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Historical Amnesia

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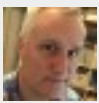
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Historical Amnesia

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Friday, May 6, 2016, 9:20 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Historical Amnesia topic.

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Re: Japanese denial

by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Sunday, May 8, 2016, 11:21 PM

I worry somewhat about the national whitewashing of atrocities like what happened in Nanking. Having had family from Eastern Europe that experienced the Holocaust, I think it's important the Japan acknowledges what it did, and at least tries to make amends for it, rather than pretend it didn't happen. Beside the immense weight of being involved with the horrible events at Nanking, the "historical amnesia" somewhat exhibited by the Japanese seems to not only have had long-standing effects on their foreign policy in the region, but also in the UN. I can completely understand the Chinese using the Rape of Nanking, and Japan's semi-reluctance to acknowledge it even happening, as one reason to deny their inclusion the Security Council. Until Japan stops downplaying its role in those war crimes, it's going to be a major issue in relations with China.

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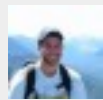
Recognizing a past Mistake to make the Future better

by [Brooke Moriarty](#) – Monday, May 9, 2016, 1:09 PM

"Historical amnesia" is something I would consider quite dangerous. Just as it is, when a country forgets something terrible it has done, it means that it is not taking responsibility for those actions, and they cannot truly make amends for their crime. The Rape of Nanking was horrible, it's understandable that Japan would be ashamed to confront it, but hiding it only creates tension and hurt. It would be like America only mentioning our history of enslaving Black-Americans as a side note (of course, American education doesn't present the cruelty inflicted during that time period as much as we could either.) While I don't think "history would repeat itself," having that history, goods and bads, can help guide the future choices of a country and it's people. In addition to that, recognizing the past, our mistakes, can create compassion and empathy, as well as understanding. A person who has done something bad, but recognizes and endeavors to amend their actions, is much more respected than someone who has done that same crime and ignores it.

For both China and Japan, I believe that if Japan were to fully acknowledge their actions in Nanking, instead of diminishing it, than the two countries could move towards a better relationship. Japanese students who would learn about the truth, the brutal killing, raping, and hardship committed by their ancestors, I think they would feel regretful that that had happened, and endeavor to never it allow something like that again. I think that's what has happened in America concerning equal rights. Take same-sex marriage, for example: many individuals in my generation are supportive, have been supportive, and have grown up after the mistakes of persecution against homosexuality was coming to light. I hear about how people attracted to the same sex were sent to prison in the 60's, and I shake my head in disbelief, swearing that I will never treat someone differently for something so normal.

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Re: Recognizing a past Mistake to make the Future better

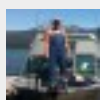
by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 12:26 PM

This "Amnesia" could definitely be dangerous on many fronts. I think Brooke is right in saying “history won’t repeat itself”, but will reverberate for many, many generations. The Chinese–Japanese political issues that persist as a result of the Nanking denial are evidence of that. It seems that the portion of Nanking deniers in Japan are a very small minority, and yet, a highly visible one. According to Wikipedia & other articles, this culture of denial extends all the way to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and members of his nationalist party. Evidently, the Japanese national museum for WWII had originally placed blame on FDR for “forcing Japan to go to war in a calculated effort to lift the U.S. out of the Depression”. This has been changed slightly, but it shows the Japanese revisionist mentality doesn’t stop at Nanking. The contrast between postwar German & Japanese responses to atrocities committed is stark. The Germans have fully acknowledged their past, and tried to make amends, the Japanese need to do the same. It’s shocking to read about such denial in the face of so much overwhelming evidence, hard as it must be for the Japanese to admit to it. It will only prove beneficial in the long term to do so, on both a personal and national level.

Los Angeles Times 2013 article on Shinzo Abe & denial

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jan/18/opinion/la-oe-guttentag-japan-nanking-20130118>

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U.S. Hostorical Amnesia?

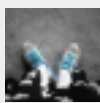
by [Joshua Crocker](#) – Monday, May 9, 2016, 6:28 PM

So all these articles and videos bring up Japans historical amnesia. Particularly their war crimes against China. It is interesting to me that after only 70ish years after the war a country has already tried to burry its past. Even calling those speaking the truth "brainwashed by the Chinese communists" as said in the 1st article. It is even more interesting though that Japan wasn't the only country to try and hide their past.

My Grandmother was born in Southwestern Germany near the boarder of France in the early 1940s. Some of her first memories are her mother hiding her and her siblings in the bomb shelter. My great-grandfather even fought for the Germans against his will. Yet, as she grew up and went through school she never heard of the holocaust or much about WWII at all. She only new the Germans lost and she was glad she didn't live on the Eastern side of the country. It wasn't until she met my grandfather who was stationed in Germany some years later and came to the states that she learned of the holocaust, and she was horrified. Now I ask you, how can a country who did such a terrible thing hide that from its people? How could they not teach that in school?

All this does it cause me to wonder, what does the U.S. have "amnesia" about? For a while we didn't teach the truth about slavery. For a while it was the Native Americans on the short end of the historical amnesia. Even today most don't know that slavery wasn't the cause of the civil war. If Germany could erase memory of the holocaust to the generation born into it what could the U.S. have done. I'd like to think that the U.S. has been very upfront with its history but, that would be very naïve of me.

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Re: U.S. Hostorical Amnesia?
by [Brooke Moriarty](#) – Tuesday, May 10, 2016, 2:22 PM

Wow, it's amazing that you have a direct link to history on this topic from your grandparents. That first-hand look and example of truth's hidden from people makes it very tangible.

You ask, "how can a country who did such a terrible thing hide that from its people? How could they not teach that in school?" I think it would be easy, honestly. It's much harder to admit to the wrongs of the past of one's own nation than it is to ignore it. In the big picture, governments and nations are made up of people, and people are often easier to figure out than one might think. To give an example, when I was about seven, I killed a kitten that my dad's girlfriend had just got, because it scratched me. When my dad found out, he made me take the cat and bury it in the backyard. I've never talked about that day since... Well, right now. It makes my stomach turn and my ears are heating up; I try not to remember what I did, because it makes me feel awful, ashamed of myself. I think the worst part is remembering how angry I felt. I think it's similar for nations and their pasts. They'd rather ignore it, go by without mentioning the horrors they committed because it hurts; they especially don't want their children, the next generation to think badly of them, to think of them, their parents, and aunts, and uncles, and teachers, and all the adults in their lives, as murderers.

However, overcoming that fear and shame is, I think, a first step towards redemption.

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Re: U.S. Hostorical Amnesia?
by [Joshua Crocker](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 3:51 PM

Wow Brooke, I have never thought about countries as being as personal as people. Thank you for your story.

I think it is immoral for countries to hide their wrong doings from their people. Through some research recently I have found how the U.S. has been trying to hide subjects of our past or fudge the truth to make us look better. For example let us look at the Civil War. Did you know the **Emancipation Proclamation** didn't actually free a single slave? Legally it was just a good speech. Or that the confederate army was not fighting for slavery. Slavery had nothing to do with the start of the war. Lincoln saw the people of the Union willing to end the war and let the south win. So he started saying the south was fighting for slavery, thus revving the peoples will to fight and regaining support of the populace.

To stay in the time period of the civil war, have you ever heard of the method of war known as Total War? It is a method of war enacted on all of the opposing country. Union General William Sherman enacted this on the south literally burning and killing everything in his path. This caused the southern populace to lose faith in their cause because the armies could not protect them.

So yes I think those actions were necessary for the preservation of the U.S.A. but why don't schools teach them? They are interesting and important facts. Why does the U.S. insist on having historical amnesia and believing the **Emancipation Proclamation** freed the slaves when it didn't? Why don't we teach the truth? Slavery was ended anyway so there's no point in hiding from the truth.

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Re: U.S. Hostorical Amnesia?
by [Sara Baker](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 10:45 PM

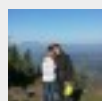
Think about the fact that history is written by the victors. Shouldn't that statement alone tell us something about how history is taught? Not that everyone proscribes to the "normal" take on history; However we should stop being shocked that countries, both our own and other, do this sort of thing and instead start searching beyond what we are told instead of expecting everyone else to do the searching and learning for us. We should learn to be more self sufficient and less dependent on the government for our needs, learning, and survival.Japan's reaction to its own gruesome history just showcases why the need for independent and self sufficient learns etc are needed so badly as things slowly seem to be spinning out of control.

**Re: U.S. Hostorical Amnesia?***by Ethan Borsak - Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 8:28 PM*

Joshua, I think that's incredibly significant that you have such a connection to people who lived through that era in Europe. One side of my family comes from Poland/Germany, and came over in the 20s, leaving behind many more members. I've been hard pressed to get any information out of my grandparents. Only my grandma is still alive, and she is very reticent to talk about that time, and what family members left behind experienced. I think compounding this "historical amnesia" is that it's such a difficult subject to confront, and generations down the line won't have the access to people who experienced it firsthand. In Japan, the generation that lived through it is disappearing, and that combined with a conscious effort by some (including high-level professors) to downplay or flat-out deny those events, could certainly lead to a future where that revisionist history is much more widespread.

A link to the Wikipedia page of historical revisionism, Japanese War Crimes section.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_revisionism_%28negationism%29#Japanese_war_crimes

**Traumatic Past***by Dan Johnson - Monday, May 9, 2016, 8:47 PM*

The memory of the past can create a lot of hardship and burden for a country, but maintaining that memory and reconciling key aspects of the country's collective identity is extremely important as to stop any atrocities from reoccurring. It's important for countries to ask themselves if they have truly grown from the experience of either having committed atrocities or having atrocities committed against them. Has Japan addressed the aspects of their society which helped give rise to the atrocities they have committed? Have they become a gentler and more humane society in a deeply transformative way? Have the Chinese acknowledged their own destructivness when judging the Japanese? Have the Chinese attempted to become a gentler and humane society in a deeply transformative way? Once they make the changes necessary to due honor to the horrific suffering of past peoples, can they truly allow the past to become an after thought. I think this process of leaving past behind is different than what the nationalist elements of both countries are contributing to their country's histories. They don't seem to be forgetting the past, but they actually seem to be denying it, which means they remember it well while they alter it for dishonorable purposes. This process of denial is not unlike other countries with difficult histories with one another. It often occurs as a centerpiece of conflict between two countries. As shown in China's opposition to making Japan a more prominent member of the U.N. Security Council, these historical disputes have deep impacts on country's ability to trust one another.

**History, Atrocities and the Line Between***by Sara Baker - Monday, May 9, 2016, 11:02 PM*

History, what a touchy and gruesome subject, no matter what flag or banner one falls under. History should always be remember, revered and conteplated or we stand the risk of emulating its mistakes and atrocities. The fact that Japan wants to "gloss over" their brutal history shouldn't be surprising. Haven't the Germans been trying to do the same thing with Hitler and the concentration camps for years? What should be surprising, if not horrifying, is that their getting away with it, and nobody in the broad spectrum of things seems to care. Listening to the horrors those front line soilders committed made my stomach twist. Not because those things don't happen in wars and armies, but because it wasn't isolated but encouraged and reveled in. They should be in prison for what they've done, not living normal lives. I'm not speaking about every soilder, because some regretted and hated what they did. But others seemed disconnected, uncaring and like they were speaking of actions committed by somebody else. While I don't doubt the Chinese have done similar things with their history, I expected better from a diplomatic country like the Japanese. Either way, neither country should be aloud to

gloss over genocide or mass murder. My biggest concern is in hiding it they condone and accept the actions the soilders took, the raping and killing of hundreds of women, the starvation and death of thousands. History may not be a spiral of repeated events, but experience should teach us that as humans we tend to emulate the past, good and ill. If we're going to repeat something let's try and repeat triumphs rather than atrocities.

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The Gravest of Concerns

by [Haley Anderson](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 8:39 PM

"Historical Amnesia" is a very concerning topic when it comes to the mass casualties of World War II. Millions of people died and to ignore that fact would be a disgrace to all of the lives that were lost in those many year of war.

I think that Maochun Yu, a history professor in the U.S. Naval Academy, summed the thinking process of historical amnesia and how it is created. "With rising Chinese nationalism, the efforts to rewrite history, to reinterpret history according to the demands of nationalism have become a major national past-time." As Maochun said, as nationalism and patriotism increase so does the tendency to gloss over events that are perceived negatively through out the world.

The biggest concern that I could have in these circumstances history books being rewritten to sound more favorable is that history is going to be forgotten if we don't preserve it, and if huge World Wars are forgotten, who is to say that history won't repeat itself? It is not necessary for so many people to die when it comes to something that could be avoided if the world is aware of what actually has happened.

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Nanking Massacre

by [Haley Anderson](#) – Saturday, May 14, 2016, 8:51 PM

After watching the CCTV News report on the Nanking massacres and also reading the articles I was astounded. To this day I had never heard of the Nanking murders and corruption that had happened under the Japanese domination. As a westerner I have always learned about the Germans and how horrible they were, but I don't think it is fair to say that all of WWII was because of Germany. There were quite a few other things that contributed to the millions of lives lost. The examples of murder that were described by soldiers and by civilians were horrifying and to thing that the world could forget about such a huge and destructive time in history is crazy to me.

People are trying to make a difference and achieve a sense of awareness when it comes to other countries. Fumiku Niki is an activist and historian at the Chykiren Peace Meuseum in Hong Kong and says that the collection of photos and first hand accounts "Prove the enormity of the Imperial Army's war crimes before and during WWII, the effort to remember this is being lost in a revisionist tide, we are in a very dangerous time period, awareness of Japan's role in wartime is fading."

Fumiku Niki's quote is basically all that can be said about any revisionist society as well as the United States. When it comes to mass murders and war the U.S. is just as guilty, to remember these things and honor them is to progress and to become a better world so that not as many people have to die for a war that we already fought.

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