greater museological context.

I gathered most of my sources that attack the exhibit from the internet. The Air Force Association's website <www.afa.org> has an extensive archive of publications and memoranda produced by their organization during the controversy. The archive includes John Correll's article "War Stories at Air and Space", as well as analyses of each draft of the script and a timeline of events. Another useful website was <www.theenolagay.com>, which includes a copy of Paul Tibbet's June 9, 1994 speech condemning the exhibit. These two sites –along with correspondence included in Harwit's book- provided me with a great deal of material decrying the planned exhibit.

Other websites provided more general information. The NASM site <www.nasm.si.edu> included a chronology of the early years of the museum as well as

information on the museum's mission and a detailed description of the exhibit which ended up replacing *Crossroads*. Finally, the Minnesota State University website, <http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/information/biography/abcde/adams_robert.html> provided useful biographical information on Smithsonian secretary, Robert Adams.

Akira Iriye's introduction to the Summer 1995 issue of *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, entitled "Historical Scholarship and Public Memory" as well as Asada Sadao's article, "The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches," found in the same edition, provided useful background information on the development of Japanese and American public memory of the atomic bombing. Asada's article cites numerous polls which track common opinions of the events. He also includes quotations from several American presidents, which helped to perpetuate the story told by American public memory.

"Balancing acts: Science, *Enola Gay* and History Wars at the Smithsonian," by Thomas F. Gieryn appears in *The Politics of Display* which was edited by Sharon MacDonald. This piece addresses the concepts of "balance" and "context" as the central arguments of both sides in the controversy. I found Gieryn's work useful in highlighting the often absurd tactics each side used in an effort to make their case to the public. "Balancing Acts" also helps define differences in the meaning of these terms for the various groups involved.

Timothy Luke's work, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at the Exhibition* and Pamela Laird's article, "The Public's Historians," from the July 1998 issue of *Technology and Culture*, provided in-depth analyses focusing on the deeper meaning of the controversy as part of America's "history wars". Both address the difficult situation faced

by museums in an increasingly anti-intellectual society. Luke and Laird both clearly favor the historian's point of view as they attempt to figure out how historians can stand up to the powerful political forces aligned against them.

Another article which addresses these same issues from a point of view ten years after the fact is "A Narrative for Our Time, The *Enola Gay* 'and after that, period" written by Robert Post for the April 2004 issue of *Technology and Culture*. This article was written just after the opening of the NASM extension in Virginia where the fully restored *Enola Gay* now resides. As part of his analysis of the new exhibit, Post includes a post-mortem on the earlier controversy. Post takes a critical view of both curators and critics accusing the former of political naiveté and the latter of circulating false information to the public. This article was instrumental in backing up my core argument that the curators should never have released an unedited script.

The volume of work on the *Crossroads* controversy is overwhelming. My research provided me with more resources than I could possibly use. The works listed above are only those which have actually made it into the final version of my paper. Many of the writings on this topic reveal a strong bias towards one camp or the other, which is indicative of the ongoing contentiousness of the subject matter. I tried to look past the polarized opinions of many of the writers in order to form my own opinion and to provide a more balanced overview of the events and the greater issues surrounding them.