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JSIS 584B: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Fall 2018

**Projecting an Atomic Legacy: the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and  
Conflicting Public Memories**

“When either Americans or Japanese talk about the bombings, they are thinking about the meaning of World War II, of subsequent wars, and of prospective conflicts”

– Laura Hein and Mark Selden, 1997<sup>1</sup>

In December 2014, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, then-President Obama authorized the creation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park (MPNHP) to “improve public understanding of the Manhattan Project and the legacy of the Manhattan Project.”<sup>2</sup> The establishment of the MPNHP in November 2015 represented the culmination of a multi-year effort from the non-profit Atomic Heritage Foundation (AHF), the National Park Service (NPS), and the Department of Energy (DOE), along with local interest groups such as the B-Reactor Museum Association (BRMA), to preserve and restore buildings associated with three

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Hein and Mark Selden. “Commemoration and Silence: Fifty Years of Remembering the Bomb in America and Japan.” in Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age, edited by Laura Hein and Mark Selden, 3-36. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997: 10.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015. 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., June 5, 2014: 314.

major Manhattan Project sites. The national decision to preserve historical sites closely associated with the still-controversial American decision to drop atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 provoked a wide range of debate and discussion, both within the United States and in Japan.

Debates over the American deployment of the atomic bomb during World War II often reflect divergent interpretations of World War II, of nuclear weapons, and of public memory. These interpretations range from the 1945 atomic bomb justifications set out by President Harry Truman and his advisors,<sup>3</sup> to Japanese claims that the atomic bombing should be considered a “war crime” against Japan.<sup>4</sup> Public memories of the atomic bombing naturally evolved very differently in the United States and in Japan. As the philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault argues, “historical memories are constantly refashioned to suit present purposes.”<sup>5</sup> Drawing from historian John Bodnar’s definition of public memory as “the view of a past event that is widely shared by members of a community (local or national),”<sup>6</sup> historian Michael Hogan notes that these “collective” memories are often strategically created by the government “to forge historical traditions that could serve their interests.”<sup>7</sup> By harnessing the “power of the group that holds [these memories],”<sup>8</sup> the dominant power group is able to utilize these historical memories to override alternative memories and historical interpretations.<sup>9</sup> Physical sites such as museums, public memorials, and national parks can provide a physical manifestation of dominant public memories, but conflict between the public memories presented through the physical site and alternative

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<sup>3</sup> Harry Truman. “Truman Statement on Hiroshima.” *Atomic Heritage Foundation*. August 6, 1945. <https://www.atomicheritage.org/key-documents/truman-statement-hiroshima>; Stimson, Henry L. “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb.” *Harper’s Magazine*. 194, no. 1161 (1941): 106.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Ryall. “US Remembers Top-Secret ‘Manhattan Project’ at Special Parks. Japanese Nationalists Say they Glorify War Crimes.” *South China Morning Post*. October 16, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2146185/us-remembers-top-secret-manhattan-project-special-parks-japanese>

<sup>5</sup> Qtd. in Michael Hogan. “Hiroshima in History and Memory: An Introduction.” *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, edited by Michael Hogan, 1-10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996: 4.

<sup>6</sup> Qtd. in Akira Iriye. “Introduction: Historical Scholarship and Public Memory.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*. 4, no. 2. (1995): 89.

<sup>7</sup> Hogan, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

interpretations has provoked international public debate and controversy. This research will investigate three primary guiding questions: How is the public memory of the Manhattan Project and the atomic bomb interpreted at MPNHP? How has this interpretation diverged from other interpretations? How does the National Park Service and the Department of Energy plan address these alternative memories? Within this conceptual framework of public memorials and evolving public memory, analyzing the international debate over the Manhattan Project National Historical Park's creation provides a lens for interpreting the complexity of atomic public memories in both the United States and Japan.

### **Creating the Manhattan Project National Historical Park**

First authorized in June 1942 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, development of the atomic bomb began as a project under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and General Leslie Groves.<sup>10</sup> Later known as the Manhattan Project, this top-secret initiative, a \$2.2 billion project employing at its height over 130,000 scientists, engineers, military troops, construction crews, and other workers,<sup>11</sup> evolved in part out of concerns about wartime German nuclear weapons development.<sup>12</sup> Seeking to explore a variety of atomic weapon possibilities, Groves pushed the project to develop atomic weapons using both uranium-235 and plutonium-239. Groves selected a site in Oak Ridge, Tennessee to serve as the project administration area and to isolate enough uranium-235 to power an atomic bomb.<sup>13</sup> Since plutonium-239 provides greater amounts of atomic energy than uranium-235, the Oak Ridge site also served as a pilot project for

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<sup>10</sup> John M. Findlay and Bruce Hevly, *Atomic Frontier Days: Hanford and the American West*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011: 16.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Project Background." *Manhattan Project Sites Newsletter* 2. September 2006. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=482&projectID=14946&documentID=14099>; U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Foundation Document: Manhattan Project National Historical Park: Tennessee, New Mexico, Washington*. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017. [https://www.nps.gov/mapr/upload/MAPR\\_FD\\_PRINT.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/mapr/upload/MAPR_FD_PRINT.pdf): 4.

<sup>12</sup> Cynthia Kelly. *Remembering the Manhattan Project: Perspectives on the Making of the Atomic Bomb and its Legacy*. Washington, D.C.: Symposium on the Manhattan Project, 2004: 142;

Leland Johnson and Daniel Schaffer. *Oak Ridge National Laboratory: The First Fifty Years*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994: 5.

<sup>13</sup> Findlay and Hevly., 16; U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. *Foundation Document*, 16.

converting uranium into plutonium-239 that modeled the later large-scale Hanford facility.<sup>14</sup> Rural Hanford, Washington was chosen as the location for producing plutonium-239 via the B Reactor, the world's first production-strength nuclear reactor.<sup>15</sup> The project's bombs were designed, manufactured, and tested in Los Alamos, New Mexico.<sup>16</sup> Oak Ridge began sending plutonium to Los Alamos beginning in February 1944.<sup>17</sup> Hanford's first batch of fissionable plutonium-239 was sent to Los Alamos in February 1945,<sup>18</sup> paving the way for the first test of the plutonium bomb over the Alamogordo Bombing Range in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.<sup>19</sup>

American forces dropped the first atomic bomb, the uranium bomb, over Hiroshima, on August 6, 1945, killing an estimated 90,000 to 166,000 people.<sup>20</sup> Three days later, on August 9, the plutonium bomb detonated over Nagasaki, Japan, killing somewhere between 60,000 to 80,000 people.<sup>21</sup> While historians continue to debate the exact relationship between the atomic bombings and Japan's surrender on August 14, the combination of the atomic bombs' devastating impact, together with the Soviet Union's August 9 entrance into the war, certainly played a role in Japan's decision to surrender.<sup>22</sup>

With the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, Manhattan Project laboratories came under the control of the civilian-led Atomic Energy Commission and the former Manhattan Project laboratories became well-funded national laboratories that came to represent both the benefits and the dangers of the nuclear age.<sup>23</sup> These national laboratories helped to position the United States as an international leader in atomic research, and led to breakthroughs in supercomputing, biology,

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson and Schaffer, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Findlay and Hevly, 21; U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Foundation Document: 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson and Schaffer, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Findlay and Hevly, 35.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Foundation Document, 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Atomic Energy Commission." *Atomic Heritage Foundation*. November 18, 2016. <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/atomic-energy-commission>  
*Ibid.*, 12; *Ibid.*, 17.

and astronomy.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, during America's Cold War struggles with the USSR for international influence and control, nuclear research became inevitably connected with concerns about the destructive power of nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation, and environmental degradation.<sup>25</sup> While both Oak Ridge and Los Alamos still function as scientific laboratories, the Hanford site has come to represent the complex legacy of the nuclear age's benefits and costs.<sup>26</sup>

In the aftermath of the Cold War, without the threat of Soviet nuclear attack, some of the sites associated with the Manhattan Project were scheduled to be demolished, while others were set to be decontaminated.<sup>27</sup> Environmental pollution and degradation caused by the Hanford site's nuclear reactors provoked the government to create plans for cementing and isolating Hanford's nine nuclear reactor for seventy-five years to allow the radioactive reactor to decay to human-safe levels, a process known as "cocooning."<sup>28</sup> These plans prompted the creation of the B-Reactor Museum Association (BRMA) in 1991, a volunteer-led non-profit created by a variety of area stakeholders, including former Hanford employees, with the aim of preserving the B-Reactor site in Hanford for public tours.<sup>29</sup>

In 2002, former DOE and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) executive Cynthia Kelly founded the Atomic Heritage Foundation (AHF) to raise public awareness of the Manhattan Project, as well as to strategically preserve sites associated with the project "for education, interpretation and commemoration."<sup>30</sup> Under Kelly's leadership, the AHF helped to advocate for the creation of a national Manhattan Project park. Seeking to explain the national significance of the Manhattan Project and the value of preserving the Project as a national park, Kelly quotes from

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<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Hackett. "Fusing the Manhattan Project into a National Park." *ScienceLine*. January 2, 2015. <https://scienceline.org/2015/01/fusing-the-manhattan-project-into-a-national-park/>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Linda Marie Richards. "Reviews: The B Reactor National Historic Landmark. The Hanford Site Manhattan Project National Historical Park, Hanford, WA." *The Public Historian* 38, no. 4 (November 2016): 306.

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, 142.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, 306.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> "Advisors and Directors." Atomic Heritage Foundation. 2018. <https://www.atomicheritage.org/about/advisors-and-directors>; Kelly, 143.

Stephane Groueff's description of the project as a "testament to the 'American way,' a combination of 'risk taking, courage for unorthodox approaches, serendipity, [and] dogged determination" that allowed the United States to triumph during World War II.<sup>31</sup> By positioning the Manhattan Project as part of a triumphal American legacy, the AHF, along with local groups such as the BRMA, were drawing from American public memories of the atomic bomb developed during the war and immediate postwar years.

In October 2004, then-President George W. Bush approved "The Manhattan Project National Historical Park Study Act," to investigate the significance, feasibility, and suitability of including Manhattan Project sites to the national park system.<sup>32</sup> Originally, the study investigated sites in Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Los Alamos, along with sites connected to polonium production in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>33</sup>

In June 2012, state representatives from Washington state, New Mexico, and Tennessee introduced the bi-partisan bill H.R. 5987 to Congress, stand-alone park legislation for creating the MPNHP as a unit of the NPS.<sup>34</sup> Former Washington state representative Doc Hastings introduced the park bill to Congress with the goal of showcasing "the American ingenuity that developed the bomb."<sup>35</sup> The legislation failed in September 2012, partly as a result of anti-nuclear activist lawmakers such as Dennis Kucinich.<sup>36</sup> A second attempt to pass the bill was introduced in 2013 – this time, the MPNHP appeared as part of the larger National Defense Authorization Act for

<sup>31</sup> Kelly, 14.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Project Background." Manhattan Project Sites Newsletter 2. September 2006. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=482&projectID=14946&documentID=14099>

<sup>33</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Background on the Manhattan Project Sites Study." Manhattan Project Sites Newsletter 3. September 2009. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=14946&MIMEType=application%252Fpdf&filename=MAPRSRS%5FEANov09%2Epdf&sfid=72838>

<sup>34</sup> Dawn Stover. "The Nuclear Past is Present." The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, January 16, 2015. <https://thebulletin.org/2015/01/the-nuclear-past-is-present/>; U.S. Congress. Senate. H.R. 5987 [Report No. 112-676]. 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., September 18, 2012; Andonian, Raffi Edward. "Nuclear History: Debating the Meanings of Manhattan Project National Historical Park." MHP Dissertation, University of Georgia, 2013. [https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/andonian\\_raffi\\_e\\_201312\\_mhp.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/andonian_raffi_e_201312_mhp.pdf): 8.

<sup>35</sup> Hal Bernton. "Will Nagasaki's Story Be Told at New National Park?" The Seattle Times. August 8, 2017.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/under-the-mushroom-cloud-will-nagasakis-story-be-told-at-hanfords-new-national-park/>

<sup>36</sup> "Debate on H.R. 5987." C-Span Transcript. 2012. <https://www.c-span.org/congress/bills/billAction/?2697607>

Fiscal Year 2015 (H.R. 4435) that covered a wide range of spending, including provisions for a large number of public lands.<sup>37</sup> However, no federal funds were earmarked for the new park.<sup>38</sup> Legislation authorizing the MPNHP was approved in December 2014, and the park was established on November 10, 2015.<sup>39</sup>

The three sites included within the park each provide a unique perspective on the Manhattan Project: The Oak Ridge site, part of the American Museum of Science and Energy, presents “three parallel industrial processes for uranium enrichment and experimental plutonium production.”<sup>40</sup> Hanford’s B-Reactor National Historic Landmark emphasizes the reactor responsible for creating the plutonium bomb.<sup>41</sup> The Los Alamos site features sites connected with the design, assembly, and research into atomic bombs.<sup>42</sup> As a result of continuing scientific research at the Los Alamos and Oak Ridge sites, along with ongoing environmental cleanup, MPNHP tours at all three sites are restricted to pre-reserved bus tours.<sup>43</sup> The National Park Service (NPS) and the Department of Energy (DOE) divide responsibility for park management. While the NPS develops interpretation of the sites’ historical significance, the DOE maintains the physical park grounds and works to ensure the safety of park structures and environment remediation measures.<sup>44</sup>

In a 2017 Park Foundation Document, the park sets out four major “interpretive themes” for the park as legacies to convey: the sacrifices that went into producing the Manhattan Project;

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Senate Bill to Establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., March 7, 2013; Stover, “The Nuclear Past.”

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate, Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act; U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Foundation Document, 4.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. “Oak Ridge Site – Manhattan Project National Historical Park.” January 15, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/oakridge.htm>

<sup>41</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. “Hanford, WA Site – Manhattan Project National Historical Park.” August 29, 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/hanford.htm>

<sup>42</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. “Manhattan Project NHP at Los Alamos.” May 1, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/manhattan-project-los-alamos.htm>

<sup>43</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Foundation Document, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Tracy D. Atkins “Manhattan Project National Historical Park.” U.S. Department of Energy Legacy Management. [http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal\\_Energy/Atkins-Manhattan\\_Project\\_National\\_Historic\\_Park\\_31332.pdf](http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal_Energy/Atkins-Manhattan_Project_National_Historic_Park_31332.pdf)

the science and engineering breakthroughs connected with the Project; the challenging moral decisions associated with nuclear weapons; and the human as well as environmental costs of the nuclear age.<sup>45</sup> As of November 2018, the MPNHP website primarily emphasizes the themes of sacrifice for a greater cause and technological innovation. The current website largely provides a narrative that emphasizes the sacrifices made for the Manhattan Project by a diverse group of Americans – with an emphasis on African American scientists and workers -- who pulled together to achieve a world-changing engineering and research achievement in developing the atomic bomb.<sup>46</sup> While the MPNHP’s website and exhibitions currently emphasize a public memory of the Manhattan Project as a technological achievement forged under great sacrifice by a diverse group of Americans, this interpretation clashes with other public memories of the Manhattan Project, and these collisions have provoked international debate on how to interpret the Manhattan Project and its impact on the modern world.

### **“History Wars”: Museums and Colliding Public Histories**

In national public history debates, shared public spaces such as museums, memorials, and parks have often served as lightning rods for questions about publicly preserved historical legacies and their interpretations. As Hein and Selden note, “Memorials and museum exhibits are important sites of silencing and speaking.... WWII memorials elevate certain parts of the war story in both countries, particularly victories and the sacrifices of the nation’s soldiers, and ignore others.”<sup>47</sup> The process of selecting or elevating some voices or stories above others in interpreting the legacy of the Manhattan Project and the atomic bomb has provoked a number of contentious controversies reflecting divergent public memories, most notably the 1995 *Enola Gay* exhibition at the

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<sup>45</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Foundation Document, 26.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Manhattan Project National Historical Park, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/index.htm>

<sup>47</sup> Hein and Selden, 9.

Smithsonian Institute's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

When Smithsonian curators originally proposed displaying the B-29 bomber that dropped the uranium bomb over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the first draft of the planned exhibit included information on projected American casualty numbers for the mainland invasion of Japan averted by the atomic bomb, along with evidence describing the devastating impact of the bombs on people in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>48</sup> However, contentious debates over the projected American casualty numbers, along with protests from U.S. veterans' group and others invested in presenting a strictly positive perspective of the atomic bomb, caused the proposed exhibit to be sidelined in favor of simply displaying the fuselage of the *Enola Gay* bomber, without commentary.<sup>49</sup> As one historian involved in the controversy explained, "there was simply no way for the museum to satisfy all concerned parties except through the vaguest of formulations."<sup>50</sup> The *Enola Gay* controversy reflected domestic U.S. debate over atomic bomb interpretation: interpretations of the bomb as an achievement of American science and military triumph were pitted against interpretations of the atomic bomb as a powerful weapon of massive destruction, and these arguments over historical interpretation came to be dubbed "history wars."<sup>51</sup> Hogan writes that the controversy "clearly illustrated how powerful groups can appropriate the past for political purposes."<sup>52</sup> Another observer argues that the *Enola Gay* experience demonstrates the fallacy that "by talking about the victims of the bombs, you somehow took away from those who thought the bombs were necessary or important."<sup>53</sup> Museum exhibits can function as physical manifestations of public memories, highlighting some voices while ignoring others, but since

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<sup>48</sup> Edward T. Linenthal. "Anatomy of a Controversy." in *History Wars: the Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, edited by Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt, 9-62. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996: 32.

<sup>49</sup> Linenthal, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Tom Englehardt and Edward T. Linenthal. "Introduction: History Under Siege." in *History Wars: the Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, edited by Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt, 1-7. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996: 2.

<sup>52</sup> Hogan, 10

<sup>53</sup> Alex Wellerstein. "History in the Flesh." *Restricted Data: The Nuclear Secrecy Blog*. May 29, 2015. <http://blog.nuclearsecrecy.com/2015/05/29/history-in-the-flesh/>

public memories are highly contextualized, they can develop and evolve based on culture, historical setting, and location.

### **The Manhattan Project in American Public History**

Public memories of World War II in the United States have been continually evolving since the end of the war. From the end of the war until the 1960s, World War II was frequently remembered as a “good, wholly justified”<sup>54</sup> war protecting the world from German and Japanese aggression; however, American involvement in the brutal Vietnam War impacted America’s public memories of World War II and provoked new interpretations of the atomic bomb.<sup>55</sup>

Soon after the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, President Harry Truman issued a public statement that laid the framework for subsequent American interpretations of the Manhattan Project. Describing the bomb as revenge for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Truman claimed that “we have spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history – and won.”<sup>56</sup> In Truman’s statement, the atomic bomb’s greatest achievement is not only power, but the strength of its top-secret creation process – an unprecedented collaboration between science, industry, and military: “the battle of the laboratories.”<sup>57</sup>

Secretary of State Henry Stimson’s ghost-written 1947 justification for the atomic bombing sets out additional explanation for the atomic bomb that retains resonance in American historical memory to this day. Stimson portrays the decision to drop the bomb as a carefully reasoned decision: since the bomb saved the American lives that would have been lost in an invasion of mainland Japan and helped to compel Japanese leaders to surrender and end the war, the atomic bomb served as “a weapon of such possibilities for accomplishing this purpose and saving those

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<sup>54</sup> Iriye, 90.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Pyle. “Hiroshima and the Historians: History as Relative Truth.” *Asia Pacific Review* 22, no. 2 (November 2015): 21.

<sup>56</sup> Truman, “Truman Statement”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

[American] lives.”<sup>58</sup> Beyond military justifications for ending the war in Japan, many Americans viewed the Manhattan Project an unprecedented American scientific and technological achievement. In Oak Ridge, Tennessee, for example, the Manhattan Project still represents an historical communal achievement for many who were involved in the Project. One social historian argues that public memories of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge provide a venue “to talk about their sacrifice to the nation, their scientific and intellectual prowess, their cosmopolitanism, and their prominent role in producing the atomic bomb.”<sup>59</sup> Within this legacy, the Manhattan Project represents the triumphant culmination of a government project combining cutting-edge technology and collaborative teamwork, emphasizing the American lives saved by the bomb and American achievements.

In the public history of the atomic bomb as an American military and technological triumph, Japanese victims of the atomic bombing are often ignored, minimalized, or depersonalized.<sup>60</sup> In one representative 1994 history published to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, for example, the American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki appear only briefly, in passing, quickly eclipsed by concerns over the laboratory’s postwar continuation.<sup>61</sup>

During the Vietnam War, concerns over American national leadership and international military involvement translated into new interpretations of the atomic bombing. Historian Gar Alperovitz has served as a recognized advocate for this atomic interpretation, often described as the revisionist view. In this analysis of the atomic bombing, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki served as a political, rather than military, decision for American leaders, and the usage of the bomb primarily allowed the United States to demonstrate its superior military and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>59</sup> Lindsey A. Freeman, Longing for the Bomb: Oak Ridge and Atomic Nostalgia. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 2015: 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> Hein and Selden, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Johnson and Schaffer, 26.

technology capabilities to Stalin's USSR, America's soon-to-be-adversary in the Cold War.<sup>62</sup> In this interpretation, since U.S. leaders were aware that Japan was already on the verge of surrender, usage of the atomic bomb cannot be justified.<sup>63</sup>

In the revisionist view of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese atomic bombing victims become collateral damage in the United States' attempt to impress the USSR with atomic weaponry, since the atomic bomb is less valuable to end the war with Japan than as the beginning of the American Cold War with the Soviet Union.

American public memories of the atomic bomb have often been represented in museums through the lens of the orthodox view. Tomoko Masumoto, a Japanese researcher in International Communications who conducted field work between 2011-2014 at both Los Alamos' Bradbury History Museum and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, describes the Los Alamos Museum, tongue firmly in cheek, as a 'classic American story,'<sup>64</sup> Masumoto describes exhibits showcasing the development of the atomic bomb as the successful culmination of a collaborative project in science and technology. Arguing that "a visitor from the US is likely to leave reassured,"<sup>65</sup> Masumoto notes that Hiroshima did not appear in the museum's exhibits, "not even from the air."<sup>66</sup>

### **The Manhattan Project in Japanese Public Memory**

As the only country to experience the devastation of an atomic bomb, Japan's sense of "victim consciousness" has deeply influenced the country's postwar history, especially its antiwar/antinuclear and nationalistic movements.<sup>67</sup> Historian James J. Orr traces the complicated

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<sup>62</sup> Gar Alperovitz. *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*. New York: Vintage, 1995: 664.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 636.

<sup>64</sup> Tomoko Masumoto. "Tales of Two Cities: Hiroshima and Los Alamos, and the Collective Memories about the Atomic Bombing Presented in their Principal Museums." *Gurōbaru komyunikēshon kenkyū*, no. 2. (2015): 150.

<sup>64</sup> Iriye, 90.

<sup>65</sup> Masumoto, 155.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>67</sup> James J. Orr. *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2001: 13.

history of Japan's post-atomic "victim consciousness," positioning it within the complicated postwar political relationship between the United States and Japan.<sup>68</sup> Emphasizing Japanese victimization functioned as one strategy for the U.S. Occupation leadership to place wartime responsibility on military leadership rather than the Emperor or the Japanese people,<sup>69</sup> but even after the US Occupation ended, Japanese interest groups and politicians harnessed the power of "victim consciousness" to develop both peace and Japanese nationalistic movements.<sup>70</sup>

Within this legacy of "victim consciousness," the Manhattan Project represents a problematic specter of American technology and violence. However, historian Akira Iriye argues that postwar Japan has largely lacked a "coherent" national public memory of World War II,<sup>71</sup> and this incoherence of historical memory may be reflected through the divergence of exhibits within atomic bomb museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Just as divergent interpretations of the atomic bomb have stoked public controversy in the US, Japanese war-related museums and public memorials have faced criticisms and pressure from a diverse range of groups maintaining sometimes conflicting public memories of the atomic bomb and the war.<sup>72</sup>

For Japan's antiwar, antinuclear weapon movement, the atomic bomb provides a devastatingly stark example of the dangers of nuclear weapons and serves as a reminder to seek nuclear disarmament and international alternatives to war. During American hydrogen bomb tests on the Bikini Atoll in 1954, crewmembers of a Japanese fishing boat, the Lucky Dragon 5, were exposed to radiation, and radiation sickness eventually killed one crew member, an incident provoking outrage across Japan.<sup>73</sup> While Japan's peace movement was originally connected to the Japanese Communist and Socialist movements, national anger created through the Lucky Dragon

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Iriye, 90.

<sup>72</sup> Takashi Yoshida. *From Cultures of War to Cultures of Peace: War and Peace Museums in Japan, China, and South Korea*. Portland: MerwinAsia, 2014: 163.

<sup>73</sup> Orr, 37.

Incident provided the momentum for creating a national antinuclear movement.<sup>74</sup> As a result, historian John W. Dower argues, “the obvious ‘lesson of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,’ Japanese at all levels of society commonly declare, is that all peoples and nations must work for a world without nuclear weapons.”<sup>75</sup>

While the Japanese nationalist camp shares the anti-war movement’s antipathy to the atomic bomb, nationalistic motives for interpreting the bomb seek to absolve Japan from responsibility for wartime actions. Reinterpretations of history, or the revision of history to fit nationalistic aims, has provided one strategy for Japanese nationalists to do this.<sup>76</sup> Especially since the 1990s, many nationalist writers and supporters (including current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe)<sup>77</sup> have argued that interpretations of Japan’s World War II history should “be purged of its ‘dark stains,’”<sup>78</sup> particularly through removing the idea of Japanese wartime aggression and reframing Japan’s goals during World War II as “self-defense and [...] the liberation of Asia.”<sup>79</sup> Within this narrative, the atomic bomb helps to position Japan as a wartime victim. Asada, among others, argues that Japan’s reluctance to emphasize its wartime actions in Asia and the country’s widespread belief in the revisionist political interpretation of the atomic bomb as a U.S. political maneuver against the USSR has allowed the Japanese to evade responsibility for their role in the war and to “tip the balance [of post-Pearl Harbor moral symmetry] in their favor.”<sup>80</sup> Similarly, by positioning the atomic bombs as a product of technology far more atrocious than anything Japan could create, Japan’s own wartime atrocities against other Asian countries can be minimized.<sup>81</sup>

Japanese museums commemorating the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> John W. Dower. “Three Narratives of Our Humanity.” *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. Edited by Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt. New York: Metropolitan, 1996: 69-70.

<sup>76</sup> Saaler, Sven. “Nationalism and History in Contemporary Japan.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 14, issue 20, no. 7 (October 2016): 1.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sadao Asada. “The Mushroom Cloud and National Psyches: Japanese and American Perceptions of the A-Bomb Decision, 1945-1955.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 4, no. 2. (1995): 110.

<sup>81</sup> Hein, Selden, 6.

reflect a diverse range of atomic interpretations, as demonstrated by the development of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. During the 1960s, one American visitor to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum reported surprise when his Japanese tour guide described the atomic bombings as “war crimes.”<sup>82</sup> In 1993, an American journalist visiting the same museum described it as “largely a monument to Japan’s own view of itself as a victim.”<sup>83</sup> The exhibits, including preserved human scar tissue and burned school outfits, emphasized the Japanese suffering caused by the bombing. “Broader discussion” of the wartime context and Japan’s own actions during the war did not appear in the museum.<sup>84</sup> Visiting the museum between 2011-2014, Masumoto reiterates the emphasis on the “human toll” of the bomb.<sup>85</sup> While the museum now offers additional information on Japan’s role within the broader war context as well as recognition of Korean forced laborers in Japan and non-Japanese bomb victims,<sup>86</sup> the museum’s depiction of the American decision to drop the bomb over Hiroshima seems to emphasize the revisionist view of the bombing, with exhibit documents “suggesting that the U.S. intentionally tried to keep the war going so that the bombs could be tested on Japanese cities.”<sup>87</sup> As recently as 2014, the exhibition avoided examining any potential culpability of Japanese wartime leadership. Writing in 2014, historian Takashi Yoshida argues that the museum’s avoidance of “the issue of responsibility” reflects the museum’s goals to end the use of nuclear weapons and to develop a peaceful world.<sup>88</sup>

In contrast, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, thanks to efforts from former Nagasaki mayor Hitoshi Motoshima, has made a conscious effort to include evidence about Japan’s military

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Donald C. Hellmann, November 25, 2018.

<sup>83</sup> John Bussey. “Hiroshima Museum Underscores Japan’s Apparent Amnesia on War.” *Wall Street Journal*. August 6, 1993: ASD.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Masumoto, 139.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>88</sup> Yoshida, 84.

actions against other Asian countries during World War II.<sup>89</sup> Motoshima aimed to create a museum that would both showcase the horrors inflicted on Nagasaki by the atomic bomb as well as provide a historical context for visitors to better understand how the bomb came to be dropped on the city.<sup>90</sup> Motoshima's efforts provoked organized protests from Japanese nationalist organizations seeking to promote their own reinterpretation of Japanese history, along with written protests from pacifist Japanese organizations reporting concerns that the exhibit's emphasis on Japan's wartime actions would justify "nuclear retaliation" by overshadowing current antiwar and antinuclear movements.<sup>91</sup> While the Nagasaki museum continues to display exhibitions on Japan's wartime actions, these protests from Japanese interest groups shaped the development of the exhibition and, in some cases, altered the wording of museum exhibits to minimize some of the original exhibit's condemnation of wartime Japanese actions.<sup>92</sup>

Japanese interpretations of the atomic bomb, both antiwar as well as nationalistic, have emphasized "victim consciousness" in public exhibitions and memorials, but this public memory of the atomic bomb deeply conflicts with the interpretation of the Manhattan Project presented at the MPNHP.

### **Park Controversy: Triumphant American Legacy or Appalling Tragedy?**

While concerns about the MPNHP's creation have ranged from ongoing site radiation risks<sup>93</sup> to criticisms that the U.S. government budget should be prioritizing nuclear environmental cleanup,<sup>94</sup> this paper will focus on ideological concerns about the park. In a 2017 Park Foundation Document drafted by the NPS and DOE, authors describe the park's founding goal: that the park

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>93</sup> Richards, 307.

<sup>94</sup> Dawn Stover. "The Nuclear Past is Present." *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 16, 2015. <https://thebulletin.org/2015/01/the-nuclear-past-is-present/>

“preserves and interprets the nationally significant historic sites, stories, and legacies.”<sup>95</sup> Some of the controversy around the park has revolved around the question of which legacies are being preserved, and how these legacies are being interpreted. Concerns from a range of interest groups have helped to shape the development of the park’s interpretive mission and goals, as well as discussion around the park’s future development.

Ideological concerns about and opposition to the park have generally fallen into two main categories: antinuclear or antiwar activists, and Japanese nationalists. Antinuclear activists frequently cite the revisionist interpretation of the atomic bomb as antinuclear justification.<sup>96</sup> In 2012, then-Congressman Dennis Kucinich helped to scuttle park plans in Congress, arguing that “the bomb is about graveyards, it’s not about national parks.”<sup>97</sup> During his congressional testimony, Kucinich cited research from Alperovitz, the revisionist atomic historian, along with quotes expressing concern about atomic weapons from prominent American WWII military leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur, to justify the argument that the atomic bomb was not necessary to force Japanese surrender in 1945.<sup>98</sup> Some anti-nuclear activist groups make arguments that the museum honors the destructive nuclear capabilities created by the Manhattan Project. One group, for example, the New Mexico-based Los Alamos Study Group, claimed that the proposed park would be “an appalling travesty. We see the Park not as ‘history’ but as pure propaganda for [Los Alamos National Labs].”<sup>99</sup> These interest groups serve to highlight the potentially destructive nature of nuclear weapons and nuclear research.

In Japan, news of the MPNHP’s impending creation provoked a wide range of reactions

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<sup>95</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Foundation Document: Manhattan Project National Historical Park: Tennessee, New Mexico, Washington. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017. [https://www.nps.gov/mapr/upload/MAPR\\_FD\\_PRINT.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/mapr/upload/MAPR_FD_PRINT.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Los Alamos Study Group. “DOE, Park Service to Create New National Park for Old Nuclear Weapons – the Ones Dropped on Cities: Group Warns of Cultural Consequences.” November 9, 2015. [http://www.lasg.org/press/2015/press\\_release\\_09Nov2015.html](http://www.lasg.org/press/2015/press_release_09Nov2015.html)

<sup>97</sup> “Debate on H.R. 5987.” C-Span Transcript. 2012. <https://www.c-span.org/congress/bills/billAction/?2697607>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Los Alamos Study Group. “DOE, Park Service.”

from atomic bombing victims, or *hibakusha*, and their families. While one Japanese-Canadian *hibakusha* and anti-nuclear activist originally from Hiroshima described the park as “a repugnant thing,”<sup>100</sup> a Japanese-American grandson of a Hiroshima bombing victim argued that “we should recount all parts of our heritage, even the painful moments.”<sup>101</sup> Hiroshima mayor Kazumi Matsui and Nagasaki mayor Tomihisa Taue, both anti-nuclear activists, have been expressing concerns about the park since at least 2012, when the first national park legislation failed in the U.S. Senate.<sup>102</sup> After MPNHP legislation passed successfully in 2014, both mayors wrote to the current American ambassador to Japan. Both mayors described concerns that the new park would “glorify” the atomic bomb and minimize its impact on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and these anxieties were shared with the National Park Service.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, representatives from the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb sufferers wrote to President Obama in December 2014 expressing fears that the new park would justify the development and usage of the atomic bomb.<sup>104</sup>

In response to these concerns from the Japanese mayors and atomic victim advocacy groups, representatives from the Atomic Heritage Foundation scheduled a public discussion between Japanese and American park stakeholders in May 2015. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki mayors, along with concerned Japanese anti-nuclear advocacy groups, were in New York City to speak against nuclear weapons at the 2015 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>105</sup> During the Manhattan Project Park discussions, Cynthia Kelly, the AHF founder and president, assured Japanese participants that the planned park “would

<sup>100</sup> Tyler Hayden. “Hiroshima Survivor Speaks for Peace.” *Santa Barbara Independent*. October 22, 2015. <https://www.independent.com/news/2015/oct/22/hiroshima-survivor-speaks-peace/>

<sup>101</sup> Clarence Moriwaki. “Op-ed: Create a Manhattan Project National Historic Park at Hanford.” *The Seattle Times*. December 16, 2012. [http://old.seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2019906786\\_clarencemoriwakiopedxml.html](http://old.seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2019906786_clarencemoriwakiopedxml.html)

<sup>102</sup> “U.S. Ambassador to Japan Defends MP National Historical Park.” Atomic Heritage Foundation. February 6, 2012. <https://www.atomicheritage.org/article/us-ambassador-japan-defends-mp-national-historical-park>

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo). “In Opposition to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.” December 18, 2014. <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/hidankyo/nihon/english/img/141218.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> “WWII Park in U.S. to Remain Neutral.” *Japan Times*. May 5, 2015. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/02/national/wwii-park-in-u-s-to-remain-neutral/#.W-kTauJRfU>

not ‘cover-up’ the facts or glorify the bomb.”<sup>106</sup> Instead, Kelly promised that the park would present a “complete and multifaceted” portrayal of the atomic bomb, emphasizing how the bomb “changed the history of the United States and the world in many ways for good and bad.”<sup>107</sup> According to the AHF, Japanese participants “seemed relieved” to hear this and offered to help provide the museum with “necessary materials and support” for helping to develop a comprehensive display of the atomic bomb’s impact.<sup>108</sup>

During the November 2015 Manhattan Project Scholars’ Forum organized by NPS as a strategy to gain scholarly feedback on interpreting the Manhattan Project, invited participants included two representatives from Japan: one representative from the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation and a representative from the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki A-Bomb Hospital, a medical expert on atomic bomb-related diseases.<sup>109</sup> The published report from the forum includes letters from the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to forum participants and to the NPS director, reiterating their belief that for the Manhattan Project park to provide visitors with a full understanding of the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons, “it is necessary to fully describe what happened to the people under the mushroom cloud.”<sup>110</sup> The mayors once again offered to provide exhibit artifacts that will allow the park to humanize the Japanese victims of the atomic bomb.<sup>111</sup>

While promising to include the Japanese perspective on the devastating impacts of the atomic bombs may have helped to assuage some of the park criticisms from Japanese anti-nuclear activists, nationalistic Japanese organizations provide a different rationale for opposing the American national memory of the Manhattan Project, and it could prove to be more challenging

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<sup>106</sup> “AHF Meets with the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” Atomic Heritage Foundation, May 5, 2015. <https://www.atomicheritage.org/article/ahf-meets-mayors-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Scholars’ Forum Report: Manhattan Project National Historical Park. 2015. [https://www.nps.gov/mapr/getinvolved/upload/MAPR\\_Scholars\\_Forum\\_Report-2-2.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/mapr/getinvolved/upload/MAPR_Scholars_Forum_Report-2-2.pdf): 14, 44.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

for the park to incorporate their perspectives into the larger Manhattan Project narrative.

In May 2018, Hiromichi Moteki, a former Japanese history teacher and current acting head of the Society of the Dissemination of Historical Fact (SDHF),<sup>112</sup> a right-wing Japanese nationalist group that has been associated with comfort women denials,<sup>113</sup> described his concerns with the park. For Moteki, and the SDHF, the atomic bombings, “a clear breach of international law at that time,”<sup>114</sup> should be viewed as international war crimes and “if that is not made clear [in the park displays] then this is nothing but a false story.”<sup>115</sup> Building off of the SDHF’s victimization narrative, Moteki also argues that the atomic bombings “were deliberately aimed at civilians.”<sup>116</sup> In this Japanese nationalist interpretation of the Manhattan Project, the Project’s work appears as a “war crime,” with wartime guilt and responsibility placed squarely on the Americans. Analyzing multiple interpretations of the atomic bomb, Japanese academic and international peace advocate Sadao Kamata has argued that both the Americans who justified the atomic bomb and the Japanese who argue for minimized Japanese war responsibility should be viewed as nationalists prioritizing “national interests above international human rights.”<sup>117</sup> Partly as a result of these priorities, the Japanese nationalistic interpretation may be particularly difficult for MPNHP to reconcile with the existing American public memories displayed at the three Manhattan Project sites.

### Addressing Multiple Interpretations of the Manhattan Project

While MPNHP leadership has recognized the value of exhibiting multiple and conflicting

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<sup>112</sup> Julian Ryall. “US Remembers Top-Secret ‘Manhattan Project’ at Special Parks. Japanese Nationalists Say they Glorify War Crimes.” South China Morning Post. May 15, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2146185/us-remembers-top-secret-manhattan-project-special-parks-japanese>; Cole, Brendan. “Manhattan Project Museum Urged to Say Hiroshima and Nagasaki were War Crimes.” Newsweek. May 15, 2018. <https://www.newsweek.com/manhattan-project-museum-urged-say-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-bombs-were-war-926932>

<sup>113</sup> “AHF to Meet”

<sup>114</sup> Ryall, “US Remembers”

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Yoshida, 171.

interpretations of the atomic bomb in MPNHP exhibits, park budget funding and potential political concerns have so far limited the development and portrayal of Japanese perspectives within the park's physical and digital exhibits.

In response to concerns expressed about the park's creation, then-NPS director Jon Jarvis argued in 2015 that his organization could best preserve controversial historical areas such as the Manhattan Project sites by offering "multiple perspectives on what happened and [by inviting] people to examine the decisions and events of the past in the context of the time,"<sup>118</sup> encouraging visitors to reflect and to reach their own interpretations of potentially controversial historical memories. "From the very beginning, we made a commitment that this would be a complete story, not only of the (bombs') creation but also their deployment,"<sup>119</sup> Jarvis explained. The current MPNHP park superintendent, Kris Kirby, has echoed Jarvis' reassurances, promising that "what we want to do is to make sure that we provide multiple and broad perspectives and not draw firm conclusions, but to leave those conclusions to our visitors, giving them sovereignty of thought."<sup>120</sup> By providing historical context, divergent perspectives, and multiple interpretations of such a divisive international event as the creation and deployment of the atomic bomb, the park hopes to be able to allow visitors to draw their own conclusions about the justification for using the atomic bomb, and to avoid some of the controversy provoked by the *Enola Gay* exhibition in 1995. The NPS approach to Manhattan Project controversy presumably draws from the experiences of the *Enola Gay* controversy at the Smithsonian, along with previous NPS interpretations of contentious American historical sites connected with the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Brendan Cole. "Manhattan Project Museum Urged to Say Hiroshima and Nagasaki were War Crimes." *Newsweek*. May 15, 2018. <https://www.newsweek.com/manhattan-project-museum-urged-say-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-bombs-were-war-926932>

<sup>119</sup> Hal Bernton. "Will Nagasaki's Story Be Told at New National Park?" *The Seattle Times*. August 8, 2017.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/under-the-mushroom-cloud-will-nagasakis-story-be-told-at-hanfords-new-national-park/>

<sup>120</sup> Ryall, "US Remembers"

<sup>121</sup> "AHF to Meet." The NPS provides professional development for employees on communication strategies for potentially controversial topics. In one 2012 handout on "Communication Strategies for Interpreting Climate Change," the NPS notes that "Acknowledging that there are different perspectives is a gesture of respect and inclusion that instantly diffuses conflict." <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/upload/controversyorconflict.pdf>

According to the park's current strategic plan (for 2017-2022), one of the park's strategies for interpreting and protecting the Manhattan Project's legacy will be to "collect oral histories of diverse communities involved with the Manhattan Project for all sites."<sup>122</sup> In the 2017 Park Foundation Document, Japanese victims of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are listed as a "Manhattan Project Community," along with other groups including segregated African-American and Hispanic-American workers on the Project.<sup>123</sup> During the park planning process, representatives from the NPS and DOE organized "site visits" and "open houses" to discuss the development of the park with local communities in Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Los Alamos.<sup>124</sup>

However, the park's proposed interpretive exhibit plans have been limited by funding concerns. In 2017, the park maintained a budget of \$680,000 for all three sites, and the current park supervisor notes that it may be several years before the park will be able to actually create and display these divergent interpretations.<sup>125</sup> Park supervisor Kirby has noted that while her application request for additional interpretive exhibit funding was denied in the 2018 funding cycle, she plans to reapply for interpretive funding.<sup>126</sup> While interpretive exhibits are more likely to be funded through grants rather than federal funds, MPNHP funding concerns may reflect current American debates on the value of national park funding. Congress annually approves NPS funding through the Department of Interior's annual budget.<sup>127</sup> The 2019 NPS budget justification includes only one full-time employee paid through federal funds and requests just \$614 in federal funding for MPNHP park operations.<sup>128</sup> While President Trump's proposed 2019 budget included

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<sup>122</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Strategic Plan for Manhattan Project National Historical Park: Tennessee, New Mexico, Washington, 2017-2022. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/getinvolved/upload/MAPR-Strategic-Plan-2017-0728-508-2.pdf>:10.

<sup>123</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Foundation, 31.

<sup>124</sup> Tracy D. Atkins "Manhattan Project National Historical Park." U.S. Department of Energy Legacy Management. [http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal\\_Energy/Atkins-Manhattan\\_Project\\_National\\_Historic\\_Park\\_31332.pdf](http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/energy/Tribal_Energy/Atkins-Manhattan_Project_National_Historic_Park_31332.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> Bernton, "Will Nagasaki's"

<sup>126</sup> Bernton, "Will Nagasaki's"

<sup>127</sup> Amelia Josephson. "The Economics of National Parks." SmartAsset, June 6, 2018. <https://smartasset.com/taxes/the-economics-of-national-parks>

<sup>128</sup> U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Budget Justifications and Performance Information, Fiscal Year 2019. 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/upload/FY2019-NPS-Budget-Justification.pdf#page=103&zoom=180,-256,60>: 84.

an 7% reduction in the NPS annual budget,<sup>129</sup> the U.S. House of Representatives in March 2018 passed a spending bill that provided a 9% NPS budget increase, reflecting continued bipartisan support for national parks.<sup>130</sup>

While the NPS and DOE have reiterated their intent to include divergent perspectives and experiences in the MPNHP exhibits, budget restraints have necessarily limited their ability to develop these exhibits, and, in the meantime, the Japanese perspective of the Manhattan Project has not yet been incorporated into the park's interpretive narrative at Oak Ridge, Hanford, or Los Alamos. Visiting the Hanford B-Reactor Museum in 2016, one frustrated researcher argued that the "B reactor is still fetishized as an object that ended the war,"<sup>131</sup> with "no room for the memories of the first Hibakushas [sic]."<sup>132</sup> For most visitors, the museum visit begins with a video describing the atomic bomb as "a testament to the human spirit."<sup>133</sup> In March 2018, Nagasaki bomb victim Mitsugi Moriguchi toured the Hanford reactor site in a radiation suit and mask, holding a radiation monitor, to demonstrate his continued concern with the site's radioactivity.<sup>134</sup> As Moriguchi explained, he was still waiting for the Japanese perspective to be included in the exhibits: "There was nothing – nothing about the suffering that was caused...I felt that eyes were closed to this part of it."<sup>135</sup>

Lack of Japanese perspective is similarly reflected in the park's online presence. By late 2018, the park had developed two separate digital initiatives: *Ranger in Your Pocket* provides online tours of park sites, while *Voices of the Manhattan Project*, a joint offering from the Atomic

<sup>129</sup> Kurt Repanshek. "Updated: President's Proposed FY19 Budget Cuts Interior Department Again, Says Energy Revenues Will Rise. National Parks Traveler, February 12, 2018. <https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2018/02/updated-presidents-proposed-fy19-budget-cuts-interior-department-again-says-energy-revenues>

<sup>130</sup> Darryl Fears and Dino Grandoni. "House Spending Bill Would Increase Funding for National Parks and Wildfire Suppression." The Washington Post, March 22, 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/22/house-spending-bill-would-increase-funding-for-national-parks-and-wildfire-suppression/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.61834007a504](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/22/house-spending-bill-would-increase-funding-for-national-parks-and-wildfire-suppression/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.61834007a504)

<sup>131</sup> Richards, 314.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Hal Bernton. "Nagasaki Survivor Visits Hanford, Finds Some of the Story Still Untold." The Seattle Times, March 12, 2018. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/nagasaki-survivor-visits-hanford-finds-some-of-the-story-still-untold/>

<sup>134</sup> Jenny Cunningham. "Nagasaki Survivor Visits the U.S. Town that Fueled his City's Destruction." PBS NewsHour Transcript, August 9, 2018. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/nagasaki-survivor-visits-the-u-s-town-that-fueled-his-citys-destruction>;

<sup>135</sup> Bernton, "Nagasaki Survivor"

Heritage Foundation and the Los Alamos Historical Society, collects and transcribes oral interviews with people associated with the Project's creation and development.<sup>136</sup> As of December 2018, while *Voices of the Manhattan Project* includes hundreds of interviews from scientists and workers associated with the Manhattan Project, the site does not currently include any interviews with atomic bombing victims.<sup>137</sup>

The lack of federal funding to develop new exhibits has hampered the creation of the Japanese perspective of the Manhattan Project, but another barrier may be local resistance. Practical economic considerations such as attracting increased numbers of visitors can play a role in encouraging public spaces like the MPNHP to avoid potentially controversial exhibition decisions.<sup>138</sup> For some people connected with the sites in Hanford, Los Alamos, and Oak Ridge, alternative Manhattan Project interpretations have been portrayed as a direct rebuke to public memories of the Manhattan Project's achievements. In April 2018, for example, plans to display items from a traveling Hiroshima and Nagasaki exhibit at the Los Alamos History Museum were put on hold until additional exhibit context could be developed, since the museum's board of directors "felt uncomfortable about the exhibit's call to abolish nuclear bombs."<sup>139</sup> The museum's director described the exhibition delay as an attempt to ensure "respect be afforded to our community."<sup>140</sup> Describing the addition of Nagasaki perspectives to the Hanford museum as "controversial,"<sup>141</sup> one perceptive Seattle newspaper columnist has pointed out that it will take "political will" for the parks to follow through on their promise to provide a comprehensive view

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<sup>136</sup> "Grants at Work: Preserving the History of the Manhattan Project." M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, <https://murdocktrust.org/grants-at-work-preserving-the-history-of-the-manhattan-project/>

<sup>137</sup> "About Us." Manhattan Project Voices, <https://www.manhattanprojectvoices.org/about-us>

<sup>138</sup> Andrea Gevurtz Arai. "When is a Prison Like a Folk Art Museum? Movement, Affect, and the After-Colonial in Seoul and Tokyo." in *Spaces of Possibility: In, Between, and Beyond Korea and Japan*, Clark W. Sorensen and Andrea Gevurtz Arai, eds. Seattle: University of Washington Press (2017): 65.

<sup>139</sup> Russell Contreras and Mari Yamaguchi. "US Museum Stalls Hiroshima Exhibit over Nuke Weapon Ban Push." AP News. April 8, 2018. <https://apnews.com/7c9581fcabb34b8c8957a1ebdc9ff42>. (accessed November 22, 2018).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Bernton, "Nagasaki Survivor"

of both the benefits and the tragedies resulting from the Manhattan Project.<sup>142</sup>

## Conclusion

In the debates and discussions created through the development of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, divergent interpretations of the Manhattan Project continue to revolve around the question of the atomic bomb's justification. Within these interpretations, public atomic memories continue to evolve, revealing national preoccupations in both the United States and in Japan, including the value of war, the power of nuclear weapons, the ethical implications of technology, and which stories are chosen to be celebrated and remembered.

In 2016, over 90,000 people visited the combined three park sites,<sup>143</sup> demonstrating the continued interest in learning about the Manhattan Project and how the Project's work impacted the modern world. Despite significant funding limitations, the NPS and DOE remain committed to preserving the buildings, stories, and legacies associated with the Manhattan Project, with the aim of eventually offering a variety of potentially conflicting interpretations through their exhibits.

Public exhibit spaces presenting conflicting historical interpretations can provide visitors with the chance to develop a more nuanced understanding of controversial histories. Anthropologist Arai argues that public exhibition spaces like the MPNHP can play a role in helping visitors to better understand "impediments to historical problems and possible reconciliation."<sup>144</sup> For many American and Japanese visitors to the MPNHP, especially, having the opportunity to interpret conflicting public memories of the Manhattan Project could help to provide a better understanding of the complex shared history between the United States and Japan. Ultimately, the complicated process of trying to make sense of these conflicting interpretations might even provide

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Andrea Gevurtz Arai. E-mail to author, November 27, 2018.

visitors with a strengthened sense of how to address future international conflicts.

### **Bibliographic Essay**

For conceptual framework and discussions on national historical memories associated with the atomic bomb in the United States and Japan, Laura Hein and Mark Selden's Living with the Bomb and Edward T. Linenthal's History Wars provided the most thorough and thought-provoking anthologies of multi-author perspectives. The authors in Living with the Bomb, especially the introduction from Hein and Selden, and chapters from John W. Dower and Hugh Gusterson, provided a valuable analysis of postwar US and Japan interpretations of the atomic bomb, while Linenthal's anthology fleshed out conflicting American interpretations.

Michael Hogan's introductory essay in Hiroshima in History and Memory and Akira Iriye's introductory article on "Historical Scholarship and Public Memory" both offer excellent introductions to the concept of "public memory" as applied to the atomic bomb.

To help situation the atomic bombing controversy in America, both Bernton and Gusterson provided thought-provoking analyses of how the atomic bomb controversy has played out on a local, sometimes individual, level. Hal Bernton's thoughtful series of articles for The Seattle Times helped humanize the controversy around the Hanford site, while Hugh Gusterson's "Remembering Hiroshima at a Nuclear Weapons Laboratory," in Hein and Selden's Living with the Bomb, helped me to articulate some of my questions about how the complicated relationship between the seemingly conflicting narratives of scientific progress and horrific damage contained within the American narrative of the atomic bomb. Gusterson interviews scientists at California's Livermore Laboratories, but his work inspired me to investigate how the atomic bomb has been remembered in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, not too far from my childhood home, and this research led me to discover the ongoing controversy over the MPNHP's interpretation of the atomic bomb.

For analyzing evolving Japanese interpretations of the atomic bomb, James J. Orr's The Victim as Hero provided essential historical and cultural context, while Takashi Yoshida's From Cultures of War to Cultures of Peace offered vivid museum and public memorial descriptions for researchers unable to visit these Japanese sites for themselves.

In evaluating potential sources for this paper, perhaps the most problematic sources were the ones portraying seemingly one-dimensional arguments on extremely controversial topics, such as Sugihara's reinterpretation of WWII from a Japanese nationalist perspective for the Society of the Dissemination of Historical Fact, and the MPNHP critiques from the Los Alamos Study Group. While these sources retain value for expressing a diverse range of opinions, they should be interpreted in the context of their historical and cultural background.

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