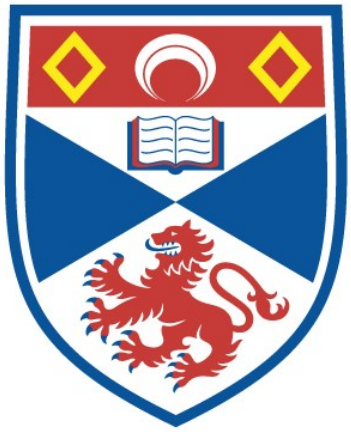
# The exhibit that bombed: the Enola Gay controversy and the culture wars in the United States

Mattias Eken

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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| **Project Title:** | 'Atomic Memory: The Enola Gay Controversy and the American Encounter with Nuclear Weapons' | | | | |
| **Researcher(s):** | Mattias Eken | | | | |
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# The Exhibit That Bombed: The Enola Gay Controversy and the Culture Wars in the United States

Mattias Eken

# Abstract

This dissertation seeks to place the so-called Enola Gay controversy of 1994-5 into the wider context of the culture wars in the United States. The controversy surrounded the preparations for an exhibit of the Enola Gay – the aircraft that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima – at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The resulting dispute has traditionally been understood as a clash between commemorative and critical voices in the US. Although this is certainly part of the story, there has been no serious attempt at establishing the location of the controversy within the wider cultural battles in the US. This dissertation therefore seeks to understand how the controversy related to, and had had an impact upon, other debates in the culture wars such as those surrounding provocative art, sexual orientation, and the teaching of history in US schools.

This dissertation will argue that the controversy, as part of the wider culture wars, helped lead to a rejection of such notions as compromise and settling disputes through reasoned debate in American political and cultural discourse. Instead, the culture wars have given rise to a new climate for debate, one in which personal conviction based on strong emotions far outweigh any well-reasoned argument based on logic and dispassionate research. The eventual cancellation of the proposed exhibit should therefore be understood as indicative of far wider ideological battles in US culture. The cancellation set a worrying precedent for future debates in the US as it showed that some aspects of the nation's history are beyond question and should not be challenged.

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# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

In March 1994 a furore erupted over a planned exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in Washington, DC. The exhibit, scheduled to open in the spring of 1995, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, would focus on the atomic bombings at the end of the war and their legacy. The centrepiece of the exhibit was supposed to be the restored Enola Gay, the aeroplane which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The exhibit, originally entitled 'The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Origins of the Cold War' generated an outcry amongst veterans, members of the United States Congress, and others, who felt that the exhibit depicted the Japanese as victims in World War II and questioned the morality behind the decision to drop the bomb. After five rewrites and nearly a year of intense argument between the Smithsonian, veteran organisations, and Congress, the exhibit, now entitled 'The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II', was cancelled and replaced with a drastically scaled down one. In addition, Martin Harwit, the director of NASM, was forced to resign over his handling of the controversy and Congress, which threatened to cancel the Smithsonian's federal funding due to the exhibit, held public hearings investigating the state of the Smithsonian Institution.

This dissertation will analyse the so-called Enola Gay controversy of 1994-95 and place it within the context of the so-called culture wars in America. The culture wars can loosely be defined as clashes in American society over such far-ranging issues as political correctness, provocative art, multiculturalism, equal opportunities programs, sexual orientation, and, as the controversy made clear, the practice of professional history. The Enola Gay exhibit clearly relates to the latter of these and thus forms part of the culture wars. In addition, this

dissertation will explore how the culture wars emerged over fundamentally different conceptions of moral authority and discordant ideas about the sources of truth. Key to this is the significant role played by emotions in the entrenched views which characterise the culture wars. This dissertation will therefore argue that the culture wars have less to do with political divisions than they do with emotional disputes surrounding truth, moral issues, and the state of public discourse in America. Furthermore, for the purposes of this dissertation, culture will be argued to be a system of symbols, cultural artefacts, and institutions. The culture wars involve a struggle for control over these symbols and institutions. The controversy surrounding the Enola Gay should therefore be viewed as characteristic of far larger and more volatile ideological battles in America's culture wars. Symbols, such as the Enola Gay aeroplane, are particularly important as they have the power to define one's perception of reality. In the case of the Enola Gay, the aeroplane seemed to symbolise the merciful end to a long and bloody war or, alternatively, the mass murder of a mostly civilian population. The controversy surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit was, in part, a struggle over which view should be the predominant one.

For the critics of the exhibit -- mostly veterans -- their experiences of the war were the most important evidence pertaining to how the war had ended. The museum's curators, however, relied on documentary evidence as the basis for their analysis. That meant that the two sides inevitably clashed over the sources of historical truth. Because of these competing claims to truth the controversy became a hostile and bitter affair, heavily imbued with emotion. Debates in the culture wars frequently involve a questioning of deeply held beliefs and personal identity which often leads to a fierce response from the individuals concerned. This clash of reason versus emotion has underlined many of the battles of the culture wars, including the Enola Gay controversy. In the process, the controversy helped reveal the deep

currents of anti-intellectualism in the US. The veterans opposing the exhibit were driven by strong emotions relating to their experiences in the war and what they thought proper history, and indeed 'truth', entailed. By arguing that the exhibit did not reflect their memories of the war, they rejected the theory and logic-based arguments of the museum. The veterans' anti-intellectual arguments were therefore an outgrowth of what they saw as historical truth.

By examining the anti-intellectual roots of the controversy, this dissertation will demonstrate how anti-intellectualism helped give rise to the culture wars. It will be argued that, from the 1960s onwards, liberals fell out of favour with white working-class voters in a way that would permanently damage the relationship between the two. Fundamental to this development was an anti-intellectual distrust among workers of academics and institutions of higher education which increasingly became seen as havens for out of touch liberals who propounded unpalatable ideas about the nation's past. This dissertation will argue that conservatism in the US, taking advantage of the decline of liberalism, established itself as a potent ideology during the 1960s and beyond. Especially important in this endeavour were conservative evangelical Christians who were instrumental in a variety of political efforts that sought to reclaim what conservatives saw as key values under threat in the culture wars. The list of perceived threats to these conservative values included such things as feminism, abortion, gay rights, pornography, subversive art and, as the Enola Gay controversy made clear, what they saw as revisionist history.

These political efforts culminated in the Republican landslide victory in the 1994 mid-term elections, the so-called 'Gingrich Revolution', which occurred as the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay was in full swing. This dissertation will argue that the culture wars were a key

issue for many of the incoming Republicans. They immediately set out to dismantle the Enola Gay exhibit, the National Standards for History, and federal funding for the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). All were viewed as threats to their traditionally patriotic; pro-church, and anti-gay agenda. The successful cancelation of the Enola Gay exhibit, within days of the new Congress assuming office, emboldened the conservatives' stance on other issues such as Medicare, the environment, and debates over raising the debt ceiling. It thus helped enforce a tradition in which squabbling and an inability to achieve agreement became the new norm for political discourse. This dissertation will therefore argue that the Enola Gay controversy, much more than a heated debate over how to display an aeroplane, represented an attempt by conservative forces in the US to politicise history and shape how Americans should remember the end of World War II. The political motivation behind the decision to intervene in the exhibit was to prevent any public criticism of the atomic bombings from being made, as well as scoring political points in the ongoing culture wars.

This dissertation will argue that, with the enforced closure of the Enola Gay exhibit, an opportunity to explore one of the most complex and controversial moments in US history was lost. Furthermore, the fact that the controversy became a debate about the legitimacy of alternative historical interpretation sets it apart from other battles of the culture wars. The larger issue at stake is whether American history can be openly and critically discussed or whether political pressure will encourage censorship and a narrow view of the nation's past. The denunciation of historical debate about Hiroshima represents the most troubling aspect of the Enola Gay controversy. It showed the strong urge among certain groups to strip the historical record of all ambiguity and simply wrap it in patriotism. This dissertation

will therefore argue that the controversy represented a significant setback for professional history and for principled discussion in American politics and culture.

The controversy was further exacerbated by how it was talked about and given polarising points for people to rally around. The prevailing trend has been to characterise it as a struggle between competing commemorative and critical voices. Although this was certainly part of it, these limited views have made it difficult to explore more nuanced and complex aspects of the controversy. These narrow views are furthermore expressed in the existing literature about the exhibit. For the purposes of this dissertation, the literature can be broken down into the following areas: the academic debate concerning the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, public perceptions and awareness of nuclear issues, the culture wars in America, and the limited number of works that focus on the Enola Gay controversy itself. The most important works in each of these fields are outlined and analysed below.

**The Academic Debate**

Questions about whether it had been right and morally just to use the atomic bomb against Japan at the end of World War II arose shortly after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The debate primarily focused on the question of whether the bomb had been necessary to bring the war to an end. The dominant view shortly after the bombings was that they removed the need to invade the Japanese home islands, hastened the end of the war, and thus saved many American lives. This traditionalist justification for using the bomb is best exemplified by Henry Stimson's article *'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb'* in the May 1947 edition of *Harper's Magazine*.[1] Stimson served as the Secretary of War at the time of the Hiroshima bombing and his arguments were later supported by others such as

[1] Henry L. Stimson, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', *Harper's Magazine*, February 1947, pp. 97–107.

President Truman and academics like Eliot Morrison.[2] It was not long, however, before dissenting views by writers such as Norman Cousins, Thomas Finletter, P.M.S. Blackett, Carl Marzani, William Appleman Williams, and D. F. Fleming began to appear, arguing that the dropping of the bomb had more to do with political rather than military considerations.[3]

The first scholarly treatment of the subject based on extensive research and use of primary sources was provided by the historian and economist Herbert Feis. In 1961 he published his book *Japan Subdued: The Atomic Bomb and the End of the War in the Pacific* in which he argues unequivocally that the atomic bomb had not been needed to force Japan into surrendering.[4] Nevertheless, Feis argues that even though the bomb was not necessary to end the war, its use was justified. He claims that American policymakers were convinced that the bomb was needed to end the war and that the primary reason for using it against Japan were military considerations. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) that focused on the war in the Pacific was published in July 1946 and dedicated an entire section of its report to the impact of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The most important conclusion drawn in that report was that, according to the surveyors, the war in the Pacific would most likely have been over by the end of 1945, even if the atomic bomb had not been used, even if the Soviet Union had not entered the war, and even if no invasion of Japan had been planned.[5] While the USSBS did not try to moralise the question about the use of the atomic bomb it does help to support the views of some scholars, such as Feis, who

[2] Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, 1995); Samuel E. Morrisson, 'Why Japan Surrendered', *The Atlantic*, October 1960, pp. 41–47.
[3] Norman Cousins and Thomas K. Finletter, 'A Beginning for Sanity', *Saturday Review of Literature*, 15 June 1946; P. M. S. Blackett, *Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy* (London, 1948); Carl Marzani, *We Can Be Friends* (New York, 1952); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, 1959); Denna Frank Fleming, *The Cold War and Its Origins* (Garden City, 1961).
[4] Herbert Feis *Japan Subdued: The Atomic Bomb and the End of the War in the Pacific* (Princeton, 1961).
[5] David MacIsaac, ed, *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (New York, 1976).

endorses the survey's findings when he argues that the atomic bombings had not been necessary to end the war.[6]

The historian Gar Alperovitz took issue with Feis's conclusions. In his *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, the Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power*, published in 1965, he argues that political, not military considerations, lay behind the decision to use the bomb. Specifically, the book argues that the bomb was dropped to impress the Soviet Union rather than to defeat Japan. Alperovitz claims that the bombing was designed to intimidate the Soviet Union and to remove the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Japan, thereby limiting Soviet influence on the post-war world.[7]

*Atomic Diplomacy* received far greater attention and was able to stir up a much larger debate than Feis's work had been able to do. This was due in part to the fact that Alperovitz used recently declassified sources, partly also because of growing uneasiness about the conduct of US foreign policy in the Vietnam War, and finally because of the scholarly debate about the origins of the Cold War that was emerging at the time of the book's publication.[8] The timing of the publication -- to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the atomic bombings -- further ensured that *Atomic Diplomacy* received extra coverage in the press. Alperovitz's arguments led to a vigorous reaction from other scholars and commentators, some of whom were highly critical of his conclusions, but also from those who supported him. By the 1970s several new studies had discounted parts of Alperovitz's thesis but substantiated others. Lisle Rose defended the Truman administration's decision to use the

[6] Samuel J. Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb: A Historiographical Update', *Diplomatic History*, vol. 14 no. 1 (1990), 97–114.
[7] Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam; the Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (New York, 1965).
[8] Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', 97–114.

atomic bomb and denied that Hiroshima was bombed simply due to political considerations. Despite this, he criticised the attempts by American diplomats to take advantage of its atomic monopoly after the war and described the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as 'vile acts'.[9]

Some writers have attempted to find a middle ground between the traditional explanation for the Hiroshima bombing and Alperovitz's arguments. Martin Sherwin viewed *Atomic Diplomacy* slightly more favourably than did Rose but also took issue with some of the central points of Alperovitz's book. In his book, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*, Sherwin argues that to understand the decision to use the bomb one must examine the actions of President Roosevelt as well as Truman. Roosevelt was very secretive about his stance towards the new weapon and did not put forth a clear policy for how it should be used. Truman, on the other hand, took a much firmer position with regards to how the bomb should be deployed. Sherwin agrees with Alperovitz that for senior policymakers the bomb was a political weapon, but he argues that these were secondary to the military considerations.[10] In addition, Sherwin makes a distinction between the military application of the bomb, which was a wartime strategic decision, and the moral and diplomatic implications of using the bomb. Winning the war and avoiding the fallout, so to speak, were separate issues.[11]

In the same year that *A World Destroyed* was published, another historian, Barton Bernstein, published an article which also addressed Alperovitz's conclusions. Bernstein arrived at similar conclusions to Sherwin and emphasised the impact of Roosevelt's legacy. He argues

[9] Lisle A. Rose, *Dubious Victory: The United States and the End of World War II* (Kent, 1973).
[10] Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destoyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (New York, 1975).
[11] Ibid, p. 195.

that Truman, much like Roosevelt, saw the bomb as a legitimate weapon and that American policymakers saw no reason not to drop it. He agrees with Alperovitz, however, that the Truman administration had wielded the bomb as part of its diplomatic arsenal after the war but did not believe that this in itself caused the Cold War.[12] Strangely enough, for a leading Cold War revisionist, Bernstein comes across as a defender of Truman's actions, at least from the criticism that Alperovitz levels against him.[13] Sherwin and Bernstein are supported by a group of scholars who broadly follow their arguments, including John Lewis Gaddis, Daniel Yergin, Robert Donovan, Gregg Herken, and Robert Messer. They all agree that the bomb had, to varying extents, both military and diplomatic purposes. They reject some of the specific arguments made by Alperovitz but accept the general framework of his thesis.[14]

Regardless of what one thinks of Alperovitz's arguments, *Atomic Diplomacy* had a significant impact on future scholarship. Before the book's publication few scholars took seriously the possibility that diplomatic considerations might have lay behind the decision to use the bomb. After publication, several scholars and commentators accepted that diplomatic considerations were an important part of the framework for understanding the bomb. The book also helped change the focus of the debate regarding the bomb. Whereas before that debate had centred upon whether the bomb was necessary to end the war as soon as possible, it now came to focus on what factors were of central importance in the decision to use the bomb.[15]

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[12] Barton J. Bernstein, 'Roosevelt, Truman and the Atomic Bomb, 1941-1945: A Reinterpretation', *Political Science Quarterly*, no. 90 (1975), 23–69.
[13] Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', 97–114.
[14] John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 1972); Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston, 1977); Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (New York, 1977); Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950* (Princeton, 1988); Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 1982).
[15] Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', 97–114.

The publication of Truman's diaries and letters in the early 1980s did not provide as much clarity as hoped since both traditionalists and revisionists could find proof for their arguments in these sources.[16] Following a meeting with the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, on 17 July 1945 at the Potsdam conference, Truman wrote in his diary: 'Most of the big points are settled. He'll [Stalin] be in the Jap war on August 15. Fini Japs when that comes about.' But on the following day Truman wrote: 'Believe Japs will fold up before Russia comes in. I am sure they will when Manhattan appears over their homeland.' Truman also referred to an intercepted telegram 'from Jap emperor asking for peace'.[17]

The diary kept by Truman at Potsdam shows the complexity of the issue before him. He was clearly aware that Japan was looking for a way out of the war. He also appears to have believed that a Soviet entry into the war would be the final blow to the Japanese war effort. However, the reference to 'when Manhattan appears over their homeland' clearly indicates that he saw no reason not to use the bomb, even though Japan was looking for a way out of the war.

Meanwhile, Alperovitz used the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima, in 1985, as an opportunity to publish a revised and expanded edition of *Atomic Diplomacy* and to hit back at his critics. The changes to the first edition were minimal as Alperovitz stuck to his guns. He dismissed Rose's work and although Sherwin and Bernstein had tried to accommodate Alperovitz's views, he rejected their emphasis on the influence of Roosevelt. Alperovitz maintained his insistence that there had been no military necessity to use the bomb and that the only

[16] Robert L. Messer, 'New Evidence on Truman's Decision', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, no. 40 (1985), 50–56.
[17] Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman and the Bomb: A Documentary History* (Worland, 1996), p. 30.

consideration that mattered to Truman in his decision to use the bomb was to impress the Soviets and score diplomatic points.[18]

Other scholars attempted to reassess old assumptions about the bomb and arrive at new conclusions. One of these issues was whether the bomb had saved a great number of American lives. This question would later be a key issue during the Enola Gay controversy. Although it had been addressed by scholars before, newly discovered sources seemed to indicate that American casualties in the event of an invasion of Japan would have been far fewer than was claimed by Truman and other policymakers after the war. In justifying their use of the atomic bomb, Truman and Stimson claimed that some half a million American lives had been saved. Other estimates range from 250,000 to up to a million lives saved. But in 1985, Rufus Miles pointed out that during the war military planners never projected casualties figures that were anywhere near those claimed by Truman and Stimson.[19] In 1987, Bernstein supported this claim by using recently opened sources to show that the worst-case estimate for the early stages of the invasion of Japan was around 46,000 casualties.[20] A decade later, John Ray Skates agreed with Miles and Bernstein when he argued that the record did not support the post-war claims of huge Allied casualties in the event of an invasion of Japan.[21] James Hershberg, in turn, showed how policymakers invented the exaggerated casualties figures in the post-war period in order to ward off any criticism of the decision to use the bomb. Hershberg explained how James Conant, a key administrator of the Manhattan Project, persuaded Stimson to write his article for *Harper's Magazine* arguing

[18] Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', 97–114.
[19] Rufus E. Miles, 'Hiroshima: The Strange Myth of Half a Million American Lives Saved', *International Security*, no. 10 (1985), 121–40.
[20] Barton J. Bernstein, 'A Postwar Myth: 500,000 U.S. Lives Saved', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, no. 42 (1987), 38–40.
[21] John Ray Skates, *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb* (Columbia, 1994).

that the bomb had been necessary to save a great many American lives.[22] Scholars are unanimous that Stimson's article played a critical role at a moment when opinion on the bomb was beginning to shift, or at least beginning to be more openly questioned.[23]

Some scholars have attempted to place the atomic bomb in the context of the war in which it was used. John Dower describes the atrocities and moral depravity of the Pacific war in his book *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. Although not including much about the atomic bomb, Dower discusses the racist tendencies, on both sides of the conflict, and the discriminatory attitude towards Japanese people that was present in American society for much of the war. The Japanese were often depicted in popular culture as savage brutes with which one could not reason.[24] These tendencies, along with the exaggerated figures of US casualties, helped ward off discussions about the moral implications of the bomb in the post-war period. In a later book that did address the bomb, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq*, Dower argues that the psychological trauma and social stigma of victimization caused by the bomb were unquantifiable and describes Hiroshima and Nagasaki as psychological warfare targets. Dower further asserts that the 'moral Rubicon' to using the bomb had been crossed with the plain acceptance of targeting civilians and non-combatants that had become standard procedure by the end of World War II.[25]

Other works which deal with the moral implications of the bomb do so by analysing the American policy of strategic bombing during the war. Ronald Schaffer's work traces the evolution of aerial bombardment from the attempts at precision strikes during the early

[22] James G. Hershberg, *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (New York, 1993).
[23] Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York, 1995), p. 459.
[24] John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific* (New York, 1986).
[25] John W. Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq* (New York, 2010).

stages of the war to the indiscriminate bombing of cities that had become commonplace by the end of it. In Schaffer's view the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a logical extension of the policy of terror bombing civilians. He concludes that moral considerations did not seem to prevent the architects of the American air offensive from deploying the methods they used to lay waste to Japanese cities.[26] Michael Sherry agrees with Schaffer and argues that the use of the atomic bomb can only be understood in the context of the American policy of strategic bombardment of Japanese cities. Sherry sees the use of the bomb as a result of an existing momentum, confusion and the fascination with technology that had gripped American policymakers.[27] Sherwin picks up on this as well in his work when he argues that the fear of congressional backlash and other domestic political reactions discouraged any policy other than the most devastating and rapid use of the bomb.[28]

Although most works on the decision to use the bomb stress that it was used for a mix of military and political reasons, there are some who remain outside the prevailing consensus. The most notable dissenters are Alperovitz and David McCullough. In his Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Truman, McCullough produces a throwback to the traditionalist argument outlined in Stimson's article. He insists that Truman faced a stark choice between invading Japan and using the bomb. In his view, Truman used the bomb to save huge numbers of American lives.[29] McCullough's book, published only a few years before the Enola Gay controversy, was highly influential on those who, during the controversy, insisted

[26] Ronald Schaffer, *Wings of Judgment: American Bombing in World War II* (Oxford, 1985).
[27] Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon*, Reprint edition (New Haven, 1989).
[28] Sherwin, *A World Destroyed*, p. 199.
[29] David McCullough, *Truman*, Reprint edition (New York, 1993).

that the bomb had been necessary to end the war and save a great many American lives.[30] McCullough's book harmonises with a popularity for hagiography in the US, which takes the form of very large, fact-filled books about American 'heroes'. These books tend to favour facts as opposed to judgement, thus encouraging the presumption among readers that history is supposed to be 'just the facts'. The problem is that there is a mistaken assumption that facts alone equates to a lack of bias, but that is far from the case. Alperovitz, for his part, used the Enola Gay controversy and the fiftieth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing as an opportunity, once again, to restate his arguments. Supported by recently declassified sources, Alperovitz published his new book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, in 1995. Whereas *Atomic Diplomacy* covers the significance of the bomb in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* is almost solely concerned with the decision itself. The arguments in this book are still very much in the vein of Alperovitz's earlier works, however, and the book serves as the culmination of his engagement with the topic. The only real change from *Atomic Diplomacy* is that instead of blaming Stimson for giving limited advice to Truman, Alperovitz blames the Secretary of State, James Byrnes, for stressing the political advantages *vis a vis* the Soviet Union that using the bomb would bring.[31]

**Public Perceptions**

Hiroshima and the controversial decision to use the atomic bomb has been a consistent theme amongst scholars since at least the early 1960s. This has not, however, always been the case amongst the American public. The cultural historian Paul Boyer stresses this point in several of his works concerning the atomic bomb as he demonstrates how public interest in

[30] Walker, 'The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb', 97–114.
[31] Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*.

Hiroshima rises and falls depending on the general awareness of nuclear issues at the time.[32] This should not, however, be confused with changing attitudes to the morality of using the bomb. The popular attitude to the morality of the bombing can, at best, be described as ambivalent.[33] In late 1945 the philosopher Lewis Mumford, reflecting on the war, noted that: 'Not the least extraordinary fact about the post-war period is that mass extermination has awakened so little moral protest.'[34] Gallup polls seemed to support his observation. A poll conducted two weeks after the bombings showed that 85 per cent of those surveyed were in favour of using the bomb.[35] In addition, according to one study, only 1.7 per cent of newspaper editorials surveyed were opposed to the bombing.[36] *The New York Times* summed up the mood when it argued that: 'By their own cruelty and treachery our enemies had invited the worst we could do to them.'[37]

The American public quickly grasped that a city had been destroyed by a new and terrible weapon. But it was not until the publication of John Hersey's book, *Hiroshima*, in 1946, that the death and suffering of the people of Hiroshima became apparent to many Americans.[38] It is not clear, however, if Hersey's book had a lasting impact on the American public. Herken argues that the book, along with the passage of time, helped change attitudes to Hiroshima.[39] Boyer, on the other hand, points out that the book neither re-energized the international-control movement, an idea debated at the time, nor launched a vigorous public debate over the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[40] Boyer's assessment is most

[32] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*, 1st edition (Chapel Hill, 1994).
[33] Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 311.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, p. 427.
[37] Editorial, 'One Victory Not Yet Won', *The New York Times*, 12 August 1945, 8E.
[38] John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York, 1946).
[39] Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 311.
[40] Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, p. 209.

likely the correct one as Hiroshima fluctuates in and out of focus in American memory, mirroring the cycles of activism and dormancy that characterises the American encounter with nuclear weapons. As the political scientist Michael Mandelbaum argues, Americans normally ignore the nuclear peril. Each period of anxiety about the bomb is followed by longer periods in which issues of nuclear weapons are forgotten by all but the nuclear specialists.[41]

In the latter half of the 1940s, the claims by Truman and Stimson that the bomb had been necessary to save a great number of American lives, and the onset of the Cold War, helped push Hiroshima away from the forefront of American public discourse. In the late 1950s, however, when the US and the Soviet Union had both acquired even more destructive hydrogen bombs and as a campaign to ban nuclear testing got underway, the memory of Hiroshima once again became the focus for debates about the bomb. This resurgence had many sources but Michihiko Hachiya's book, *Hiroshima Diary*, a day by day account of the bomb's aftermath, published on the tenth anniversary of the bombing, was a key text in bringing back the memory of Hiroshima.[42] So, too, did the so-called 'Hiroshima Maidens', a group of twenty-five mutilated survivors of the bomb who arrived in the US for reconstructive surgery in 1955. Despite criticism in Japan about the perceived publicity stunt, and hesitation from the US State Department, the 'Hiroshima Maidens' helped revive discussions about the bomb.[43] The memory of Hiroshima was also expressed in novels and films that began to appear in the late 1950s. Edita Morris, an antinuclear activist who ran a centre for survivors in Hiroshima, published her book, *The Flowers of Hiroshima*, in 1959

[41] Michael Mandelbaum, 'The Anti-Nuclear Weapons Movements', *American Political Science Association*, no. 17 (Winter 1984), 27.
[42] Michihiko Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6-September 30, 1945* (Chapel Hill, 1955).
[43] Rodney Barker, *The Hiroshima Maidens: A Story of Courage, Compassion, and Survival* (New York, 1985).

which dealt with the psychological and physical aftermath of the bomb.[44] In the same year Alan Resnais's film, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, appeared in cinemas across the US. Although the theme in the film was forgetfulness, an unintentional reminder of the cyclical attention paid to nuclear issues in America, the images of the destruction of the city at the beginning of the movie no doubt had a significant impact on moviegoers.[45] A few years later, in 1962, Betty Jean Lifton's documentary film, *A Thousand Paper Cranes*, dealt with the experiences of child-victims of the bomb.[46] All these works helped to bring the memory of the atomic bombings back into the spotlight for many Americans.

The peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 temporarily alleviated nuclear concerns and allowed the memory of Hiroshima to slip out of focus. A few years later though, in 1967, the Yale university psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton published his book *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. In his book, for which he interviewed some seventy survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, Lifton argues for what he calls the concept of 'psychic numbing' to explain how survivors dealt with their memories of the bomb. Expanding on this concept, Lifton speculates that 'psychic numbing' can also be used to understand wider social patterns of nuclear denial. He therefore concludes that 'psychic numbing' is just as present in US society where it also serves the additional purpose off warding off guilt for the bombing.[47] The British science writer Jacob Bronowski stresses this point in his review of *Death in Life* and argues that this helps explain the decline in awareness of nuclear issues in the latter half of the 1960s.[48]

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[44] Edita Morris, *The Flowers of Hiroshima* (New York, 1959).
[45] Paul Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts: Atomic War in Fiction, 1895-1984* (Kent, 1987), p. 266.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York, 1967).
[48] Jacob Bronowski, 'The Psychological Wreckage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki', *Scientific American*, June (1968), pp. 132–35.

The next wave of nuclear awareness arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This wave was a symptom of larger international events including the establishment of groups such as the Campaign for Peace and Democracy (CPD), the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) and the advent of the Reagan administration. Literary works also helped rekindle the memory of Hiroshima. Eleanor Coerr's children's book, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, which appeared in 1979, told the story of Sadako Sasaki a young Hiroshima survivor and her battle with leukaemia; the same topic that was addressed in Betty Jean Lifton's documentary film. Sadako attempted to fold a thousand paper cranes believing this would cure her as, according to a Japanese legend, anyone who folded a thousand paper cranes would be granted a wish.[49] In addition, in 1982 Harper & Row published *Children of Hiroshima*, a collection of writings by young survivors of the bomb which had long been out of print.[50] Three years later, *The Crazy Iris: And Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*, an anthology of short stories about Hiroshima by Japanese authors, appeared in US bookstores.[51] The buzz of nuclear activism of the early 1980s also contributed to the US publication of another Japanese work, Masuji Ibuse's *Black Rain*, which dealt with the long term effects of the Hiroshima bombing.[52]

In the early 1980s the antinuclear movement was further spurred by the fierce rhetoric and military expansion undertaken by the Reagan administration. Media attention to nuclear issues soared; in June 1982 seven-hundred thousand antinuclear demonstrators blocked New York's Central Park. In the same year Jonathan Schell's best-seller, *The Fate of the Earth*, was published; it reflected and intensified antinuclear sentiments of its time by

[49] Eleanor Coerr, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (New York, 1979).
[50] Arata Osada, *Children of Hiroshima* (New York, 1982).
[51] Kenzaburo Oe, ed, *The Crazy Iris: And Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath* (New York, 1985).
[52] Brians, *Nuclear Holocausts*, p. 161.

graphically describing a nuclear attack on New York City.[53] This wave of activism was to be short-lived, however, as Reagan, through a series of meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Premier, began to work through some of the long-standing issues of the Cold War. These meetings helped to undermine the anti-nuclear movement.

Following the end of the Cold War, nuclear issues and the memory of Hiroshima, once again, drifted out of focus. Just prior to the end, however, Spencer Weart published a monumental work which analyses how fears of nuclear war, and of nuclear radiation in general, have manifested themselves in society. His book *The Rise of Nuclear Fear*, originally published in 1988, two years after the catastrophic Chernobyl nuclear disaster, argues that the fear of nuclear radiation creates very specific mental images in the minds of most people. According to Weart, atomic dreams and fears form 'one of the most powerful complexes of images ever created outside religions' and impede an effective accommodation of nuclear energy within society.[54]

Despite these fluctuations in awareness concerning the Hiroshima bombing, support for the decision to drop the bomb has remained strong. What little criticism there is has hardly become widespread. In the years since Hiroshima, poll after poll has shown that most Americans think the bombings were justified and, moreover, that they saved a very significant number of lives.[55] This raises the issue of collective memory. There is no sure method for establishing exactly what constitutes public memory. Studies have been most successful in explaining influences on collective memory rather than at defining the content

[53] Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York, 1982).
[54] Spencer R. Weart, *The Rise of Nuclear Fear*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, 2012).
[55] Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, p. 7.

of collective memory, which can only be done with a healthy dose of assumption and extrapolation.[56]

The historian Alison Landsberg contends that memory is historically and culturally specific. She argues memory has meant different things to people and cultures at different times, but that it has fundamentally been used to negotiate a relationship with the past and to consolidate group identities.[57] More importantly, however, she claims that, in the modern age, individuals are increasingly able to take on memories of events they did not live through. Commodification makes ideas and images available to people with different backgrounds. 'Mass cultural commodities' – including memories – are disseminated across social divisions. There have always been social strategies for passing on memories. But commodified – or prosthetic memory – is not simply a means of consolidating one particular groups memories and identity, it also enables the transmission of memories to people who have no 'natural' claim to them.[58]

Prosthetic memory thus challenges the idea that a set of memories belongs exclusively to a particular group. This is most clearly seen at what Landsberg calls 'experiential museums', such as NASM or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which provide people with the opportunity to have a relationship with a collective or cultural past they did not experience. In the case of the Enola Gay controversy, the curators engaged in prosthetic memory by making a history which had previously been largely restricted to one group, namely the veterans, accessible to a much larger audience. The problem is that it is not

[56] Samuel J. Walker, 'History, Collective Memory, and the Bomb', in Michael J. Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 188.
[57] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York, 2004), pp. 3–4.
[58] Ibid, p. 18.

always possible to determine whether memories, which are central to one's identity, are 'real' or prosthetic. Either way they become the foundations for one's narrative about the past and the present. In addition, for American studies scholars, the fact that national narratives are constructed on an individual level complicates the paradigm for how the American national identity is constructed and by whom.[59]

Prosthetic memory thus illustrates the complex relationship between memory and history. Some scholars, such as Pierre Nor and Yosef Hayim Yerushalami, assert that memory and history have an adversarial relationship.[60] But as Marita Sturken argues, history and memory should rather be seen as 'entangled' since cultural memory is a form of cultural negotiation in which different stories vie for a place in history.[61] Memory is crucial to the understanding of the past, and culture, because it indicates collective desires. This was clearly seen during the Enola Gay controversy as the critics of the exhibit worried that it risked undermining the collective memory of World War II in America. Sturken further argues that cultural memory is produced through objects, images, and representations. But she also points out that the creation of cultural memory is complicated by the cryptic nature of many historical objects which prevent them from fitting neatly into traditional narratives of historical discourse. The Enola Gay controversy was a clear example of this as the participants argued over what the large aeroplane represented. In addition, according to Sturken, debates over cultural memory also involve a debate over who gets to participate in creating national meaning.[62] The struggle over the Enola Gay was indicative of this as the main participants, primarily veterans and the curators, struggled over who was to determine the meaning of the

[59] Ibid, p. 79.
[60] Ibid, p. 19.
[61] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the Aids Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 7.
[62] Ibid, pp. 12–13.

aeroplane, and by extension, how America's actions at the end of World War II should be viewed.

Despite these issues, from the available evidence, the collective memory of the atomic bombings regards Truman's action as a decision that ended the war without the need for an invasion of Japan, thus saving large numbers of American lives.[63] In the US, the collective memory of World War II sees the war as the nation's finest hour. It was not, as Sherwin argues, simply the 'good war'. It was the most just of wars, the model war, the most righteous of wars, and a war, as the leaflets dropped on Japanese cities in July 1945 stated, in which the United States 'stood for humanity'. America without that image is unimaginable to the generation that fought the war, and to those in subsequent generations who share this view. Starting from this assumption, the natural conclusion is that, if the US did terrible things, they had to be done and were well deserved punishment for Japanese atrocities.[64]

The debate about Hiroshima is a sensitive issue in American society. As Truman's diary makes clear, there are a lot of ambiguities regarding the decision to use the bomb which make it controversial. And controversy, especially over World War II, is problematic in the US. American society has an especially strong intolerance for ambiguity, as the Enola Gay controversy makes clear. Sherwin speculates that this revulsion to ambiguity results from the system of government in the US, which, in contrast to a parliamentary system, severely limits the spectrum of views that are debated. Public dialogues are driven toward oversimplification and clarity. More than in other democratic societies problems are discussed in either/or terms: good or bad, right or wrong. Ambiguity and complexity are

[63] Walker, 'History, Collective Memory, and the Bomb', in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 188.
[64] Martin J. Sherwin, 'Hiroshima as Politics and History', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1085–93.

unwelcome, even viewed with suspicion, in American political culture.[65] In addition, Americans often allow themselves to confuse discussion of research findings on Hiroshima with criticism of American servicemen. But even critics strongly opposed to the dropping of the atomic bombs, such as Alperovitz, argue that the Americans serving in the Pacific in 1945 were prepared to risk their lives for the nation. By this most fundamental test, they, according to Alperovitz, can only be called heroes.[66]

The reason why it can be difficult to talk about Hiroshima is surprisingly straightforward. No matter how the issue is framed, the atomic bombings were events in which many people died. Even if the atomic bombs were necessary to end the war quickly, and saved many lives, the fact remains that the bombings were acts of violent destruction aimed at large concentrations of non-combatants. As Alperovitz argues, we do not like to speak of such things.[67] Judith Herman, a professor of psychiatry, argues that the knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness but that it is rarely retained for long. Denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level.[68] In addition, one reason why Americans have so much trouble coming to terms with Hiroshima and Nagasaki surely lies in the fact that the destruction the two atomic bombs caused has never been easily squared with the prevailing public view of World War II as the 'good war'. Particularly in the aftermath of the divisive Vietnam conflict, Americans looked back nostalgically to the 1941-45 period as a time when the nation's aims were clear and just and when nearly every citizen rallied behind the government.[69] Unlike any other American war,

[65] Ibid.
[66] Gar Alperovitz, 'Hiroshima: Historians Reassess', *Foreign Policy*, no. 99 (1995), 15–34.
[67] Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, p. 636.
[68] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York, 1992), p. 2.
[69] Paul Boyer, 'Whose History Is It Anyway?: Memory, Politics and Historical Scholarship' in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 118.

World War II was, for most people, an unambiguous war, a war with a clarity of purpose and an unprecedented sense of national unity. But, as Sherwin asserts, the way the war ended left an ambiguous legacy.[70]

For some the atomic bomb was a salvation. In a matter of days, it seemed to end what four years of drawn out carnage could not. Veterans especially identified with this viewpoint as many of them were convinced that they would otherwise have perished on the beaches of Japan. For others, especially those who grew up during the Cold War, the bomb signalled something altogether different. For them, Hiroshima symbolised the ushering in of the atomic age and the Cold War with its fears of nuclear war and mutually-assured destruction. The Enola Gay controversy clearly showed the different views that existed, and continues to exist, in American society with regards to the use of the atomic bomb.

**The Culture Wars**

Although many of the issues debated in the culture wars, such as abortion, have long historical roots, the term 'culture wars' itself is surprisingly new. It only fully entered the American political vocabulary following the publication of James Davison Hunter's book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* in 1991.[71] Hunter's book was preceded by Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, published in 1987, which itself had helped popularise a phrase in the American political lexicon, namely 'political correctness'. Bloom's book, which according to the critic Camille Paglia represents the 'first shot in the culture wars', is an attack on the supposed corruption of America's elite universities by the ethical

[70] Sherwin, 'Hiroshima as Politics and History', 1085-1093.
[71] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Reprint edition (New York, 1991).

relativism of leftist professors in its humanities departments.[72] Bloom argues that the emphasis on 'openness' and 'absolute understanding' undermines critical thinking and eliminates the 'point of view' that, according to him, is the defining feature of most cultures.[73]

Regardless of the validity or otherwise of Bloom's complaints, what surprised those he criticised most was the unexpected success of the book. Forced onto the defensive by the large number of copies sold, academics responded in various journal essays and newspaper editorials by highlighting the often-exaggerated claims of the book.[74] Further criticisms of higher education were made, however, by Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, published in 1990, and Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, published in 1991.[75] Both are contentious and very conservative attacks on the perceived ills of higher education in America. Of the two, Kimball's book aligns most closely with Bloom's as it asserts that the radicals of the 1960s have become responsible for 'ideologically motivated assaults on the intellectual and moral substance of our culture'.[76] Despite the exaggerated claims of these books, they helped generate an awareness of the points of contention in US culture and paved the way for subsequent works on the culture wars in America.

Hunter's book, however, made the most lasting impression. He perceives a dramatic realignment and polarization which has transformed the nation's politics and culture. He argues that, on issues as diverse as abortion, gun control, immigration, separation of church

[72] Camille Paglia, 'Ask Camille', *Salon*, 28 November 1999, https://web.archive.org/web/19991128143344/http://www.salon.com/july97/columnists/paglia2970722.html.
[73] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York, 1987).
[74] Bennett Lovett-Graff, 'Culture Wars II: "A Review Essay"', *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 25 no. 3 (1995), 99–124.
[75] Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted Higher Education*, 1st edition (New York, 1990); Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (New York, 1991).
[76] Kimball, *Tenured Radicals*, pp. 11-12.

and state, LGBT rights, and censorship, two defined and antagonistic groups exist. Furthermore, he claims that American society has split along the same lines. These groups are defined not by religion, ethnicity, social class or even political affiliation, but by ideological worldviews. Hunter describes this polarity as originating from different impulses towards what he refers to as progressivism and orthodoxy. He further claims that the culture wars evolved out of century-old religious tensions -- through the expansion and realignment of American religious denominations.[77] The rift in American culture is therefore caused by fundamental disagreements over the sources of moral truths. As a result, Hunter argues that debates in the culture wars involve claims to truth that are viewed as irreducible and irreconcilable. [78]

In Hunter's view the culture wars are not simply an airing of different opinions on various issues, for example abortion. If this were all, the conflict would be nothing more than a distraction which keeps Americans from settling more important matters. Instead, the culture wars emerge over fundamentally different conceptions of moral authority, over clashing ideas about the sources of truth, the nature of community, and so on. It is cultural conflict at its deepest level.[79] He therefore concludes that the culture wars emerge over how Americans are to order their lives together. This means that the conflict is inevitably expressed as a clash over the nature of what it means to be American. It is ultimately a struggle over national identity, over the meaning of America, what it has been in the past, what it is now, and what it should be in the future.[80]

[77] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 77
[78] James Davison Hunter, *Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America's Culture War* (New York, 1994), p. 209.
[79] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 49.
[80] Ibid, pp. 49-50.

Nevertheless, the culture wars thesis has been heavily criticised by those who argue that, like Bloom, Hunter oversimplifies the problem. There are many sides to the cultural conflict in America; the Christian Right for example, represents only one of them. There are also many so called 'non-combatants' who would like to restore religious values to public life but resist the attempts by the Christian Right to dictate the nature of these values. They are equally not persuaded by claims that the Christian Right is radical or extreme and presents a clear danger to the future of America. But they, simultaneously, also do not believe that American culture is hostile to Christians and that liberals are attempting to undermine religious freedom.[81] In this view then, the opinions of Americans are multi-layered and complex, many people are conservative on one-set of issues, for example moral issues, and liberal on another, for example economics.[82]

This has led some authors, such Irene Thomson, to argue that American culture is too complex to be reduced to a simple equation of liberal versus conservative values and that it is not a question of either/or but of both/and. She therefore claims there is no culture war, no struggle for the soul of America. However, she prefaces her argument with an important caveat. Thomson concedes that if the culture wars are about the power to define reality through symbols, as this dissertation will argue, then a struggle over the soul of America is indeed taking place.[83] In addition, some commentators argue that religious groups with stakes in the culture wars, such as the Christian Right, are beset by a 'pluralism-versus-Christendom' dilemma in which their belief that Christian values should govern American culture are at odds with their belief that people should be free to live as they want, even if

[81] Clyde Wilcox and Carin Robinson, *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Religious Right in American Politics*, Fourth edition (Boulder, 2011), p. 27.
[82] Daniel V. A. Olson, 'Dimensions of Cultural Tension among the American Public', in Rhys H. Williams, ed, *Culture Wars in American Politics: Critical Reviews of a Popular Myth* (New York, 1997), p. 239.
[83] Irene Taviss Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas* (Ann Arbor, 2010).

that means rejecting Christianity.[84] This dilemma, so the argument goes, mitigates the culture wars.

Like Thomson, the political scientists Morris Fiorina, Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope argue that the 'truth is that there is no culture war in the United States -- no battle for the soul of America rages, at least none that most Americans are aware of'.[85] They claim that the myth of a culture war is down to misinterpretations of polling data, misrepresentations by activists, and an uncritical media more concerned with news value than with getting the story right. What has occurred, according to them, is that partisanship has become more embedded in political parties than in the past. Thus, the leading echelons of the parties have become more polarized, but this should not be viewed as a reflection of popular polarization.[86] Fiorina et al further argue that the myth is perpetuated by the nature of elections since voters can only choose among the candidates on the ballot paper. The candidates, in turn, are nominated and the agenda set by the parties. The idea of a culture war is therefore based on how the political parties conduct their discourse. And since the media frequently take part in and comment upon this discourse the misconception of popular polarization takes place.[87] This is further aggravated by the fact that, as James Nolan asserts, the nuanced views of centrist Americans are not as exciting as those on the extreme

[84] Christian Smith, Michael Emerson, Sarah Gallagher, Paul Kennedy, and David Sikkink, 'The Myth of Culture Wars: The Case of American Protestantism', in Rhys H. Williams, ed, *Culture Wars in American Politics: Critical Reviews of a Popular Myth* (New York, 1997), p. 189.
[85] Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3rd edition (Boston, 2010), pp. 7-8.
[86] Ibid, pp. 8-9.
[87] Ibid, pp. 114-5.

ends of Hunter's divide who, inevitably, therefore end up more widely reported in mainstream media.[88]

Critics of the culture wars thesis, such as Fiorina et al, frequently base their analysis on their background as political scientists or by drawing on statistical analysis. They focus on opinion polls and election results, not on the debates themselves which encompass the culture wars. As a result, their arguments fail to grasp the entrenched views which characterise the culture wars. Hunter correctly points out that all the tests of the culture wars hypothesis have been based exclusively on public opinion surveys or interviews. The results, predictably, have been that Americans' opinions simply do not reflect the divisions described by the culture war theory.[89] He goes on to argue that the General Social Survey (GSS) and National Election Studies (NES), conducted from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, which many critics of the culture wars thesis rely on, are 'as most social scientists acknowledge ... at best a crude instrument for evaluating public opinion. This is especially true regarding dissensus, since few of its questions thoughtfully target the sub-samples that make up contesting factions.'[90]

The culture wars have less to do with political divisions than they do with arguments surrounding truth, moral issues, and the state of public discourse in America. As Hunter observes, the 'discourse of adversaries' in the culture wars is almost exclusively negative and seeks to systematically discredit the opposition.[91] In addition, many national interest organisations are, if not on principle, then at least in practice frequently opposed to

[88] James L. Nolan Jr., 'Contrasting Styles of Political Discourse in America's Past and Present Culture Wars', in Donald Black and James L. Nolan Jr., ed, *America at War with Itself: Cultural Conflict in Contemporary Society*, Virginia Review of Sociology, vol. 2 (London, 1995), p. 164.
[89] James Davison Hunter, 'The Enduring Culture War', in James Davison Hunter and Alan Wolfe, *Is There a Culture War: A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life*, Pew Forum Dialogue Series on Religion and Public Life (Washington DC, 2006), p. 20.
[90] Ibid, p. 24.
[91] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 136.

compromise. Each, be they Focus on the Family or Planned Parenthood for example, portrays the other as the enemy of all that is good, whether that is understood to be religion or tolerance. As Kim Sargeant and Edwin West argues, escalation of rhetoric makes for good publicity but bad relations between the opposing parties.[92] This further helps explain why the clashes of the culture wars have become hostile and bitter affairs, heavily imbued with emotions. It is for this reason that public discourse in America, if not Americans themselves, has become so polarised.[93] This was no doubt the case during the Enola Gay controversy when veterans felt that NASM was questioning their personal experiences of World War II and, by extension, the collective memory of the war in America. The exhibit script therefore became, in the words of the historian Edward Linenthal, an embattled text, attacked, and endlessly revised in an increasingly hostile atmosphere which revealed more about American cultural politics in the 1990s than about the history behind the dropping of the atomic bomb.[94]

Despite the criticism levied at the culture wars hypothesis, it does retain value, especially with regards to the Enola Gay controversy. The reason is that Hunter's argument about a culture war in America is based on a different understanding of culture to that of his critics. According to Hunter, culture is primarily a normative order by which we understand ourselves, others, and the world around us and through which we order our experiences. At the heart of this lies a system of 'commanding truths' that are so deeply embedded in our

[92] Kim Howland Sargeant and Edwin L. West Jr., 'Teachers and Preachers: The Battle Over Public School Reform in Gaston County, North Carolina', in Black and Nolan Jr., ed, *America at War with Itself*, p. 57.
[93] James Davison Hunter, 'Reflections on the Culture War Theory Hypothesis', in Black and Nolan Jr., ed, *America at War with Itself*, p. 248.
[94] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 44.

consciousness that to question them is to question one's understanding of reality.[95] Debates in the culture wars, as stated earlier, involve claims to truth that are viewed as irreducible and conflicting. In the case of abortion, for example, the 'truth' of a woman's right to autonomy is not compatible with the 'truth' of the need to protect the unborn child.[96] Likewise, during the Enola Gay controversy, it would prove almost impossible to reconcile the conflicting truths over what the Enola Gay aeroplane represented. In addition, Hunter views culture not as the norms and values residing in people's heads and hearts, but rather as systems of symbols and other cultural artefacts, institutions that produce and promulgate them, and a struggle for control over these symbols and institutions. According to him, the 'heart of the culture war hypothesis' is the contention that there has been 'a realignment in American public culture that has been ... institutionalized chiefly through special interest organizations, denominations, political parties, foundations, competing media outlets, professional associations etc'.[97]

Symbols, such as the Enola Gay aeroplane, are particularly important in this regard. As Hunter argues, cultural conflict in America is about 'the uses of symbols, the uses of language, and the right to impose discrediting labels upon those who would dissent'.[98] During the Enola Gay controversy the museum and its critics engaged in a heated quarrel over what the aeroplane represented and how it should be shown to the American public. While the controversy has been understood as a case of political censorship, it should

[95] James Davison Hunter, *Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America's Culture War* (New York, 1994), p. 200.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Hunter, 'The Enduring Culture War', in Hunter and Wolfe, *Is There a Culture War*, pp. 20-21.
[98] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 155.

therefore be viewed as symptomatic of far larger and more volatile ideological battles in America's culture wars.[99]

Each side in the culture wars invokes symbols and do so within a specific historical context. In the process, they strive to monopolise the use of said symbols by labelling the opposition as extremist. For conservative Christians, for example, these symbols include the traditional family, the flag, morality and religion. This is further reflected in the name of organisations, examples of which include Concerned Women for America, Moral Majority and Christian Coalition. The implication is that those who do not support these symbols are not concerned about America, are immoral, and unchristian.[100] The perception of reality is, in part, defined by the understanding of symbols. As a result, Sargeant and West argue that those who can manipulate or monopolize certain symbols and determine their meaning will succeed in framing the perception of reality.[101] This was no doubt the case during the Enola Gay controversy as veterans and the museum struggled over the meaning of the Enola Gay and, by extension, the question of whether the US had acted morally in dropping the bomb. Symbols, such as the Enola Gay, are immensely powerful as they have, in the words of the political scientist Timothy Luke, 'the power to define reality ... nothing less is at stake than a sense of justice and fair play, an assurance that life is as it should be, indeed, nothing less is at stake than a way of life'.[102] In this sense the controversy fits squarely within the culture wars framework developed by Hunter.

[99] Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at The Exhibition*, 1st edition (Minneapolis, 2002), p. 19.
[100] Sargeant and West Jr., 'Teachers and Preachers: The Battle Over Public School Reform in Gaston County, North Carolina', in Black and Nolan Jr., ed, *America at War with Itself*, p. 43.
[101] Ibid, p. 44.
[102] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 52.

Most books published about the culture wars, such as those above, are written by political scientists. There are few lengthy examinations of the conflict by historians. Nevertheless, in *The Age of Fracture* the historian Daniel Rogers tries to explain some of the issues dividing America. He argues that in the last quarter of the twentieth century the ideas that most Americans lived by started to fragment. Earlier concepts such as national consensus, managed markets, gender and racial identities, citizen obligation, and historical memory, became more fluid. He asserts that on both the intellectual right and left, earlier notions of history and society that stressed solidity, collective institutions, and social circumstances gave way to a more individualized human nature that emphasized choice, agency, performance, and desire.[103]

Andrew Hartman similarly attempts to place the issues of the culture wars in a historical context. He argues, somewhat surprisingly, that the term culture wars should be buried once and for all. According to him, the culture wars, and the metaphor itself, has run its course. He argues that American society, albeit grudgingly in the case of conservatives, has accepted the cultural changes which have occurred since the 1960s, for example the rise of feminism and legalisation of same-sex marriage. [104] His thesis has been refuted by the fact that these issues have become even more controversial, especially following the divisive presidential election of 2016. In addition, there has been an attempt to roll back the cultural changes to which conservatives object, as seen, for example, in the ongoing battles over access to abortion. The culture wars are, therefore, not merely a historical event in the US, but an enduring conflict.

[103] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, 2012).
[104] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, Reprint edition (Chicago, 2016).

Other works focus on specific issues in the culture wars. Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross Dunn, in their book *History On Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*, provide an assessment of the battle over school curriculums in America. The focus is on the reaction offered to the National Standards for History which were published in 1994, concurrent with the Enola Gay controversy.[105] Led by Lynne Cheney, conservative critics accused the standards of ignoring basic history, such as the Founding Fathers, in favour of traditionally neglected minorities such as African-Americans and Latinos. Nash et al, who were involved in developing the standards, offer an impassioned, if partisan, defence of the standards. Nevertheless, the book offers a valuable insight into how education, and history education specifically, has become politicised in America, something which the Enola Gay controversy revealed.

Similarly, one of the most heated debates in the culture wars in America focuses on the nature of provocative artworks and whether the federal government should subsidise such works, primarily through the NEA. Frederick Lane, an author and constitutional lawyer, in his book *The Decency Wars: The Campaign to Cleanse American Culture*, examines the changing attitudes towards the politics of decency in America. He argues that it is inappropriate and dangerous for the government to try to regulate morality. Furthermore, he accuses religious conservatives of starting 'decency wars' for no other purpose than profit and political gain. As he points out, such controversies generate a flood of books, speeches, and syndicated radio and television programs which, in turn, fill the coffers of conservative politicians and so-called non-profits.[106] More nuanced is Steven Tepper's *Not Here, Not Now, Not That:*

[105] Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History On Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York, 2000).
[106] Frederick S. Lane, *The Decency Wars: The Campaign to Cleanse American Culture* (New York, 2006).

*Protest Over Art and Culture in America*. The book examines a wide range of controversies over films, books, paintings, sculptures, clothing, music, and television in dozens of American cities to find what turns personal offense into public protest. Tipper argues that these protests arise due to local concerns over what should be deemed acceptable. Furthermore, he claims these protests are essential to the process of working out differences within a civil society.[107] Decency and civility, however, would not characterise the Enola Gay controversy which, furthermore, shows how certain issues in the culture wars extend beyond local concerns and evolve into a national debate.

**The Enola Gay Controversy**

The Enola Gay controversy itself has occasionally been addressed in academic studies although the existing literature leaves much to be desired. One of the first works to appear following the cancellation of the exhibit was Philippe Nobile's *Judgement at the Smithsonian* which contains several essays by authors such as Bernstein, all of which are highly critical of those who worked to have the exhibition cancelled.[108] The book was not well received on its release with one reviewer calling it 'a silly enterprise. For Nobile the controversy over the a-bomb is not a passionate disagreement about history but a government conspiracy.'[109] This criticism is justified as the book displays an almost total lack of balance and perspective. The book, marketed as containing a 'rare copy' of the initial script for the Enola Gay exhibition (when in fact copies of the script are widely available), adds very little to the literature on

[107] Steven J. Tepper, *Not Here, Not Now, Not That: Protest Over Art and Culture in America* (Chicago, 2011).
[108] Philip Nobile, ed, *Judgment at the Smithsonian: The Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 1st edition (New York, 1995).
[109] Philip Terzian, 'Review: Judgment at the Smithsonian', *The American Spectator*, August (1995), pp. 65–66.

the exhibit and does not contain the graphic images from the exhibit that caused so much anger amongst veterans.

Much more balanced and informative is *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* by Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt.[110] Unlike Nobile's work, *History Wars* places the Enola Gay controversy in context by including articles on the growing public apprehension about historical inquiry and the rising anxiety about America's place in the post-Cold War world. Published in 1996, this edited volume represents the first serious academic treatment of the controversy. In the same year, Harwit published his account of the controversy: *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*.[111] He vigorously defends the right of the Smithsonian and other museums to engage with controversial aspects of American history. Yet the book also makes painfully clear his inability to grasp the political aspects of the exhibition and his underestimation of the lengths to which veteran organisations, such as the Air Force Association (AFA) and the American Legion, were willing to go to have the exhibition cancelled.

Examples of more recent scholarship on the controversy include Robert Newman's book *Enola Gay and the Court of History*. His book is, at its best, a vivid and engaging discussion about the morality of using the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Particularly convincing are the sections that point out the flaws and inconsistencies with the revisionist argument regarding Truman's decision to use the bomb. But Newman is not consistent throughout and accuses the Smithsonian of buying into the arguments by early revisionists like Blackett 'in toto' without providing primary resources or relevant secondary literature to

[110] Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*.
[111] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, 1st edition (New York, 1996).

support his claims.[112] Equally inconsistent is Charles O'Reilly and William Rooney's book *Enola Gay and the Smithsonian Institution*, an exposition of the position taken by veterans in their criticism of the exhibit. Rooney himself is a veteran who strongly opposed the Smithsonian's actions during the controversy. The primary focus of the book is to dissect the originally proposed 'Crossroads' exhibit.[113] Although useful for pointing out the flaws in the 'Crossroads' draft, the book spends little to no time analysing the many redrafts and changes to the exhibition which eventually resulted in 'The Last Act' version of the exhibit. O'Reilly and Rooney also blatantly refuse to accept, or even consider, that racism and vengefulness were important aspects affecting American attitudes to the end of the war. This leaves the analysis lacking in both depth and scope. These works therefore leave an opening for a balanced, extensive, more critical and less emotionally invested treatment of the Enola Gay controversy that utilizes the primary source material that is available.

**This Dissertation and the Existing Historical Debate**

The Enola Gay controversy was an infected and sometimes outright hostile public debate. Extensive coverage in local and national press led to a tense and difficult environment, some of the historians advising NASM on the exhibit received death threats as a result of their involvement. Bias, on both sides, was inherent in the controversy and prevented a compromise from being reached. This bias has been extended to much of the existing literature on the controversy. The main problem with the existing literature is the one-sided approach most authors have taken. Authors analysing the subject, most of whom are American, have therefore brought their own, highly personal and strongly held views on the atomic bombings to the literature. These inherent biases have also led to a focus on one set

[112] Robert P. Newman, *Enola Gay and the Court of History* (New York, 2004).
[113] Charles T. O'Reilly and William A. Rooney, *The Enola Gay and the Smithsonian Institution* (Jefferson, 2005).

of sources in favour of others, with little regard for opposing views. This dissertation therefore fills a gap in the existing literature by moving away from prejudiced accounts of the controversy and providing a more distanced view. In addition, notably absent from the literature is an attempt to place the controversy within the larger context of the culture wars. Although most commentators, such as Richard Kohn, agree that the controversy forms part of the culture wars, there has been no serious attempt to address this issue in detail.[114]

This dissertation will argue that the critics of the Enola Gay exhibit sought to strip the historical record of all ambiguity and use it for political purposes, namely the promotion of a specific viewpoint at the expense of other views. Critical analysis and discussion of complex events is, according to this argument, not essential to the practice of professional history. Those opposing the exhibit therefore saw history in straightforward terms, black or white, good and bad. This rudimentary understanding of what history is supposed to be fails to grasp the multitude of views that exists on the atomic bombings. As a result, the arguments between the museum and its critics became pointless exercises in defending different political views, as opposed to a meaningful discussion and analysis of the bombings.

This dissertation therefore adds to the existing literature by establishing how the controversy relates to the culture wars. The Enola Gay exhibit threatened to show an uncomfortable part of American history and this did not sit well with the conservative political agenda that was gaining momentum at the time of the controversy. It is worth evaluating why Congress and politicians became involved in the controversy as their attempts to shut down the proposed exhibit, by withholding funding from the Smithsonian, ties in with other debates in the culture wars such as those over public-school history

[114] Richard H. Kohn, 'History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1036–63.

curricula and whether history should be 'celebratory' or 'critical'. This dissertation therefore examines the links between the culture wars and what the Enola Gay controversy shows about these clashes of values and opinions of history, as part of the larger culture wars.

Part of the reason for why Congress became involved in the controversy lies in how the Smithsonian Institution was founded and is administered. The British scientist James Smithson (1765–1829) left most of his wealth to his nephew Henry James Hungerford. When Hungerford died childless in 1835, the estate passed 'to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men', in accordance with Smithson's will.[115] Hungerford's death started a long debate among legislators in Congress as to whether they could, or should, accept the bequest, and what form the Smithsonian Institution should actually take. After much legal wrangling, the claim was successfully made in 1837, just as the country descended into the financial downturn now known as the Panic of 1837. Congress thus took eight years to decide what to do with the money. The gift of half a million dollars, sizeable for its time, had no precedent and was to be used for a very vague purpose.[116]

Little progress was made until 1844 when Congress decided that the bequest should be considered a permanent loan and used to erect a building with rooms for a museum, library, laboratory, lectures, and an arboretum. It also decided that all natural history objects belonging to the country should be transferred to the institution. Two years of further legal wrangling ensued, with an amendment passed that government collections deposited to the institution should be known as the National Museum. Finally, in 1846, both chambers of

[115] Paul H. Oehser, *The Smithsonian Institution* (New York, 1970), p. 13.
[116] Ibid, pp. 16–18.

Congress passed the bill establishing the Smithsonian Institution. The bill was subsequently signed by President James K. Polk in August 1846.[117]

The bill signed by Polk stipulated that the institution would be administered by a Board of Regents consisting of the Vice-President and the Chief Justice of the United States, as ex officio members, as well as senators, congressmen, and regular citizens. Day to day management of the institution was to be overseen by a Secretary appointed by the Board of Regents. The Smithsonian Institution is thus intimately tied to the US government. Since its founding the institution has swelled and presently consists of over nineteen museums, nine research centres, and a zoo. The collection of museum, galleries, and research departments which make up the Smithsonian differ hugely. Some are governmental, some quasi-governmental, and some non-governmental. As such the institution is not, strictly speaking, a government agency. In truth, however, the Smithsonian today is part government and part nongovernmental. It receives federal funding to maintain the national museums and other such agencies established by Congress. The institution's other activities are financed through its endowments, which began with Smithson's bequest, or from other private sources. The Freer Gallery of Art is an example of a Smithsonian institution which was financed via the latter.[118] In the way that federal funds are appropriated to the Institution, the Smithsonian operates like any other government agency. The Smithsonian, knowing where a large portion of their funds come from, therefore generally aims to please Congress by providing reports and other materials as requested by Congress in a timely fashion.[119]

[117] Ibid, pp. 19–22.
[118] Ibid, pp. 73–74.
[119] Ibid, p. 210.

The NASM, the setting for the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay, was founded in 1946 as the National Air Museum with the charge that it should 'memorialize the national development of aviation; collect, preserve, and display aeronautical equipment of historical interest and significance; serve as a repository of scientific equipment and data pertaining to the development of aviation; and provide educational material for the historical study of aviation'.[120] The Smithsonian had, however, collected aeronautical items long before the museum was officially established. In 1876, a group of twenty kites was acquired from the Chinese Imperial Commission, seeding what would later become the largest collection of aviation and space artefacts in the world. The collections of the museum were first housed in the Arts and Industries (A&I) building, then after World War I, it expanded to a large hut erected by the War Department behind the main Smithsonian building in Washington, DC. Affectionately known as the 'Tin Shed', the new building opened to the public in 1920, and would remain in use for the next 55 years.

The legislation signed by Truman in 1946 did not provide for the construction of a new building, however, and the collection soon outgrew the exhibition space. Since there was no room left in the A&I building, or the 'Tin Shed', World War II aircraft and other items such as engines and missiles were stored at an abandoned aircraft factory in Park Ridge, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Funding for a new building was finally acquired in 1971 and in 1976, as part of the bicentennial celebrations, the museum was renamed and moved to its current location on The Mall in Washington, DC. The success of the Smithsonian's new National Air and Space Museum exceeded expectations. The five millionth visitor crossed the threshold

[120] Ibid, p. 100.

only six months after opening day. Today, the NASM remains one of the most visited museums in the world.

In the first chapter the historical backdrop to the Enola Gay controversy is outlined. This chapter focuses on the rise of anti-intellectualism in America and how it has given rise to the culture wars. A key feature of the analysis in this chapter is the decline of liberalism and the steady rise of American conservatism which supplanted it. In the second chapter the decision to display the Enola Gay, as part of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, is examined. It will explain the various issues with displaying the Enola Gay that were present from the outset and the historical view of the atomic bombings that the opposing sides in the controversy took. The third chapter will analyse how, after months of arguing and heated debate, the proposed Enola Gay exhibit was eventually cancelled. The focus of the analysis in this chapter is on the various tactics used to undermine the exhibit and how the controversy became increasingly politicised. The penultimate chapter will explain the impact of the controversy on the wider culture wars, focusing specifically on how it helped give rise to a political climate in which facts and reason were replaced with arguments based on strong emotions. Finally, the epilogue will explain what became of the aeroplane itself and include reflections on the controversy by the key participants involved and the longstanding consequences the controversy had on some of their careers.

**Methodology and Scope:**

Two main approaches are used to achieve the stated objectives of this dissertation. Conceptually, this dissertation examines the role that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima plays in American memory and how Americans have struggled to come to terms with this event. A critical part of the analysis examines how the veterans, politicians, scholars, and

curators involved in the controversy remembered the atomic bombings and how this affected their stance on the Enola Gay controversy. In other words, the interplay of historical memory with present day politics will be revealed and examined. Secondly, as explained above, this thesis explores the links between the Enola Gay controversy and the culture wars in the US and determines the consequences of the controversy on the wider culture wars.

In addition to the secondary literature mentioned above, this dissertation draws upon extensive archival material from both the Smithsonian and the AFA. This includes the specific primary sources that exist on the Enola Gay controversy such as the drafts of the proposed exhibit which sparked the controversy, letters between the Smithsonian Institution and veterans organisations, and the large number of editorials and articles that were published in newspapers around the US. What these sources add to our understanding of the controversy is that, firstly, they allow one to establish fully the views on history held by the key participants in the controversy. Secondly, through careful analysis, it is also possible to place these sources, and thus the controversy, into the wider debates about history that form part of the culture wars in America. Although many of these sources have been consulted by researchers before, the result has usually been a reliance on one set of sources in favour of the other, a clear example of the partisanship with which most authors have approached the topic.

For the written sources consulted, including the primary sources, the mode of analysis used is a textual one in which each source is analysed with regards to its purpose, value, and limitation. Given the often-biased account of the controversy given in most sources, this dissertation utilizes a wide range of sources, which view the controversy from different angles, to better understand its impact. This approach was used to establish the significance

of the Enola Gay controversy within the wider framework of this dissertation, namely the culture wars. In addition, this dissertation utilizes interviews conducted with key individuals involved in the controversy such as Martin Harwit, John Correll, the editor in chief of the AFA's *Airforce Magazine* at the time of the controversy, and the two lead curators of the exhibit, Michael Neufeld and Tom Crouch. This type of source material has rarely been used by researchers examining the Enola Gay controversy. By utilizing this new type of source material this dissertation incorporates recent reflections on the controversy by those involved in order to establish its location within the wider culture wars. These interviews were analysed using discourse analysis which allows this dissertation to compare the opposing viewpoints on the controversy that the participants hold. By using this approach this dissertation connects these various viewpoints by establishing the symbolic value of the Enola Gay aeroplane to the parties involved, and consequently, the significance of the controversy on the wider culture wars.

The controversy was, on the face of it, a debate about how the Enola Gay aeroplane should be displayed and commemorated. Broadly speaking, two main camps would emerge during the controversy. The first group, which consisted mainly of veterans and their support organisations like the American Legion and the AFA, took the view that history should be used to commemorate their service and sacrifice and that publicly funded institutions, such as the Smithsonian, should be the main bodies through which this type of commemorative history would occur. In this they were supported by several members of Congress and the Senate who ultimately pulled the financial strings of the Smithsonian. These political forces were adamant that the exhibit should not be used as a platform from which to criticise American conduct during World War II and the decision to drop the atomic bomb. The Smithsonian and the scholars who were brought in to advise on the exhibit took the

opposing view and argued that the purpose of the Smithsonian was not simply to display artefacts of history, but to engage in commentary and analysis of the events that those artefacts represented. Fuelled by strong emotions and heated rhetoric the controversy evolved into a well-publicised and bitter dispute of the culture wars. The cancellation of the exhibit would have longstanding repercussions as it would help foster a tradition in which bickering and a refusal to reach agreement became the new norm for public discourse in the US.

This dissertation will therefore conclude that the culture wars have given rise to a new climate for debate, one in which objective evidence is thrown out in favour of emotionally charged arguments. Debates on history are no exception. This emotional response to history has become a flexible tool used by conservative elements in the US to justify national policy. In the case of the Enola Gay exhibit, Republicans, and others, saw an opportunity to clamp down on what they saw as revisionist history and in the process strike a blow at their opponents in the culture wars. In doing so they further entrenched developments in US political and cultural discourse. The cancellation of the exhibit bolstered the resurgent political right with their hostility to government and helped lead to a rejection of such notions as compromise and reasoned debate. The fundamental problem was that those who opposed the exhibit did not recognise the validity of dispute when it comes to historical events. They believed too exclusively in their own version of the truth, failing to recognise how history is not a collection of facts, but a constantly changing perspective on the past. The past is what happens, and history is the way we choose to remember. The way we choose to remember depends on who we are and the factors influencing our perspective.

# Chapter I

## *'What Then Is the American, This New Man?'*

The roots of the dispute surrounding the Enola Gay can be found in the ideological battles between liberalism and conservatism that have been taking place in America since the mid-20th century. This chapter will provide the background to the Enola Gay controversy by outlining the growing rise in anti-intellectualism in America and how the decline of liberalism, and the steady rise of conservatism, culminated in the so-called culture wars, a series of ideological disputes about everything from abortion, gun control, art, political correctness, education and views on what should be considered 'proper' history. In addition, it will be argued that the historical roots of the culture wars stretch back to shortly after the nation's founding and that these are closely linked to the religious history of America. However, the decline of liberalism, from the 1960s onwards, remains the key factor in explaining the clashes of the culture wars. In the 1970s, American conservatism, heavily infused with religious messages, began a rise in prominence which steered the country towards the political right. The policy clashes between liberals and conservatives which characterised the culture wars produced a new breed of politics, ironically one that was less focused on the traditional left-versus-right divide over policies, and more concerned with moral issues. This in turn led to a greater emphasis on emotions in public debates where facts and rational discussion had little, if any, place. It was against this backdrop of revived anti-intellectualism and ongoing cultural conflict that the Enola Gay controversy would erupt in the spring of 1994.

The culture wars are, in part, the result of the deep currents of anti-intellectualism in America. The historian Richard Hofstadter's book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*,

published in 1964, was one of the first in-depth analyses of anti-intellectualism in America and it remains one of the key examinations of the topic. [121] In his book, Hofstadter argues that anti-intellectualism has not been clearly defined because its vagueness makes it more useful in controversy as a label. He further argues that anti-intellectualism is not a constant thread but a force fluctuating in strength and drawing power from various sources. This means that it cannot be made the subject of a formal history in the same way as the development of a social movement or an institution.[122] Hofstadter was also the first to clearly argue that the roots of American anti-intellectualism must be sought in the framework of the nation's religious history. But he was quick to insist that anti-intellectuals are not committed to it as though it was a creed or principle. As he explains, 'people do not rise in the morning, grin at themselves in their mirrors, and say: "Ah, today I shall torment an intellectual and strangle an idea!"'[123] Instead Hofstadter argues that anti-intellectualism is the accompanying consequence of some other intention, often justified, and that its roots were to be found in the religious institutions and egalitarian sentiments of America.[124]

The author Susan Jacoby echoed Hofstadter's conclusions regarding the religious origins of anti-intellectualism in America. She argues that the religious revival movement in the early 19th century known as the Second Great Awakening was a response, not only to the secular Enlightenment values represented by many of the Founding Fathers, but also to the unsettled social conditions associated with the Revolutionary War. The American religious landscape at the end of the Revolution was, in her view, pluralistic and chaotic.[125] The ensuing split, in the early 19th century, of American Protestantism into many different

[121] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (London, 1964).
[122] Ibid, p. 7.
[123] Ibid, p. 22.
[124] Ibid, p. 407.
[125] Susan Jacoby, *The Age of American Unreason* (London, 2008), p. 39.

denominations produced a split in the young nation's intellectual road. The more liberal Christian denominations encompassed and embraced intellect and higher learning. More fundamentalist churches, on the other hand, turned away from any form of learning which contradicted the Bible. This ensured that a significant portion of believing American Christians would develop deep suspicions of any learning, and institutions of learning, not subject to church supervision.[126] Jacoby further agrees with Hofstadter that it is impossible to define anti-intellectualism as a historical force in a manner as precise or useful as the kind of definition that might be supplied for capitalism for example. She argues that it is surely true that few people like to consider themselves enemies of thought and culture. Jacoby therefore claims that anti-intellectualism, in any era, can best be understood as a 'complex of symptoms with multiple causes'.[127]

Whereas Hofstadter claims that anti-intellectualism is embedded in the national fabric of America, due to its colonial and religious heritage, Jacoby instead stresses the effects of daily life as the driving force behind anti-intellectualism. She argues that poorly educated settlers on the frontier were drawn to religious creeds and preachers who provided emotional comfort without making the intellectual demands of other Protestant denominations.[128] Jacoby argues that the harsher the circumstances of daily life, the more effective were the simple and universal emotional themes of struggle, sin, repentance, forgiveness, and redemption that form the core of fundamentalist denominations. Sidney Mead, a historian of American Protestantism, argues that an ever-widening chasm between religion and higher education has been apparent since the rise of evangelical fundamentalism at the end of the

[126] Ibid, pp. 43-4.
[127] Ibid, pp. 9-10.
[128] Ibid, p. 45.

revolutionary era, and that the more liberal forms of American Protestantism lost a great deal of ground to fundamentalism in the early republican era. [129] Since then, the more liberal strands of American Protestantism have struggled to close this gap. Eventually this gap would move beyond religious divides and into the realm of politics, in the process giving birth to the culture wars of the second half of the 20th century.

Religion has tended to reinforce the egalitarian notions of anti-intellectualism as the use of reason and logic, as emphasised by intellectuals, clashes with organised religion and its supposedly revealed religious truth. This clash of reason versus emotion has underscored many of the battles of the culture wars, including the Enola Gay controversy. According to the sociologist Thomas Gieryn, the nature of the arguments used by the museum's critics, which relied on personal experiences and emotional conviction, helped reveal the deep currents of anti-intellectualism in American life.[130] The critics opposed the exhibit, in part, on anti-intellectual grounds. They were driven by strong emotions relating to personal experiences in the war and what they thought real -- or proper -- history entailed. By arguing that the proposed exhibit did not depict their memories of the war, they rejected theory and logic-based arguments and restricted expertise to those with direct experiences. Their anti-intellectual arguments were therefore a consequence of what they saw as historical truth, which they equated with their experiences of how World War II had ended. For the critics, the exhibit was not only an affront to historical truth, it was an affront to their personal experiences and beliefs about America's status as a moral nation. The museum massively underestimated how passionately and deeply these beliefs were held. The curators' and

[129] Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York, 1963), p. 129.
[130] Thomas Gieryn, 'Balancing Acts: Science, Enola Gay, and History Wars at the Smithsonian', in Sharon Macdonald, ed, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London, 1998), p. 216.

historians' own emphasis on scholarship and rigorous critical examination of the nation's past could not match the intensity of the emotions felt by veterans.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that these anti-intellectual trends -- and the culture wars -- are just something dreamt up by academics, a charge that critics of the intellectual elite are quick to make. On the contrary, the culture wars affect the lives of most Americans since, as Hunter argues, they have an impact on virtually all major institutions of American society.[131] A key battleground in the culture wars is the role and nature of education. Schools have been the primary institutional means of creating a sense of national identity for generations of Americans. It is here that Americans are first taught what it means to be an American. Cultural conflict will inevitably reach the institutions, including museums, that impart these collective understandings. The intrinsic link between public education and national identity means that education has long been a battleground.[132]

In the culture wars, however, education takes on a more important and strategic role than simply teaching basic skills and passing on knowledge. Education is meaningful, not because of its formal remit to educate but because, in the culture wars, schools are seen as strategic since this is the central institution in which the concept of a larger social order, a sense of how things should be, is imposed on students.[133] In the culture wars, conservatives fear that an increasingly progressive agenda in America's schools and museums is undermining the egalitarian sentiments and narratives on which the nation has based its collective identity, including the view of how World War II ended. Education has the power to shape, and unravel, national narratives and as such is viewed with scepticism by those who think that

[131] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 50.
[132] Ibid, p. 198.
[133] Ibid, p. 174.

increasingly progressive education reforms are undermining the social order. This was clearly seen during the Enola Gay controversy as the critics worried that the exhibit would undermine the collective memory of the war in America and, by extension, the view of America as a good and just nation.

The political right in America has, according to Thomson, tended to see 'dangerous elites' in many places in society. Historians have been added to the list of 'internal enemies' due to such controversies as the national history standards and that over the Enola Gay.[134] They have also been treated with suspicion because history is so important to national identity, therefore any attempt to rethink the past is seen as threatening. What is relevant here is the critics' view of the historical profession and its abandonment of what they see as history's proper role.[135] According to them history could -- and should -- consist of nothing but what is perceived as fact, with very little room for different interpretations. This view was further based on the belief that empirical knowledge was more likely to be known by the participants in the event in question, in other words, in the case of the Enola Gay, by the veterans, not by historians and curators. The collective memory of the war was, therefore, the narrative that should be shown at the museum.

The link between anti-intellectualism, egalitarianism, and education is no coincidence. For many in America, higher education and intellect is seen as a privilege, not something to which everyone is entitled. In addition, many Americans see education as a ladder of social mobility, with the result that, in some ways education attainment has become a substitute for class. This means that resentment has developed between those who have been able to

[134] Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*, p. 163.
[135] Mark H. Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100 no. 3 (1995), 829–53.

progress up the social ladder and those who have not. This has led to deep suspicion and mistrust of higher education and intellectuals as they have been viewed as an elitist minority by the majority. Anti-intellectualism thus becomes an unintended outcome of the outcry against the lack of equal opportunities in education. This is somewhat ironic as egalitarianism is a central tenet of many strands of liberalism favoured by intellectuals and educational reformers.

Universities, and the academics associated with them, frequently find themselves the target of populist anger and critique from those on the political right. This anger stems less from any personal dislike of academics but more from a loathing of the inequality with which education is dispensed and the lofty, sometimes arrogant, attitude taken by those lucky enough to have benefited from higher education. Higher education is also believed to offer a haven to 'subversives' who threaten to undermine the social order, a charge that critics of the Enola Gay exhibit were quick to make. It is not, however, only a conflict between those who have benefited from education and those who have not, although this certainly is part of it. According to Hofstadter, at an early stage in the history of America, literature and learning were stigmatised as the prerogative of useless elites. It seemed to be the goal of America to build a society that would show how much could be done without literature and learning.[136] Intellect in America is therefore resented as a challenge to egalitarianism. Even in its earliest days, the egalitarian impulse in America was linked with a distrust for what may be called specialization and, in its later forms, expertise. This hostility to universities, mainly associated with right-wing sympathisers, was in part due to deference and social status, but in part also a reflection of the old dislike of specialists and experts epitomised by president

[136] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, p. 51.

Andrew Jackson in the early 19th century.[137] Jackson's election to the presidency seemed to prove just how much could be achieved without access to higher education and that anybody could rise to the highest office in the country.

The criticism levied at education by external critics differed from the struggles within academia. These internal clashes centred on the struggle to define, in practical terms, what the mission of a university is. The mission in ideal terms remained what it always had been: to be a sanctuary where knowledge and truth could be freely pursued and debated. In practice, however, 'free and open inquiry' had always, as Hunter states, been decided by certain philosophical and political boundaries.[138] In reality, then, the culture wars in higher education centred on what the boundaries of academic freedom should be. Academic freedom, however, can be a double-edged sword. While for the most part being welcomed as essential to the pursuit of knowledge, it can also make intellectuals seem out of touch and susceptible to wacky and fringe ideas, a charge that would be successfully imposed on academics during the 1960s and the Enola Gay controversy. When confronted with accusations of undermining social order and morality, academics have an unfortunate habit of hiding behind the shield of academic freedom. Rather than facing the criticism head-on, they retreat into the ivory tower, safe behind their claims that any condemnation of their work impinges on their academic freedom. This not only patronizes the critics, by indicating that they are not part of the intellectual community, it also lets the criticism go unchallenged by avoiding engaging with it. This can have a dramatic impact on public discourse as it leaves debates very one-sided.

[137] Ibid, p. 14.
[138] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, p. 214.

While intellectuals have for the most part been viewed with suspicion, they were at times in high demand. World War II, like World War I, increased the need for experts -- even classicists and archaeologists were thought of as important due to their knowledge of the Mediterranean.[139] But when the war ended the suspicion of intellectuals was revived. Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration marked the start of the modern anti-intellectual trend in presidential leadership and in American political discourse at large. Despite a short tenure as president of Columbia University, Eisenhower had no qualms about portraying himself as an anti-intellectual. He emphasized a pragmatic and no-nonsense approach, loathed elitism, and preferred plain-spoken rhetoric. In addition, Eisenhower seems to have had a personal dislike of academics and publicly expressed his unfavourable opinion of them. At a 1954 press conference, he defined an intellectual as 'a man who takes more words than necessary to tell more than he knows'.[140] Eisenhower's use of anti-intellectualism, however, was in part a deliberate attempt to achieve political goals. As the policy analyst Max Boot argues, Eisenhower utilized anti-intellectualism to preserve his political room to manoeuvre.[141] As a Republican governing in the aftermath of the New Deal, Eisenhower shrewdly realized that he needed to distance himself from his liberal and intellectual opponents. Rather than trying to beat them at their own game, he concentrated on his popularity outside Washington, DC. To this end, he acted like an 'ordinary guy' rather than an intellectual. Despite this, Eisenhower, who enjoyed classical music and other cultural pursuits, confessed in private that he was 'deathly afraid of being considered highbrow'.[142]

[139] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, p. 221.
[140] Colleen J. Shogan, 'Anti-Intellectualism in the Modern Presidency: A Republican Populism', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol 5 no. 2 (2007), 295–303.
[141] Max Boot, 'How the "Stupid Party" Created Donald Trump', *The New York Times*, 31 July 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/opinion/how-the-stupid-party-created-donald-trump.html.
[142] Shogan, 'Anti-Intellectualism in the Modern Presidency', 295–303.

The 1952 presidential campaign pitted the outwardly anti-intellectual Eisenhower against the Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson, a man well known for his intellectual demeanour and eloquent speech. Despite his upper-class background and elite education, Stevenson was not an intellectual himself, having never pursued an academic career. The intellectual community nevertheless swiftly endorsed him. They were attracted to him because he vowed to improve the level of political discourse in American society and pledged to 'talk sense' throughout the campaign.[143] This was not enough, however, to challenge the popular Eisenhower who won a landslide victory over Stevenson. Over the course of Eisenhower's eight-year administration, however, the mood changed. The rage and witch-hunts of McCarthyism faded and with the launch of Sputnik an immense amount of attention was brought on the consequences of anti-intellectualism in the school system and American life at large. Meanwhile, John F. Kennedy made a virtue of his intellect and education in his run for the presidency in a way not seen since Woodrow Wilson. Kennedy, according to Hofstadter, brought back to politics the combination of intellect and character shown at the start of the 20th century by men like Teddy Roosevelt, a combination in which respect for intelligence was united with aggressive and practical virtues.[144]

The good standing of intellectuals, and liberalism at large, during the Kennedy administration would be short-lived. During the 1960s liberalism in America suffered a blow to its popularity from which it has struggled to recover. In popular memory, however, the 1960s are regarded as a period of triumphant liberalism. According to this view, liberals dominated the political agenda. Among their achievements was, as Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin argue, the launch of a 'war on poverty' and a 'rights revolution' which led to

[143] Ibid.
[144] Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, p. 227.

the recognition of the rights of minorities outside the mainstream of American society.[145] In addition, to its adherents, liberalism stood for the preservation of the New Deal established by Franklin Roosevelt. The term thus recalled twenty years of seemingly stable Democratic leadership during which the country had survived the Great Depression and the brutality of World War II.

This view, however, overstates the power of liberals in the period following World War II. Except for Truman's surprise win in the 1948 presidential election, liberals did not perform well at the voting booths from the end of the war to the late 1950s. McCarthyism and accusations of being 'soft on communism' took their toll upon liberals, along with the heavy defeats by Eisenhower in the presidential elections of 1952 and 1956.[146] During the 1960s, of the three branches of government, liberals only dominated the judiciary. In Congress, liberal Democrats were nearly always a minority. Southern Democrats were just as likely to vote with Republicans on any given issues as with their fellow Democrats. As for the executive branch, neither of the two Democratic presidents who held office from 1961 to 1968 had been the preferred choice of liberals in the Democratic party. Much like Eisenhower's perceived anti-intellectualism, Kennedy's supposed openness to liberal ideals was a calculated attempt at promoting a certain style, rather than genuine conviction. Lyndon B. Johnson was seen by traditional liberals as unprincipled, revealing the prejudice held by New England liberals towards a Texan who was not that well educated. Despite this he would go on to become perhaps the greatest genuinely liberal post-war president. Nevertheless, his nomination as Kennedy's running mate was viewed as a dangerous attempt to appease the conservative wing of the party, especially southern Democrats. The Americans for

[145] Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2000), p. 47.
[146] Ibid.

Democratic Action (ADA) group, which formed the core of the party's liberal wing, refused outright to endorse Johnson's nomination.[147] As a result, in the early 1960s, liberalism was neither a coherent political ideology nor in a position to fully realise its ambitious political programme.[148]

Worse was to come, however, as in the 1960s liberals would lose touch with the working class in a way that would permanently damage the relationship between the two. Simply put, the working-class of America grew sceptical and tired of liberalism and stopped identifying with the change and progress promised by it.[149] Student protests and the civil rights movement were just two of the many issues by which working class voters were becoming disillusioned. A letter to the *San Diego Union* newspaper in 1966, the year the future superstar of American conservatism, Ronald Reagan, was elected governor of California, summed up the mood:

> We are tired of picket lines and sit-ins by dirty unwashed never-do-wells who rush to man the barricades against law-and-order. We are tired of seeing mobs of scabby-faced, long-haired youths and short-haired girls who claim to represent the 'new wave' of America and who sneer at the virtues of honesty, integrity, and morality on which this country achieved its greatness ... Last but not least, most of us are fed up with the colleges which are tax supported ... having disgraceful demonstrations by youths who are trying to dictate the policies of an institution of education.[150]

This was not an example of anti-intellectualism as such but rather a sign of the growing dissatisfaction with various universities and a belief that they served as a hotbed for revolt. This, in turn, tied in with suspicions that academics were prone to wild ideas, out of touch

[147] Ibid, p. 59.
[148] Ibid, p. 48.
[149] Gerard DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan: The Emergence of a President* (London, 2015), p. 247.
[150] Ibid, p. 252.

with the rest of America. This was a charge that would later be successfully imposed on the curators of the Enola Gay exhibit.

Reagan, master of the populist campaign, picked up on this kind of sentiment and used it to his advantage. He realised that being despised by the establishment constituted a recommendation in the minds of working and middle-class Americans, the great 'silent majority' which Richard Nixon would later refer to, who felt patronized by the establishment.[151] By arguing that the student protests of the 1960s was a moral problem, rather than an educational or political one, Reagan was able to appeal across party lines, including to working-class Democrats.[152] He directly targeted those large number of voters who had not enjoyed the benefits of a university education. The cleverness of this rhetorical position was proved when the university community hit back by accusing him of impinging academic freedom. This simply enhanced Reagan's position further by underlining how out of touch and elitist academia had become. The issue of higher education has been a firm favourite of this type of populist campaign because it is supported by the many, in the form of tax dollars, but is enjoyed by a relatively select few. Working class voters were especially inclined to campaigns reliant on emotion, as opposed to reason, and the use of soundbites and cleverly crafted images.[153] It was the same technique used by evangelical fundamentalists in the early 19th century with their promises of emotional comfort to the people of the frontier. This was a simple, easily understood message which resonated deeply with the egalitarian, anti-intellectual sentiments of America.

[151] Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*, Reprint edition (New York, 2015), p. 603.
[152] DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan*, p. 194.
[153] Ibid, p. 254.

Liberalism, to its detriment, is a complex and difficult concept to understand. It is hard to reduce to black and white notions of good versus bad.[154] These are the kind of moralistic battles which anti-intellectualism thrives on. Its complexity was one of the reasons it stopped appealing to working class voters during the 1960s. One angry housewife and campaigner against sex education in schools told a reporter that: 'I'm still a registered Democrat and I thought I was liberal, but I really don't understand the meaning of the word.'[155] Liberalism was not only starting to lose its appeal to voters, it was also beginning to lose policy battles. Ironically, this was caused by the relative success of liberalism. At its core lies a belief that society can improve and progress. Each round of sweeping liberal reform, however, yields a group of voters satisfied with the amount of progress made.[156] Among the many disasters which befell it in the 1960s was the rebuke in California of the Rumford Fair Housing Act, a law passed in 1963, to help end racial discrimination by property owners and landlords who refused to rent or sell property to 'coloured' people. The amendment to the act, known as Proposition 14, grew increasingly popular after it was supported by Republicans in California. The amendment, which in effect re-legalised discrimination by landlords, passed with a 65% majority. Working-class voters had grown content with the progress offered by liberalism and clearly signalled that enough was enough.

The same year saw a presidential campaign which pitted Johnson against the Republican Barry Goldwater. Although Goldwater was heavily defeated, the campaign served as a baptism of fire for many, including Reagan, who would later play key roles in the conservative revival. Years later Buchanan described it: 'Like a first love, the Goldwater

[154] Ibid, p. 256.
[155] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, Reprint edition (London, 2009), p. 411.
[156] DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan*, p. 255.

campaign was, for thousands of men and women now well into middle age, an experience that will never recede from memory.'[157] Johnson, who had come into office less than a year before following the assassination of Kennedy, benefitted from his association with Kennedy's popularity and the fact that Goldwater was perceived to be a dangerous extremist, actively endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan and infamously having proclaimed that extremism in defence of liberty was no vice.[158] In addition, Goldwater's obstructionist attitude to politics -- which would become a popular tactic in the culture wars -- received its foundations during the campaign when he argued that his aim was 'not to pass laws, but to repeal them'. Hofstadter claimed that his main business in the Senate had been to simply vote 'no' to whichever new law was proposed.[159]

This type of populist conservatism espoused by Goldwater survived his own defeat. Over the course of the rest of the decade it was, as Justin Watson argues, able to grow based on the perceived social and moral breakdown of society, declining economic opportunities, the perceived military and diplomatic weakness of the US, and a loss of faith in public institutions.[160] Goldwater's campaign, more than anything else, helped make the conservative revival a mass movement. It changed the political right in America from a small, mainly intellectual phenomenon, into a large grassroots movement. Unlike liberalism, the right, as Isserman and Kazin assert, established itself as a coherent and forceful ideology in the 1960s.[161]

[157] Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, p. 216.
[158] Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus*, Reprint edition (New York, 2009), p. 513.
[159] Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, p. 205.
[160] Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition* (London, 1999), p. 19.
[161] Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, p. 206.

Reagan, who was catapulted to national prominence thanks to his 'A Time for Choosing' speech in support of Goldwater, avoided making the mistake of being perceived as an extremist (despite some dubious links to far-right extremists) in his run for the governorship in 1966 and later in his successful 1980 election to the presidency. His 'A Time for Choosing', also known simply as 'The Speech', was an important moment in the Goldwater campaign, not because it made any difference to Goldwater's chances of winning but because it launched Reagan's career as the future posterchild of American conservatism. Unlike Goldwater, who rarely used examples or humour in his speeches and assumed that his audience knew what he was talking about, Reagan used his charm and humour to connect with voters.[162] Here was a candidate that blue-collar voters who had grown dissatisfied with out of touch liberals could rally around. Reagan, like any successful politician, was pragmatic. But his pragmatism was different. When he made compromises, he insisted that they were the fault of someone else, usually liberals, with excuses always readily on offer. These excuses, rather than undermining his position, ended up making his rhetorical position stronger by making him appear practical and realistic.[163] This tactic of shifting blame and portraying itself as the underdog would become a hallmark of the political right in America. The Christian Right especially has been able to project an image of itself and its values as a victim of unchecked progressivism and liberalism. Californians may have voted for Johnson in the 1964 presidential election, but their rejection of the Fair Housing Act and the appeal of Reagan was far more indicative of the dissatisfaction with liberalism that had begun to take hold in America. Lucien Haas, press assistant to Pat Brown, the incumbent governor

[162] Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, p. 501.
[163] Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, p. 410.

defeated by Reagan in 1966, went so far as to claim that 'Liberalism ... was dead. Liberalism died in '64, if you want to pick a date.'[164]

Liberalism was clearly entering a moment of crisis. Liberals had written the legislation of the New Deal which let ordinary Americans win back a measure of economic security. Then they helped lead a war against fascism, a war some conservatives opposed, and then worked to create, in the post-war period, the economy which built the middle class, a prosperity for ordinary workers unprecedented in American history. Now they were becoming victims of their own success: with the boom they had helped build, ordinary people were becoming less susceptible to their message, and therefore vulnerable to an appeal from Republicans.[165] Conservatives mastered the weapons of the populist campaign. The advent of the television age with its emphasis on soundbites and short, easily digestible messages, played straight into the hands of Reagan and his fellow conservatives. Set against the background of the social unrest of the 1960s, it was not hard for Reagan to find a receptive audience to his message that something was wrong in America, not just politically, but morally. The conservatives used the increased media exposure to appeal to the emotions of disaffected working-class voters who no longer identified themselves with the America they saw on TV every night.

The emergence of modern American conservatism was not, however, a sudden backlash to the alleged depravities of the 1960s. Nevertheless, during the 1960s the foundation for modern American conservatism was laid, taking advantage of the decline of liberalism, and heavily infused with religious messages. As Jacoby argues, Protestant fundamentalists built a kindergarten-through-college network of Christian schools whose alumni would become the

[164] DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan*, p. 37.
[165] Perlstein, *Nixonland*, p. 41.

warriors in the army of the religious right in the 1980s and later.[166] Building upon the foundations laid in the 1960s the political right coalesced into a full-scale political movement and forged durable connections between state and society in the 1970s.[167] Conservatives in the 1970s, as Alice O'Connor argues, developed an awareness, honed from years on the political margins, that the proverbial 'battle of ideas' was all about power, political power to set, dominate, and ultimately win policy debates.[168]

The 1970s was a boom decade for conservatives, especially evangelical Christian ones. Evangelicals had largely remained content to fend for themselves throughout the Great Depression, World War II, and the tumultuous 1960s. But they found it increasingly hard to ignore the forces of change. The Supreme Court especially emerged as a powerful threat to evangelical beliefs. First, in the 1960s, the court drove the Bible and prayer from public schools. And then, in 1973, the justices provided evidence of Nixon's failure to protect evangelical interests when they ruled against state prohibitions on abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. Responding to what they saw as legalized murder, evangelicals believed themselves under siege politically, culturally, and morally. These rulings upset not only conservative Christians, but wider segments of the population. These included law enforcement officials enraged by court decisions which protected the 'rights' of criminals, millions of Americans who would not understand why the 'rights' of atheists should prevent the reading of the Lord's Prayer and the Bible in schools, Americans angry about 'permissiveness' and court rulings on pornography, politicians astounded by the court's reapportionment decisions, and anti-communists alarmed at the court's repeated thwarting of congressional investigations and

[166] Jacoby, *The Age of American Unreason*, p. 135.
[167] Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, 'Introduction', in Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, ed, *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 3.
[168] Alice O'Connor, 'Financing the Counterrevolution', in Schulman and Zelize, ed, *Rightward Bound*, pp. 156-7.

Cold War legislation. Added to this was the campus unrest of the 1960s and early 1970s which alarmed many parents who, as Alan Crawford argues, blamed the disorder on liberal educators who lacked the will to resist.[169]

To many of them, but especially to conservative Christians, it now seemed like they could not wait any longer.[170] William Bennet, a conservative pundit, summed up this newfound political conviction among evangelicals and other conservative Christians when he argued: 'Christianity is about right and wrong. And politics is, too.'[171] A few years later their presence in politics began to make its mark. *Time* magazine famously declared 1976 the year of the evangelicals. Perhaps the most visible was Jerry Falwell, an evangelical preacher who by 1976 was preaching that the idea that 'religion and politics do not mix' was invented by the devil to keep Christians from running the country. He became an avid campaigner against such 'existing evils' as the Equal Rights Amendment, homosexuality, pornography, and women's liberation.[172] On some issues, such as the opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, he was aided by other influential conservatives such as Phyllis Schlafly. In 1979 Falwell founded the Moral Majority, a political organization which played a key role in mobilising conservative Christian voters. The founding of the Moral Majority in 1979 was, as Susan Harding asserts, an open attack against the idea that white conservative Protestants, and fundamentalists especially, could not engage in American cultural and political life.[173]

[169] Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment* (New York, 1980), p. 167.
[170] Robert Shogan, *Constant Conflict: Politics, Culture, and the Struggle for America's Future* (Boulder, 2004), p. 159.
[171] Ibid, p. 29.
[172] Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, 2000), p. 22.
[173] Ibid.

Conservative evangelical Christians played prominent roles in a variety of political efforts that sought to reclaim what conservatives saw as 'family values' under threat, a key aim for conservatives in the culture wars. The list of perceived threats to these values included such things as feminism, abortion, gay rights, pornography, and the perceived decline in public and political morality. Conservatives, however, were not the only ones who were worried about the state of American culture. The sense of a crisis afflicting the American family became, as Matthew Lassiter argues, a mainstream feature of the 1970s as voices from across the political spectrum expressed deep anxieties about a culture of moral permissiveness, the consequences of the sexual revolution, and the uncertain economic future of the nation.[174] Nevertheless, the political right benefitted most from that tumultuous decade. The so-called New Right grew into an alliance of conservative groups who learned how to work together. This was helped by using the label culture wars since, as Thomson argues, it helped conservatives knit together various issues into a compelling narrative framework. [175] Richard Viguerie, a direct-mail expert, defined the new movement well when he argued that: 'The Old Right was not that interested in social issues. The New Right represented the cyclical developments of the culture wars as they were energized by the social upheaval and change of the 1960s.'[176]

In the 1970s the nation's evangelical subculture emerged from relative obscurity to become a powerful force in mainstream culture and politics. The middle class in America, mobilized and hailed by Nixon as the 'silent majority' in the 1970s, were subsequently re-energized by Reagan in the 1980s. In addition, their numbers were bolstered by millions of conservative

[174] Matthew D. Lassiter, 'Inventing Family Values', in Schulman and Zelize, ed, *Rightward Bound*, p. 14.
[175] Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*, p. 177.
[176] Shogan, *Constant Conflict*, p. 172.

Christians who overwhelmingly started to vote Republican.[177] Following his election to the presidency, America would share some of the aspects of evangelicalism, most notably a belief that it could do no wrong. Or, to put it in terms of American exceptionalism, that if America did it, it was by definition *not* wrong.[178] The journalist Morton Kondrake, writing in *The Washington Post*, described this outlook as 'a simplistic world view, a John Wayne view, but it is thoroughly American and of obvious appeal, the United States can do anything it wants, if it has the will'.[179] Because of Reagan's election, the culture wars became even more entrenched. Since the 1980s there has been a full-blown battle between conservatives and liberals who regard each other with an antipathy as fierce as that between the communists and anti-communists of the 1930s.[180] The clashes of the culture wars, especially since the 1980s, have been characterised by an unwillingness to compromise on both the liberal and conservative sides.

This development caught many observers off guard. As the historian Alan Brinkley argues, the revival of the political right in the United States unsettled many liberal and left-leaning academics because it contradicted some of their most basic assumptions about the development of modern society.[181] Throughout much of the 20th century America had seemingly grown more secular while mainstream Protestantism had grown more liberal. From the 1920s through the 1960s evangelical Protestantism, increasingly gripped by end-time speculations, managed to survive, but mainly at a grassroots level. Pre-1970s evangelicals focused on evangelism and denominational concerns and generally avoided

[177] Ibid, p. 12.
[178] Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge*, pp. 748-9.
[179] Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 174.
[180] Jacoby, *The Age of American Unreason*, pp. 291–2.
[181] Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, p. 24.

political involvement. From the late 1970s onwards, however, evangelical leaders were openly anti-communist and supported Washington's aggressive Cold War foreign policy. These developments fell below the radar to most observers. Media coverage during the 1960s had, as Boyer asserts, focused more on radical protests and countercultural provocations than on the conservative reaction.[182] Cumulatively, however, they laid the groundwork for the 1970s evangelical resurgence.

Having been a largely apolitical movement prior to the 1970s, evangelicals in America became a political force worthy of attention, lending their support and numbers to the conservative resurgence. Membership of evangelical churches greatly increased during this time. Disaffected Christians turned to evangelical churches that offered emotionally fulfilling worship and a supportive congregational network. Deepening their appeal, the evangelical churches took unambiguous stands on contentious moral issues, in contrast to the liberal churches' openness on sensitive matters relating to sex and gender, including homosexuality, abortion, sex education, birth control, pornography, feminism, and teenage sexuality.[183] This was another example of back-to-basics evangelism. In the same way that settlers on the frontier had been attracted to the emotional comfort provided by evangelical and fundamentalist Protestant denominations, so too did evangelicalism in the 1970s attract those who were disgruntled about social developments regarding sexual liberation and the perceived decline of public morals.

A simplistic equation of evangelicalism with right-wing politics, however, would be misleading. Nevertheless, ‘left-wing evangelicals’ were always a small group. By 1980

[182] Paul Boyer, ‘The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism’, in Schulman and Zelize, ed, *Rightward Bound*, pp. 31-4.
[183] Ibid, p. 35.

millions of American evangelicals were not only becoming politicized but, crucially, were lending their support to the Republican party. To be sure, the rightward political shift of the 1970s had complex sources. It was driven by people from a wide range of backgrounds such as ex-Democrats unhappy by their party's lurch leftward in the later 1960s, whites in the once solidly Democratic South, and working-class voters upset by campus activism, the counterculture, racial violence and what they saw as government favouritism toward minorities. Intermingled with all this were religious and cultural conservatives who viewed moral issues as paramount and who saw 'traditional values' as under siege.[184] A strange displacement also occurred with regards to conservative disaffections with the civil rights policies introduced in the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of taking out their frustrations on African-Americans they vented their anger at 'liberal elites' and 'unelected bureaucrats'.[185] This tendency to deflect potential criticism away from oneself is a key tactic in the culture wars. In the 1970s, the political right managed to frame their battle with liberal intellectuals as a conflict between 'ordinary' Americans and those who look down on them from a lofty perch. A staple of American political discourse is, as Thomson argues, defining an opponent as elitist while portraying one's own side as representing the will of the people.[186] This was an artform conservative intellectuals mastered and liberals never did. As Jacoby asserts, they somehow managed to present themselves as an aggrieved minority even while they were enjoying widespread influence and a rise in popularity.[187] Liberals, however, struggled to shake off the criticism of them. This inability would become apparent in the culture wars and the struggle surrounding the Enola Gay.

[184] Ibid, pp. 46-49.
[185] Joseph Crespino, 'Civil Rights and the Religious Right', in Schulman and Zelize, ed, *Rightward Bound*, p. 92.
[186] Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*, p. 145.
[187] Jacoby, *The Age of American Unreason*, p. 290.

In the late 1970s, evangelical and fundamentalist Christians started exerting their newfound political power when they rushed to the defence of independent Christian schools that they believed were under attack by, among other groups, federal bureaucrats in the Internal Revenue Service. [188] This was just one example of how the Christian right began to assert themselves politically during the 1970s. Conservative Christians, politicized and galvanised, saw their fight as part of the Protestant defence of the separation of church and state, as a last-ditch effort to protect education from a hostile government intent on standardizing and secularizing education and citizenship in America. Although evangelical support for Reagan was primarily pragmatic, based mainly on his success and the fact that he was not a liberal, he clearly benefited from their support. Though not a churchgoer, he sprang from evangelical soil, often mused about prophetic significance of world events and endorsed, at least in public, the evangelical message.

Many Christian Right activists, however, ultimately became disillusioned with Reagan, arguing that they received only symbolic representation and that he was more focused on pleasing economic and foreign policy conservatives. [189] This development was directly linked to the competition for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988. For the first time in a generation the conservatives which had rallied behind Goldwater and then followed Reagan had, as Robert Shogan argues, no clear leadership.[190] Into this void stepped Pat Robertson, a conservative media mogul and former Southern Baptist minister. Robertson's candidacy, however, helped mobilize mainstream cultures against evangelicalism. Used to the feeling of

[188] Crespino, 'Civil Rights and the Religious Right' in Schulman and Zelize, ed, *Rightward Bound*, pp. 90-1.
[189] Wilcox and Robinson, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, p. 125.
[190] Shogan, *Constant Conflict*, pp. 197-8.

being under siege, evangelicals reacted viciously, a development which helped re-energize the politicization of the Christian Right.[191]

Although their support was unable to help re-elect George Bush in the 1992 presidential election, their political activism would be rewarded in the Republican landslide victory in the 1994 mid-term elections which occurred as the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay was in full swing. The role of conservative Christians in the Republican landslide in that election is hard to overstate. The Christian Right mobilized four million activists and reached 50 million voters -- a performance matching that of traditional electoral powerhouses such as the National Rifle Association and labour unions. The Republican vote was twenty percentage points up among evangelical churchgoers who were provided with political information at their church or heard a church leader endorse a candidate.[192] White evangelicals cast about one-third of all votes for the Republican party in the House election. Overall, the religious community provided two out of every five Republican votes.[193] The culture wars were firmly on the agenda for many of the incoming Republicans who quickly set about dismantling the Enola Gay exhibit, the National Standards for History, and federal funding for the NEA, among other things.

America has been especially susceptible to this type of cultural conflict as, throughout its history, it has had a tendency towards idealism. As such the nation has been the subject of great myths about its past and grandiose visions of its future.[194] These themes emerged during America's colonial history, most notably in the *A Model of Christian Charity* sermon delivered by the Puritan cleric John Winthrop while en route to the Massachusetts Bay

[191] Ibid, p. 214.
[192] Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York, 1998), p. 100.
[193] Shogan, *Constant Conflict*, p. 31.
[194] Ibid, p. 61.

Colony. He told his fellow colonists that their new community would be 'as a city upon a hill', watched by the rest of the world, and that the people on the ships had been chosen by God to carry out this mission.[195] The phrase has become popular in American politics to emphasise values to which the nation should uphold and the unique character of America. As a result, the nation has long been portrayed in the most moralistic of terms. Whether about foreign affairs or domestic politics, public debates in America have rarely been framed merely in terms of a clash of opposing views but as a struggle between good and evil.[196] This was evident during the Enola Gay controversy as the museum's critics saw the exhibit as an attempt to undermine the notion that America was a just and moral nation and had acted as such in dropping the atomic bomb. It was not merely an argument of who was right and who was wrong. It was about whether America had been, and still was, a good and righteous nation.

During the controversy, two different narratives of how World War II ended, and the reasons for why the atomic bomb was dropped, clashed in a heated battle of the culture wars. For the critics -- mainly veterans -- their experiences of the war were the ultimate proof of how the war had ended. The curators, on the other hand, insisted on using documentary evidence as the basis for their exhibit. That meant that the two narratives were bound to clash over the sources of historical truth. There was no mistaking, as Robert Post argues, the genuine disparity between how the exhibit was conceptualized by most historians on the one hand, and by most everyone else on the other.[197] The controversy brought to the

[195] Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, ed, *The Journal of John Winthrop: 1630-1649*, Abridged edition (Cambridge, 1996), p. 10.
[196] Shogan, *Constant Conflict*, p. 62.
[197] Robert C. Post, 'A Narrative for Our Time: The Enola Gay "And after That, Period"', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 45 no. 2 (2004), 373–95.

surface a fundamental issue: what is -- or ought to be -- the relationship between what happened in the past and how we interpret and present history in the present?[198]

Both sides, but especially the critics, were emotionally invested in the exhibit. For veterans, the exhibit seemed to be questioning their lived experiences, their very identity, and historical fact. The curators, and the academics who tried to defend them, saw the attacks on the museum as an attack on their work and years of research which had uncovered new knowledge since the end of the war. Since perceptions of what constitutes fact come to us through human experiences, they are inevitably prone to 'in the eye of the beholder' bias. This was evident during the controversy as the historians involved did not recognise the existence of facts as such but viewed the debates about the war as different interpretations of the same events. For the critics, on the other hand, facts were inviolable. For that reason, there was never any serious hope that a compromise could be achieved. This further ensured that the controversy became a highly emotional affair in which reason and logic were all too easily thrown out the window in an effort to condemn the opposition.

For the participants in the culture wars; leftist, liberals, conservatives, and others, control over historical interpretation was especially important. Throughout most of American history, albeit with some challenges, most Americans have, as Roger Launius asserts, viewed their past as exceptional and triumphant.[199] This view of American history began to break down with the rise of the new social history of the 1960s. Peter Hoffer, a historian, argues that:

> Outraged by the Vietnam War and inspired by the civil rights movement, this new generation of professional historians set themselves the task of dismantling

[198] David Thelen, 'History after the Enola Gay Controversy: An Introduction', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1029–35.
[199] Roger D. Launius, 'American Memory, Culture Wars, and the Challenge of Presenting Science and Technology in a National Museum', *The Public Historian*, vol 29 no. 1 (2007), 13–30.

> consensus history. Some of them were political radicals, and they gave renewed life to the progressive critique of consensus. Others were more concerned with black history and women's history and were determined to move the story of these groups to centre stage.[200]

This development deeply worried conservatives as it risked undermining the consensus view of America's past, including that of World War II. To them, control over the historical profession would redeem the country from the alleged depravities of the 1960s and heal the trauma of the divisive Vietnam War. The Vietnam War had brought into question the founding premise of American history itself. It was commonly held that the US, from its inception, had stood for self-determination, freedom and democracy. As Marilyn Young argues, however, the longer the Vietnam War lasted the less plausible that proposition appeared.[201] If the US was to return to its preeminent position -- a city upon a hill -- conservatives had to win the struggle over historical meaning.[202] For the left, history was no less important and they too saw a redeeming quality in it. The historical profession's greater attention to minorities was, to them, an acknowledgement that these histories had previously been swept away by traditional narratives focusing on white males.[203] Control over historical interpretation was therefore paramount to the opposing sides in the culture wars, something which the Enola Gay controversy would clearly demonstrate.

Despite these developments, one of the founding bastions of America's culture had remained untouched during the tumultuous 1960s. Notwithstanding the blot of Japanese internment, and the atomic bombings, the most sacred icon of 20th century American culture, World War II, remained a symbol of national pride and virtue. Not even at the height

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[200] Peter Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York, 2004), p. 63.
[201] Marilyn B: Young, 'Dangerous History: Vietnam and the "Good War"', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 201.
[202] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, p. 254.
[203] Ibid.

of the Vietnam War, as Young asserts, did anti-war protesters question the righteousness of their country in World War II.[204] By the 1980s the consensus view of a proud and stable American past had crumbled throughout academia, but not amongst the wider population and in museums and other cultural institutions.[205] By the end of the 1990s, however, this had changed. This new approach to history encouraged a more critical look at America's past, including the most sacred of all the nation's narratives, America's involvement in and conduct during World War II.

In proposing the Enola Gay exhibit, and setting it in an explicitly historical context, the Smithsonian risked revealing that events which once appeared inevitable – that the US had to drop the bomb to end the war -- had been matters of debate and decision. As a result, the exhibit made the atomic bombings into an act of choice and made them open to moral question.[206] The Smithsonian's crime seems to have been precisely that it attempted to deal with the atomic bombings as history. That an institution such as the Smithsonian would raise the possibility that there had been alternatives to dropping the bomb was viewed as an insult. The veterans insisted there could be no questions about the need to use the bomb. It was a betrayal for the country's official museum even to raise the question. By suggesting the possibility that the war ended in an American atrocity, or even an unnecessary act of aggression, the Enola Gay exhibit called into question the previously unquestionable virtue of the entire war, throwing into sharp doubt one of the cornerstones of American national mythology.[207]

[204] Young, 'Dangerous History', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 203.
[205] Launius, 'American Memory, Culture Wars, and the Challenge of Presenting Science and Technology in a National Museum', 13–30.
[206] Young, 'Dangerous History', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, pp. 204-5.
[207] Ibid, pp. 206-8.

Unlike previous historical disagreements, which had largely been confined to educational establishments, the debate in the 1990s about America's conduct in World War II would develop into a bitter public dispute. When historians sought to extend their research to outside the ivory tower and into museums, as they did in the case of the Enola Gay controversy, a clash of cultures ensued which merged with the wider culture wars. The controversy therefore, as Kohn argues, found itself attached to a whole range of issues including arguments over revisionist history, the National Standards for History, political correctness, provocative art, multiculturalism, equal-opportunity programs, gender and sexual orientation, and just about every other divisive social or cultural issue in American society.[208] Conservatives, with very little respect for academic practices and developments, openly contested the academics' claims which challenged deeply held norms of what America represented.[209]

The Enola Gay controversy would go on to become a public, and bitter, confrontation of the culture wars. Much like the culture wars, the Enola Gay controversy had multiple and complex sources. It resulted from the longstanding suspicion and resentment of intellectuals and historians harboured by many people on the political right. It was also a case of bad timing. At a time when conservatives were enjoying widespread influence, the NASM decided to host an exhibit that problematized America's involvement in World War II. That was anathema to conservatives. The memory of World War II holds an almost sacred place in the minds of many Americans, especially conservative-minded ones. To question it meant to question the collective memory of America. The following chapter will take a closer look

[208] Richard Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars,* p. 159.
[209] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, p. 260.

at the origins of the Enola Gay controversy and the decision by the museum to host an exhibit using one of the most iconic artefacts of the war, the Enola Gay, set against the background of the culture wars.

# Chapter II

## *The Decision to Commemorate*

This chapter will introduce the key issues and primary stakeholders of the Enola Gay controversy. It will establish the major themes of the controversy such as the opposing views on history, the role of the Smithsonian Institution in presenting history, the attempts by key officials such as Robert Adams and Martin Harwit to redefine that role, and the efforts by critics of the Smithsonian to ensure the exhibit reflected a specific viewpoint. This chapter will argue that NASM seriously underestimated the difficulties, both practical and political, of exhibiting the Enola Gay. Harwit, the director of NASM, was adamant that the exhibit should go ahead, no matter the difficulties encountered. NASM's critics, primarily veterans and the AFA, through a very skewed sense of what history is, attempted to ensure that the exhibit would reflect a certain judgement, favourable to the veterans, by ignoring crucial aspects of the atomic bombings. In doing so they sought to strip the historical narrative of all ambiguity and emphasise a judgement that was, despite claims to the contrary, inherently political.

Between the opening of the new NASM building in 1976 and the outbreak of the Enola Gay controversy in the spring of 1994, the museum had been no stranger to controversy, nor was it lacking in critics. A 1981 exhibit review by Michal McMahon described the new museum as 'largely a giant advertisement for air and space technology … The omission of the Enola Gay … or rather, omission of the "offensive" themes in 20th century history represented by the World War II bomber -- can be seen as the first crisis of the new museum … Why not the Enola Gay?'[210]

[210] Michal McMahon, 'The Romance of Technological Progress: A Critical Review of the National Air and Space Museum', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 22 no. 2 (1981), 281–96.

Critics such as McMahon may have been reassured by the appointment of Adams, an archaeologist from the University of Chicago, as the new Secretary of the Smithsonian in 1984. He embarked on a radically different course compared to his predecessors and wanted to transform the institution from a 'cabinet of curiosities' to a more academically minded one and made a serious attempt at, in his words, 'deepening the intellectual structure of the place'.[211] Throughout his tenure, Adams encouraged Smithsonian staff to pursue advanced academic degrees and exhibitions took on a more enquiring and critical tone. His appointment as Secretary was followed by the appointing of Harwit as the new director of NASM in 1987. Harwit, a successful astrophysicist from Cornell University, differed from his predecessors in that he did not have an extensive background in the military or the aviation industry. Indeed, much like Adams, Harwit was an academic and Adams picked Harwit ahead of a retired four-star general as the new director of the museum. Harwit had, however, served for five years in the US Army in the 1950s and been stationed in the Pacific during the nuclear tests conducted in the Eniwetok and Bikini atolls. Of all the people involved in the controversy, apart from Paul Tibbets, the Enola Gay's pilot on the Hiroshima mission, he was the only one who had seen a nuclear device go off at close range. This experience clearly influenced him in his desire to put on an exhibition depicting the horrors of a nuclear attack. Nevertheless, Harwit's perceived lack of military experience would later work against him in his dealings with veterans during the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay.

The gradual shift towards more probing and thought-provoking exhibits by the Smithsonian was not universally welcomed. In the same year that Harwit was appointed, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History held a controversial exhibit titled 'A More Perfect

[211] Howard Means, 'The Quiet Revolutionary', *Washingtonian Magazine*, August 1987, pp. 96–101.

Union: Japanese Americans and the United States Constitution'. The exhibit, designed to mark the bicentennial anniversary of the adoption of the United States Constitution, showcased the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II and their confinement to internment camps. 'A More Perfect Union' drew heavy criticism from veterans who protested at the focus on one of the worst abuses of freedom in the history of the constitution, rather than, in their eyes, its otherwise long and successful history.[212] The curator for 'A More Perfect Union', Tom Crouch, would later find himself in the crosshairs of veterans once again over his involvement in the Enola Gay exhibit.

'A More Perfect Union' was followed by two other exhibitions, both held in 1991, that proved equally controversial. The first, at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, titled 'The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier', did not go down well with critics. The *Chicago Tribune* claimed that 'The main purpose of the exhibition ... is to demonstrate the knowing or unconscious complicity of the artists in it with what the organizers judge to be an immoral national policy, namely, the westward expansion of the United States.'[213] The second exhibit, held at NASM, was titled 'Legend, Memory, and the Great War in the Air', and focused on the role of aircraft in World War I and debunked myths about pilot heroism. It too faced heavy criticism. *The Washington Post* described the exhibit as a 'shocking show' that was 'turning heads and stomachs'.[214] The 'West as America' exhibition especially was a sign of things to come. Anonymous viewer comments in gallery logs suggest that many expected a 'feel good' experience from Smithsonian officials at this

[212] Mary Battiata, 'Smithsonian's Constitution Controversy: Show on Japanese Americans' Internment Protested by Vets', *The Washington Post*, 16 March 1987, B1.
[213] Michael Killian, 'Wild, Wild West: The Smithsonian Circles the Wagons over Its Latest Exhibit', *Chicago Tribune*, 26 May 1991, p. 16.
[214] Hank Burchard, 'Plane Truths During WWI', *The Washington Post*, 22 November 1991, N65.

highly visible venue.[215] Faced with this type of criticism, the organisers decided to end the exhibition ahead of schedule. In doing so they foreshadowed the criticism that would befall the Enola Gay exhibition.[216]

Yet exhibits like these were exactly the kind that Adams wanted to see as part of his mission of transforming the Smithsonian. He saw one of the roles of the museum as 'putting on exhibits that make people feel uncomfortable'.[217] This was in stark contrast to what many veterans and museum goers saw as the mission of the Smithsonian. Veterans who visited NASM were not expecting to be made to feel bad about their wartime service in a national museum. The press was especially critical of the new direction of the Smithsonian. *The Wall Street Journal*, traditionally on the right of the political spectrum, memorably described the Smithsonian during this period of controversial exhibits as being 'in danger of becoming the Woodstock Nostalgia Society'.[218] The implication was that the Smithsonian was populated by leftist officials who had come of age during the 1960s and held strange ideas about the nation's past. *The Washington Times*, another right-wing newspaper, in a review of the exhibits under Adams' tenure, found that he was 'transforming "America's attic" into a showcase for the victimological left'.[219] This was part of a general backlash against what conservative forces saw as the liberal takeover of the country's universities, museums, and other educational establishments, a key feature of the culture wars discussed in the previous chapter.

[215] Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at The Exhibition*, 1st edition (Minneapolis, 2002), p. 9.
[216] Ibid, p. 17.
[217] Richard H. Kohn, 'History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1036–63.
[218] Editorial, 'Even Columbus', *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 October 1992, A10
[219] Matthew Hoffman, 'Guilt Tripping at the Smithsonian', *The Washington Times*, 15 October 1992, G1.

Despite this criticism, Adams and Harwit were undeterred and the Enola Gay seemed like the perfect artefact for them to showcase their message about the social consequences of technology. The idea of displaying the Enola Gay as part of the museum's efforts marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II also faced resistance from within the museum, however. At a meeting of NASM's Research Advisory Committee in October 1987, Admiral Noel Gayler, a former commander of US forces in the Pacific, argued against displaying the aeroplane as he did not believe it represented an aeronautical achievement:

> The Japanese were essentially defeated. We were flying airplanes all over the empire, at will. I was the operations officer of the task force at that time … And except for accidents, we didn't lose any airplanes. So, there was nothing aeronautical about it. The thing that made the mission distinctive was ... that we used the nuclear weapon for the first time against human beings ... If we put that thing on exhibit, we cannot fail to give the impression that we somehow are glorifying that mission or taking pride in it.[220]

Gayler clearly did not view the Hiroshima mission, or the Enola Gay, as a milestone of aviation, a criterion normally used for artefacts at NASM. More importantly, he thought that displaying the aeroplane would be tantamount to celebrating the mass killing of tens of thousands of people.

The members of the Research Advisory Committee were not the only ones with reservations about the exhibit. Von Hardesty, chair of the museum's aeronautics department, argued that 'If the Enola Gay or another large bomber is used, it would physically overshadow everything else in the gallery; in the case of the Enola Gay, it might possibly overwhelm the whole thrust of the museum.'[221] He stressed, however, that, although museum staff were against the idea of displaying the Enola Gay

[220] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 31.
[221] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Von Hardesty to Martin Harwit - Subject: Strategic bombing exhibit and the proposed display of the B-29 Enola Gay', 18 November 1987.

specifically, they were very much in favour of Adams' and Harwit's approach to military themes.[222] Senior officials at the Smithsonian were also hesitant regarding the prospect of displaying the Enola Gay. Adams, usually supportive of thought-provoking and controversial exhibits, cautioned that any exhibit featuring the Enola Gay 'would have to be done with extraordinary sensitivity'.[223] Clearly many within the Smithsonian were worried about how to display the aeroplane and what messages and judgments such an exhibit might imply.

Despite these warnings, alerted by further veteran interest in having the Enola Gay displayed through the so-called Enola Gay Restoration Association, NASM, in 1988, began planning for a display of the bomber, restored to its original condition. In the process of planning for the exhibit both Adams and Harwit made clear their views on the role of the Smithsonian in presenting history. Adams argued that the Smithsonian was 'in the business of confronting and learning from history, not suppressing it'.[224] In an interview with *The New York Times*, he was explicit about his role at the Smithsonian when he argued that his job was to 'change this institution from the sort of tight little island in Washington which was mainly thinking about its own internal housekeeping' to one concerned with 'the grand issues of our time'.[225] Harwit, speaking about the practice of strategic bombing during World War II, for which B-29 bombers like the Enola Gay were developed, argued that 'These issues are critical, because the threat of war has never entirely left us. We need to ask: how effective were the raids militarily? Did the cost to the enemy exceed the cost of losses to the bomber command? And, above all, how high were the losses in civilian lives?'[226] But Harwit was not

[222] Ibid.
[223] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 31.
[224] Robert McCormick Adams, 'Smithsonian Horizons', *Smithsonian*, July 1988, p. 12.
[225] William A. Honan, 'A Feisty Chief Shakes Up the Smithsonian', *The New York Times*, 11 February 1990.
[226] Martin Harwit, 'The Enola Gay', *Air & Space*, September 1988, p. 4.

interested in merely asking questions about the past and about American conduct during World War II. He also saw the exhibition as a chance to talk about the threat of nuclear war more generally as he went on to argue that 'The vocabulary of war is now different. No longer do we talk of "thousand-bomber raids" and "carpet bombing." Instead we debate "mutually assured destruction," "nuclear winter," and "megadeaths." Otherwise little has changed.'[227] In Harwit's mind, the Enola Gay exhibit would advance his agenda of promoting scholarship and exploring the social contexts and human implications of aviation, while avoiding the uncritical celebration of technology.[228]

Critics of the museum, however, were quick to point to legislation which outlined how the Smithsonian should portray matters relating to the armed forces. Article 20 of the United States Code, paragraph 80a states:

> §80a. Display of contributions of Armed Forces; study centre; historical collations; National Air Museum provisions unaffected.
> (a) The Smithsonian Institution shall commemorate and display the contributions made by the military forces of the Nation toward creating, developing, and maintaining a free, peaceful, and independent society and culture in the United States of America. The valour and sacrificial service of the men and women of the Armed Forces shall be portrayed as an inspiration to the present and future generations of America. The demands placed upon the full energies of our people, the hardships endured, and the sacrifice demanded in our constant search for world peace shall be clearly demonstrated. The extensive peacetime contributions the Armed Forces have made to the advancement of human knowledge in science, nuclear energy, polar and space exploration, electronics, engineering, aeronautics, and medicine shall be graphically described.[229]

In other words, the critics argued that Smithsonian exhibitions dealing with military themes had to, by official fiat, be celebratory, based on the assumption that the mission of the US was always noble – part of a search for world peace.[230] This suggests that Harwit and his

[227] Ibid.
[228] Richard H. Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay' in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 145.
[229] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 147.
[230] John Dower, 'Three Narratives of Our Humanity' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 73.

colleagues were contradicting the original charter of the museum. What most observers missed, however, was the subsequent paragraph of the code which states that '(b) The provisions of paragraphs 80 to 80d of this title in no way rescind §77 to 77d of this title, which established the National Air Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, or any other authority of the Smithsonian Institution.'[231] NASM was exempt from this legislation because the code concerned a National Armed Forces Museum which was authorised by Congress in 1961, but was never funded and built. Joanne London, a historian, attributes the failure to establish a military museum in the US capital to concerns among the cultural elite about 'foster[ing] the notion that the United States was a warmongering nation'.[232] The code therefore did not relate to NASM, as made clear in the title and subsequent paragraphs of the code. Subchapter ten of the code, from which the paragraph above is derived, is titled 'National Armed Forces Museum Advisory Board'. Exhibits at NASM were therefore free to take whatever approach the curators liked. Nevertheless, as Article 20 called on the Smithsonian as whole to present the armed forces as an inspiration to Americans there was an expectation, at least among lawmakers, that the Enola Gay exhibit would do the same.

As part of the planning for exhibiting the Enola Gay the museum began a sixteen-month series of talks, panels, and exhibits on strategic bombing in World War II, which, according to Harwit, was required in order to make the necessary contacts for an exhibit featuring the Enola Gay. The fact that the aeroplane was to be used in order to discuss the risks and dangers of nuclear war did not sit well with veterans, however. In a foreshadowing of things to come, Ben Nicks, a veteran of World War II who had campaigned for the Enola Gay to be

[231] Ibid.
[232] Robert C. Post, 'A Narrative for Our Time: The Enola Gay "And after That, Period"', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 45 no. 2 (2004), 373–95.

displayed, argued that focusing on strategic bombing was 'simply a transparent excuse to moralize about nuclear warfare … The Enola Gay deserves to be displayed as a simple artefact of history and as a memorial and tribute to the men who flew it'.[233] Nicks' logic is seriously shaky. The only reason the Enola Gay was famous was because of the payload it carried on a single day in August 1945. Without that payload, the aircraft was not significant as an 'artefact of history' – certainly no more significant than thousands of other aircraft and crew engaged in much more dangerous missions throughout the war.

The Nicks letter points to what would be one of the recurring themes in the Enola Gay controversy -- the opposing views on history that key stakeholders in the controversy held. Long before a draft of the Enola Gay exhibit even existed some of the future critics of NASM were already beginning to dream of a time when the museum would return to a style of exhibition organising in which 'facts' would be promoted instead of 'interpretation'.[234] This dispute about whether history should be celebratory or critical in nature went right to the heart of the controversy and was one of the fundamental problems with displaying the Enola Gay. It was also part of the wider debate about history and the role of education, a key issue of the culture wars. Even before the museum mounted an exhibition the Hiroshima bomber had already come to symbolise conflicting perspectives on American war making -- emphasising either innovative technological achievement or the mass death of enemy civilians -- and, more widely, positive and negative judgements on the American past.[235]

NASM were not only interested in taking on the Enola Gay, a highly symbolic artefact, and the debate about the threat of nuclear war in a single exhibit. They were also posing more

[233] Ben Nicks, 'Keep Moralizing out of Museums', *Air & Space*, December 1990, p. 8.
[234] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 25.
[235] Richard H. Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars,* p. 145.

fundamental questions about the purpose of history and the role of museums, especially national museums, in displaying historical artefacts. This might seem to have been overly-ambitious, and indeed, throughout much of the controversy, NASM and their handling of the situation can rightfully be described as, at best, naïve and miscalculated. It is somewhat surprising that the museum underestimated the controversy that was brewing. It understood better than most that historical commemorations are socially constructed and often contested events. At stake is nothing less than the control of history. In defending the planned exhibit, the museum argued that it would present all the differing views. This is exactly what got it into trouble with veterans and other critics.[236]

There seemed to be almost no end to the problems of displaying the Enola Gay. The most obvious problem was that the aeroplane was too big to comfortably fit into NASM's building on The Mall. A B-29 bomber is a large aeroplane. The Enola Gay is 99 feet long, has a wingspan of 141 feet and weighs 74,500 lbs. For years the museum maintained that the only reason that the aeroplane was not on display was that there was no room to display it. The standard reply given to queries regarding the Enola Gay was that the museum would have to wait until the completion of the proposed extension at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, DC. When Harwit became director, he asked to see the dimensions of the museum and found that the Enola Gay could be squeezed in to the largest gallery on the main floor, with the wings stretched diagonally from corner to opposite corner.[237] Fitting the aeroplane into the building turned out to be the easy bit, however. Lin Ezell, in charge of the museum's collections, pointed out that:

[236] Michael J. Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation', in Michael J. Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 202-3.
[237] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied,* p. 35.

> If the Enola Gay is exhibited in Gallery 102, all objects currently on the floor of the gallery would have to be removed, as well as the Boeing 247D, which is suspended above the gallery ... In addition to the galleries being closed, sections of the parking level underneath the main corridor from the west entrance to the escalator area and underneath Gallery 102 would have to be closed since large cranes would be used throughout the operations that would require that the first floor be jacked up.[238]

In other words, a display of the Enola Gay meant that everything currently in the main gallery had to go and that the floors of the museum needed to be reinforced due to the weight of the cranes required to put the aeroplane in place. There were also concerns that the museum floors would not hold up under the weight of the aeroplane once in place.

Logistical challenges were not the only problem. The museum also seriously underestimated the differences regarding how to display the aeroplane, the political ramifications of the exhibit, and the lengths to which the museum's opponents were willing to go to ensure the exhibit reflected their viewpoints. In an essay published shortly after the conclusion of the controversy, Linenthal, who worked on NASM's advisory committee, admitted to underestimating the forces that the controversy would unleash:

> nothing in my experience with memorial exhibits prepared me for what happened when the National Air and Space Museum tried to mount its Enola Gay exhibit to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II … I felt remarkably sanguine about the problems or issues that might arise, and the record of the advice my colleagues on the committee and I offered the museum during its early script preparations indicates how little any of us foresaw what lay in the museum's path.[239]

There was a real disparity between what the Smithsonian thought it should be doing, and what many of its visitors thought. By the time Harwit became director, NASM had already begun to change its image from 'temple' to 'forum' by holding exhibits on Hitler's V2 rockets

[238] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Lin Ezell to Martin Harwit, Subject: Exhibiting the Enola Gay', 11 December 1987.
[239] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 10.

(the first time pictures of dead bodies were shown in the museum) and the 1991 World War I exhibit, 'The Great War in the Air', described above.[240] Harwit kept up the momentum of this transformation with his insistence that the Enola Gay exhibit should go ahead. As we have seen, this change in approach at NASM was not welcomed by all.

Veterans, and other critics of the Smithsonian, were fearful that the institution, given the reputation of its exhibits, would distort what they saw as *their* story. William Rooney, one of the key veterans who had campaigned for the Enola Gay to be displayed, argued, in an exchange of letters with Adams, that he and other veterans were suspicious

> of the Smithsonian's intention to manage history as is evidenced in the last paragraph of your letter. In that last paragraph, you offer me the quote: 'A decent respect for the opinions of mankind.' I offer you one in response. I can give you the author of this quote. It was Harry Truman. He said: 'I haven't heard anyone apologize for Pearl Harbor.' ... Does your 'Decent respect for the opinions of mankind' give respect to the millions of Americans who fought in World War II? Do you read the Japanese correctly or does your opinion take its lead from the State Department plus your own determination to punish America for having dropped the atomic bomb?[241]

Rooney concluded by noting that he saw the dispute over the Enola Gay 'as a contest between a Washington Satrap with all of the infrastructure and social, political and government connections on his side. On the other side is one old American citizen with a conviction.'[242] These remarks are indicative of the more general discord that existed between veterans, conservative critics, and the Smithsonian with its emphasis on academic rigour. As the veterans saw it, the Smithsonian was ignoring basic facts about the end of the war. The veterans believed they knew what the facts were since they had been present at

[240] Ibid, p. 24.
[241] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from William A. Rooney to Robert Adams', 22 January 1987.
[242] Ibid.

the time. They were therefore worried that the museum would not showcase what they saw as their history.

Veterans were deeply suspicious of the Smithsonian's intentions, especially over its handling of the Enola Gay, and not without reason. The Enola Gay had been handed over to the Smithsonian in July 1949 when it was flown by Tibbets from storage in Arizona to Park Ridge, Illinois. The newly established National Air Museum did not have any suitable storage for the massive bomber, however, and so the aeroplane remained outside, unprotected from the elements. Its last flight occurred in December 1952 when it was flown to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. For the next eight years the bomber sat on the runway at Andrews, adjacent to a golf course, and was dented by golf balls, raided by souvenir hunters, and made into a home by birds and rats. In August 1960 it was finally disassembled, and the following year moved into storage at the museum's Paul E. Garber facility in Suitland, Maryland. The aeroplane remained neglected for a further twenty-three years until a decision to restore it was taken in 1984.

Veterans were therefore mistrustful, perhaps justifiably so, regarding the Smithsonian's intentions to display the aeroplane. An often-repeated accusation was that the Smithsonian never intended to display the Enola Gay, but was using it to ensure Congress would pass legislation allowing it to construct its long overdue extension at Dulles, where large artefacts such as the Enola Gay could be displayed. Elmer Henson, another veteran, took this line in a letter to Adams. He argued that:

> If the Smithsonian ever had any intent of placing this historic aircraft on display it would have done so decades ago ... Why not tell the public that it will never be done as the money and space can better be used elsewhere, that all members of

> the generation to whom the Enola Gay means anything will soon be gone and that those who came later couldn't care less?[243]

Here Henson clearly demonstrated a view of history that was shared by most veterans, namely that the past is only important to the people who had first-hand experience of the event and that, therefore, the aeroplane which dropped the first atomic bomb was of no importance to the generation that came after the event. This simplistic and narrow understanding of history fails to grasp the symbolic importance of certain historical artefacts and the long-term implications of such a significant event as the first dropping of an atomic bomb on a city.

In response to accusations like this, all Adams could do was repeat the mantra that the Enola Gay would be 'among the primary exhibits at our proposed National Air and Space Museum annex'.[244] That was little reassurance to the aging veterans who felt that they might not be around to see the Enola Gay fully restored and displayed. The museum continuously stated that the aeroplane would be restored and displayed in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. For some veterans that was not quick enough. Some, such as Paul Filipkowski, therefore suggested that the aeroplane be lent or donated to another museum:

> Both you and Secretary Adams have expressed the will to display the Enola Gay ... However, it doesn't seem likely that the Enola Gay will be on display for at least a decade. Perhaps the time to reconsider loaning the Enola Gay to another museum, even temporarily, is now. While the plight of the plane's condition might be a bargaining chip in winning Congressional funding for a new museum, there are World War II veterans who would very much like to see the plane displayed within their lifetimes.[245]

[243] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Elmer L. Henson to Robert Adams', 30 June 1988.
[244] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Robert Adams to Elbert L. Watson', 13 July 1988.
[245] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Paul Filipkowski to Martin Harwit', 22 August 1988.

The museum was hesitant to lend the aeroplane, however temporarily, for two reasons. The first was that the plane was already undergoing restoration and that moving it to another museum while restoration was still ongoing was both unwise and impractical. The second reason was that NASM was disinclined to part with such a significant artefact as the Enola Gay which it deemed to be part of the national collection of historical artefacts. The museum did, however, consider picking up the pace of the restoration of the Enola Gay in order to satisfy their critics. That came with its own set of problems, however. As Ezell pointed out: 'If we pull everyone off their planned assignments, except for those artefacts that have already been slated for an exhibit, we could complete the Enola Gay restoration much sooner, by 1992. However, we would be forced to ignore other artefacts that both the Collections Management staff and the curators agree should be cared for as soon as possible.'[246] Some veterans would no doubt have deemed that an acceptable solution, but the museum was not willing to drop everything for the sake of the Enola Gay.

Recognising that military veterans were a core constituency of the museum, NASM did move to improve its relationship with them by working with the Enola Gay Restoration Committee. After a visit to the Garber facility where the Enola Gay was being restored, Frank Stewart, president of the committee, remarked that he and his colleagues were 'impressed with the dedication and professionalism of your staff, and compliment everyone for the open, positive approach to our common goals' and that the committee appreciated the 'high priority' assigned to the Enola Gay.[247] The museum even went so far as to propose an official

[246] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Lin Ezell to Martin Harwit "Subject: Exhibiting the Enola Gay"', 11 December 1987.
[247] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Frank B. Stewart to Martin Harwit', 28 June 1988.

collaborative effort between the committee and the museum the month after the committee's visit.[248]

Yet some members of the committee, like Ben Nicks, remained concerned about the context in which the museum would display the aeroplane. Nicks worried that, given the reputation of the museum, curators might be more intent on sending a political message about strategic defence and nuclear weapons. He argued that the morality of nuclear warfare should 'be determined in the pulpit and the Halls of Congress' and that the anti-nuclear and anti-war sentiments of Adams and Harwit were 'painfully apparent … Their remarks deal not with history, the eminent domain of any museum -- but indeed, pure politics.'[249] Nicks evidently believed that history consists of facts and nothing else. What he failed to understand, however, was that history is determined, not through facts, but by interpretations. This inevitably leads to different views as people tend to have different interpretations. Nicks' view was just that, a point of view. It was no less an interpretation or a political viewpoint than that held by NASM. The job of the historian, and of museums, is to analyse and debate different views. Nicks was objecting to a political interpretation different from his own and was certain that his political interpretation was not an interpretation at all, but an incontrovertible truth.

Nicks was not, however, entirely incorrect in his suspicions. The museum's Research Advisory Board, expressing its tentative support for the exhibit, argued that: 'The ever-present threat of nuclear war must be addressed by an intelligent public. A well-designed

[248] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from The National Air and Space Museum to The Enola Gay Restoration Committee "A Proposal for Cooperative Effort"', July 1988.
[249] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Ben Nicks to Jay P. Spencer', 3 October 1993.

exhibit would convey the message that strategic bombing with nuclear weapons is too horrible an escalation of past warfare for any civilized society to contemplate.'[250] Clearly the museum, or at least the Research Advisory Board, had a political agenda. Harwit also shared this belief through his insistence that the exhibit should show the horrors of nuclear war. Admiral Gayler, however, remained opposed to any display of the Enola Gay. He argued that compared to the heroism of bomber crews who went back again and again into action against fighter aircraft and flak, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki missions were 'milk runs' not deserving of any glorification.[251] In a private letter to Harwit, Gayler argued: 'I can think of nothing better calculated to bring the museum into disrepute ... [the] Enola Gay is something else: it represents the first use of the atom bomb against human beings. It is more than an airplane: it is an instrument of genocide. Surely we don't want it up there in a museum where we can otherwise be proud of American ideals and courage.'[252]

Gayler clearly foresaw the problems that exhibiting the Enola Gay would bring. More importantly, unlike most veterans, he did not see the bombing of Hiroshima as something to be celebrated. Rather than a symbol of the end of the war, the bomber seemed to him an instrument used to incinerate tens of thousands of men, women and children, most of them civilians, and the ushering in of an era of perpetual fear of nuclear war. As argued above, the Enola Gay was only special because of its payload. Neither the aircraft, nor the crew, nor the danger of the mission made it special, therefore it is impossible to display it without giving prominence to its payload and its effect. Gayler feared that exhibiting the aeroplane would

[250] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Minutes of the National Air and Space Museum Research Advisory Committee meeting', 22-24 October 1988.
[251] Ibid.
[252] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Noel Gayler to Martin Harwit', 29 August 1988.

be seen as celebrating this and that it had no place in a museum dedicated to showcasing aerospace achievements. His comments also indicate that the views of the armed forces community were much more diverse than indicated by the Enola Gay Restoration Committee. Nevertheless, divisions on the advisory board undermined efforts to place the expertise of historians over the memory of veterans, and, by extension, the authority they were trying to wield over their own exhibit.[253]

In many ways NASM was an ideal place for an exhibit featuring the Enola Gay. The problem was that it could not separate its exhibits from the symbolism of the place. Bock's Car, the aeroplane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki, had been on display for years at the US air force museum in Dayton, Ohio. There it had stirred no great controversy because visitors expected an air force museum to celebrate the aeroplane as an instrument of war. But to display the Enola Gay, at a national museum on The Mall was different. The site of the exhibit, in the same building with the Wright Flyer, the Spirit of St Louis, and the Apollo 11 space capsule, almost necessitated a celebration. By its very existence, and due to the symbolism associated with the museum, NASM gave its artefacts a particular status as national icons worthy of worship.[254] Given the range of artefacts and stories on display at the museum many visitors and commentators were expecting that the museum should appear 'non-partisan' and 'objective' because national museums, such as NASM, are where America tells its histories to itself in the broadest possible terms.[255] However, this overlooks the fact that, by their very nature, museum exhibits are highly selective and present a particular point of view as something is always necessarily emphasised or deemphasised.

[253] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 213.
[254] Alex Roland, 'Voices in the Museum', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 39 no. 3 (1998), 483–88.
[255] Luke, *Museum Politics*, p. 22.

The museum staff were not the only ones grappling with how to display the aeroplane. The Enola Gay Restoration Committee was outright contradictory over its stance on the bomber. In a report to the 9th Bomb Group Association, a veterans' organization, Nicks presented a resolution arguing that: 'The Enola Gay should be displayed to citizens of America and the world, not as a symbol but as an artefact of history as it was -- not as some would like to have it.' Yet a few paragraphs later the resolution called for the Enola Gay to 'be publicly and proudly displayed as a *symbol* and a reminder for present and future generations that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, and that securing of peace in this United States sometimes demands the dedicated commitment of its citizen soldiers and the unfortunate awesome sacrifice of human lives'.[256] This clear contradiction, again, shows a very distorted sense of what history is and what is its purpose. For Nicks, history consists of facts and should be used to celebrate events, such as the achievements of veterans like himself. This view, which Nicks shared with many critics, sought to remove all ambiguity from the historical record and use it for political purposes, namely the promotion of a particular judgement at the expense of other views. Critical engagement and discussion of complex events was, according to adherents of this view, not something with which history should be concerned. People like Nicks therefore saw history in very blunt terms, black or white, good and bad. This crude and thin understanding of history fails to consider the multitude of views toward the bombing of Hiroshima. As a result, the arguments between NASM and its critics became pointless exercises in defending different political views, rather than a meaningful discussion and analysis of the evidence available on the bombing of Hiroshima.

[256] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, Ben Nicks, 'The Enola Gay - B29 That Dropped World's First Atomic Bomb, Hiroshima, Japan, August 6, 1945, Report to the Ninth Bomb Group Association and Resolution Calling for Its Speedy Restoration and Display', 13-16 October 1988. Emphasis added.

On top of this Harwit correctly pointed out, in a memorandum to Margret Gaynor, the director of government relations for the Smithsonian, that the Enola Gay Restoration Committee was asking for two separate things:

> The Committee is trying to work out ways in which it could help the Museum speed up the restoration of the airplane. We are very pleased with those moves, because we also would like to see the work proceed more rapidly. At the same time, however, they have also asked that we consider transferring the restored plane to the Strategic Air Command museum in Omaha, Nebraska. We have said we don't want to do that … I've mentioned these requests to two of our Congressional Regents when they were here recently, just to let them know that we might need their support in staving off groups who feel they have a right to our airplanes, simply because we currently have no Extension at which to display them.[257]

Evidently the veterans believed that the history of the Enola Gay, and the Hiroshima bombing, was their history and theirs alone. The controversy was thus not only over whose history should be told but was also a fight over who should dominate the process of historical representation.[258] They therefore sought to claim ownership of that history and the artefact at the centre of their story in order to better promote their own views, without other implied judgements.

Although letters from veterans and others calling for the rapid restoration and display of the Enola Gay were by far the most numerous, there were also letters from the general public protesting against the idea of displaying the aeroplane. In a reply to one such letter Adams argued that: 'It is not our intention to "glorify" the Enola Gay. People sometimes assume that the Smithsonian, as an establishment of the United States government, must be an uncritical cheerleader for everything ever done in the name of our country. But such a role would be a grave disservice to the American people.' Instead, Adams reiterated his belief

[257] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Martin Harwit to Margret Gaynor "Another Enola Gay request"', 3 October 1988.
[258] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 209.

that: ‘Our proper function is not to render historical judgments; rather, it is to present the evidence as accurately as possible, trusting in the intelligence of an informed public to draw their own conclusions.'[259] Here Adams displayed the naïve assumptions that would plague the museum throughout the controversy. Most worrying was his misunderstanding of what most visitors saw as the role of the Smithsonian. From a national museum, highlighting the achievements of air and space flight, visitors were expecting a ‘feel good’ experience. He also underestimated the extent to which museum visitors were informed about the events of World War II and the character of the war in the Pacific. The museum assumed that most visitors knew a fair bit about the war. That was a gross miscalculation. For some viewers, especially younger ones, World War II was as distant as the American Civil War. The museum, belatedly, admitted their mistake.

Over the next three years plans for the Enola Gay exhibit evolved through a series of proposals and planning documents. Harwit and his team of curators outlined the plan for the exhibit by explaining that: ‘The main thrust would be for a thoughtful retrospective which places the role of the aircraft and the bombing of Hiroshima in the context of its times, focusing on factors affecting Truman's decision to drop the bomb, and presenting the factual information on World War II that has emerged from archival documents over the years.'[260] Visitors would be encouraged to take sides in the historiographical debates, as the curators themselves did in certain cases. For example, they seemed particularly convinced that diplomatic considerations influenced the decision to drop the bomb. Veterans envisaged something completely different. They wanted the exhibit to celebrate the sacrifices they had

[259] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, ‘Letter from Robert Adams to Katherine Chudoba’, 3 May 1988.
[260] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 109.

made during the war. These sacrifices would be diminished by the emphasis on the last year of the war, on the death and destruction caused by the bomb, and on the role that diplomatic considerations, racism, and thoughts of vengeance may have played on the decision to use the bomb.[261]

This appeared straightforward enough, yet senior officials at the Smithsonian were still not convinced. Adams and Connie Newman, the Under-Secretary of the Smithsonian, remained 'especially wary of the potential political implications of this show'.[262] The Research Advisory Committee also urged care to avoid 'revisionism' and had concerns about how Truman's decision might be viewed by visitors in the light of developments over the past fifty years, rather than in terms of information the president had available to him at the time.[263] Accordingly, Adams and Newman only agreed to allow planning of the exhibit to continue provided that Harwit and his curatorial team showed them plans and layouts, as well as labels and other descriptive material, before any commitments were made.[264]

The differences separating the Smithsonian and its critics went further than simply how to display the Enola Gay. The opposing sides could not even agree on what exactly had happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, let alone what the events represented. Harwit outlined his view to Donald Rehl, one of the most vocal veteran activists, when he stated that:

> Unfortunately, there is no one correct view of the so-called 'decision to drop the bomb' by President Truman. Although the fanatical resistance of Japanese forces on Okinawa and other islands, plus the sudden ending of the war in August 1945, have lent much credence to the view that only the atomic bomb prevented an invasion of Japan, historical studies since that time have shown the problem to

[261] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, pp. 204-5.
[262] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 121.
[263] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Minutes of the National Air and Space Museum Advisory Board', 11 December 1991.
[264] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 121.

> be more complex. The Japanese government initiated a peace offer in July through the Soviet government which may or may not have been half-hearted, depending on which scholarly view one follows. Others, including General LeMay, have argued that the Japanese would have surrendered anyway if only conventional bombing and the blockade had continued. Army staff studies of the invasion plans for Japan done in 1945 also predicted far below the 'millions' often asserted, and many historians now view an invasion as unlikely in any case. Others support the correctness of President Truman's decision. In addition, there are many points of view regarding the morality of bombing civilians.[265]

In Harwit's, and indeed most historians' view, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was the result of several factors and different concerns which affected the decision to use the bomb, including diplomatic issues and the attempts to intimidate the Soviet Union. Not so for many veterans, including Rehl, who saw things in far simpler terms. Responding to a eulogy Harwit wrote for Paul Garber, the man after whom the museum's restoration facility was named, Rehl argued that

> in Dr Harwit's eulogy, he fails to explain fully the historical importance that the Enola Gay represents. He merely states that it dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He leaves the field wide open to the revisionists of history to continue their cries about how horrible and unnecessary President Truman's (brave) decision to use the bomb was. His statement about the Enola Gay should have been – 'that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima which saved millions of lives that would have been lost in the planned invasion of Japan and also thwarted Russia's plan to sit at the peace table and build a "Berlin Wall" in Tokyo.' If Dr Harwit felt that such a statement was too lengthy for his 'eulogy' he should not have mentioned the Enola Gay at all.[266]

Here Rehl presented as fact two things that were wildly disputed regarding the atomic bombings: firstly, that not only had the bombings saved millions of lives (which cannot be proven as the invasion of Japan did not happen), but also that it prevented the Soviet Union from building a 'Berlin Wall' in Tokyo, decades before the idea of building a wall in Berlin had been articulated by the Soviet leadership. Not only did Rehl present his unique take on

[265] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Donald C. Rehl', 18 December 1992.
[266] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Donald C. Rehl to George C. Larson', 3 December 1992.

history, he also made it quite clear that for veterans like him, the condition of the Enola Gay was more important than any other concerns. As George Larson, the editor of the museum's *Air & Space* magazine, to whom Rehl's letter was addressed pointed out: 'The suggestion that the occasion of Paul Garber's death presents an opportunity for debate about the role of the Enola Gay is unlike anything I have read or heard in the years I've worked here, but it helps to clarify, for me at least, that for many people, the status of the airplane eclipses many other human concerns. This was, after all, a man's funeral.'[267] The letter also made clear that the distinct possibility that the story of the atomic bombings was, at the very least contestable, was utterly out of the question to some veterans.[268]

In a separate letter to Harwit, Rehl went on to argue that:

> Need I remind you that the Enola Gay represents the fact that the war was ended 'overnight' and put to rest LeMay's contention that the firebombing of Japanese cities might end it? Yes, might do it. No one could say when and meanwhile the plans for the invasion proceeded. President Truman's brave decision to use the bomb was meant to remove 'when' from the controversy and use the word 'NOW'.[269]

Rehl's logic is seriously dubious given that he, in this letter, rejects counterfactual history after having used it freely in his earlier letter. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima occurred on 6 August 1945. The Japanese surrender was announced on 15 August, nine days after the bombing of Hiroshima. That can hardly be called 'overnight'. And if the Japanese surrendered 'overnight', as Rehl suggests, why was Nagasaki bombed on 9 August, three days after the Hiroshima bombing? It is evident from these exchanges, and the attitude taken by the museum and its critics, that the two parties were conducting separate debates.

[267] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from George C. Larson to Donald C. Rehl', 14 December 1992.
[268] Luke, *Museum Politics*, pp. 28-9.
[269] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Donald C. Rehl to Martin Harwit', 2 December 1992. Emphasis in the original.

The museum was interested in a historical discussion about the atomic bombings and the different motives behind them. The veterans for their part were asking for something far more significant. They wanted their actions to be celebrated in a national museum by, in effect, ignoring the fact that there is dispute about the necessity and purpose of the bombing. The veterans' viewpoint was therefore inherently political and went much further than simply telling their story.

By the end of 1992 the museum faced a dilemma regarding the logistical challenges of displaying the aeroplane. Given that it was impractical to display the whole aeroplane in the museum on The Mall, without removing exhibits and risking damage to the building, the decision was taken to display only the forward fuselage of the Enola Gay. This further angered the museum's critics who were looking forward to a display of the entire aeroplane, fully assembled, for the first time. The museum saw their predicament as choice between displaying the entire aeroplane, and accepting the risks in doing so, or not displaying it at all. The museum knew that the exhibit, no matter what shape it took, would be controversial, as pointed out by Michael Neufeld, the lead curator, in one of the many planning documents:

> Controversy is nonetheless unavoidable, because the exhibit cannot avoid an examination of the process by which the United States government decided to use atomic bombs on Japan, nor can we, or should we, avoid photographs of the physical effects of the bombs on the inhabitants of the two cities. The point of those two parts of the exhibit should be to convey to the general public some of the moral and political dilemmas of the decision to drop the bomb, while giving the historical context of 1945.[270]

Neufeld, in an attempt to find a compromise, concluded the planning document by stating that 'doing an exhibit in Gallery 104 with the foreword fuselage of the Enola Gay would

[270] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Michael Neufeld to Martin Harwit "A Proposal for a Fiftieth-Anniversary Hiroshima Exhibit in the West End (Gallery 104)"', 1 December 1992.

enable us to meet the fiftieth anniversary of this crucial event with a significant and effective exhibit, while keeping costs down … and controversy manageable'.[271] The decision to display only the front section of the aeroplane was thought by the museum to be a way of managing controversy surrounding the exhibit. This proved to be another miscalculation. The problem with displaying only the forward fuselage was that it undermined the earlier arguments of the museum. Having repeatedly stated that it was restoring the whole aeroplane for a display this was, in effect, an admission of failure.

What angered the museum's critics most, however, was that the exhibit would showcase a multitude of views regarding the atomic bombings. The veterans were worried that their story and experiences would not be told in a way that reflected well on them. As they saw it, the atomic bomb ended the war and prevented the invasion of Japan thereby saving untold number of lives. Period. The end justified the means. However, as Harwit explained to another World War II veteran, Burr Bennett:

> You also assume that there was only one American viewpoint on the bombing in 1945, which is not true. Most notably, many scientists in the Chicago laboratory of the Manhattan Project objected to the dropping of the atomic bomb on civilian populations without warning. Any exhibit we might do would not take any particular view of the morality and necessity of the atomic bombings but must take into account the diversity of views -- then and now.[272]

The veterans, however, did not accept this diversity of views. In a letter to his Congressman, Bennett explained that:

> Their exhibit will display the Enola Gay only to draw a crowd for their negative position on strategic bombing ... in one letter, they did state: 'We will not attack the decision to drop the atomic bomb, but neither will we celebrate it.' Obviously, there is an anti-nuclear sentiment solidly embedded at the Smithsonian ... There is this terrible movement afoot by the so-called 'intellectuals' in this country to mock everything ever accomplished by the

[271] Ibid.
[272] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to W. Burr Bennett', 23 November 1992.

> United States. The Smithsonian's cryptic explanation of their planned exhibit implies that they plan to do the same to the Enola Gay.'[273]

Bennet suspected that, by not wanting to celebrate the victory in World War II, the Smithsonian intended to shame American servicemen. More importantly, the veterans were worried that visitors to the museum would not understand how dropping the atomic bomb could ever be justified, even in time of war. As Bennett explained in a letter to Adams: 'Is it honest to judge what happened in 1945 by the morality of today … Is it not the height of sophistry to look back now and say that bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unnecessary?'[274]

So strong was the distrust for the intellectuals of the Smithsonian that the veterans assumed that the exhibit would be damming to them, even before a single word of the exhibit script had been produced. Given that the exhibit was due to be held in a national museum, located on The Mall in the heart of the US capital, there was no doubt in the minds of the veterans about what judgement the exhibit should pass. By including the suffering caused by the bombings it would imply a very different judgement to what the veterans were expecting. Fearful that the exhibit was being written in a way to avoid offending Japan and survivors of the bombing, Bennett argued that 'The Enola Gay should be displayed with the sensibilities of the American veterans in mind. To do otherwise would be to bruise our sensibilities which should be paramount if the word National, in the National Air and Space Museum means the United States of America.'[275]

[273] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from W. Burr Bennett to John Edward Porter', 22 October 1992.
[274] Ibid.
[275] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from W. Burr Bennett to Robert Adams', 6 September 1992.

By 1993 the brewing controversy had become contextualised as the difficulties in squaring the desires of Harwit and his curatorial team with the expectations of veterans, critics, and museum visitors became further entrenched. Yet Harwit was unrepentant in his desire to see the exhibit happen. He took a deep, personal interest in wishing to hold an exhibit focused on the atomic bombings. None of his predecessors had immersed themselves so deeply in any single exhibit. His involvement as director of the museum went far beyond the need to be aware of the controversies the exhibit would no doubt cause. Harwit made the exhibit his personal mission. He explained his actions in a letter to Senator Mike Mansfield, a former ambassador to Japan:

> You might wonder why I should be so persistent in trying to mount this exhibition, when it might be far easier to put on some more trendy show certain to attract praise. Simply put, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are indisputably pivotal events in the history of our country and in the annals of the twentieth century. If we, as a nation, cannot soberly and dispassionately examine and discuss what happened there, to see how the critical decisions were made, and to appreciate their long-lasting impact, then it is unlikely that we will ever be able to face squarely the lessons that we must assimilate from our own history. That would be a tragedy for a great democracy, and I think we as a people are bigger than that.[276]

Here Harwit neatly summarised his stance on the exhibit. He wanted the general public to critically engage with questions surrounding the atomic bombings as he believed, firstly, that they were important events in the history of the US and worth examining. Secondly, having an informed citizenry was crucial in a democracy like the US. That was, in Harwit's view, the mission of NASM; to raise questions, educate, and encourage visitors to make up their own mind. Harwit's own experiences of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific during the 1950s no doubt encouraged him to take this

[276] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Senator Mike Mansfield', 28 April 1993.

view. He believed that both narratives, the heroic and the critical, could be addressed in a single exhibit.

In hindsight, it is easy to see how the very structure of the exhibit made that commitment an impossibility. The plans called for the 'intellectual heart' of the exhibit to be the various controversies that surround the decision to drop the bomb, and its 'emotional heart' to be the horror of the effect of the bomb on the ground.[277] Unfortunately, he underestimated the extent to which people wanted to engage with crucial historical questions at a museum dedicated to aerospace achievements. Most people did not come to the Smithsonian to ponder deep and meaningful questions, as shown by the reactions to the 'West as America' and 'The Great War in the Air' exhibitions. In the case of NASM, people came to see great machines and to be made to feel good about themselves and America as a nation. Like 'The Great War in the Air' exhibition the 'Crossroads' was criticised as an exhibit that moved, in the eyes of its critics, beyond the museum as a place where great technological achievements could be admired to a place where air power was 'on trial' as a threat to human existence.[278]

The first substantial planning document for the exhibit was produced in April 1993 and argued that 'the National Air and Space Museum has an obligation and an opportunity to help visitors better understand the meaning of the decisions and events that have shaped the subsequent history of the twentieth century'. According to the document, the exhibit would address such themes as 'the Manhattan Project and its origins, the escalating spiral of attacks on civilian populations during World War II and the peculiar character of the Pacific War, including the racism manifested by both sides'. The exhibit would conclude 'as it began,

[277] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 29.
[278] Ibid, p. 27.

by noting the difficult and debatable character of the atomic bombings, as well as their important symbolic role as one of the starting points of the nuclear age and the Cold War'.[279] Over the course of the next two months the planning document, which originally went by the title of 'Fifty Years On', evolved through further drafts until finally, in July 1993, the exhibit arrived at its tentative title: 'The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Onset of the Cold War'. Throughout the planning process the document maintained its original emphasis on the controversial character of the atomic bombings and the onset of the Cold War.

Some of the fiercest criticism to the planning documents came, not from the veterans, but from within the Smithsonian. Barber Conable, one of the Regents of the Smithsonian, the board which administers the institution, was not pleased with the document, arguing that 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'.[280] That was counter-factual as the costs of not dropping the bomb can never be known as the alternatives, most likely an invasion of Japan, did not happen. Yet Conable's comments show that the insistence by veterans that the exhibit should include outright speculation was shared by senior Smithsonian officials. More worrying was the fact that Harwit felt that the curators, Neufeld and Crouch, were deliberately undermining him by avoiding to address the concerns of figures such as Adams and Conable and instead imposed their own, personal, views on the exhibit. In a response to a draft of 'Fifty Years On', Harwit argued:

[279] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'A Proposal – Hiroshima and Nagasaki: A Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum', April 1993.
[280] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Jim Hobbins to Bob Adams, Connie Newman, Tom Freudenheim, and Martin Harwit, "Subject: Barber Conable's Reaction to Fifty Years On"', 21 June 1993. Emphasis in the original.

> The consistent problem with Mike's [Neufeld] headings, subheadings, and introductory paragraphs, is that they do not do what the Museum always claims it intends to do: To let visitors judge … 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?[281]

As plans for the exhibit developed, critics of the Smithsonian's new direction become more vocal. The popular magazine *Aviation* claimed, based on the reputation of the museum, that NASM was ignoring its 'Congressional mandate' and that 'a new order is perverting the museum's original purpose from restoring and displaying aviation and space artefacts to presenting gratuitous social commentary on the uses to which they have been put'.[282]

What was worse from the museum's standpoint was that the internal disagreements regarding the exhibit were beginning to undermine it. In a detailed report to Harwit regarding the exhibit, Adams spelled out his concerns: 'I've read your planning document with interest and find much of it compelling. There could be an exhibit here that does the Smithsonian credit. On the other hand, there are some, fairly fundamental aspects of it with which I am no more in agreement now than when we have discussed them on previous occasions.'[283] Adams went on to argue that:

> I cannot accept the wording 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'. This should be an exhibit commemorating the end of World War II, taking appropriate note of the atom bomb's central role in one theatre, and seeing that decision-point as a decisive determinant of decades of strategic and political thinking and action that followed.[284]

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[281] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Martin Harwit to Tom Crouch, "Subject: The latest draft of 50 Years On"', 2 July 1993.
[282] Arthur H. Sanfelici, 'Is the NASM Thumbing Its Nose at Congress While No One's Watching', *Aviation*, July 1993, p. 6.
[283] 'Memo from Bob Adams to Martin Harwit', 17 July 1993, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings* (Arlington, 2000).
[284] Ibid.

Adams' report received a stern response from Crouch. On Adams' objection to the wording of the title and focus on the development of the bomb Crouch argued:

> That is, of course, precisely what the exhibit outlined in the document is all about. Fiddling with the title and the introductory panel will not change that … In a nutshell, the Secretary is not consistent. On the one hand he says: 'Basically, I think the planning document from unit 1 on is in very good shape.' On the other hand, he identifies the exhibition outlined in that document as presenting an 'unacceptable risk to the SI [Smithsonian Institution]'. What are we to make of that? You can't have it both ways.[285]

Crouch concluded by summarising the museum's predicament with an often-quoted rhetorical question: '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.'[286]

As the curators saw it, their critics sought to overlook the fifty-year long controversy surrounding the decision to drop the bomb, to sanitize what happened once the bomb had been dropped, to defend the practice of strategic bombing, and, most importantly, to protect the heroic image of the air force and the end of the war. On the other hand, from the critics' perspective, the museum seemed to be saying one thing -- that they were open to criticism, while, in effect, ignoring any criticisms made.[287] When Crouch argued that the script could not both make veterans 'feel good' and critically discuss the use of atomic weapons he pointed out the great gulf between the two narratives and worried that, even though they were part of the same story, no exhibit could bridge such a gulf.[288]

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[285] 'Memo from Tom Crouch to Martin Harwit "Subject: A Response to the Secretary"', 21 July 1993, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.* Emphasis in the original.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, pp. 35-6.
[288] Ibid, p. 38.

Crouch's letter sent Harwit's patience over the edge. In a strongly worded memorandum to Crouch and Neufeld the next day he lamented 'the attempts I have made, in several drafts, to show how one might comply with the Secretary's wishes, are invariably erased in the next version you return, which essentially has kept your documents at a standstill all this time'. Harwit closed by asking his two curators to think about whether the Secretary's requests 'taken literally and fully, will violate your professional ethics'.[289] Crouch and Neufeld both replied that the Secretary's wishes did not clash with their ethical beliefs but that they were, in Neufeld's words, 'inconsistent with the content of the exhibit and his [Adams'] own concerns about it'.[290] As the curators saw it, Adams' objection that the exhibit should not dwell too much on the decision to use the bomb was inconsistent with the premise behind the entire exhibit, namely to showcase the development of the bomb and its subsequent use at the end of the war.

While the museum was wrestling internally, the veterans faced divisions of their own. In early August 1993 Nicks wrote to fellow veteran Rehl:

> Great news from the Smithsonian Institution! On August 2 President Clinton signed a bill authorizing the Smithsonian to proceed to develop plans for constructing the new Air & Space Museum annex at Dulles airport right outside Washington, DC ... So, our long battle to get the Enola Gay out on permanent public display is almost over despite our misgivings about the purity of the good intentions of the Smithsonian![291]

Nicks acknowledged that the actual display of the entire aeroplane might still be some years away but argued that the veterans were, in his words, 'rolling down the runway now'.[292]

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[289] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Martin Harwit to Tom Crouch and Michael Neufeld', 22 July 1993.
[290] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Michael Neufeld to Martin Harwit "Subject: The Crossroads"', 23 July 1993.
[291] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Ben Nicks to Donald C. Rehl', 10 August 1993.
[292] Ibid.

Rehl was not, however, nearly as enthusiastic as Nicks. In his reply he argued that 'from the very beginning the aim has been to EXPEDITE AND COMPLETE the restoration of the plane in its entirety and have it on display in its correct historical context before you and I and all the others (including Paul Tibbets) are dead and gone'.[293] Rehl was also far more sceptical about the Smithsonian's intentions than Nicks, noting that: 'What is great about the plans to exhibit just the nose section in 1995 "on a temporary basis"? What happens then? What's so great about Clinton signing the legislation for the annex at Dulles? Doesn't that tell you that the restoration will now definitely be stalled until the annex is built?'[294]

It is doubtful that veterans like Rehl would have been happy with any exhibition proposed by the museum. As Rooney explained in a letter to Harwit, it was a case of broken faith in the Smithsonian:

> All of us have one point of view with regard to you, Mr Adams, the Smithsonian, and NASM. It is: through wanton neglect, you allowed the Enola Gay to deteriorate and be vandalized ... It is an absolute disgrace to our nation, to our history, and to the military that the very repository of our nation's history could allow this to happen. To the end that you are party to this, you and NASM are responsible and guilty. It is an issue of betrayed trust.[295]

Considering the difficulties the museum faced, Harwit made a conscious decision to communicate with other sections of the armed forces community whom he hoped might be more accommodating. One of the people Harwit communicated to was General Claude Kicklighter, the executive director of the Department of Defence's Fiftieth Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee, which had been established by Congress to oversee commemorative events related to the end of the war. Kicklighter was happy to

[293] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Donald C. Rehl to Ben Nicks', 18 August 1993. Emphasis in original.
[294] Ibid.
[295] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from William A. Rooney to Martin Harwit', 13 October 1993.

support the museum and even offered to help find sponsors for the exhibition. Among the potential sponsors he suggested was the AFA who were briefed by Kicklighter on 14 April 1993. [296] The AFA exists to promote American air power and as such is often the most vocal lobbyist for the United States Air Force (USAF). It has been described by the journalist Mike Wallace as the 'air wing of what Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex'.[297] In late August, Harwit forwarded a plan of the exhibit to the president of the AFA, retired air force general Monroe Hatch, explaining that:

> I understand how strongly Air Force veterans feel that the Museum must emphasize their story. But, through the nuclear legacy it ushered in, the Enola Gay also represents the start of a story that gripped all Americans in a Cold War that lasted more than four decades. Our exhibition must represent this impact on all our citizens, though we do plan to honour the bravery of the veterans, who so clearly risked their lives for their country and sometimes made the ultimate sacrifice.[298]

Hatch was not, however, as supportive as Kicklighter had indicated. In his reply to Harwit, he lamented the lack of 'balance' in the exhibit and argued that

> the concept paper 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 ... there is little mention of Pearl Harbor, except to characterise the American response as 'vengeance'. Japanese aggression and atrocities seem to have no significant place in this account.[299]

Attached to Hatch's letter was an alternative outline for the exhibit which he considered much more satisfactory. This argued that: 'The exhibit will emphasize: (1) Japan's aggression in East Asia and subsequent attack on Pearl Harbor. (2) Issue of allied casualties as war progressed. (3) Rationale for decision to drop atomic bomb. (4) Missions against Hiroshima

[296] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Gen. Claude M. Kicklighter to Martin Harwit', 10 May 1993.
[297] Mike Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, *History Wars*, ed, p. 172.
[298] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Monroe Hatch', 20 August 1993.
[299] 'Letter from Monroe Hatch to Martin Harwit', 12 September 1993, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

and Nagasaki. (5) Role of atomic bomb in ending the war. (6) The enormous technological impact of the nuclear age.'[300]

This alternative, so called 'balanced' proposal, was not the AFA's own work. Richard Hallion, the official historian of the air force, had sent the outline to Lieutenant-General Thomas McInerny, the Vice-Chief of Staff of the air force with the remarks: 'I've just received what seems an excellent [alternative] outline for this exhibit prepared by Herman Wolk of our staff -- suggest it be sent to Hatch for his consideration.'[301] In other words, the air force was, through the AFA, attempting to influence the exhibit. The AFA was thus not only lobbying on behalf of the air force regarding expensive weapons programs, but also on history. But Hallion and the AFA were missing the point. Any exhibit focusing on the atomic bombings would, inevitably, show more Japanese than American casualties.[302] This was not a general World War II exhibit (the museum already had a permanent display relating to the war) but an exhibit focusing specifically on the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Harwit was, perhaps naively, taken aback by the AFA's criticism. In his reply, he defended his position and argued that

> the fears you voiced about our portraying Japan and the United States as having positions morally equivalent in the war really surprised me. Such a position would clearly be outrageous and never entered any of our minds. I believe that the exhibition can be compassionate to the human suffering that resulted from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki without also contending that the use of the bomb was morally right or wrong. Its use simply is historical fact.[303]

[300] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'A Proposal - The End of World War II, The Atomic Bomb, And The Onset of the Cold War', 12 September 1993.
[301] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Richard P. Hallion to AF/CVA "Subject: Enola Gay (Harwit, 27 Aug 1993)"', 8 September 1993.
[302] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, First Edition (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 272.
[303] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Monroe Hatch', 7 October 1993.

Harwit was still keen to get the AFA's approval of the exhibit, however, and therefore invited Hatch to prepare a videotaped statement to be used in it. Hatch accepted this invitation and in late January 1994, when the first draft of the exhibition script was finally finished, Harwit forwarded a copy to Hatch asking him to 'Please let me have any comments you have. They are important to us. I would appreciate it, however, if you did not circulate the material at this time, since it is not yet in suitable form.'[304] Little did Harwit know that in doing so he had given the AFA the ammunition it needed to start criticising the museum in public.

With the positions of the key parties firmly entrenched, there seemed to be no quick solution to the brewing controversy surrounding the Enola Gay. NASM, as we have seen, were adamant that a thoughtful and reflective exhibit was necessary to allow the wider public to engage with questions surrounding the atomic bombing. That was admirable but naïve. Most visitors and critics were not interested in discussing difficult questions about America's conduct during World War II, especially on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war. Harwit, in his desire to see the exhibit succeed, was unyielding in his belief that he could deal with any issues that would arise. What he did not realise was that the exhibit could be cancelled by forces outside the museum. The veterans, through their narrow view of the purpose of history, wished to see their actions celebrated in a national museum. This would be achieved at the expense of showing any other viewpoint on the atomic bombings. That was not history. It was, in effect, a political statement. The Smithsonian, due to its earlier controversial exhibits, was not in good standing with the press, the general public, or with its main funding body, Congress, who were worried about the recent number of controversial exhibits at the institution. Veterans, and the positions they represented, on the

[304] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Monroe Hatch', 31 January 1994.

other hand, enjoyed an unparalleled level of support from Congress. The next chapter will examine how and why the exhibit, mainly due to external pressure from Congress, was cancelled and replaced with a drastically scaled down version.

# Chapter III

## *Showdown at 'Disneyland with Wings'*

This chapter will analyse how, after months of deliberations between the museum and veteran organisations, the Enola Gay exhibition was cancelled and replaced with a much more politically acceptable one. Specific attention will be paid to the decision by NASM to sit down with the American Legion and conduct a line-by-line review of the script and how, despite this, veteran organisations were simultaneously pressuring Congress to close down the exhibit. This chapter will argue that the museum set a dangerous precedent and made itself vulnerable to undue influence from interest groups when it agreed to a line-by-line review. Nevertheless, the involvement of Congress in the exhibit ultimately sealed its fate. When Congress threatened to withhold funding from the Smithsonian if the demands of the American Legion were not met, the Smithsonian was given no choice but to capitulate. In doing so it signalled that the culture wars had reached Congress and America's premier museum. The heroic, faith-based narrative of the Hiroshima bombing, as favoured by veterans and Congress, had become integral to the culture of America and any deviation from it at a national museum would not be tolerated. The Enola Gay controversy showed that lawmakers were more than willing to ignore opposing evidence in order to ensure that their view of America was the one shown at the Smithsonian, at the expense of any other narrative.

After the completion of the first draft of the exhibit script, the museum convened, in early February 1994, an advisory committee to review it. The committee consisted of eleven people and included historians Edward Linenthal, Barton Bernstein, Martin Sherwin, Akira Iriye, Stanley Goldberg, and Richard Rhodes. Edwin Bearss, the chief historian of the National Park Service and a decorated World War II veteran, was also invited alongside two

representatives of the Air Force, Richard Hallion, the military historian in charge of the United States Air Force Centre for Air Force History, and his assistant, Herman Wolk. Hallion had for several years worked as a curator at the museum and Bearss had previously overseen the fiftieth anniversary commemorations at Pearl Harbour. Victor Bond, an expert on radiation from the Brookhaven National Laboratory, was the final member of the group.

Overall, the advisory committee responded favourably to the first draft of the script. Bearss commented that: 'As a World War II Pacific combat veteran, I commend you and your colleagues who have dared to go that extra mile to address an emotionally charged and internationally significant event in an exhibit that, besides enlightening, will challenge its viewers.'[305] Hallion and Wolk, who had produced an alternative draft for the AFA, as shown in the previous chapter, were also impressed, arguing that 'this is a most impressive piece of work, comprehensive and dramatic, obviously based upon a great deal of sound research, primary and secondary'.[306] When the exhibit was eventually condemned by veterans and others, however, Hallion would distance himself from his earlier comments and vehemently attack the script. It was true that he did have some concerns. He argued that 'Truman's deep concern on June 18 1945 with potential American casualties, based on the casualty rate on Okinawa, does not come out clearly and effectively in the script' and that there should be more images focusing on the Japanese brutality to which they subjected people.[307] These concerns seem to have been relatively minor though as at the bottom of his comments he wrote: 'Again -- an impressive job! A bit of "tweaking" along the lines described here should

[305] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Edward C. Bearss to Tom Crouch', 24 Feb 1994.
[306] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, Dick Hallion and Herman Wolk, 'Comments on Script, The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War', 7 February 1994.
[307] Ibid.

do the trick.'[308] Hallion's and Wolk's comments are important because they show the deep obsession, among the military community, with potential casualty figures that an invasion of Japan would have caused, even though such an event never took place and exact figures can never be known. More importantly, the comments by Bearss, Hallion and Wolk seemed to indicate that veterans and the military community had few objections to the exhibit. Iriye, an expert on US-Japanese relations, concluded that 'Only irresponsible fanatics, who do exist in both countries, would take exception to the document.'[309] Iriye's comments, however, reveal the naiveté and lack of understanding for the veterans' viewpoint that plagued the museum throughout the controversy. Bearss, Hallion, and Wolk may have liked the script but clearly other veterans felt very strongly about the Enola Gay and its role in the war and were suspicious of the museum's intentions. Many of them had campaigned for years to get the aeroplane restored and on display, believing that it had saved their lives in dropping the atomic bomb.

While the advisory committee met, the AFA started openly to criticise the museum in public. On 15 March 1994, it released a 'special report' concerning the Enola Gay. Leading the charge was John Correll, the editor of the AFA's *Air Force Magazine*. In his report he lambasted the museum for how it intended to display the aeroplane arguing that

> The presentation is designed for shock effect ... For what the plan calls the 'emotional centre' of the exhibit, the curators are collecting burnt watches, broken wall clocks, and photos of victims -- which will be enlarged to life size -- as well as melted and broken religious objects. One display will be a schoolgirl's lunch box with remains of peas and rice reduced to carbon.[310]

[308] Ibid.
[309] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Akira Iriye to Michael Neufeld', 7 February 1994.
[310] John T. Correll, 'War Stories at Air & Space: At The Smithsonian, History Grapples with Cultural Angst', in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996* (Arlington, 1997), pp. 1-2.

Despite arguing that the exhibit was designed to shock visitors, Correll agreed that the 'Enola Gay's task was a grim one, hardly suitable for glamorization' and that the veterans who dropped the atomic bomb were treated 'extensively and with respect'.[311] His main concern with the exhibition, however, was its tone and mood. Railing against what he called 'politically correct curating' he argued that NASM were part of the cultural reinterpretation of World War II which had swept the Smithsonian.[312] To Harwit's rhetorical question if veterans really suspected that NASM was an unpatriotic institution and would opt for an apologetic exhibit, Correll replied that 'the blunt answer is yes. Many veterans are suspicious, and for several reasons.'[313] He went on to list the museum's earlier comments on airpower and the exhibit on World War I as proof that the museum was out to discredit veterans, airpower, and America's actions in the war. Correll raised a warning for the museum when he argued that to aviation enthusiasts 'the museum is a special place, where priceless artefacts are held in trust to be displayed with understanding and pride. They do not take kindly to what they perceive as the use of historical aircraft to promote an agenda of cultural revisionism.'[314]

Correll's comments make clear that he, and most veterans, saw the Enola Gay and the bombing of Hiroshima as an integral part of US culture. It symbolised the just nature of World War II and the swift end to that conflict, avoiding the need for a costly invasion. This was an identity and belief on which many veterans had based their lives. Furthermore, what is curious is Correll's relentless fixation with revisionism. He, and many others of the museum's critics, saw revisionism as inherently wrong. The best explanation for this seems

[311] Ibid, pp. 1-11.
[312] Ibid, p. 7.
[313] Ibid, pp. 3-4.
[314] Ibid, p. 15.

to be that it was opposed to their view of what history is. They saw history as consisting of facts and nothing else. Interpretation of historical events was not, in their view, telling history like it was. Having been present at the time, veterans thought they were more likely to know what the facts were. They believed strongly in these so-called facts because they had been there. To try and alter these facts, especially concerning a cultural icon such as the Enola Gay, was simply unforgivable to the museum's critics. It is interesting to note, as argued in the previous chapter, that the veterans were obsessed with the Enola Gay when, in fact, it was not the Enola Gay that devastated Hiroshima, but the atomic bomb known as 'Little Boy'. Despite the museum having replicas of 'Little Boy' available for display the veterans instead focused on the Enola Gay as the means by which the war, according to them, came to a merciful end.

However, the museum's critics were not interested in telling the whole story. One of the strongest recurring themes in the criticism levied against NASM during the controversy was how Correll and others deliberately left out statements from the script that contradicted their position. An often-used tactic was to take quotes from the script out of context or misattribute quotes from participants in the war as being those of the curators. The most infamous quote from the first script was the line: 'For most Americans, this war was fundamentally different than 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.'[315] To Correll this was proof that the museum had a tendency to depict Americans as ruthless invaders and the Japanese as desperately defending their

[315] 'The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War' (Arlington, 1994), p. 5.

homeland.[316] This might well have given the impression that the script was glossing over the brutality with which Japan conducted World War II. But if Correll had been bothered to republish the quote in the context of its paragraph it would have shown that that was not the case. The full paragraph in which the so-called 'war of vengeance' line was located reads:

> 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 labourers and prisoners of war, and biological experiments on human victims. In December 1941, Japan attacked US 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 than 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.[317]

How a script which characterised the Japanese conduct in World War II as 'naked aggression and extreme brutality' could be described as neglecting the violence by the Japanese shows the lengths to which the museum's critics were willing to go to denigrate it. It also revealed how sensitive the issue of the end of the war was. The veterans responded to the proposed exhibit by accusing the museum of being unpatriotic and forgetting the atrocities committed by Japan. It was a tactic aimed at drawing attention away from what had happened on the ground at Hiroshima by making the museum look negligent for failing to fully address Japan's war crimes. The critics kept insisting that the script was unbalanced as it focused far more on the destruction at Hiroshima than on the casualties of Japanese aggression. But that was to be expected from an exhibit focusing on the atomic bombings. Throughout the controversy

[316] John T. Correll, 'Analysis of "Crossroads" Script, April 7 1994, Missing: Balance, Context, Objectivity', in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996*.
[317] 'The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War', p. 5.

the AFA and others conveniently overlooked the fact that the Enola Gay exhibit was not an exhibit about World War II in general (the museum, as stated previously, already had a permanent World War II exhibit) where more information and photos of the effects of Japan's aggression would be expected. Nevertheless, the 'war of vengeance' line was an incredibly clumsy one. The museum admitted its mistake and removed it from all subsequent drafts of the script. Despite this, some critics and media continued to cite the line well after it had been removed. This further proved the extent to which the museum's critics were willing to go in order to keep dragging the museum through the dirt, even after it had responded to their criticism.

The misappropriation of quotes was also widespread practice among the media. Tony Snow of *USA Today* told his readers of the 'consensus' view that 'six million or more people would have died during an allied invasion of Japan' and dismissed arguments about post-war concerns as 'crackpot theories'.[318] *The Wall Street Journal* spoke of the 'oozing romanticism with which the ... show's writers describe kamikaze pilots ...These were, the script elegiacally relates, "youths, their bodies overflowing with life"'.[319] The *Journal* had taken a quote from a kamikaze pilot and implied that it was the curator's words when, in fact, it had been included to provide 'insight into [the kamikazes] suicidal fanaticism which many Americans would otherwise find incomprehensible'.[320] Tony Cappacio, editor of *Defence Week* magazine, critiqued the media's treatment of the controversy and concluded that 'journalists did not do enough research and failed to hold the veterans' version of history to the same exacting standard they used in judging the curators' version. The initial exhibit had flaws of

[318] Tony Snow, 'Sanitzing the Flight of Enola Gay', *USA Today*, 1 August 1994.
[319] Editorial, 'War and the Smithsonian', *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 August 1994.
[320] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1094–1101.

context and historical perspective -- but not as serious and certainly not as ill-informed as the media coverage led the public to believe.'[321] Nevertheless, the extensive coverage that the exhibit received in the press ensured that many readers became sceptical of the museum's efforts.

Correll's criticism did not, however, go unchallenged. Richard Kohn, Hallion's predecessor as chief historian of the air force, wrote a letter in response to Correll's article where he argued that 'the atomic attacks, were grim experiences and audiences should be informed of the reality of their effects on the ground … to imply otherwise would be to forfeit the opportunity to present "history as it was", which is what Mr Correll advocates'.[322] Bernstein also took Correll to task arguing that:

> The critique by Correll ... is not simply 'the other side,' but rather a very extreme form of one of the many sides. Correll is not requesting balance; he is asking that a spirited form of 'celebration' of war, of the air force, and of heroism be presented as if it is the obvious, and the only responsible form of portraying the war, the 'conventional' bombings of Japan, and the use of the atomic bomb. To Correll, apparently, there is only one version of the history -- it is not interpretation but unalloyed fact. It is his version.[323]

Bernstein was right. Correll and the AFA were not interested in a nuanced debate about Hiroshima. This was about a faith-based version of history versus an attempt to discuss the end of the war. The exhibit threatened to undermine the veterans' beliefs and the message about airpower that the AFA was keen to portray. The AFA's position was, in turn, a reflection of Correll's personal view and his view quickly came to be regarded as the official view of the AFA and, by extension, as that of most veterans.

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[321] Tony Capaccio and Uday Mohan, 'Missing the Target: How the Media Mishandled the Smithsonian Enola Gay Controversy', *American Journalism Review*, August 1995, pp. 21–26.
[322] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Richard H. Kohn to Martin Harwit', 22 March 1994.
[323] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Barton J. Bernstein to Martin Harwit', 23 May 1994.

It was nevertheless clear that the museum was out to ruffle a few feathers. In a draft for an op-ed piece, Crouch argued that Americans preferred to see the end of World War II with a view of the mushroom cloud as seen from 30,000 feet and that NASM had an 'obligation to help our visitors place pressing issues of our national life in historical perspective. Sometimes, that requires us to take a risk -- to be a bit more daring than usual, to probe, to ask some difficult questions, perhaps even to make our visitors a bit uncomfortable.' If it did not do so, NASM risked becoming, according to Crouch, 'little more than Disneyland with wings'.[324]

It is evident that there were two opposing views of history at work. One version preferred to see the dropping of the atomic bombs as the merciful end to a long and brutal war. The other sought to ask questions that had arisen since those events. The first version was based on faith and personal conviction. The second was based on a desire to probe and discuss a controversial event using the available historical evidence. The probing nature of the exhibit was enough to get Congress worried about what direction the exhibit was taking, a full year before it was scheduled to open. In a letter to Harwit a number of Senators expressed their concern that 'any analysis of the atomic bombing does not inadvertently lead to a revised view of the events that led up to the difficult decisions that were made in a time of war'.[325] The US Army's chief of military history took this view as well arguing that: 'The subject of the atomic bomb is a legitimate historiographical controversy. The Smithsonian's story line and exhibit, however, offer a revisionist diplomatic historical interpretation of the weapon's

[324] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Tom Crouch to Martin Harwit and Michael Fetters "Op Ed piece on Crossroads (An Article of Faith)"', 12 March 1994.
[325] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from 'Wendell Ford, Ted Stevens, Robert Dole, Thad Cochran, Jesse Helms and Mitch McConnell to Martin Harwit', 24 March 1994.

employment. In other words, the military dimension of the decision and use of the bomb is neglected.'[326] Clearly, according to the view of Congress and the military community, showing the military factor behind the decision to drop the atomic bomb was more important than the effect of the bomb on the ground. The word revisionism was again used invectively to describe a version of history that they saw as inherently wrong. In the eyes of the veterans, their authentic feelings about how the war had ended should take precedence over later historical interpretations.

It was not, however, entirely clear exactly what the museum's opponents were expecting to see at the exhibition. Was a straightforward glorification and idealization of the plane and its mission really what most veterans wanted? From what the veterans were saying that certainly seemed to be the case. A retired US Marine commented that: 'You best believe that a whole generation … insist that we do "idealize ... our national culture" as well as the courage, patriotism, and the resourcefulness of those who brought us victory.'[327] The museum's critics were expecting that a national museum, such as NASM, would appreciate the efforts of veterans and venerate the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as part of America's national culture and not question the heroic narrative. Chipping away at the façade of the narratives which formed the collective understanding of how World War II had ended threatened to undo more than just the veterans' memories. Modern American culture is based on several stories that are considered sacred and part of the national narrative. One of those stories is that of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb. Any narrative which challenged the notion that World War II had been a just and good war, implying that

[326] 'Memo from Harold W. Nelson to Executive Director 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee', 19 April 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings* (Arlington, 2000).
[327] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from T. Bruce Graham to John Correll', 29 March 1994.

America had acted immorally in dropping the bomb, threatened to undermine what most Americans understood their nation to be.

Harwit seems to have been aware, however, that what the museum had in mind might appear contradictory to many visitors. In a note to Crouch he argued that 'most people are genuinely puzzled by the twin statements, "The decision to drop the bomb is debatable" and "The museum draws no moral conclusions on the dropping of the bomb." To the average American that is a contradiction.'[328] He went on to say that it was important that the museum expressed its ideas about the exhibit 'in American English, and not in the language of historians'.[329] This criticism is quite remarkable as the curators had gone to great lengths to make sure that the exhibit labels were straightforward and accessible to everyone. What is more significant, however, is Harwit's belief that saying that the decision to drop the bomb is debatable, but that the museum would take no stance on the morality of that decision, would be contradictory. After all, that had been the premise of the exhibit since the beginning, to show the debates surrounding the atomic bombings but not take a definitive stance on those issues but let visitors, in the museum's words, decide for themselves.

Meanwhile the AFA was beginning to work behind the scenes to spread its view to the media and Congress. In early April, Steven Aubin of the AFA forwarded a copy of the script to *The Washington Times*, one of the leading conservative newspapers in the DC area, with an invitation to 'judge for yourself' what the museum was up to.[330] This was, again, despite the fact that Harwit had asked the AFA not to circulate the material. Even though the AFA

[328] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from Martin Harwit to Tom Crouch', 26 April 1994.
[329] Ibid.
[330] 'Letter from Stephen P. Aubin to John McCaslin', 4 April 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part III: Supplementary Documents* (Arlington, 2002).

claimed that the script that they circulated was not the one they had officially received from NASM, they were clearly dishonest in their dealings with the museum by circulating material when explicitly asked not to do so, and while discussions with the museum were still proceeding. In addition, the AFA was asked to provide analysis of the script to the House Government Operation Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, which it did on 8 April 1994 in which it argued that the script 'is seriously flawed as it now stands'.[331] That prompted Adams to write to Congressman Sonny Montgomery (D, Mississippi), the chairman of the congressional Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and explain that the stance of the exhibit was that 'while the use of atomic weapons is hardly something our nation would want to celebrate, neither is it anything for which we should apologize'.[332] Adams' letter underscored just how little the Smithsonian understood their critics' desires. The museums critics *were* looking for a celebration of the use of the atomic bomb. In their belief that the bomb had ended the war and saved their lives, the veterans, and many others, wanted a celebration at a national museum.

Realising that the script had not gone down well with the AFA and that momentum was beginning to swing against the museum, Harwit decided that an additional review of the script was needed. He explained his reason for this as being that he had 'evidently paid greater attention to accuracy than to balance' and that 'a second reading shows that we do have a lack of balance and that much of the criticism that has been levied against us is understandable'.[333] He went on to point out the flaws of the exhibit saying that:

[331] 'Memorandum from Stephen Aubin to Ron Stroman and Marty Morgan', 8 April 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part III: Supplementary Documents.*
[332] 'Letter from Robert McC. Adams to G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery', 12 April 1994, *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part III: Supplementary Documents.* Emphasis in original.
[333] Martin Harwit, 'Comments on Crossroads', 16 April 1994, *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

> We talk of the heavy bombing of Tokyo, show great empathy for Japanese mothers, but are strangely quiet about similar losses to Americans and among our own allies in Europe and Asia … We show terrible pictures of the human suffering in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in section 400, without earlier, in section 100, showing pictures of the suffering the Japanese had inflicted in China, in the camps they set up for Dutch and British civilians and military, and US prisoners of war … We show virtually no pictures of Allied dead or wounded either in sections 100 or 300. Section 300 is almost clinically military in its tone, when contrasted to section 400 which speaks about the action on the ground entirely in human terms. Section 400 has any number of heart-wrenching, tragic stories of suffering on the ground. Where are the corresponding tragedies in section 100, in China, in the Philippines, in Singapore, in the former Dutch possessions? We go into American racism against Japanese but show nothing equivalent on the Japanese side.[334]

This is highly significant as it suggests that in order to say anything remotely critical, or even neutral, about the atomic bombings, the museum was forced into widening the scope of its exhibit to cover the entire war. Harwit's comments are therefore indicative of the moral relativism that has come to characterise debates in the culture wars. Every effort by the museum to show the effect of the bomb was countered with accusations of glossing over the brutality of the Japanese. According to this logic, if the US had done bad things in the war it was only because Japan had done so.

To fix the problems with the exhibit, Harwit recommended taking out 'all but the one third of the explicit pictures of death and suffering in section 400 ... put in an equal number of pictures of death and suffering in section 200 for soldiers on both sides ... contrast the hardships of war in Japan with hardships the allies in Europe and in the Pacific were suffering ... reduce much of the speculative material about what might have been possible without the atomic bomb'.[335] Harwit's comments sounded as if they had been written by Correll and the AFA immediately seized on the comments as proof that they had been right about the

[334] Ibid.
[335] Ibid.

script in the first place.[336] It is important to remember, however, that the opening date of the exhibit was still over a year away and that museums regularly undertake several reviews before an exhibit opens. The Enola Gay exhibit was no exception. This was a first script (not including earlier planning documents) that was clearly far from perfect and was never intended to be the final version. Harwit's comments, however, reveal that he was seriously beginning to worry that the exhibit was slipping away from the museum and that urgent steps had to be taken if it were to be salvaged. Unfortunately, in the process he had inadvertently strengthened his critics' hands by, in effect, admitting that they were right about the script.

In trying to address the limitations of the script, Harwit appointed a so-called 'Tiger Team' to conduct a further review of it. This team consisted of museum staff, many with military backgrounds, who had not been involved in developing the original script. The group was chaired by retired air force general Bill Constantine. During the review Michael Neufeld, the lead curator, argued that

> thirty years of scholarly research ... has shown that the decision [to drop the atomic bomb] is debatable on its political and military merits -- a conclusion which goes to the heart of the exhibit concept. This research obviously has not resolved the debate; indeed, it cannot resolve the debate, since too many factors that went into the decision remain subject to dispute. But this research has produced much new knowledge that must be communicated in some form to the public … One of the most important conclusions one can draw from this research is that, although it is certainly still possible to argue for the correctness of Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb without warning, the traditional justification used in this country is no longer tenable. That justification, which is repeated with almost religious fervour; asserts that Truman was faced with only two options: a) drop the bomb without warning, or b) invade Japan at the cost of a quarter of a million, half a million, a million, or many millions of American and/or Japanese lives, depending on what version is being told.[337]

[336] John. T. Correll, 'The Smithsonian Plan for the Enola Gay: A Report on the Revisions', June 28 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996*, p. 2.
[337] 'Memorandum from Michael Neufeld to Martin Harwit, Tiger Team members, exhibit team, "Subject: The decision to drop the bomb and Crossroads"', April 25 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

He went on to list the various casualty estimates, the number of options to dropping the bomb available, the fact that Japan was looking for a way out of the war, and the Soviet factor as examples of the type of research that should be shown as part of the exhibit. Neufeld concluded that 'this is not to say that the exhibit should take any position on these controversies -- indeed it does not. But it is clearly in the Smithsonian's charge, "the increase and diffusion of knowledge," to make this scholarly research accessible to the public.'[338] That was, in effect, all that the exhibit intended to do -- to show what happened at Hiroshima and the many debates that surround that event. At no point in the script did the curators state that the bomb should not have been dropped. They merely pointed out that it had been, and remained, a hotly contested issue.

Alerted to the brewing controversy surrounding the exhibit, the largest veteran organisation in America, the American Legion, entered the fray in early May when it adopted a resolution condemning the exhibit. The resolution accused the museum of being 'politically biased' by asserting that 'America was somehow in the wrong and her loyal airmen somehow criminal in carrying out this last act of war.'[339] Later that month Burr Bennett, wrote the Smithsonian Board of Regents indicating just how angry veterans were at the exhibit. As he explained: 'This exhibit deeply angers the World War II generation. We grew up in a real depression. We went to war when called. Those of us who survived came home, lived decent lives, and paid our taxes. Few, if any of us, have marched on Washington for any cause.'[340] Attached to Bennett's letter was a petition from another veteran organisation, American Defenders of

[338] Ibid.
[339] 'National Executive Committee Meeting of The American Legion, Resolution No. 22, Subject: Smithsonian Exhibit of the Enola Gay', 4-5 May 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part III: Supplementary Documents.*
[340] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from W. Burr Bennett to The Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents', 16 May 1994.

Bataan and Corregidor Inc., which made clear the veterans' intentions with regards to the exhibit when it announced that they would 'accept nothing less than complete cancellation of this proposal'.[341]

Bennett's letter is also indicative of the fact that many veterans involved in the controversy saw themselves as part of what journalist Tom Brokaw called 'the greatest generation'.[342] This referred to the generation which grew up during the Great Depression and then went on to fight in World War II, for which they have also become known as the 'GI Generation'. According to the preferred narrative, they did all this, not out of personal pride, but because they saw it as the right thing to do. The fact is that many were drafted into military service and had little choice in the matter. Nevertheless, the least the Smithsonian could do for them, according to members of this generation, was to honour them and show its appreciation during the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war. The generational divide also underscored the different views of history at work during the controversy. Having lived through the war the 'GI Generation' felt they had ownership of the story that the museum was going to tell, and what the museum was planning was not how they remembered it. The curators based their right to interpret the past on their scholarly credentials, on their mastery of the historical record, and on the advice they received from professional historians. Veterans, on the other hand, appealed to the authenticity of personal experience and equated their collective memory with historical reality.[343]

Simultaneous to the veterans critique, the museum's 'Tiger Team' finished their report in late May in which it suggested changes to all sections of the script and urged the museum to

[341] Ibid.
[342] Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York, 2001).
[343] Michael J. Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation', in Michael J. Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 201.

make a ‘conscientious effort to add objectivity, accuracy and balance’.[344] All of this resulted in the second draft of the script, now and henceforth entitled ‘The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II’. But the AFA remained unimpressed. Although the new script, according to Correll, contained many commendable changes he still lambasted the museum for failing to lay the groundwork ‘about Japan's drive for conquest in the 1930s or popular support for the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" that was on the verge of making the Pacific a Japanese lake by the 1940s'.[345]

Not only did this greatly exaggerate the extent of Japanese expansion during the war but it also showed that the AFA were not interested in merely making changes to the script but something far more significant. What it came down to was who was to have ownership of the exhibit and, by extension, the history of the Enola Gay and the bombing of Hiroshima. The historian Michael Sherry warned Harwit of this in a letter in which he cautioned against letting the AFA have ‘undue influence’ on the exhibit.[346] He went on to argue that a

> group like the Air Force Association has a legitimate voice, and such an exhibit cannot be the exclusive creation of professional historians and curators ... By the same token, however, this exhibit is also not the possession of the Air Force Association and its allies … the AFA's assertion that it is countering a ‘politicized plan’ by the museum staff -- with the implication that its ideas are not ‘politicized’ -- must be challenged. Of course its views carry political weight -- of great tonnage.[347]

The AFA’s position was no less a political standpoint than that of the curators. In addition, it was also using its influence to spread its views to members of Congress and the media. The AFA was in an advantageous position as almost no politician in the US would argue against

[344] ‘National Air and Space Museum’s “Tiger Team” Critique of the Planned 1995 Exhibit Featuring the Enola Gay’ (Arlington, 1994), p. 22.
[345] John T. Correll, 'The Smithsonian Plan for the Enola Gay: A Report on the Revisions', June 28 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*
[346] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, ‘Letter from Michael S. Sherry to Martin Harwit’, 2 June 1994.
[347] Ibid.

veterans who enjoy such widespread support in Congress and throughout society. Going against the will of veterans would have been tantamount to political suicide. Perhaps it was this knowledge and knowing that the production and construction stages of the exhibit would take a considerable amount of time that Neufeld, in late June, urged that the script 'must be considered a finished product, minor wording changes aside'.[348]

The matter was far from over, however, for the museum's critics. In early August, congressman Peter Blute (R, Massachusetts), wrote a letter to Harwit, co-signed by two dozen other members of Congress expressing their 'concern and dismay' at the developing exhibit.[349] Blute's letter is interesting for another reason, namely that it, once again, shows the fixation with imagined American deaths that an invasion of Japan might have caused. The letter attacked the exhibit for portraying 'Americans as being driven to drop the bomb out of revenge and for political reasons rather than out of concern for the hundreds and thousands of American lives that would have been lost during an invasion of Japan'.[350] Two paragraphs later the letter states as fact 'that the atomic bomb prevented an invasion of Japan and an estimated one million American casualties'.[351] Clearly, the number of casualties that an invasion would have caused increased as the letter went on. The Enola Gay exhibit was given several labels during its short life. Countercultural and counterfactual were just two of them. But speculating about how many casualties a US invasion of Japan would have caused, clearly a sticking point for the museum's critics, is equally counterfactual as those events did not occur. To state as fact events that did not happen remains pure speculation. It

[348] 'Letter from Michael J. Neufeld to Advisory Board Members and Military Historians', June 21 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*
[349] 'Letter from Peter Blute to Robert McCormick Adams', August 10 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.

was highly ironic of the museum's critics to accuse the museum of being counterfactual when it was, in fact, they who were being so.

Blute followed up his letter to Adams by releasing a press release the same day condemning the exhibit as 'anti-American' and 'biased'.[352] This was echoed by Correll who, reporting on the on-going talks with the museum, claimed that it had agreed to cut some of the offensive material, most notably the series labelled 'Historical Controversies'.[353] It is this denunciation of raising questions about Hiroshima by labelling them as anti-American that is so troubling about the Enola Gay controversy. It showed the powerful emotional and ideological impulse to strip the historical record of all ambiguity, all contradiction, all complexity, and simply wrap it in patriotism.[354] This did a huge disservice to the historical profession and principled discussion in American politics and culture. The lifeblood of serious discussions in academia, but also in American cultural life, lies in tolerance of principled criticism, a willingness to entertain serious challenges to entrenched and orthodox views.[355] The criticism of the Enola Gay exhibit represented a repudiation of what it is historians do and the fair and balanced discussion of aspects of American history. It showed that some things in the cultural psyche of America are above discussion and should not be challenged, especially at a national museum.

The veteran voice was given significant weight in early June 1994 when Paul Tibbets, the man who commanded the Enola Gay on the Hiroshima mission, blasted the proposed exhibit

[352] 'Congressman Send Letter Blasting Planned Smithsonian Exhibit of Enola Gay', August 10 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*
[353] John T. Correll, 'Memo for the Record: Meeting on Enola Gay exhibit', 17 August 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*
[354] John W. Dower, 'Three Narratives of Our Humanity', in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 71.
[355] Ibid, p. 76.

as ‘a package of insults’ and that the aeroplane should be displayed within ‘the context of the times’ in which it carried out its mission.[356] Although not directly involved in the controversy nor in the development of the exhibit, Tibbets undoubtedly carried substantial weight. Eager to appease him and, if possible, include him in the exhibit, Harwit sent him a letter explaining that:

> As a national museum I think we have both an opportunity and an obligation to show that the questions under debate can be discussed openly and without apology; but we also realize that this is only possible if we are willing to touch on all the issues that have been raised from time to time, and not just those that are unanimously accepted as uncontroversial. In that respect the Enola Gay differs from the Wright Flyer or the Spirit of St Louis, which can be exhibited with just a single label. That format would not work for the Enola Gay without exposing us to accusations that the museum into whose care the aircraft had been placed by our nation was playing it coy. This is the context in which I view the exhibition. I think you will understand that it is a defensible and honourable point of view, though you may disagree with it.[357]

What Harwit was essentially saying was that the context of the times, as Tibbets had put it, were controversial and subject to debate. The fact that Japan had been looking for a way out of the war and that the bomb was dropped in the centre of a city had made the bombing fraught with emotion and controversy. But that was not how Tibbets had experienced the events. As far as he was concerned he had had one job, end the war as quickly as possible, and he did it. And although he, at the time, knew about the controversial nature of the new weapon, due to its secrecy, he did not think that the exhibit should unduly focus on later worries over nuclear weapons, such as the threat of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War.

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[356] ‘News Release, Airmen Memorial Museum, “Statement Offered By Brigadier General Paul W. Tibbets (USAF, Retired) At The Airmen Memorial Museum on June 8, 1994 Upon The Acceptance of the Air Force Sergeants Association’s Freedom Aaward”’, 9 June 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part III: Supplementary Documents.*

[357] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, ‘Letter from Martin Harwit to Paul W. Tibbets’, 11 July 1994.

Tensions flared throughout August as the forty-ninth anniversary of the atomic bombings passed and the opening of the exhibit drew nearer. The American Legion piled on further pressure when, in a letter to President Clinton, it accused the exhibit of being 'an affront to an entire generation of Americans'.[358] The National Commander of the American Legion, Bruce Thiesen, admitted, despite earlier claims to the contrary, that 'nowhere does the exhibit explicitly state an anti-American bias' but that the overall weight and feel of the exhibit would give the impression that the atomic bomb had been dropped on a defeated nation. On this point, the veterans knew exactly who to blame. Bennett claimed that 'the left-leaning "intelligentsia" in this country, want an apology for using atomic weapons' and that the Smithsonian staff had embedded that apology so deep in the fabric of the exhibit that it would convince viewers that Japan was the victim of a war it had started.[359] The influential conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh jumped on the bandwagon as well when he told his listeners that

> this is not the first time this kind of stuff has happened. All over American universities today, there are history courses which are trying to say that the pioneers of the old west were the first racists, the first homophobes, the first sexists, and the first to destroy the environment. You know, this stuff has been going on for a long, long time. And you don't know who these people are. These are nameless, faceless, so-called historians, who think that they have somehow grasped the truth of history, and the truth always seems, in their eyes, to be that the United States is imperialist, has been imperialist, and is motivated only by racism ... It's blasphemous.[360]

This tactic of labelling academics as out of touch and susceptible to wacky ideas was highly effective. Limbaugh was wrong, however, to assume that the historians claimed that they

[358] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Bruce Thiesen to William Jefferson Clinton', 12 August 1994.
[359] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from W. Burr Bennett to Claude M. Kicklighter', 9 August 1994.
[360] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, Rush Limbaugh, 'The Rush Limbaugh Show, Transcript', 19 August 1994.

represented the truth. In fact, they frequently claimed that there could be no one truth about Hiroshima. Peter Novick, a historian at the University of Chicago, argued just that. The atomic bombings, he argued, could be interpreted as the merciful culmination of the end of World War II, as a chapter in the history of white atrocities against non-whites, or as the opening of the terrifying age of potential nuclear devastation. According to Novick, historical accounts were always a radically selective version of events.[361] The viewpoint of the museum was no less a viewpoint than that of their critics. What the critics would not allow, however, was an exhibition in a national museum showcasing such views. They wanted a celebration of the atomic bombings by supressing any and all views that differed from their version of events. The historian Edward Linenthal has argued that the presence of the Enola Gay established a 'commemorative membrane' around the exhibition space, within which a language of commemorative respect was expected to dominate. The exhibit was, to veterans and others, a place of honour, a place transformed by the aircraft into something other than a museum.[362] To them the presence of the Enola Gay made the exhibition an almost sacred space, where a language of respect and celebration of the events that the aeroplane represented was demanded.

The museum had, however, made yet another miscalculation in the planning of the exhibit. They had assumed that most visitors knew a fair bit about the war and how it had started. To the museum, it seemed almost impossible that people could not know that Japan had started the war and that the US had dropped two atomic bombings on it towards the end of the war. The forty-ninth anniversary of those events in August 1994 showed just how wrong they had been. Several man-in-the-street style interviews conducted by the museum had

[361] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 28.
[362] Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', 1094–1101.

revealed just how little the American public knew about the war.[363] Many could not name on what country the bomb had been dropped or who had been the President at the time. A poll for *The New York Times* showed that 60 per cent of Americans could not name the President who ordered the nuclear attack on Japan, 35 per cent did not know that the first bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and 25 per cent did not even know that Japan was the target for the first atomic bomb.[364] This has led some observers to conclude that, for most young Americans, Pearl Harbour was as distant as the American Civil War. [365] The museum, as with the 'war of vengeance' line, admitted its mistake and in subsequent drafts added material on the war as a whole. But the lack of knowledge on how the war had ended meant that the museum was fighting an uphill battle. Their provocative and graphic exhibit would no doubt cause a great deal of shock among casual museum goers who might not be familiar with the history of the war.

With tempers starting to fray, Harwit wrote the AFA again asking specifically what changes they would need to see in order to drop their opposition to the exhibit.[366] The reply came the next day when Hatch demanded that 'all revisionist speculation be eliminated'.[367] Clearly, according to the AFA, it was speculation to point out questions that had arisen since the atomic bombings but not to try and predict how many casualties would have ensued from an invasion that did not happen. Correll saw his chance as well and replied to Harwit by spelling out exactly what needed to happen when he argued that:

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[363] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Michael Kammen', 31 August 1994.
[364] Richard H. Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 148.
[365] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, First Edition (Philadelphia, 1996), pp. 272-3.
[366] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Monroe Hatch', 23 August 1994.
[367] 'Letter to Martin Harwit from Monroe Hatch', 24 August 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

> The exhibition will not be acceptable if it fosters any of the following impressions: 1) That the Japanese were victims in World War II, defending their nation and culture against western aggression. 2) That the Americans were ruthless invaders, driven by racism, revenge, and blood lust. 3) That the death, suffering and horrors of war were borne unilaterally or unfairly by a passive Japan. 4) That the roles of Japan and the US in World War II were morally equivalent. 5) That the United States acted dishonestly, dishonourably, or immorally in its decision to use the atomic bomb.[368]

Correll could not prove, however, that any of these 'impressions' were present in the exhibit. The closest he had to proof was the infamous 'war of vengeance' line which had since been removed. Rather it was the tone and mood and the very questioning of the national narrative surrounding World War II which kept upsetting the museum's critics. The powerful list of demands was also far removed from what the museum was trying to do. It was another case of the culture wars tactic of drawing attention away from the debate at hand, in this case how World War II had ended, and the effect of the bomb on Hiroshima, by accusing the museum of depicting America as an immoral, bloodthirsty and ruthless nation. The wrestling match over control of the interpretation was emblematic of the struggle for the control of the institution. Convinced that the curators were subverting the museum, the AFA took the short step to accusing them of subverting America.[369]

In his article, Correll also claimed that the AFA did not represent anybody or speak for anybody other than the AFA, instead claiming that its main role had been to analyse and report.[370] Although that may have been true in the strictest sense, the AFA clearly carried significant weight in Washington, having been asked by the House Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations to provide information on the exhibit. It also

[368] John T. Correll, 'Developments in the Enola Gay Controversy', 22 August 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*
[369] Mike Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 174.
[370] Correll, 'Developments in the Enola Gay Controversy', 22 August 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*

made sure it spread its message by circulating its viewpoint to local and national media. This relentless pressure was beginning to pay off. In late August the museum announced that the exhibit would be expanded with a unit titled 'The War in the Pacific: An American Perspective'. This was a clear victory for the critics and a sign that the Smithsonian was beginning to buckle under the pressure applied by the veterans' organisations and Congress.

That did not mean that the museum's critics were happy. The AFA was not merely opposed to the wording used or the technical aspects of the exhibit. As Hatch explained, the real issue was 'how scholars and high-level curators at one of the finest museums in the world could ever produce concept papers and draft of scripts so out of tune with historical scholarship, the published memoirs of the leaders who made those awesome decisions, and with the first-hand reports from veterans who fought the war'.[371] What he failed to remember, however, was that many scholars, including those invited to serve on the museum's advisory board, attested that the script conformed to the scholarship available at the time. Secondly, the memoirs by figures such as Truman proved how complex the issue had been, which is exactly what the museum was trying to portray. As explained in the introduction, his Potsdam diary revealed that he was aware that Japan was looking for a way out of the war, yet he allowed the bomb to be dropped anyway. Finally, the testimonies of participants were not excluded from the exhibit. The original script was loaded with quotes from people in Hiroshima as well as US soldiers, especially section three which chronicled the training of the air force unit which dropped the bomb, a section which even Correll had praised. More importantly, the fact that one is a participant means that, at best, he or she knows only part of the story. This does not invalidate an individual's experiences; it does not devalue a

[371] 'Letter to Martin Harwit from Monroe Hatch', 24 August 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

person's emotional reactions to events. Those events, however, are but part of one scene in a multi-act drama.[372] The museum had sought to address this by adding material on the discussions surrounding the use of the bomb which had not been known at the time but which later scholarship had revealed.

One of the many ironies of the Enola Gay controversy is that, as the sociologist Thomas Gieryn has argued, everybody claimed to pursue balance.[373] For critics of the exhibit, balance most often referred to equivalent displays of potent images and artefacts that would recreate the moment in which the Enola Gay carried out its mission. If photographs of atomic bomb victims were shown, so too must the atrocities of the Japanese war camps; if numbers of lives lost at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were reported, so too must the numbers of Allied lives lost in the Pacific campaign and the number of lives saved by the bomb.[374] This criticism conveniently overlooked the fact that the exhibit utilized five times as many images than the AFA deemed sufficient for dead and dying to US aircrews, their aeroplanes, and their activities.[375] It is important to remember, however, that the idea that such a thing as a neutral or balanced exhibit exists is illusory. Taken as a whole the script could be read to be a condemnation of American behaviour at the end of World War II.[376] That was, however, just one of many ways the script could be read. It could also, as noted earlier, be read as approval of Truman's decision to use the bomb. The fact that the museum was taking a stance should not have come as a surprise to anybody. As museum critic Barbara

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[372] Stanley Goldberg, 'The Enola Gay Affair: What Evidence Counts When We Commemorate Historical Events', in Pnina G. Abir-Am and Clark A. Elliot, *Osiris, Volume 14: Commemorative Practices in Science: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Collective Memory* (Chicago,2000), pp. 179-80.
[373] Thomas Gieryn, 'Balancing Acts: Science, Enola Gay, and History Wars at the Smithsonian', in Sharon Macdonald, ed, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London, 1998), p. 203.
[374] Ibid, pp. 204-5.
[375] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 279.
[376] Richard H. Kohn, 'History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1036–63.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has pointed out; every exhibit has a 'point of view' and is 'full of messages, full of interpretation'.[377] The museum was merely stating its view on the events at Hiroshima which is to be expected in a free and democratic society such as the US. What the veterans and Congress indicated, however, was that the museum's view would not be tolerated.

In attempting to satisfy its critics, the museum chose a rather curious solution to its problem. The museum decided, in effect, to negotiate history with them, most notably with the AFA, and later the American Legion, on a line-in/line-out review of the script.[378] Although negotiating with key stakeholders in a museum exhibit was not unheard of, the lengths to which the museum was willing to go to appease its critics is extraordinary, especially given that the American Legion had already condemned the museum's efforts. Museums regularly modify exhibitions according to the best advice they can get, but to negotiate a rendering of the past in exchange for acquiescence posed special dangers. As Kohn argued, to negotiate an exhibition on medicine with the American Medical Association would potentially have made the exhibition hostage to a constituent group that could then wield a veto over facts or interpretation. [379] This is exactly what happened to NASM in the last six months of 1994.

Strangely, the fact that the exhibit could be read in a number of different ways seems to have come as a surprise to Harwit as he remarked that he was 'quite surprised' at the American Legion's reading of it.[380] That a museum engaged in creating historical exhibitions did not fully realise that people might see things another way clearly shows how far apart

[377] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 26.
[378] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 220.
[379] Kohn, 'History at Risk', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 160.
[380] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Michael Kammen', 22 September 1994.

the two sides were. This is symptomatic of the wider culture wars which, in effect, is not a battle over one culture, but a battle between two cultures. On both sides there is an almost complete unwillingness to see the other side of the argument. In the case of the Enola Gay exhibit the opposing sides appeared mutually exclusive when, in fact, they were simply two interpretations of the same event. The museum's critics did not only see things in a different way, however, they were outright offended. As Ben Nicks argued when he said that 'we feel like returning spat-upon Vietnam veterans when we see the space given to the kamikaze and Hiroshima, compared to the space dedicated to American soldiers who fought and died in the war -- and who expect to be suitably recognized in any American display celebration'.[381]

The museum's critics, in this case, expected the museum to host a celebration of the atomic bombings, even though the museum did not think that this was what they were supposed to do with regards to the Enola Gay. Nevertheless, veterans and the museum's critics clearly wanted a celebration of the dropping of the atomic bomb at the expense of showing any other narrative that might contradict that version of events. Jesse Brown, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, pointed this out when he argued that there was 'no other way' for the museum to do the exhibit and that the museum should not let fifty years of hindsight allow any questioning of the decision to drop the bomb to be aired.[382] There were of course other ways of doing the exhibit, but what Congress and veterans were demonstrating was that they would not allow a legitimate historical debate, the decision to drop the atomic bomb, to be aired in a national museum.

[381] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Ben Nicks to Martin Harwit', 4 September 1994.
[382] 'Letter from Jesse Brown to Martin Harwit', 6 September 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

What the museum's critics wanted to see, however, could hardly be called balance either. For an organisation whose purpose is to promote airpower, the AFA had a lot to say on how a museum exhibit should be organized, right down to the exhibit labels. Hatch, in a long list of bullet points to Harwit outlined how the exhibit should be structured, including the 'ground zero' section of the exhibit which the AFA argued should be reduced and subdivided along the lines off

- 'Imperial Japan: Defiant and Still Dangerous' -- force of millions waiting in the home island. Commitment to fight to the death. Photo of War Minister, General Anami. The determination to keep fighting continues into August -- even after the first atomic bomb has fallen.
- 'A Warning Declined' -- Photo of Prime Minister Suzuki. 'Mokusatsu' to the Potsdam Declaration. However you interpret the word, they still said 'no'. They were holding out for a better deal.
- 'Ground Zero: Hiroshima and Nagasaki' -- We agree that it should be included -- but not as the excessive 'emotional centre' the curators had in mind. Reduce the volume of it and stop the emotional manipulation. Twenty pictures and a half dozen artefacts would be ample. These photos and artefacts should not unduly emphasize women, children, and religious objects.
- 'The Surrender' -- The Number One consequence of the Enola Gay's mission -- given short shrift to date by the curators -- was that it brought on the end of the war. Nine days after Hiroshima, six days after Nagasaki, the Japanese surrendered.
- 'The Invasion That Didn't Occur' -- The bomb saved lives on both sides.[383]

Hatch's demands revealed that he realised that the atomic bombing was a sensitive issue. In wanting to reduce the ground zero section of the exhibit the AFA made it clear that it was not after the facts of the bombing at all, but rather a sanitizing of the past. The AFA wanted to downplay the fact that the bomb was dropped on a city, one of the reasons that the museum had included photos of women and children. There was also to be no mentioning of

[383] 'Letter from Monroe Hatch to Martin Harwit', 27 September 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

the discussions that led up to the dropping of the bomb, including the meetings of the so-called Interim Committee, or the deliberations Truman had with his advisers, as if to indicate that no discussion had been needed before the bomb was dropped.

Correll wanted to go even further and demanded that the curators be replaced with people who were veterans of military service and that 'continued monitoring will be required ... Veterans groups should be allowed to periodically review script updates as new changes occur'.[384] *Air Classics* magazine chimed in and argued that the aim should be to 'outs the revisionists who want to forever change history in favour of the enemy' and to establish a permanent committee to 'constantly monitor the NASM, and similar institutions to stop a repeat of their nearly successful treachery'.[385] This conveniently overlooked the fact that Harwit *was* a veteran of military service and that many other members of the museum staff had a military background. It also sought to present the veterans as the guardians of the history of the atomic bombings and that they knew the history and could produce an exhibit better than any historian or curator ever could. Sherry has argued that, in this way, the veterans sought just not a voice in their exhibit but the complete capitulation of their domestic foes, the museum, almost as if they were symbolically recreating the victory over Japan in 1945.[386] In effect, they wanted to have a veto on the exhibit. In hindsight is it hard to see how any degree of balance, however imperfectly applied, would have satisfied critics like Correll who seemed determined to censor all voices but his own.[387]

[384] John T. Correll, 'Memo To The Military Coalition and Associate Members, "Further Actions on Enola Gay Exhibit"', 19 September 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*
[385] Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 190.
[386] Michael Sherry, 'Patriotic Orthodoxy and American Decline' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 100.
[387] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 231.

Amid the turmoil surrounding the exhibit Secretary Adams retired and was replaced with Ira Michael Heyman, a former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley. Before he officially assumed office on 19 September 1994, Heyman asked his friend Preble Stolz, a former law professor at Berkeley, to review the script. Stolz came into the process with, in his own words, 'all the preconceptions you would expect of a squishy liberal deeply steeped in the tradition of academic freedom'.[388] He concluded that the problem with the exhibit was not one of balance or fairness but that he had come away with 'a distinct sense that I am being preached at and that, I think, is wrong'.[389] Stolz argued that the business of the Smithsonian was history but that it should not 'slant the facts to prove a point'.[390] Nevertheless, he admitted that 'telling a story must involve selection, what is omitted is necessarily deemphasized, and so down the slippery slope you descend to the inevitable pit of becoming a propagandist'.[391]

Stolz's argument was contradictory. He criticised the museum for preaching its message but pointed out that it is almost impossible to avoid this, as something is always omitted in an exhibition. He also noted that, while NASM knew how strongly veterans believed that the bomb had saved their lives, 'no one thought about it or articulated very clearly the emotional significance of that set of ideas ... At its core that asks people to consider the possibility that their life was not worth living.'[392] What Stolz was ultimately saying was that the museum was going needlessly out of its way to get its message across and that it was not taking seriously the very real emotions felt by veterans. It remains unclear, however, why

[388] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Preble Stolz to I. Michael Heyman', 2 September 1994.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 39.

the museum should have paid special attention to the feelings of veterans. After all, they were simply one of the many constituents that visited the museum. The museum was not an institution dedicated specifically to military matters. As such the veterans were not any more entitled to the content of its exhibits than any other interest group. Nevertheless, the veterans felt they had ownership of the story that the museum wanted to tell and therefore felt that their views should be at the centre of the exhibit. In this way the battle over the Enola Gay became a battle for control of the museum.

Backed up by his close friend, Heyman wasted no time in condemning the exhibit script as 'deficient' upon assuming office.[393] He did, however, pick up on the tactic that the museum's critics had so far used to get their point across. In a letter to *US News and World Report* he pointed out that the critics' argumentative technique was 'an old one: decide on your storyline, choose examples that support it, while ignoring overwhelming contradictory evidence'.[394] That was precisely what the museum's critics had done, but realising this was too little too late. At the age of 64, Heyman was very much in a transitional role at the Smithsonian and was hired to secure the institution's long-term funding during a difficult financial climate. Congress had already signalled that it was going to tighten the purse strings and reduce the Smithsonian's budget. Heyman was aware that controversy, like the one engulfing the Enola Gay exhibit, was not going to make his job any easier. His installation as Secretary in September 1994 was followed two months later by the so-called 'Gingrich Revolution' in the mid-term elections which saw the Republican Party seize control over

[393] Jacqueline Trescott, 'Michael Heyman, Airing the Nation's Attic', *The Washington Post*, 20 September 1994.
[394] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from I. Michael Heyman to Letters Editor, US News & World Report', 7 October 1994.

both chambers of Congress. These two events marked the beginning of the end of the exhibit.

Heyman's comments in the press certainly did not help morale amongst NASM employees. Worse was to come, however, when in late September the US Senate unanimously passed a non-binding 'Sense of the Senate' resolution submitted by Nancy Kassebaum (R, Kansas) attacking the exhibit. The resolution argued for the 'appropriate portrayal of men and women of the Armed Forces' and that 'the current script ... is revisionist and offensive to many World War II veterans'.[395] In doing so it echoed the legislation in Article 20 of the United States legal code which called on the Smithsonian to display the armed forces as an inspiration to present and future generations of Americans. However, as discussed in chapter two, this legislation was directed at the proposed National Armed Forces Museum which had never been funded or built since the legislation passed. Nevertheless, it was clear that Congress expected the Smithsonian to follow, if not the letter, then the spirit of the law in its exhibits, as made clear by the unanimous consent in favour of Kassebaum's resolution. The hand of the AFA was evident in the resolution. On the day of its introduction, Ed Bolan, a member of Kassebaum's staff, faxed Aubin at the AFA with copies of the resolution and the senator's speech along with a note saying 'Thanks for your help. Please call if you have any comments.'[396] The AFA had clearly moved on from trying to influence the exhibit directly to encouraging legislation which sought to promote an official version of the events at Hiroshima. What Congress was trying to do, with help from the AFA, was to legislate history.

[395] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 259.
[396] Ibid.

Throughout October the museum worked, together with the American Legion, on refining the script in the hope of appeasing its critics. This eventually culminated in the fifth and final script. The museum's critics were still not placated, however. In an op-ed piece in *The Washington Times* the American Legion reaffirmed the view of itself as a watchdog and argued that the exhibit was 'disseminating a deconstructed view of American history with the potential to undermine … our people's faith in our forefathers'.[397] The article revealed why the museum's critics reacted so strongly as they did to what was, after all, just one exhibition. The exhibition threatened to undermine the collective understanding and national narrative of America as a just and moral nation. This notion had been cultivated through a series of myths and stories about the greatness of America of which the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a merciful act was one of them. The Enola Gay exhibit thus threatened to undo a part of the national fabric of the US, which is why Congress, the veterans, and so many private citizens rallied against it. In an academic setting, where raising questions and criticism is part and parcel, the exhibit would most likely have raised scant outrage. But in an institution such as a national museum, where national narratives are invoked, and celebrated, that was out of the question, at least as far the critics were concerned.

The museum soon found itself further isolated as the group that had so far remained their staunchest defender, the academic community, started to criticise it for caving in to the American Legion. The academics' support had remained relatively unseen throughout the controversy, however, as Harwit recalled receiving only approximately five letters from

[397] Hubert R. Dagley II, 'We're Making Sure That Smithsonian Corrects Enola Gay Display', *The Washington Times*, 14 October 1994.

historians supporting the museum.[398] Then Martin Sherwin, who had been critical of the idea of an exhibit featuring the Enola Gay in the first place, penned a letter to Heyman, co-signed by forty-seven other leading scholars, accusing the Smithsonian of partaking in a 'historical cleansing' of the record of the Hiroshima bombing.[399] He went on to argue that:

> The problem now is that the current (fifth) script of the Enola Gay exhibit utterly fails to 'portray history in the proper context of the times' ... certain irrevocable facts cannot be omitted without so corrupting the exhibit that it is reduced to mere propaganda, thus becoming an affront to 'those who gave their lives for freedom'. One of these facts -- the observation that there has been a debate from the very beginning over whether the atomic bombings were necessary to bring about an early end to the Pacific war without an invasion of Japan -- was accurately reflected in the first few drafts of the exhibit's script. The existence of that debate is a historical fact, and the statement of that fact was removed from the planned exhibit in response to political pressure ... The Smithsonian is taking fastidious care to make sure that each bolt, each gauge and detail of the Enola Gay is a perfect reflection of the true artefact. This stands in extraordinary contrast to the disregard of historical documents and the scholarly literature on the atomic bombings[400]

Suddenly the roles had been reversed with historians complaining that history had been misappropriated by their critics and was being used to support a narrative that was more personal and political than historical.[401] Clearly the museum was caught in a bind. By including the debates that had surrounded the decision to drop the bomb, and the graphic images of its effect, the museum had managed to infuriate veterans, Congress, and the general public. In trying to address their concerns and by working with them it had alienated itself from the scholars and experts who had been the museum's defenders since the beginning. The support of the historians had, however, been of limited help to the museum and responding to them at this stage would have done little to change that. Compared with

[398] Martin Harwit, 'Academic Freedom in The Last Act', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1064–84.
[399] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Martin Sherwin to Ira Michael Heyman', 16 November 1994.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 226.

the political leverage of veterans' organisations, members of Congress, and the media, the historians' objections carried little weight as the museum gained nothing politically by responding to their concerns.[402]

The irony was that both narratives were part of the Enola Gay story. Although documentary evidence had, in the years since the war, undermined beliefs held at the time, there can be no denying that many veterans had felt true relief that the bomb was dropped. The historian Paul Fussell, who served as an infantry officer during the war, recalled that, when news of the atomic bombings reached him, 'we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live. We were going to grow to adulthood after all.'[403] At the same time, the documentary evidence since uncovered had shown that Truman and his advisers knew that Japan was looking for a way out of the war and that there were alternatives to dropping the bomb. These revelations were not available to the individual solider at the time but nevertheless form part of the Enola Gay story.

As a result, the exhibit became a kind of Rorschach test. People were concerned with different questions, paid attention to different 'facts', and interpreted the same facts differently.[404] The veterans' groups would settle for one story only, their story, precluding the multiple readings invited by the curators' script -- or so said the Smithsonian curators. However, Correll and friends accused Harwit, Crouch and Neufeld of the same partisanship.[405] Both interpretations are part of the history surrounding the atomic bombings, however, and deserved to be included in the exhibit. Unfortunately, the AFA and

[402] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 52.
[403] Paul Fussell, *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (New York, 1990), p. 28.
[404] Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', 1094–1101.
[405] Gieryn, 'Balancing Acts' in Macdonald, ed, *The Politics of Display*, p. 210.

the American Legion utilized their significant influence in Congress to make sure that the exhibit ultimately reflected their views at the expense of any mention of the complexity that surrounds the decision to use the atomic bomb.

Sensing that the museum was close to breaking point the American Legion mobilized for a final push to sink the exhibit. On 2 December 1994, Hubert Dagley, the head of the Legion's internal affairs, wrote a letter to the Legion's senior leadership arguing that

> Clearly the Air and Space museum is between a rock and a hard place, and this opens for us a possible 'second front' ... Now that NASM has an exhibit that pleases absolutely no one and is suspect from both our perspective and our opponents' perspective, the museum may be seriously damaged by the administration's dogged determination to proceed with this ill-fated exhibit, and irreparably damage its reputation for scholarship and reliability. It is our view that Members of Congress can be motivated to act against the exhibit on these grounds, even if some might not be moved by the revisionist history argument.[406]

The Legion was clearly planning on using its influence in Congress to close the exhibit once and for all. But the museum was not the only one caught in a bind. The Legion found itself, ironically, in a precarious position. As Dagley explained 'anything less than unequivocal opposition to the exhibit will be perceived as a betrayal of the high trust placed in The American Legion'.[407] In other words, although a great many veterans wanted to see the Enola Gay displayed, one way or the other, the American Legion was forced into unambiguous condemnation of the exhibit due to the hard stance it had taken throughout the controversy. Continued cooperation and negotiation with a museum they had labelled as dishonouring the actions of veterans could prove to be a double-edged sword. They, and many other organisations, like the AFA, needed the exhibit closed, and fast.

[406] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Hubert R. Dagley II to National Commander's Advisory Committee', 2 December 1994.
[407] Ibid.

Meanwhile, Correll argued that there was more at stake than a single exhibit:

> If the Enola Gay program is fixed -- and that is a big if -- what about the next exhibition, and the one after that? What about the people who created such a biased exhibit in the first place? What else do they have in mind for the National Air and Space Museum? We suspect they share the reported view of an official at another Smithsonian museum who looks down on visitors as clods who 'don't want to be engaged, empowered, or educated'. It is difficult, apparently, for these fellows to accept that people come to the Air and Space museum to see historic aircraft, professionally restored and cleanly presented. They are not interested in counter-culture morality pageants put on by academic activists.[408]

Correll was trying to link the actions of the curators to the wider counter-culture movement of the 1960s which was frequently viewed by the 'GI Generation' as consisting of individuals with wild and far-flung ideas that were out of touch with most ordinary Americans. He sought to marginalize the museum by accusing the curators of harbouring crazy ideas about the end of the war dreamt up by a group of out of touch academics. The new national commander of the Legion, William Detweiler, agreed with Correll when he argued on ABC's *Nightline* that a discussion of the decision to drop the bomb 'belongs somewhere else, in a ... seminar or in some education event'.[409] A national museum was, apparently, not the place to educate the public about the research that had been undertaken since the end of the war, or indeed, what was known at the time. This reaffirmed the view of many veterans that NASM was more of a 'temple' than a 'forum' and that they expected exhibits at the museum to uphold the national narratives of the end of the war.

The tactic of isolating the museum and putting pressure on Congress worked. In mid-December, seven congressmen led by Sam Johnson (R, Texas), and Blute, wrote Heyman and called for Harwit's firing, arguing that there was 'no excuse for an exhibit which addresses

[408] John T. Correll, 'Airplanes in the Mist', December 1994, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996.*
[409] Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', 1094–1101.

one of the most morally unambiguous events of the 20th century to need five revisions'.[410] The letter accurately sums up the view of history that Congress was trying to achieve. They wanted the museum to show the bombing of Hiroshima as if it had been, as Truman later claimed, the easiest decision in the world to make. What the critics of the exhibit wanted was just that; no questions about the morality of using nuclear weapons on cities, no discussions of alternatives to the bombing and, most importantly, no questioning of the national narrative of World War II. How lawmakers could label these controversies as 'morally unambiguous' was truly staggering and showed their desire to maintain the orthodox view of the end of the war and their resentment of curators and historians.

However, the killing blow for the exhibit would be provided, in part, by the museum. Having negotiated with the American Legion on a line-by-line basis and arrived at what seemed a fairly acceptable compromise in late October, Harwit, on 9 January 1995, informed Dagley and the Legion that new research suggested that the expected casualty figure for a proposed invasion of Japan used in the exhibit was far higher than what had been presented to Truman and his advisers. Harwit explained that:

> The highest of the figures cited for the invasion of Kyushu at the June 18 meeting appeared to be those of Admiral Leahy, who said that he expected loss rates comparable to those suffered at Okinawa, or around 30%. Professor Barton Bernstein of Stanford University, in a paper he had published some years ago, interpreted that figure to mean 30% of the 766,700 'total assault troops', Marshall had mentioned earlier in the meeting. On that basis, Bernstein thought Leahy's remarks meant casualty levels around a quarter of a million for the Kyushu invasion … Our museum accepted those figures, but in a more recent meeting with Bernstein, he took us to task for this, saying that he had, in the meantime, found Leahy's diary entry for that same day. We checked on that in the archives and found that Leahy's entry summarizes the entire June 18 with these words; 'From 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. the President conferred with the Joint Chief of Staff, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, and Assistant Secretary of War McCloy, in regard to the necessity and the practicability of an invasion of

[410] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Sam Johnson and Peter Blute to I. Michael Heyman', 13 December 1994.

> Japan. General Marshall and Admiral King both strongly advocated an invasion of Kyushu at the earliest practicable date. General Marshall is of the opinion that such an effort will not cost us in casualties more than 63,000 of the 190,000 combatant troops estimated for the operation.'[411]

As a result, the museum had decided to revise down the number in its exhibit label to the 63,000 mentioned in Leahy's diary.

That proved to be the final straw for the museum's critics. Shortly after Harwit had written Dagley, the Legion penned a letter to President Clinton demanding that 'that the exhibit be cancelled, that Congress investigate the process by which it was developed, and that the historic B-29 be displayed outside any political or philosophical context by an institution willing and able to do so'.[412] The AFA followed suit the next day by releasing a press release accusing the museum of having betrayed their trust, arguing that 'on the side and behind the scenes, the curators are still working their political agenda … We conclude, therefore, that it is time to cancel this exhibit ... Finally, we believe that the Congress of the United States should demand an accounting to the public of how this debacle was allowed to happen.'[413]

But the veterans' organisations had been looking for an excuse to call for the cancellation of the exhibit even before Harwit's letter to Dagley. On 4 January, Detweiler sent a memorandum to his staff arguing that the Legion should 'actively oppose the National Air and Space Museum and its controversial exhibit … It is my recommendation that our position calls for: 1) The exhibit to be cancelled 2) NASM's role and intent in the controversy to be investigated by Congress 3) The Enola Gay to be immediately re-assembled and

[411] 'Letter from Martin Harwit to Hubert R. Dagley II', 9 January 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*
[412] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from William M. Detweiler to William J. Clinton', 19 January 1995.
[413] 'AFA Blasts the Air and Space Museum on Enola Gay Reversal', 20 January 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*

loaned, or ownership transferred, to an entity willing and able to display it without controversy.'[414] This was five days *before* Harwit's letter to Dagley which supposedly sparked the veterans' calls for the cancellation of the exhibit. It was clear that the Legion and the AFA had been looking for a way out of the debacle regarding the Enola Gay. Harwit's letter to Dagley simply provided them with the excuse they had been looking for.

Even after Harwit's letter to Dagley, Secretary Heyman seemed content with the exhibit as it stood. In a letter to George Maness, the chairman of California's Department of Veterans Affairs, he argued that: 'I believe the script for the exhibition now strikes the appropriate balance that provides visitors with an opportunity to learn more about this critical event while at the same time recognizing the sacrifices of those who served in the armed forces and the resoluteness of those who lead our nation.'[415] Three days later, however, he was to get a stark reminder of who controlled the Smithsonian.

On 20 January, just a few days after the new Republican majority congress was installed, congressman Gerald Solomon (R, New York), the chairman of the influential House Committee on Rules, sent a letter to Harwit, with a copy to Heyman, threatening the Smithsonian with the power of the purse. As the letter states: 'The Smithsonian is getting on my nerves. Let me make a promise: if the Smithsonian cannot accommodate the wishes of the American Legion concerning the Enola Gay exhibit, I will personally take measures this year to zero out the Smithsonian's congressional appropriation. You can count on that.'[416]

[414] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Memorandum from William M. Detweiler to National Commander's Advisory Committee', 4 January 1995.
[415] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from I. Michael Heyman to George A. Maness', 17 January 1995.
[416] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Gerald B. Solomon to Martin Harwit', 20 January 1995.

The letter confirmed the strong influence the American Legion had over Congress when he went on to argue that 'the American Legion is our voice on this issue. The Legion's views reflect our own.'[417] Four days later, congressmen Johnson and Blute piled on the pressure with a letter co-signed by eighty-two other members of Congress calling for Harwit's firing and the cancellation of the exhibit. It argued that Harwit had recently 'reintroduced controversial and speculative accounts to the script of the Enola Gay exhibit which earlier had been removed' and that his actions 'were a slap in the face to all the parties who contributed their time and expertise in creating an exhibit that best reflects the contributions that all Americans made to the culmination of World War II'.[418]

With that the game was up. Threatened with the elimination of its budget, calls for congressional hearings, and the firing of the museum's director, Heyman had no choice but to capitulate. On 30 January he threw in the towel and announced the cancellation of the exhibit and that it would be replaced with a much simpler one. He also announced his decision to delay other planned exhibitions that might prove equally controversial, including one on the Vietnam war. Defending his decision, he argued that the Smithsonian had 'made a basic error in attempting to couple an historical treatment of the use of atomic weapons with the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the end of the war'.[419] The new exhibition would, according to Heyman, 'essentially be a display, permitting the Enola Gay and its crew to speak for themselves'.[420] This represented the ultimate surrender to the veterans who

[417] Ibid.
[418] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Sam Johnson and Peter Blute to I. Michael Heyman', 24 January 1995.
[419] 'Statement by I. Michael Heyman', 30 January 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings.*
[420] Ibid.

had been asking for the aeroplane to be displayed on its own, with no labels describing the many controversies surrounding the use of the atomic bomb.

The decision to cancel the exhibit was a complete reversal from a man who, in the weeks before becoming Secretary, had defended the 'independence of the institution from detailed political direction' and endorsed the idea that the 'strength of America is the relative independence of its scholars from political pressures'.[421] But Heyman was no fool. As Kohn has argued, he understood that his action would damage the Smithsonian's reputation, call into question its scholarly integrity, and give the appearance of political censorship. [422] As for the scholars who were sure to cry out at the caving in to specialized interest groups, Heyman pointed out that they were nowhere to be seen defending the Smithsonian, in fact, some, like Sherwin, were openly attacking the museum. He therefore concluded that they would get over the cancellation.[423] The Enola Gay exhibit was simply the last straw following other exhibits, such 'The Great War in the Air' and 'A More Perfect Union', which were both accused of disparaging American culture. By abandoning this exhibition and agreeing to review some earlier controversial ones, and to delay new ones under way, Heyman chose to surrender the Smithsonian in order to try and save it.

The causes of the controversy and the cancellation of the exhibit thus lay in the diverse circumstances that came together in 1994: an exhibit designed to provoke viewers with powerful interpretations; long developing and bitter contests over education, historical interpretations, and public culture; mistakes of process by NASM; a new, aggressive and determined Republican majority in Congress; and a new, peculiarly vulnerable, Smithsonian

[421] Kohn, 'History at Risk', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 163.
[422] Ibid, p. 167.
[423] Ibid, p. 165.

leader who did not resist pressures generated by a national outcry.[424] In the end, the commemorative voice had prevailed over the historical one. This was in part because veteran groups could muster more political power than historians and in part because a conservative political climate called into question the very practice of history.[425] What was most worrying was how the involvement of Congress had brought the planned exhibit to an end. As the physician and historian Stanley Goldberg has argued, the fact that a significant portion of the museum's funds came from public sources no more entitles Congress, or anyone else, to dictate conclusions by the curators than does the fact that other public monies support other kinds of research.[426] Such practices have no place in a country committed to democratic principles. The final irony of the Enola Gay saga was that the exhibition was cancelled over a dispute regarding the number of casualties in an invasion that did not happen. The museum's critics had been highly critical of the museum for including material on the discussions that had led to the bomb being dropped and the alternatives available but, evidently, did not think the same principle applied to speculations about the number of casualties in an imagined event.[427]

The Enola Gay exhibit was the victim of a clash between two different attitudes to history. The first, as exemplified by the museum's critics, was faith-based in its convictions, believing that events had occurred as the participants at the time remembered them. Any historical display should therefore reflect the views of the participants. The second, as championed by the curators, was open to discussions and reinterpretations about past events, especially

[424] Ibid, p. 168.
[425] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy' in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 229.
[426] Goldberg, 'The Enola Gay Affair', in Abir-Am and Elliot, *Osiris, Volume 14: Commemorative Practices in Science*, p. 183.
[427] Ibid, p. 177.

those that were complex and controversial and based on the available historical evidence. The museum's crime was that it wanted that debate to take place in a national museum.

This debate was not, however, what Congress, the AFA, veterans, and many visitors were expecting from the Smithsonian. The Enola Gay controversy showed that, when confronted with debates that threaten to undermine politically motivated understandings, the solution is to suppress one's opponents' views in favour of one's own. In the case of the Enola Gay, Congress, in effect, said that the curators' evidence was not part of the historical debate. This is the opposite of what historians do. The job of the historian is to debate evidence, to determine which factors had greater impact. By closing the Enola Gay exhibit, Congress signalled that the debates and questions surrounding the atomic bombings were not part of the body of historical evidence. This was not a controversy about historical truth or fact. It was about what should be considered evidence and what should not. Congress made clear that they would not accept anything which did not conform to the heroic narrative of the Hiroshima bombing. It is the highest irony that America, which has been highly critical of other nations, especially Japan, for failing to confront their past, is incapable of hosting a historical exhibit in a national museum debating the reasons behind the decision to drop the atomic bomb. The culture wars have given rise to a telling double standard. Most Americans would agree that other nations must look squarely at the dark or controversial aspects of their history. Apparently, as the Enola Gay controversy revealed, the same was not true of America.[428]

The Enola Gay controversy set a chilling precedent for the rest of the culture wars when it was made clear that Congress could, and would, determine what constituted historical

[428] Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History On Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York, 2000), p. 17.

evidence and what did not. The conservatives that swept to power in November 1994 wasted no time in forcing the cancellation of an exhibit which threatened to undo the narrative of World War II and the view of America as a righteous and moral nation. Backed up by the influence of the American Legion and the AFA, these conservatives signalled that certain aspects of America's history could not be freely debated and that there was an official line from which Congress expected the Smithsonian not to deviate. The following chapter will analyse the long aftermath of the Enola Gay controversy and how it influenced the rhetoric of the other debates of the culture wars.

# Chapter IV

## *'Heaven Knows We Could Use the Money Elsewhere'*

This chapter will examine the lengthy aftermath of the Enola Gay controversy and its impact on discourse in American politics and culture. In particular, this chapter will analyse how the controversy relates to other issues of the culture wars such as debates on political correctness, art, culture, and the role of government. It will be argued that the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay helped set a worrying tone for public discourse in American society. The closing down of the Enola Gay exhibit revealed a tendency in the cultural life of America to forgo principled and rational discussion in favour of opinionated airing of differences. Since the controversy, policy battles in the US have increasingly tended to be based on emotional arguments, rather than reason and a willingness to reach agreement. The controversy also emboldened the resurgent political right in America who used the battles of the culture wars to strike a blow at ideological opponents and defend what they saw as traditional values. These developments came to light not only during the Enola Gay controversy, but also in the disputes surrounding the creation of the National Standards for History and federal funding for the NEA and NEH.

Despite having succeeded in forcing Heyman to cancel the proposed Enola Gay exhibit in late January 1995, the museum's critics were not satisfied. Less than two weeks after the cancellation, the American Legion sent congressman William Clinger (R, Pennsylvania), chairman of the House Committee on Government Reforms and Oversight, a letter repeating its demand for congressional hearings, along with a long list of questions for the museum to answer. Among the questions that the Legion wanted answered were what political convictions the curators held; why Neufeld, the lead curator and a Canadian citizen, had been hired in the first place; and if it had been the intent of Martin Harwit, the museum's

director, to 'radicalise' NASM.[429] It was evident that the museum's critics saw the attempt to display the Enola Gay as something far more than just an exhibition. At stake was America's view of itself and the museum, according to its critics, had tried to undermine what the nation represented. One critic expressed this clearly to Heyman when he argued that

> I am appalled how this degradation of American principles, values, sacrifices and patriotism could have occurred ... What has happened is an attempt to destroy these sacred covenants of America by a trio of 'Baby Boomers' who were still wet behind the ears during the end of World War II. Now they masquerade as authorities on World War II under the guise of PhDs … How these men, an immigrant from Turkey, an astronomer from Canada, and a Japanese sympathizer can be placed as curators of America's National Museum is ludicrous and irresponsible ... How can this trio who are living fat off the sacrifices of this great country mastermind such a betrayal?[430]

The letter revealed the strong emotions roused by the controversy and how easily logic was thrown out the window in an effort to condemn the exhibit. The Baby Boomers, whom he accused of betraying the nation, would not, by definition, have been Baby Boomers if they had been wet behind the ears during World War II. In many instances, like in the letter above, the criticism contained thinly veiled xenophobia. In late March 1995, Johnson, the chairman of the House Committee on Rules, forwarded the same list of questions to the Smithsonian and confirmed that Congress would be conducting hearings into the state of the institution.[431]

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[429] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 1, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from William M. Detweiler to William F. Clinger, Jr.', 10 February 1995.

[430] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 2, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Robert P. Hurley to Michael Heyman', 15 March 1995. Hurley was slightly confused as to who the culprits were. Harwit, an astronomer, was born in Czechoslovakia but lived in Turkey before emigrating to America. Michael Neufeld, the lead curator of the exhibit, is a Canadian citizen whose specialty is World War II history. The 'Japanese sympathiser' is Tom Crouch, the head of the museum's aeronautics department during the controversy. He had earlier worked for the National Museum of American History where he curated the 'A More Perfect Union' exhibit which focused on the forced internment of Japanese-Americans during the war.

[431] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 2, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Letter from Sam Johnson to I. Michael Heyman', 22 March 1995.

The first round of hearings began two days later when officers of the American Legion testified before Congress and confirmed that they were worried that the Smithsonian was undermining Americans' view of their country. William Detweiler, the national commander for the Legion, argued that the 'National Air and Space Museum consciously and intentionally violated … principles, by setting out to alter our citizens' view of themselves.'[432] The solution, according to the Legion, was to rein in the Smithsonian's budget in order to 'impose some discipline on free-spending curators and administrators'.[433] This was despite earlier having testified that they were not asking 'that funding for the Smithsonian Institution be withheld'.[434] This reflected a weird logic that supposedly left wing views were, somehow, connected to the museum's budget. It is not clear how cutting the museum's budget would force it to alter its ideological standpoint. In their desire to remove such views the American Legion made clear that their intention was punitive, not corrective.

These remarks revealed a telling double standard. According to the view taken by the Legion, the responsibility of historians and curators working in public institutions was to support commonly accepted viewpoints and, crucially, to celebrate America. If they did, their work was considered factual. If they did not, their work was labelled as subversive and revisionist.[435] As Michael Kammen, a historian and chairman of the Organization of American Historians during the Enola Gay controversy, has argued: 'Historians become notably controversial when they do not perpetuate myths, when they do not transmit the received

[432] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 2, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Testimony of William M. Detweiler, National Commander of The American Legion, before the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives', 24 March 1994.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid.
[435] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1094–1101.

and conventional wisdom, when they challenge the comforting presence of a stabilized past.'[436]

With the aftermath of the controversy continuing a full three months after the exhibit's cancellation, Harwit announced his resignation on 2 May 1995, two days before representatives of the museum were due to testify in Congress. In his resignation letter he argued 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 … There is no choice but to resign: the museum's welfare and future are too important.'[437] This was not enough to placate the critics, however, and the scheduled hearings continued as planned. Harwit's resignation represented another victory for those critics who had been demanding it for months. As an academic, Harwit differed from his predecessors who had mostly come from a career in the military. Following his departure, the museum, until 2018, was continuously led by people with an extensive military career behind them. In this way, those who were critical of the Enola Gay exhibit ensured, for a time, that the museum remained in the hands of those with close ties to the military community, thereby limiting the risk of exhibits threatening to portray a darker narrative of America's military might.

Attempting to provide an alternative historical interpretation of the Enola Gay's mission was evidently the Smithsonian's most serious crime. Correll and the AFA made this clear when he argued: 'World War II does not call for neutral interpretation. There was a right side and a wrong side. The right side won. That is what we remember … no conciliatory adjustments

[436] Paul Boyer, 'Whose History Is It Anyway?: Memory, Politics and Historical Scholarship' in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), p. 131.
[437] 'Letter from Martin Harwit to I. Michael Heyman', 2 May 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, Part II: Documents and Clippings* (Arlington, 2000).

are required.'[438] In his opening statement, Senator Ted Stevens (R, Alaska), who presided over the hearings, echoed Correll's comments when he announced that: 'We are here today because the Smithsonian decided to present an interpretation of the history of the Enola Gay's historic flight.'[439] As far as the critics were concerned, the Smithsonian had been trying to contradict what they saw as historical truth. Anything that differed with that accepted truth was seen to be an 'interpretation' and therefore wrong.

This was made evident in the testimony of Charles Sweeney, who had commanded the mission which dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, when he argued that: 'We must have the courage to stand up and demand that before any conclusions are reached, those facts which are beyond question are accepted as part of the debate.'[440] He had earlier, as part of an *ABC News Nightline* special dedicated to the controversy, argued that raising questions about the use of the bomb was 'un-American … derogatory of American culture' and 'might be close to treason'.[441] He contradicted himself, however, as he argued in his testimony that: 'This does not mean that debate should be stifled. It does mean that any debate must be founded upon a recognition of all the facts … In a free society such as ours there must always be an ongoing debate about who we are and what we stand for.'[442] In short, debates should not be stifled but certain things were beyond questioning. Opinions which supported a particular point of view were labelled 'facts', while those that offered a different

[438] John T. Correll, 'Japan's Struggle With Surrender', May 1995, in *Revisionism Gone Wrong: Analysis of the Enola Gay Controversy, March 1994 - December 1996* (Arlington, 1997).
[439] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Pamela Walker Laird, 'The Public's Historians', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 39 no. 3 (1998), 474–82.
[442] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.

interpretation were dismissed as propaganda or self-serving lies. This contradictory and naïve sentiment underpinned what the museum's critics wanted to see at the Smithsonian. They claimed to want an open and fair debate but really wanted a showcase for their historical version of how World War II had ended, which they equated with truth, and the exclusion of any other narrative which challenged this view.

The Legion, in further testimony, continued to pile on the pressure by recommending that the

> personal and professional goals of future museum directors be clarified and determined to conform to the intent of Congress before the visions are permitted to affect the direction of a museum … This is not an effort to restrain freedom of expression, but rather an effort to quash propaganda presented in the guise of history -- propaganda researched and prepared at the expense of the American people.[443]

The statement was contradictory as the Legion claimed they did not want to impinge on the museum's right to free expression while, at the same time, arguing that Congress should approve any future decisions the museum made. The implication, however, was clear; freedom of speech did not extend to museums, at least not exhibits at national ones. Harwit, in the aftermath of the controversy, seemed to agree with this sentiment when he argued that academic freedom, as practiced in the nation's universities, did not easily extend to other types of institutions.[444] Some of the testimonies provided at the hearings were dubious in the extreme as the AFA testified that at 'no time did the AFA seek to dictate the exact details of the script'.[445] Apparently, dictating how many pictures of dead and wounded

[443] Ibid.
[444] Martin Harwit, 'Academic Freedom in The Last Act', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1064–84.
[445] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.

should be shown, or the titles of exhibit labels, as shown in the previous chapter, did not count as dictating the content of the exhibit. Perhaps, as the Legion argued, the veterans' organisations exercised no censorship over the exhibit, but whether the exhibit 'lived' had clearly rested on their acceptance of the final product.[446]

Time and again the testimonies of the museum's critics kept coming back to the fact that the museum had provided an interpretation which challenged the memories of veterans. At the hearings, Stevens argued that the purpose of the hearings was to establish 'what led the Smithsonian to propose a view of the events that took place at the end of World War II that is contrary to the memory of those who lived through the war'.[447] Senator Wendell Ford (D, Kentucky) agreed with this view when he argued that 'it is awfully hard to refute General Sweeney. It is awfully hard because he was there, and he seems to be of sound mind … The Smithsonian must understand that, as an institution supported with federal funds, it is ultimately accountable to the American public, whose lives and history its exhibits reflect.'[448] He was, in other words, arguing for the notion of empirical fact, which comes to us via observation or experience. This fact is not determined by anyone. It is simply observed and therefore fact. The problem is that historians do not generally accept the notion of empirical fact, since people observe things differently based on their context. Ford and Sweeney did not see themselves as propagandists. They sincerely believed that there was a singular truth that could be discovered through observation and experience and was beyond doubt. In this instance, that meant presenting the veteran's view of how World War II had ended.

[446] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars,* p. 53.
[447] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.
[448] Ibid.

Sweeney, however, did not observe the decision that preceded the atomic bombings, nor how World War II ended. He merely observed a single bombing mission. Nevertheless, the fact that a large part of the Smithsonian's funding came from public funds meant that, in Ford's mind, Congress, as the body providing the funds, was entitled to decide what conclusions the curators should draw. This was despite the fact that Congress funds all kinds of research, such as cancer treatments or astronomy, without similar demands being made. The reason the Enola Gay exhibit elicited this response was that it threatened to undo the national narrative of how World War II had ended. For many, this meant that the museum was challenging the view of America as a just and moral nation, values which they saw as integral to what the nation represented. His comments also reflected the view of history that the museum's critics were keen to present. According to this view, empirical knowledge was more likely to be known by the participants in the event in question, not by historians and curators, and the collective memory of the war was therefore the narrative that should be shown at the museum.

Against this onslaught of accusations that the museum had betrayed American values, questioned the memories of veterans and contradicted the collective memory of the nation, Edward Linenthal was left to defend and explain the museum's actions. In his testimony he argued that

> Some critics folded this exhibit into the culture wars, into an anti-intellectual attack, arguing that elite historians had 'stolen' the 'people's' history, and that the museum had fallen victim to the delusions of 'revisionism' ... is it not the job of historians to continually reconstruct the past in great detail, to continually revise our interpretations of the past according to new research and new insight? ... Do we not see this as an act of historical enrichment, reminding us of the fact that history is never as simple as it seems, but as complex, ironic, and therefore, endlessly fascinating?[449]

[449] Ibid.

He was not, however, claiming that the Smithsonian had been guilt free. He criticised the museum for failing to take seriously the feelings of veterans and for willingly entering negotiations with the American Legion, who, he claimed, had near veto power on the exhibit. This had threatened the scholarly integrity of the project by making an interest group, the Legion, the arbiter of public history.[450] Nevertheless, he concluded that: 'Unlike totalitarian countries, we never want to give fuel to the impulse to sanitize history, to turn away from engaging with the past in all of its complexity. This would be anathema to the democratic principles we all hold sacred.'[451]

Linenthal correctly connected the fate of the exhibit to the wider culture wars. The museum's critics accused it of being overly politically correct, by which they meant avoidance of language and portrayals that could be seen as discriminatory against certain people, for example Japanese visitors to the museum. This term has also become an invective divorced from its original meaning, used merely because of the effect it is guaranteed to arouse. The museum was not trying to be politically correct, it was merely trying to be professional as regards the conduct of historical enquiry. Labelling it as politically correct, however, was effective because it saved critics from having to address or explain the larger and more complicated issues at stake. The term itself became increasingly used in the late 1980s and early 90s following, as explained in the introduction, the publication of such books as Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, and Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* in which they condemned liberal efforts to promote self-victimisation and multiculturalism.[452] But, as Mike

[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.
[452] Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York, 1987); Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted*

Wallace asserts, the only real political correctness in the whole affair was the decision to shut down the exhibit and prevent people from judging it for themselves.[453]

This tactic of blaming one's opponent for the very thing one was guilty of was frequently used in the Enola Gay controversy. The result was that pressure shifted back on to the museum staff who, in the end, were unable to defend their exhibit. In this way, the participants of the culture wars were trying to defend what they saw as sacred values. For the critics of the exhibit that meant upholding the traditional narrative of how World War II had ended and respecting the sacrifices of veterans. On the other hand, for those defending the exhibit, it was a case of protecting the independence of the nation's museums and allowing old assumptions to be questioned. This is also indicative of how the culture wars have moved political debates away from traditional left versus right arguments over, say, the budget, to a focus on morals and values. This was demonstrated by how members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, assailed the exhibit with accusations of political correctness, historical propaganda, and unflattering portrayals of America.

Despite Linenthal's defence, members of Congress at the hearings were unimpressed and kept questioning the Smithsonian's right to provide an interpretation of the events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Throughout the hearings the critics continually challenged the Smithsonian's claim to authority and did not view the curators and historians as disinterested experts. Dianne Feinstein (D, California) questioned whether it had been right for the museum 'to interpret history, rather than just simply put forward historical facts based on the validity of that fact and the historical value … In the days when I studied history

*Higher Education*, 1st edition (New York, 1990); Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (New York, 1991).

[453] Mike Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 188.

the text ... was essentially a recitation of fact, leaving the reader to draw their own analysis. Now what you see is a writer's interpretation of fact, which is different ... I wonder about the wisdom in presenting any interpretation.'[454] Linenthal replied that 'when you begin to put any story into a narrative of any kind, you are already doing interpretation ... Anytime you ask … the meaning of events, you are already into the realm that all historians practice, and that is interpretive history.'[455]

Feinstein's comments revealed how little the museum's critics understood the role of historians. After all, how does one value something without interpreting it? They also, as mentioned above, demonstrated how the culture wars have blurred old political boundaries as this was not simply a Republican versus Democrat argument. Her comments were also indicative of the heroic narrative of World War II that many of the museum's critics, including leading members of Congress, were keen to portray. This view of history was based on the belief that history could, and should, consist of nothing but what was perceived as fact, with very little room for different interpretations. The problem with that kind of narrative is that, almost by definition, it is hostile to two notions that most historians take for granted: that controversy is inherent in any historical reinterpretation, and that policy-making, such as deciding to use atomic bombs, is driven by multiple considerations. In addition, since facts come to us through human experiences, they are inherently subject to 'in the eye of the beholder' bias. This also assigns to anyone who lived through an event knowledge of that event. Mere presence equals authority. Yet, as we know, most people are not aware of the finer details of what is going on around them. This was especially

[454] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.
[455] Ibid.

problematic during the Enola Gay controversy as the historians did not recognise the existence of facts as such but saw the debates about the war as different interpretations of the same events. For the critics, on the other hand, facts were inviolable. For that reason, there was never any chance that an agreement could be reached. Critics of the exhibition were unnerved by the very notion of controversy. To them, this was the opposite of simply telling history 'like it was' which, for them, was that the atomic bombings were completely justified and moral. The critics' narrative therefore demanded a simple, uniform storyline, which brought it into direct conflict with what the museum was trying to achieve.[456]

The hearings ended with no real conclusion, other than a stern warning for the Smithsonian. Stevens, once again, utilized the threat of funding cuts to get the Smithsonian in line when he argued that:

> I can tell you, you will not get it [the Smithsonian's budget] from this Congress if we have controversies like this. You cannot expect to have dramatic increases in funding at the time of controversies of this size … To assure the future of the museum you must find some way to assure that controversies of the type we have been through in the last few years are avoided to the maximum extent possible … We are going to have conflicts within our society, but if people want to be revisionist, if people want an opportunity to have politically correct exhibits, then I think they should get private sector money to do it.[457]

As part of the larger battle over American values, the Enola Gay exhibit appeared to be more emotional, significant, and less ambiguous than other debates, such as those over the national history standards, the NEA and NEH, and the suspected leftist bias of the press and other institutions. The museum's critics, especially conservative ones, worried that if an exhibit that appeared to be openly unpatriotic, planned by a national, publicly funded

[456] John W. Dower, 'Three Narratives of Our Humanity' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 80.
[457] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, 'Hearings Before the Committee on Rules and Administration, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session on the Smithsonian Institution Management Guidelines for the Future', 11 and 18 May 1995.

museum, could not be shut down or altered, then other institutions and aspects of society more sheltered from the corridors of power might be truly unreachable. It did not matter that forcing the cancellation would lead to accusations of political censorship and the suppression of free speech; stopping the Enola Gay exhibition would have a deterring effect. The threat of large cuts in the Smithsonian budget and hearings into how the institution was managed were just the weapons to wield.[458] For those in Congress who had made the culture wars central to their critique of American society, cancelling the Enola Gay exhibit seemed a necessity in rolling back the perceived dominance of the left in the cultural life of America.[459]

The Enola Gay was just one of several problems that conservatives wanted to address. In his 1993 book *See, I Told You So*, Rush Limbaugh, the influential radio talk-show host, warned his fellow conservatives that 'we have lost control of our major cultural institutions. Liberalism long ago captured the arts, the press, the entertainment industry, the universities, the schools, the libraries, the foundations etc.' In the last 25 years 'a relatively small, angry group of anti-American radicals' – what he called the 'sixties gang' -- had become 'firmly entrenched in all of the key cultural institutions that are so influential in setting the agenda and establishing the rules of debate in free society'. Of particular concern were those who 'bullied their way into power positions in academia' spreading 'a primitive type of historical revisionism' the heart of which was 'our country is inherently evil'.[460] The academic community, whom he was targeting, were highly unsuited to countering this type of criticism. Academics tried to point to their expertise in the subject matter, the facts as far

[458] Richard H. Kohn, 'History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1036–63.
[459] Richard H. Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 161.
[460] Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, pp. 174-5.

as they were known, and the public value of organisations like NASM, the NEA and NEH. But that was missing the point. Myths and emotions cannot be refuted by facts. Limbaugh was out to launch a campaign, not an academic conference.[461] In the public sphere, the modus operandi of academics, that debates be conducted rationally and be based on the available evidence, was useless in the face of strong emotions based on powerful convictions. Unlike in the classroom, academics did not set the terms of the debate in the public arena, where a different set of rules decided what was acceptable and what was not. Outside the ivory tower, authentic feelings, not evidence, mattered.[462] The academics were, in essence, attempting to conduct an academic debate. Their opponents were not.

Nevertheless, one of the most fascinating aspects of the controversy was the extent to which critics in Congress and the press discounted the authority of professional historians. Historians and curators were dismissed as agents of political correctness, multiculturalism, post-modernism, and historical revisionism, all phrases used interchangeably and derogatively in a conservative critique of everything from the Enola Gay exhibit to the national standards of history.[463] The critics treated the historians involved in the exhibit not for what they were -- trained experts in their fields -- but like any other political opponent. When historical knowledge threatened powerful non-academic interests, as it did in the case of the Enola Gay exhibit, it was viewed as just another political obstacle that had to be destroyed.[464] The memories of veterans became weapons, not only in an anti-intellectual assault on the practice of professional history, but also on the principle of free speech and

[461] Ibid.
[462] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, Reprint edition, (Chicago, 2016), pp. 280-1.
[463] Michael J. Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation', in Michael J. Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 229.
[464] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, pp. 282-3.

the tradition of academic freedom. Conservative commentators saw themselves as defenders of historical truths, which they equated with traditional American patriotism. Denouncing the curators for promoting a political agenda, they demanded complete capitulation to a point of view that was itself frankly political and represented the interests of particular groups.[465]

The controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit became a potent symbol for all sides in the culture wars in America, and an additional point of contention over which to attack opponents. For *US News & World Report's* John Leo, the proposed exhibit had been part of the 'same dark vision of America as arrogant, oppressive, racist and destructive [that] increasingly runs through the Smithsonian complex'.[466] Pat Buchanan, the presidential candidate, saw the controversy as a result of a 'sleepless campaign to inculcate in American youth a revulsion toward America's past. The left's long march through our institutions is now complete.'[467] He was referring to the slogan, coined by the German student leader Rudi Dutschke, which called for subverting society by infiltrating its key institutions and Buchanan sought to tie the actions of the Smithsonian to the notion, prevalent among conservatives, that the political and cultural left had somehow successfully achieved this aim. For others, particularly those on the political left and centre, the cancellation of the exhibit represented a clear case of government censorship, and a future in which controversial historical issues could not be addressed in public museums, especially national ones.[468] As Buchanan's comments made clear, for many the controversy represented an opportunity to assign blame. Conservatives blamed liberals and the left for disparaging American culture and

[465] Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy', in Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, p. 230.
[466] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy', in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 59.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.

liberals replied in kind with accusations of censorship and political correctness. It therefore quickly became clear that, for many of the participants in the culture wars, defending one's own doctrine was what mattered, not the issues of the war itself.

The cultural climate of the 1990s, despite the end of the Cold War, was not suited to the presentation of a darker narrative about nuclear weapons. Linenthal has argued that, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, as fears about global nuclear war rescinded, other kinds of fears -- about the nature of America and its role in the world -- rose to the surface. This darker narrative, particularly when applied to the 'Good War', tapped into more substantial fears about whether or not the US was a righteous and innocent nation. For many, even to mention the ambiguities and controversies in American history appeared a dangerous activity. Peter Blute, the Congressman from Massachusetts who had so violently attacked the Enola Gay exhibit, struck this note when he declared: 'I don't want 16-year-olds walking out of [that museum] thinking badly about the US.'[469]

Blute accused the museum of undermining American values such as morality, hard work, and perseverance in the face of adversity. But he was not above being flexible with these values when it suited him.[470] Those members of Congress, like Blute, who railed against what they saw as the deterioration of American values were given a significant boost in the November 1994 elections in which the Republican Party swept both chambers of Congress for the first time in twenty years. The mastermind behind the party's revival, Newt Gingrich, who before his election to Congress in 1978 had been an assistant professor of history at

[469] Ibid, p. 61.

[470] Following his career in Congress, Blute served as the head of the Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort) between 1997 and 1999. His tenure ended abruptly following revelations in *The Boston Herald* of a workday 'booze cruise', originally paid for by MassPort and labelled as a survey of Boston harbour, during which he admitted to drinking heavily and a female passenger, actress Gidget Churchill, exposed her bare chest to the Herald's photographer.

West Georgia College, concluded that: 'The Enola Gay fight was a fight, in effect, over the reassertion by most Americans that they're sick and tired of being told by some cultural elite that they ought to be ashamed of their country.'[471] And, as Gingrich was aware given his background as a historian, the generation of historians who were responsible for the Enola Gay exhibit were also responsible for having broadened the scope of the discipline. In doing so they had embraced the experiences of a far wider range of Americans, for example Japanese-Americans, than had previously been the case.[472] This did not sit easily with conservatives' distrust of multiculturalism and their fear that it was undoing social bonds and aiding in the subversion of American society. They therefore saw the Enola Gay controversy as, not only an attack on the actions of veterans, but also as part of an attempt at undermining American society as a whole.

Despite their claims to the contrary, these conservatives seemed drawn to authoritarian solutions. In the case of the Enola Gay exhibit, Congress laid down an official historical 'line' and demanded the firing of curators who did not agree with it.[473] The threat of reduced funding was a favourite tactic. This was also used during the arguments concerning the NEA and NEH. The NEA especially has found itself the target of critics who think that the federal government has no role in funding and promoting art. This was made evident during the 1989 controversy surrounding 'Piss Christ', a photograph by the artist Andres Serrano depicting a crucifix submerged in the artist's own urine. The artwork was the winner of an award from the Southeastern Centre for Contemporary Arts which was partly sponsored by the NEA. Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R, New York) argued in Congress that 'some may want to

[471] Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 187.
[472] Ibid.
[473] Ibid.

sanction that [the photograph], and that is fine. But not with the use of the taxpayers' money. This is not a question of free speech. This is a question of abuse of taxpayers' money.'[474] The following year, congressman Robert Dornan (R, California) argued that

> It is clear ... that America is engaged in a *kulturkampf*, or culture war. From flag burning to abortion to capital punishment to public funding for the arts, America is struggling to define its moral and ethical foundations … It is time to strike a blow for traditional values and economic responsibility. It is time for average Americans to take their country back from the amoral elites -- in the universities, in the dominant media culture, in certain sectors of the arts community, and elsewhere -- who have nothing but contempt for them and their way of life. It is time to put the NEA out of business. Heaven knows we could use the money elsewhere.[475]

By labelling the cultural elite as amoral he engaged in an ad hominem attack arguing that the danger facing the country was not political, but moral. This was a key feature of the culture wars and ensured that debates became heavily infused with emotion, far more so than traditional political arguments over, for example, the budget that could be easily interpreted along party political lines. He viewed the arts community as subversive and with an open contempt for ordinary Americans and traditional values. What was worse, as D'Amato argued, was that this was actively funded by the government.

In addition to Serrano's work, in the summer of 1989 the work of another photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe, brought further attention to the issue of public funding for the arts, as well as questions of censorship and the obscene. Mapplethorpe's traveling solo exhibit, titled *The Perfect Moment* and compiled shortly before his death from AIDS earlier that year, included works from his infamous *X Portfolio* which contained images of homoeroticism, sadomasochism, and a self-portrait with a bull whip inserted into his anus. Shortly before its

[474] Richard Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts* (New York, 1992), p. 28.
[475] Ibid, p. 269.

opening at The Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC, the gallery announced that it was cancelling the exhibit for fear of being drawn into a political debate concerning the future of the NEA and publicly funded art.[476] Instead of avoiding a political debate, the Corcoran's decision caused one. Joshua Smith, a curator and art collector, argued in *The Washington Post* that: 'The message the cancellation sends artists is that they must conform to "acceptable" norms as dictated by outside interest groups in order to have museum shows.'[477] For others, however, especially the conservative *The Washington Times*, the cancellation was, according to its editorial, 'probably the best thing to happen to American arts since Philip Roth lost the manuscript of a novel in a New York men's room'.[478] Similarly, another contributor for the same paper mused about what he would do if he stumbled across Mapplethorpe's corpse and concluded that he would set it on fire, call it a work of 'performance art' and ask the NEA for a $15,000 grant.[479] Five years later similar words and sentiments were used about the cancellation of the Enola Gay exhibit, reflecting the intense feelings roused by debates in the culture wars.

Like other debates in the culture wars, such as that over abortion, the use of federal money was a sore point and ensured that the argument became very heated. As Hilton Kramer, an art critic, argued: 'We are being told ... that no one outside the professional art establishment has a right to question or oppose the exhibition of Mapplethorpe's work even when it is being shown at the government's expense … The public's right to have an interest in the fate of this exhibition began the day that tax dollars were allocated for its public

[476] Freeborn G. Jewett Jr and David Lloyd Kreeger, 'The Corcoran: We Did the Right Thing', *The Washington Post*, 29 June 1989.
[477] Joshua P. Smith, 'Why The Corcoran Made a Big Mistake', *The Washington Post*, 18 June 1989.
[478] Editorial, 'Mapplethorpe Agonistes', *The Washington Times*, 20 June 1989.
[479] Richard Grenier, 'A Burning Issue Lights Artistic Ire', *The Washington Times*, 28 June 1989.

display.'[480] Robert Samuelson, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, similarly argued that the NEA amounted to 'highbrow pork barrel' by which he meant that the endowment spent public money in order to please their own constituents.[481] In this way, critics like Kramer and Samuelson were lashing out at the use of federal funding but also at the aloofness and disdain for the general public that they claimed the arts community embodied. This was a charge that would later be successfully imposed on the curators of the Enola Gay exhibit.

But the argument was not only about the role of federal funding in sponsoring art. It was also the nature of the artworks in question and the values which they portrayed. Frederick Hart, a sculptor and a member of the Commission of Fine Arts argued that

> What is taking place is yet another perverse manipulation of the public by the contemporary art establishment … What is really going on is the cynical aggrandizement of art and artists at the expense of sacred public sentiments -- profound sentiments embodied by symbols, such as the flag or the crucifix, which the public has a right and a duty to treasure and protect.[482]

It quickly became clear that, more than the issue of federal funding, the critics were opposed to the very thing the artworks represented, especially homosexuality. Despite claiming that he did not view homosexuality itself as a problem, Kramer argued that in Mapplethorpe's photographs 'men are rendered as nothing but sexual -- which is to say, homosexual' and he lamented the 'attempt to force ... acceptance of the values of a sexual subculture that the public at large finds loathsome'.[483] As such, the attacks on the NEA sought to serve a larger agenda -- promoting a conservative ideology of pro-family and anti-gay. Robert Hughes, a columnist for *Time* magazine, pointed this out when he remarked that people like Kramer 'don't greatly care whether it [the NEA] exists or not; if attacking it can serve a larger

[480] Hilton Kramer, 'Is Art Above the Laws of Decency', *The New York Times*, 2 July 1989.
[481] Robert Samuelson, 'Highbrow Pork Barrel', *The Washington Post*, 16 August 1989.
[482] Frederick Hart, 'Contemporary Art Is Perverted Art', *The Washington Post*, 22 August 1989.
[483] Kramer, 'Is Art Above the Laws of Decency'.

agenda, fine'. He went on to argue that the critics had no doubt that the NEA had to be punished if it strayed from what they took to be the centre line of American ethical belief. The truth, according to Hughes, was that no such line exists -- not in a society as vast, various and eclectic as the real America.[484]

This tactic of focusing on symbols as a means of attacking ideological counterparts was widely practiced by conservatives engaged in the culture wars. One commentator picked up on how the tactic was used when he noted that

> Conservative and fundamentalist groups have deployed and perfected techniques of grass-roots and mass mobilization around social issues, usually centring on sexuality, gender and religion … In moral campaigns, fundamentalists select a negative symbol which is highly arousing to their own constituency and which is difficult or problematic for their opponents to defend. The symbol, often taken literally, out of context and always denying the possibility of irony or multiple interpretations, is waved like a red flag before their constituents.[485]

The tactic was used to great effect during the arguments over the NEA and the Enola Gay exhibit. The use of symbols and powerful imagery, coupled with the inability of the participants in the debates to acknowledge multiple interpretations, contributed to a situation where, as the photographer Ben Lifson pointed out, whatever was said about controversial exhibits degenerated into propaganda for either of the opposing sides.[486]

Liberals tend to see the attempts to rein in or close the NEA and NEH as proof of government censorship, or even as a breach of the First Amendment, in which the right to free speech is enshrined. Conservatives, on the other hand, see it as an issue of government sponsorship rather than censorship.[487] Very few conservatives would characterise their

[484] Robert Hughes, 'A Loony Parody of Cultural Democracy', *Time*, 14 August 1989.
[485] Carol S. Vance, 'The War on Culture', *Art in America*, September 1989.
[486] Andy Grundberg, 'Art Under Attack: Who Dares Say That It's No Good?', *The New York Times*, 25 November 1990.
[487] Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars*, p. 3.

actions as censoring art, impeding research in the humanities, or even forcing the closure of a museum exhibition. What made their arguments more powerful was, as noted above, the fact that the institutions in question received public funding. Debates in the culture wars become more heated when federal funding is involved. The current argument over Planned Parenthood, for example, is essentially the typical argument over abortion. But what makes it even more impassioned is the fact that Planned Parenthood receives federal funding. The funding issue, however, is just a smokescreen for opposing ventures that seem politically objectionable. If Planned Parenthood advised women to avoid abortion, conservatives would not object to the idea of federal support for it. Since the early 1990s, Congress has slowly but steadily reduced the NEA's budget. Some conservatives, including the influential Christian Right, want to cut all funding completely, leaving theatres, art galleries, and museums to fend for themselves. They argue that the government has no role in supporting artistic endeavours of any type and that the free market should determine which projects should be funded. More importantly, many conservatives, especially the Christian Right, view art as not benefiting society as a whole but as a threat to those who, like themselves, uphold Christian values.[488] In addition, this is a typically populist stance which argues that art is by nature elitist and that funding for it therefore favours an unrepresentative elite.

As such the clash over government funding was more than an argument over public funding for art. It was a debate over competing social agendas and sources of truth. For conservatives there was a lot at stake in these debates. Many of them found in the artworks in question evidence that artists were attempting to introduce a progressive agenda into society, an agenda based on multiculturalism, gay rights, feminism, and sexual liberation. For

[488] Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York, 1998), p. 190.

conservatives, this meant that artists were engaged in antisocial activity -- challenging the family, traditional religious beliefs, and the existing structure of power.[489] It was a debate over the state of US culture in the 1990s as much as it was over the future of America. Fearful that the 'cultural elite' were dismantling old truths, these conservatives worried that this new progressive agenda would replace the old truths on which they had relied for so long.

The argument over the NEA, like that over the Enola Gay, became, in effect, a battle for power between the two primary antagonists of the culture wars: liberals and religious conservatives. Both sides claimed to defend sacred values on behalf of society as whole. For liberals that meant defending multiculturalism, the right to free speech and being tolerant of differences. For conservatives, on the other hand, it meant protecting the family and respecting traditions and the social order. But neither side seemed to have very much in common with those they claimed to defend. As George Will, a conservative columnist, pointed out in 1980 'capitalism undermines traditional social structures and values; it is a relentless engine of change, a revolutionary inflamer of appetites, enlarger of expectations, diminisher of patience. … Republicans see no connection between the cultural phenomena they deplore and the capitalist culture they promise to intensify.' The resulting decent into immorality was, according to Will, a product of the 'unsleeping pursuit of ever more immediate, intense and grand material gratifications' – the very ethos capitalists were promoting.[490] It is therefore interesting to note that conservatives, while rejecting high culture in the name of the masses, also frequently complained about the state of popular

[489] Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars*, p. 5.
[490] Gerard DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan: The Emergence of a President* (London, 2015), p. 15.

culture -- television, music, and film -- commonly enjoyed by these same masses.[491] Whereas conservatives cloaked their arguments in the guise of populism, liberals and the left invented a supportive public that they claimed instantly understood that freedom of speech and the rights of artists was under attack when, in fact, there was little evidence to suggest any kind of public outcry against the attempts to slash the NEA.[492]

Nevertheless, some of the arguments used in the battle over the NEA were downright nasty. Buchanan, writing in *The Washington Times*, argued that

> In the 60s, the children of the counterculture wanted to be free to curse 'Amerika' and to use 'filthy speech'. Now, in middle age, they wish to be subsidized even as they do so. Truly, they have never grown up, and surely, a showdown is coming. Like the gay rights community, the arts community seems increasingly alienated from American society. And both suffer from an infantile disorder. The gays yearly die by the thousands of AIDS, crying out in rage for what they cannot have: respect for a lifestyle Americans simply do not respect, billions for medical research to save them from the consequence of their own suicidal self-indulgence.[493]

The reference to 'filthy speech' pertained to an incident in 1965 when a man named John Thompson was arrested in Berkeley, California after holding up a sign with the word 'FUCK' written on it. This enabled the right to attack the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at the University of California for disrespecting the law and traditional values, even though Thompson was not a student nor a member of the FSM. Democrats in California were implicated by association because of their support for the FSM.[494] That incident, and Buchanan's comments, revealed how conservatives used the culture wars to strike a blow at their political opponents. In the same way, conservatives, like Buchanan, were trying to use the debate over the NEA, and the other battles of the culture wars, to promote what they

[491] Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars*, p. 11.
[492] Ibid, p. 23.
[493] Pat Buchanan, 'Where A Wall Is Needed', *The Washington Times*, 22 November 1989.
[494] DeGroot, *Selling Ronald Reagan*, pp. 179-186.

saw as traditional American values which, conveniently, bore a strong resemblance to their own agenda – patriotic, pro-family, pro-church, and anti-gay.[495] It also made clear that, for many conservatives, this was not just a matter of scoring points against opponents, it was about upholding what they saw as key values and defending their doctrine. The scoring of political points, however, was made possible by the fact that there was a large base of people who, like Buchanan, were worried about a progressive agenda creeping into American society. These people therefore served as a base from which support could be garnered. Veterans, evangelicals, and more mainstream conservatives all found an issue in the culture wars which they could get behind. The Republican Party was able to channel this surge in support for a more conservative agenda and were able to turn it into a political success in the November 1994 elections.

The NEH fared no better than the NEA. In the 1980s, new approaches to American history, especially in social history, had introduced a greater focus on groups which had previously been neglected such as women, minorities, and African-Americans. These new developments caused scant outrage within the world of academia. Outside the universities, however, it caused near panic among those on the political right. They were worried that America's future was greatly endangered by a failure to affirm a stable, proud, and unitary past. The NEH, first under William Bennet, then, from 1986 to 1992, under Lynne Cheney, took on a strong conservative outlook and moved to reduce funding for research on topics relating to women, labour, racial groups, or any projects focusing on controversial aspects of American history.[496] In this way conservatives were, again, using the battles of the culture

[495] Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars*, p. 6.
[496] Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History On Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York, 2000), pp. 100-3.

wars as a means of promoting their own agenda, in this case by limiting support for opposing viewpoints.

The attacks on the NEA and NEH bore striking resemblance to how conservatives criticised the national standards for history. The standards, which were released in late 1994, concurrent with the Enola Gay controversy, were part of a broader effort to establish voluntary guidelines to help schools reform their history curricula and improve student performance. The guidelines had been developed with the help of the American History Association, the Organisation of American Historians, the National Council for History Education, and the Organisation of History Teachers. [497] The purpose of the standards, much like that of the National Education Goals released in 1990, was to inspire creativity and new ideas in the history curricula at the local, state, and federal level. The purpose was not, as the critics maintained, forcefully to introduce a national curriculum or to impose reforms on specific states.[498] Even before the standards were officially released, Cheney, who as chair of the NEH had approved their creation in the first place, began a series of public attacks on them for 'political correctness' and neglecting 'traditional history'.[499]

The critics were worried that this new progressive agenda was designed to show a darker side of US history, one that threatened to undermine what they saw as historical truth, including how World War II had ended. Ben Nicks, who campaigned against the Enola Gay exhibit, argued that what was needed was

> a direct challenge to liberal scholars in academia, think-tanks, news column pundits, and national TV left-wingers ... In our America we cannot stop them from promulgating their hate America message. But we can publicly challenge them at every opportunity. And in the schools we can take the time and make

[497] Mark H. Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100 no. 3 (1995), 829–53.
[498] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, p. 150.
[499] Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', 829-53.

> the effort to check the textbooks and voice objections to any historical revisionist attempt to brainwash America with their propaganda.[500]

The issue of history textbooks is especially important for two reasons. Firstly, secondary school textbooks in America reach far more students than any other type of historical source. These textbooks then, in theory, impart some kind of historical consciousness on almost every American high school student. Frances Fitzgerald, a journalist and historian, has argued that: 'What sticks to the memory from those textbooks is not any particular series of facts, but an atmosphere, an impression, a tone.'[501] Secondly, John Bodnar, a historian, has argued that the primary agent responsible for shaping popular views of historical events has been the federal government.[502] Conservatives were therefore worried over the possibility of what they saw as revisionist history creeping into official textbooks and the view of history, including with regard to the end of World War II, which many Americans would take from them.

The standards managed to anger not only Cheney, but other conservative commentators as well. The columnist Charles Krauthammer argued in *The Washington Post* that the standards were a 'classic of political correctness' and that they highlighted the 'victimization of the country's preferred minorities, while straining equally to degrade the achievements and highlight the flaws of the white males who ran the country for its first two centuries'.[503] Similarly, John Fonte of the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, although acknowledging the need to include 'previously neglected groups and individuals', denounced the standards mentioning

[500] SIA, Accession Number 14-100, box 4, National Air and Space Museum (US) Enola Gay Exhibition Records 1968-2006, Ben Nicks, 'Ninth Bomb Group Association, Enola Gay Committee Report', 9 September 1995.
[501] Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*, 1st edition (Boston, 1979), pp. 16-18.
[502] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, Reprint edition (Princeton, 1993).
[503] Charles Krauthammer, 'History Hijacked', *The Washington Post*, 4 November 1994, A25.

of Harriet Tubman and the women's suffrage movement as 'politically correct'.[504] And John Leo argued that the standards' focus on the many revolts during the nation's early history, such as Shay's Rebellion, made sense when you view America as 'inherently oppressive' and that the authors had deliberately picked a narrative focusing on rebellions against the 'selfish and hypocritical ruling white elites'. He concluded that the standards were 'riddled with propaganda ... and the American people would be foolish to let them anywhere near their schools'.[505] As a result of the conservative media's backlash against the standards the Department of Education's switchboard was flooded with calls from people angrily asking: 'Why are the feds telling our schools that our kids can't learn about George Washington anymore?'[506]

The standards nevertheless garnered some support in the media. Those who favoured them also used the label 'political correctness', but rather than arguing that the standards were rife with them, argued that the opposite was in fact true. The *Los Angeles Times* stated that: 'We are happy to report that this inclusiveness [of long-neglected groups] entails no new, politically correct exclusions.'[507] The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* argued that Cheney, Limbaugh and others 'should be embarrassed' for their 'nit-picking focus on whiffs of political correctness' and missing the new standard's 'huge contribution ... school districts that choose to adopt these voluntary standards will discover lively history classrooms full of intense debates far more enlightened than the ones already taking place on talk radio'.[508] The *Lincoln Star* of Nebraska commended the standards for promoting a 'broader, more

[504] John D. Fonte, 'Rewriting History', *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 6 November 1994.
[505] John Leo, 'The Hijacking of American History', *US News & World Report*, 16 November 1994.
[506] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, p. 193.
[507] Editorial Board, 'Now a History for the Rest of Us', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 October 1994.
[508] Editorial Board, 'Living History - New Standards Reflect Vital Reality', *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 14 November 1994.

thoughtful look at America's past ... The materials offered in the guidelines better reflect the variety and complexity that is American than does much of today's public school curriculum.'[509] And *The New York Times*, although believing that the standards demanded more than what was realistic of students, concluded that 'if this government-sponsored project errs by demanding too much, that in itself might herald a welcome change for America's primary and secondary schools'.[510] The most vocal support came from Douglas Greenberg, the director of the Chicago Historical Society. Writing in the *Chicago Tribune*, he argued 'the standards offer a balanced view of our national history that neither reflexively dismisses nor uncritically praises our accomplishments as a people ... Cheney is using the standards as an excuse to initiate a discussion that has nothing to do with education and everything to do with politics.'[511]

Despite this mixture of responses to the standards, a vote in Congress would not reflect this divide. In January 1995, two weeks before the Enola Gay exhibit was cancelled, the new Senate passed, with a 99-1 margin, a motion introduced by senators Bob Dole (R, Kansas) and Slade Gorton (R, Washington) which sought to repeal the standards. The motion argued that the standards should not be adopted, and that funds for future ones should go to those that 'have a decent respect for the contributions of Western civilization, and United States history, ideas and institutions, to the increase and spread of freedom and prosperity throughout the world'.[512] Despite being more than a little uneasy about the motion, Democratic senators were mindful that the Republican majority had the votes necessary to pass it, even if every Democrat voted against it. They were also keen to move the debate

[509] Editorial Board, 'History Guidelines Offer Good Ideas', *Lincoln Star*, 2 February 1995.
[510] Editorial Board, 'Maligning the History Standards', *The New York Times*, 13 February 1995.
[511] Douglas Greenberg, 'Face The Nation - Exposing the Chief Critic of the "American Experience"', *Chicago Tribune*, 9 January 1995.
[512] Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 185.

back to other issues such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Medicaid. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D, New Mexico) therefore offered a compromise in response. If Gorton scaled back the motion to a Sense of the Senate resolution, which would not be legally binding, the Democrats would vote for it, no matter how offensive they found it.[513]

Leaving aside the non-binding nature of the resolution, the Senate's action was hasty and ill-informed. No hearing on the standards had been held; the Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities had taken no action; and not one of the teachers or educators who had produced the standards had been consulted before the vote. Some Senators openly admitted that they had not read the standards. Patty Murray (D, Washington) confessed she voted for the resolution without having seen the standards 'in order to move the debate back to the unfunded mandates bill that was on the floor at the time'.[514] In doing so the Senate unanimously lent its support to the critics of the standards who were telling the nation's teachers that the guidelines sought to undermine American values.

The vote, despite its non-binding nature, sent chills through the offices of those organisations that had helped devise the standards and through certain sectors of the media. It was also tactically unwise on the part of the Democrats since it gave the impression that censure of the NEH had nearly unanimous support. For many, the biggest disappointment was the callous way in which some lawmakers voted for the motion. NEH chairman Sheldon Hackney lamented the fact that the discussion had become a 'drive by debate' and that school reform had been 'made a hostage in the culture wars'.[515] Others were worried about how the standards had been inaccurately presented. Helen Wheatley, a

[513] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, pp. 234-6.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Ibid.

historian at Seattle University, exposed point by point how Gorton's speech in the Senate had distorted the content and meaning of the standards.[516] Another historian, Eric Foner, writing in *The New York Times*, argued that the Senate was 'manipulating federal funds to promote an official interpretation of American history. This kind of thing used to happen regularly in other countries, but until recently was held to be inappropriate for a society that values freedom of thought.'[517] Much like the hearings in Congress regarding the Enola Gay controversy, Dole and Gorton's actions represented an effort by legislators to propose that Congress should determine whether certain subjects should be taught in American schools, or shown in its museums. It also served the larger point of fighting the culture wars by undermining any effort to set national standards, over which the right felt they had little control.[518] By passing the motion Congress promised to investigate federal funding and support for history teaching.[519] The vote therefore represented a rebuke, not only of the standards, but of the historical profession as a whole.[520]

The resolution condemning the standards was misleading in the first place. In arguing against them, Dole and Gorton made it look like they were to be universally implemented across the county. That was never the plan. The standards were voluntary. In attacking the standards, conservative commentators linked them to trends in education such as postmodernism, feminism, and multicultural approaches. They characterized them as the work of a small group of radical 1960s-era professors dedicated to what they saw as a perversion of history. To conservatives, revisionist history was an assault on historical truth, and therefore a weapon that could be used in the war against the standards. To scholars,

[516] Helen Wheatley, 'Teaching History', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 19 February 1995.
[517] Eric Foner, 'Historian, Show Decent Respect', *The New York Times*, 31 January 1995.
[518] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, p. 237.
[519] Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Power Plays at The Exhibition*, 1st edition (Minneapolis, 2002), p. 30.
[520] Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', 829-53.

revisionist history was simply work that challenged older interpretations of past events and proposed new ones. Few historians, if any, viewed the idea of reinterpreting the past as being subversive.[521] In the culture wars, however, revisionism became a pejorative word and revisionists were vilified as people who went about manipulating 'facts' and destroying the past.[522]

It is the job of historians constantly to challenge established interpretations. This process usually unfolds in scholarly journals or professional conferences, away from the public spotlight. Occasionally, however, the disjunction between the scholarly and public attitude to history is exposed with stark clarity, normally when an ongoing process of historical revision and reassessment focuses on an issue about which many citizens are passionate.[523] These feelings underscored the reaction to the Enola Gay exhibit and to the standards. Revealingly, the one charge that never appeared in the case against the standards was that they failed to reflect contemporary scholarship. On the contrary, they reflected it all too well, at least according to the critics.[524]

In her attack on the standards, Cheney used tactics like those used by critics of the Enola Gay exhibit. She accused the standards of failing to mention the Constitution. That, however, was a deliberate misrepresentation. The only sliver of truth to the charge was that the word 'constitution' did not appear in the standards. In fact, a major part of them called for students to examine the Continental Congress, the Bill of Rights, and the founding of the Supreme Court.[525] Suspicions that Cheney's real goal in attacking the standards was political

[521] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, pp. 206-7.
[522] Ibid, p. 207.
[523] Paul Boyer, 'Whose History Is It Anyway?: Memory, Politics and Historical Scholarship' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, *History Wars*, p. 135.
[524] Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', 829-53.
[525] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, pp. 200-1.

were confirmed by her actions in late 1994, as the controversy surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit was in full swing. She meticulously followed the guidelines set out by Gingrich on how to challenge opponents. This strategy was described in the training manual of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), the political action committee chaired by Gingrich, which advised candidates to 'go negative', to 'never back off', and 'use minor details to demonize the opposition'.[526]

Conservative critics, in order to stay in the spotlight of national news, took the elements of the debate surrounding the NEA, the standards, and the Enola Gay, stripped them down and turned them into provocative sound bites and cleverly crafted images. This played to their strengths. In the media they used the weapons of the culture wars; phrases like 'multiculturalists, 'revisionist,' 'politically correct liberals,' and 'educational establishment'. The educators who had tried to defend their work had a much harder time. Inaccurate accusations had to be answered with careful and reasoned explanations, made all the more difficult by the fact that most critics, let alone members of the public, had not actually read the standards or the exhibit script. Most media commentators, however, were not interested in lengthy discussions which would have dispelled some of the misunderstandings regarding both controversies.[527] By January 1995, as the Enola Gay exhibit was in its death throes, Cheney had aligned herself with those members of the newly installed Congress who were leading the charge in trying to pull apart the NEA and NEH.

The tactics of deliberate misrepresentation, endless fixation with minor details, and the demonization of the opposition became a hallmark of conservatives in the culture wars and has remained popular ever since. It had the distinct advantage of making Cheney et al

[526] Ibid, p. 213.
[527] Ibid, p. 197.

appear clear and straight talking when, in fact, their attacks on the Enola Gay exhibit, the national history standards, the NEA and the NEH, and so on, were merely smokescreens for attempts at advancing their own agenda of traditional patriotism, pro-family, pro-church, and anti-gay. The extent to which the culture wars have become an excuse to strike a blow at political opponents is evidenced by Cheney's contradictory stance on the standards. In October 1992, when the first draft was released, she wrote to the authors: 'What nice work you do! I've been saying lately that the best grant I've ever given is to your standards-setting project.'[528] Two years later, when the political situation demanded it, she would attack the same standards.

One of the most astounding facts about the controversy surrounding the standards, and the Enola Gay, is that no one, either on the political left or right, challenged the idea that Congress had the right to mandate historical interpretation.[529] This was partly down to the fact that, in the case of the Enola Gay, the museum was perceived to be attacking veterans and no politician, of any persuasion, would join in an attack on a group of people that enjoyed such widespread support throughout American society. But it was also a reflection of how the culture wars had broken down the traditional left versus right characterisations of politics. Instead of political beliefs that could be placed along the spectrum of left to right, the Enola Gay controversy exemplified how questions of morals and sources of truth had started to outweigh traditional political concerns. During the congressional hearings concerning the Enola Gay exhibit, as explained in the previous chapter, Feinstein, a well-known liberal, joined conservative members of Congress in attacking the museum's right to question the veteran's version of how World War II had ended. Similarly, during the many

[528] Ibid, p. 214.
[529] Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 181.

arguments surrounding the NEA, the liberal senator Barbara Mikulski (D, Maryland), when asked by a constituent why it was unconstitutional to place a nativity scene on or near the steps of a courthouse, replied that if you had put 'those symbols in a container and filled it with urine or some other repugnant substance, you'd get a federal grant for putting it up'.[530]

Other, more conservative politicians, came to the defence of the NEA believing that, whatever their misgivings about the nature of the artworks in question, it should not come at the expense of artists' ability to express themselves. Senator John Danforth (R, Missouri), during a debate concerning the so-called Helms Amendment which sought to ban the NEA from supporting cultural pursuits depicting sadomasochism, homo-eroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts, pointed out that, if the amendment passed, the NEA would have been unable to sponsor programmes involving such literary classics as *Tom Sawyer, The Colour Purple*, or the works of Shakespeare.[531] Nevertheless, as part of the breakdown of the traditional political divide, many conservatives were quick to seize the opportunity of a national movement against political correctness, multiculturalism and provocative art. According to Midge Decter, a prominent conservative, Reagan's presidential victories during the 1980s had borne witness 'not so much to a wish for radical new policies as to an open declaration of war over the culture'.[532] It was, as one commentator described it, 'payback time for what many saw as an epidemic of political correctness'.[533]

The lasting impact of the controversies surrounding Enola Gay, the NEA and NEH, and the national standards for history, is therefore to be found in the way they dramatized and

[530] Bolton, ed, *Culture Wars*, p. 209.
[531] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History On Trial*, p. 104.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Alex Roland, 'Voices in the Museum', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 39 no. 3 (1998), 483–88.

further entrenched developments in US political and cultural discourse. During the Cold War bipartisanship was a staple of US politics, primarily because of a shared desire to defeat communism. America's two-party system, although confrontational by its very nature, was made less so by the existence of a common enemy. For example, President Eisenhower, in order to pass laws, frequently worked with Democratic leaders such as House Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson. The 1958 National Defence Education Act, a reform brought in to improve science teaching in response to the successful Soviet launch of Sputnik, was framed precisely with the idea of defeating communism in mind. Similarly, part of the motivation to enact civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s came from the propaganda gift the Jim Crow laws handed the Soviet Union.[534] But after the end of the Cold War, without a common enemy to define efforts, this era of bipartisanship came to an end. As a result, in the 1990s, Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole started using the filibuster, and other delaying tactics, far more aggressively. Government shutdowns, among other things, thus became part and parcel of American politics and became politicised weapons.

The 1994 congressional midterms, the so-called Republican revolution described earlier, saw many conservative ideologues elected to Washington. With an aversion to government, especially federal government, they had very little interest in making it work. Gingrich, the first Republican to occupy the post of House Speaker in forty years, personified the kind of divisive politics that would go on to become the new norm on Capitol Hill. This in turn further emboldened these conservatives and, in their minds, justified their use of confrontational, partisan tactics. Spurred on by their success in demolishing the Enola Gay

[534] Nick Bryant, 'The Time When America Stopped Being Great', BBC News, 3 November 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41826022.

exhibit and rebutting the national history standards, Gingrich used two government shutdowns in 1995-96 as a means to force budget concessions from President Clinton on matters such as Medicare, public health, education, and the environment. This new obstructionist attitude has become firmly entrenched in US politics, as summed up in 2013 by then-Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R, Kentucky) when he argued that his number one job in Congress was 'making sure President Obama is a one-term president'.[535] This type of inflexible stance helped bring about another government shutdown in 2013 over continued battles of raising the debt ceiling.

The argument over the Enola Gay was instrumental in helping to foster this tradition of partisanship, squabbling, and inability to reach agreement. It emboldened the resurgent political right and their hostility to government and helped make bickering and a refusal to compromise the new norm for discussions about American politics and culture. When historians and other academics threatened to undermine politically motivated understandings, those in positions of power reacted by treating them like political adversaries who had to be destroyed. Instead of reasoned discussions and compromise, those in power utilized their significant political weight and influence to silence any and all views which challenged their own. In doing so they set a worrying precedent for how debates are conducted in the US and made the Enola Gay controversy one of the most significant battles of the culture wars.

[535] Ibid.

# Epilogue

## *'White Wine and Cucumber Sandwiches'*

Although the dust eventually settled on the Enola Gay controversy, it would have long-lasting consequences for those involved. This epilogue will explain what became of the aeroplane itself and include reflections on the controversy by key individuals involved such as Neufeld, Crouch, Harwit and Correll. In addition, it will critically reflect on the impact of the controversy on the NASM and the Smithsonian Institution. It will be argued that the critics of the Enola Gay exhibit were successful, at least partially, in their efforts to display the aeroplane as they wished. The current display of the Enola Gay is devoid of all the moral questioning deemed so offensive by the critics of the original exhibit but is also missing the celebratory aspects sought by many of them.

As it had promised, and despite veterans' suspicions that it would never do so, the Smithsonian eventually put the fully restored and reassembled Enola Gay on display. When the long overdue extension of the museum, the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Centre, opened in 2003 at Dulles airport outside Washington DC, the Enola Gay was among the first objects placed on display. Those who hoped that tempers had cooled in the decade since the first attempt at display were quickly proved wrong. On the opening day, proceedings were briefly interrupted when protesters spilled a red liquid, supposed to resemble blood, near the Enola Gay and threw another object which dented one of its panels. Angry veterans and their relatives replied with shouts of 'Go home!' and other, less pleasant, epithets.[536]

The protesters were angry at the fact that the aeroplane would be displayed as a feat of technological achievement and without mentioning the death toll at Hiroshima. To this day

[536] 'Protesters Disrupt Air Museum Opening', *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 16 December 2003.

the Enola Gay remains on display at the centre. Tucked in amongst other wartime aeroplanes, it has been given no special treatment nor pride of place, unlike the SR-71 Blackbird spy plane or the Space Shuttle *Discovery* also on display. A small plaque in front of the aeroplane explains how B-29 bombers, such as the Enola Gay, were the most sophisticated propeller-driven bombers of the war and the first to house their crews in pressurised compartments. The only reference made to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima is a short sentence describing how the B-29 on display dropped the first atomic weapon used in combat on 6 August 1945. That is all. No wider context is given, nor any mention of the damage caused by the bomb. The critics of the original exhibit had won, at least partially. Although the aeroplane is now displayed without any moral questioning it also does not include any of the celebratory aspects many veterans wanted to see. The Enola Gay is displayed as a technological achievement and, supposedly, allowed to 'speak for itself'.

Nevertheless, the present label is, as it currently reads, incredibly unhelpful. As Robert Post, a professor of law, argues, it is full of facts but empty of meaning.[537] Visitors to the museum, without prior knowledge of the aeroplane, will not learn of the wider context in which it carried out its historic mission. According to Neufeld, who continues to work for NASM as a senior curator, the current plaque is what the museum can get away with without causing another outcry.[538] As he explained: 'Most people want us to be a technology museum. But we try and sneak some real history and substance into it and on some issues that is possible.'[539] That a senior curator at one of America's most prominent museums believes

[537] Robert C. Post, 'A Narrative for Our Time: The Enola Gay "And after That, Period"', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 45 no. 2 (2004), 373–95.
[538] Michael Neufeld and Tom Crouch, Interview with the author, 23 February 2016.
[539] Ibid.

that they have to 'sneak' history into their exhibits shows how much the Smithsonian still struggles to deal with contentious issues regarding the nation's past.

The Enola Gay, however, was certainly not an issue in which it was possible to add substance and complexity. Part of the problem was, according to Neufeld, that the museum was 'very afraid of controversy … we still are'.[540] This is because the museum has been torn between whether it should act as a 'temple' for technological achievements or as a 'forum' in which the implications of technology can be discussed. The curators believe that technological achievements should be showcased at the museum, but also want to bring in more depth and substance to its exhibits where applicable.[541] This is a view shared by Peter Jakab, the current chief curator at the museum, who argues that:

> I don't like the word 'temple' because it implies that there is no thoughtful analysis or presentation of our subject matter. However, one role of the museum is to be inspirational … That's an important role of the museum. But we are also here to provide insight and serve as a forum … to engage the impact and consequences of aerospace technology. It doesn't have to be one or the other. The museum can achieve both goals and that is what we try to do.[542]

Even though technology can be applied for a variety of purposes it has been hard for the museum to include its darker aspects and achieve the balance sought by Jakab. The present label in front of the Enola Gay underscores how much the museum still struggles to deal with the darker themes of technology and serve as a forum in which the implications of technology can be critically discussed.

Crouch, who also continues to work for the museum as a senior curator, claims that through the museum's focus on technological achievements it is a place that 'basically makes people feel pretty good'. Visitors can marvel at such inspiring machines as the *Wright Flyer* and

[540] Ibid.
[541] Ibid.
[542] Peter Jakab, Email, 'Curating Post-Enola Gay Controversy', 13 June 2017.

Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St Louis*. It therefore attracts a wide audience but primarily those interested in the history of flight. The museum, according to Crouch, has been a 'pilot's museum' for a long time and still is.[543] As Correll, who continued to work as editor-in-chief of *Air Force* magazine until his retirement in 2002, claims, people come to NASM to see old aircraft. They are, as he argued during the controversy, 'not interested in counter-culture morality pageants put on by academic activists'.[544] Clearly, he was unaware that the absence of any critical reflection on the Enola Gay's mission is itself a critical reflection. The Enola Gay, and the atomic bombings, in this view, stand above any form of questioning or attempts at analysis. This is precisely what happened during the Enola Gay controversy as critics worked to remove any views which challenged their own.

Nevertheless, Crouch argues that occasionally the museum has an obligation to be 'honest about technology'.[545] Neufeld sees things similarly and argues that:

> We have to try and push the boundaries and push issues on people that they do not want to hear about. The Enola Gay just turned out to be an extreme case … The whole thing was certainly a disaster for museums nationally and internationally. Everybody became afraid of controversy after this.[546]

Although Neufeld overstates the global influence of the controversy, following the dispute the Smithsonian became very cautious indeed and anything relating to war was cancelled or put on indefinite hold. Jakab, who in 1995 had been planning an exhibit on airpower in the Vietnam War, was told by Secretary Heyman that the institution could not risk another

[543] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.
[544] Mike Wallace, 'Culture War, History Front' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, 1st edition (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996), p. 173.
[545] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.
[546] Ibid.

potentially controversial exhibit so soon after the proposed Enola Gay exhibit had ended with the resignation of Harwit, the museum's director.[547]

The fear of controversy is clearly still evident within the Smithsonian as neither Jakab's proposed Vietnam exhibit nor a more in-depth exhibit featuring the Enola Gay have been attempted again. This fear was felt outside the Smithsonian as well. As Robert Macdonald, director of the Museum of the City of New York, argues

> Curators and officials at the Smithsonian ... were definitely afraid. They have jobs to protect ... the 'culture wars', as they are called, had come down to where they were fearful of speaking what they believed to be true, because they would lose their jobs ... I was shocked, but I don't blame them at all. They have families to feed.[548]

By threatening the Smithsonian with the power of the purse and demanding the firing of museum officials whose views challenged their own, the exhibit's critics, and their allies in Congress, sought to stifle the debate surrounding the atomic bombings. Harwit especially felt the effects of the controversy on his career. Following his enforced resignation from the Smithsonian he struggled to land another high-profile managerial job and was forced to conduct his astrophysics research without a permanent institutional affiliation.

There can be no denying, however, that the NASM's timing for the proposed Enola Gay exhibit had been incredibly poor. With the exhibit scheduled to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, many veterans and their families were expecting, indeed demanding, that it would showcase the sacrifices made during the war. The curators, and Harwit himself, openly acknowledged that this was a legitimate expectation.[549] Crouch argues that there had been an 'element of hubris' in proposing the exhibit and that the

[547] Jakab, 'Curating Post-Enola Gay Controversy'.
[548] Steven C. Dubin, *Displays of Power: Controversy in the American Museum from the Enola Gay to Sensation!* (New York, 2001), p. 235.
[549] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, 1st edition (New York, 1996), pp. 427-8.

curators had hoped it would help shift the attitude in the museum and make it more open to controversial exhibits.[550] This hubris stemmed in part from previous efforts at the Smithsonian such as the 'The Great War in the Air' and 'A More Perfect Union' exhibits. As Neufeld explained: 'One lesson we drew from "A More Perfect Union" was that if we could do that then we could do this [the Enola Gay exhibit].'[551] The ensuing controversy would prove just how wrong they were. For starters, with regards to the 'A More Perfect Union' exhibit, there was a desire to deal with the internment issue, not least from Japanese-American congressmen from California and Hawaii. By contrast, there was hardly any desire amongst veterans, or lawmakers, for an exhibit which problematized the end of World War II. In hindsight, Neufeld agrees that the museum's timing had been 'horrible'. He also views the controversy as part of the wider culture wars raging in America in the mid-1990s and believes that the Enola Gay debacle was a precursor to the 'Gingrich election' of 1994 and the larger right-wing backlash. As he explained, the culture wars were 'certainly part of it, it was one dimension of many dimensions of arguments over history that took place in that time frame'.[552] Neufeld therefore clearly connects the fate of the exhibit with the debates surrounding the National Standards for History, funding for the NEA, and so on, and views these debates as part of a wider conservative cultural backlash.

The museum's opponents, however, did not see the controversy as part of any wider cultural issues. Correll argues that such assertions are 'ridiculous … that was really old hat by the 1990s … The idea that something special culturally happened in the 1990s is something somebody thought up sitting around drinking white wine and eating cucumber

[550] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Ibid.

sandwiches.'[553] His remarks clearly show a disdain for the academic community whom he sees as having far-flung ideas, out of touch with reality. But his stance is also partly explained by what he views as the mission of the AFA. As he explained: 'We were not following any kind of cultural agenda … the AFA is not a lobby. The AFA is a veterans' organisation … We were interested in the post-Cold War use of air power, air power in limited wars, the declining defence budget … and so on.'[554] Correll somehow believes that a veterans organisation, which exists to promote veterans' interests, is not a lobby. He also, once again, seems to be unaware that not commenting is, in effect, making a statement. Nevertheless, the AFA clearly had a cultural agenda as he admitted that the Association, and most veterans, had an opinion on cultural issues and were 'fairly conservative' in those views. His own role had been, according to him, that of a journalist. Although claiming that he did not 'have an agenda', he admits that, in addition to working as editor-in-chief, he served as the 'chief policy adviser' of the AFA. And despite arguing that he did not want to 'get into the business of telling them [NASM] how to run a museum' Correll and the AFA had clearly dictated what would constitute an appropriate exhibit in their letter to Harwit in September 1994, as shown in Chapter Three.[555]

Despite this, Correll still believes that the AFA, unlike the American Legion, was not campaigning for a specific outcome but simply commentating. He claims that: 'I did not say "This is what you need to do" but if you are trying to achieve balance you can add things like this, which you are not paying attention to.'[556] Again, as shown in Chapter Three, the AFA on numerous occasions told the museum what they thought was missing from the exhibit,

[553] John T. Correll, Interview with the author, 24 February 2016.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.

thereby telling the museum what to do. The fact that, in the critics' view, the museum was not listening to the veterans was clearly a sticking point. As Correll put it: 'Those guys [NASM] didn't ask anybody, except themselves, and a bunch of advisers of likeminded views ... they were not tapping into anything having to do with the public, they were not paying attention to the public.'[557] Here Correll raises an important issue with regards to the culture wars in America. His views reflect the argument that a small group of elites in Washington are making the big decisions about which direction the country should take, regardless of what the people might want or feel. Reagan had made a similar argument in the 1960s when he questioned why intellectuals should get to decide what was best for America. In the 1990s, conservative critics of the Enola Gay exhibit, such as Correll, took it upon themselves to launch another attack on intellectuals and expertise in America. Correll also viciously defends the AFA from criticism that, as an organization focused on promoting air power, it had no business criticising an exhibit ahead of its opening. As he explained, that was 'one of the most idiotic things I've heard. What kind of yo-yo would come up with a proposal like that? These guys [the museum] were out there consulting the Japanese for God's sake! But we should not say anything?'[558] His argument reflects the view that the museum, by neglecting the interests of American veterans in favour of having focused on the effects of the atomic bombings, was betraying the sacrifices of American veterans and undermining the collective memory of the war. Correll, in effect, accused the museum of disloyalty and subversion.

Neufeld argues that the museum's critics 'thought they'd lost their museum' and felt like they had to take it back as they believe they hold the correct view of what happened at

[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[559] Harwit too felt that it was 'likely' the AFA and veterans wanted to reclaim control over the museum.[560] This is sharply refuted by Correll who claims that: 'I can guarantee you that out of the top 125 things on my mind at the time the Air & Space museum was somewhere around 300.'[561] Not only is this a ridiculous assertion on Correll's part but it is also blatantly not true given his intense and continuing criticism of NASM. The AFA had clearly spent considerable time and wielded significant power, especially among lawmakers, in the efforts to change or close the exhibit. Fortunately for the AFA, few, if any, members of Congress would actively oppose what was perceived to be a veterans' issue. As Neufeld explained, no one was going to oppose Congress getting involved in what they saw as a national issue, i.e. protecting America's reputation in World War II. Crouch saw things similarly, explaining that it was a constituent issue, there had simply been no political gain in standing up for the museum. Once Congress openly declared its support for veterans, the fate of the exhibit, according to Neufeld and Crouch, was effectively sealed.[562]

Harwit, however, had not been prepared to give up so easily and even decades later believes that a compromise could have been achieved in negotiations with the museum's critics.[563] That view is not shared by Neufeld who believes that Harwit was 'foolishly playing games' in trying to negotiate a successful exhibit. Crouch agrees with Neufeld and believes that negotiations, no matter how well intended, would not have saved the exhibit. The veterans' organisations simply could not allow an exhibit they had condemned from the outset to continue. Their constituents would, in his words, 'not let them get away with it'.[564] This helps

[559] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.
[560] Martin Harwit, Interview with the author, 25 February 2016.
[561] Correll, Interview with the author.
[562] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.
[563] Harwit, Interview with the author.
[564] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.

explains why organisations like the AFA and the American Legion were so adamant that the exhibit had to be closed.

Neufeld argues that the museum, by engaging in a line-by-line review of the script with veterans' organisations, was 'essentially negotiating history' and so was 'relieved when the cancellation came ... Thank God we didn't have to stand up and represent that thing.' The exhibit had become, in his view, 'totally compromised, distorted, and censored'.[565] By sitting down with the American Legion and systematically going through the script and agreeing what would be acceptable, and what would not, the museum had made themselves hostage to an interest group which then wielded undue influence over the exhibit. The curators admit that it would have been possible to do an exhibit that would have been acceptable to most people but that it 'would not have been a show that said a lot about what happened on the ground' at Hiroshima. That was because, as Neufeld bluntly puts it, 'Americans like the view from 30,000 ft'.[566] It was not that the museum, despite its struggles to show the darker aspects of technology, could not show images of dead and wounded in its exhibits. That had, as explained in Chapter Two, already been done, in a previous exhibit, curated by Neufeld, which focused on Nazi Germany's V2 rocket programme. The difference with regard to the Enola Gay exhibit was that, in the case of the V2s, as Neufeld argues, 'the Nazis did it' and consequently it did not affect the self-image of America negatively.[567] The Enola Gay exhibit, however, by focusing on the events on the ground at Hiroshima, threatened to undermine the positive self-image of America as a just and moral nation.

[565] Ibid.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid.

The museum, in many ways, had put itself in a position in which it was bound to fail. Neufeld argues that 'without Harwit's driving desire to have an Enola Gay show it [the controversy] would never have happened'.[568] The museum's naiveté in proposing an Enola Gay exhibit is best exemplified by the fact that they were not unaware that it would be difficult, nor how passionately veterans felt about the issue. Crouch and Neufeld admit that the museum had known how difficult the exhibit would be. They understood that, for veterans, the threat of a potential invasion of the Japanese home islands had been very real and that it appeared condescending to question those memories.[569] Harwit agrees and recalls that: 'We knew about it. They were coming around and talking about it. We were trying to see how best to handle it. But what they wanted really was for us to take their unadorned view and present it.'[570] He went on to argue that:

> Ultimately, when you got down to it, people have a story to tell, that they've always been telling. And now a new group [the museum] comes in and tells their story. They don't have the personal recollections that these people have been sharing and storing for fifty years, information that they hold dear. And because they were there they know it's true. Whereas all this declassified information, you don't know where it's coming from, somebody could have dug it up in some unlikely place, but I was there, I knew I was going to be sent out, they were training us for the mission, I'd already been selected, I was going be in the first wave [of the invasion]. It's hard to give that up.[571]

Harwit believed that the museum could have done an exhibit which showcased these views, but which also brought to the public's attention some of the information uncovered by historians since the end of the war. It was an admirable, if naïve, standpoint. Unfortunately for him, he realised too late just how passionately the museums critics felt about the issue and the lengths to which they were willing to go to cancel the exhibit.

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[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Harwit, Interview with the author.
[571] Ibid.

Nevertheless, spurred on by then Secretary Bob Adams who, according to Neufeld and Crouch, 'indirectly' encouraged a more scholarly approach to exhibits, the Enola Gay exhibit was undertaken. Adams, however, eventually grew weary of the numerous controversies surrounding the Enola Gay, 'The Great War in the Air' exhibit, and others, which plagued the latter years of his tenure. As Crouch argues, 'if he'd had a gun, he would have shot us'. When Adam's successor, Heyman, finally pulled the plug on the exhibit, Crouch was sympathetic. As he explained, the controversy had become so big and uncontrolled that 'you could not deal with this … When it was over I had developed real respect for Mike Heyman and lost some respect for Bob Adams.' In Crouch's view, Heyman 'didn't have any choice' in cancelling the exhibit. During the subsequent hearing in Congress, Harwit wanted to testify on behalf of the museum and defend its position but Heyman, in the interest of damage control, would not allow it. In the end, Crouch accompanied Heyman at the hearings. As he later recalled: 'What I did was to apologize for creating this big mess, not for the show or what it said, but for how it happened.'[572] Crouch's apology, and the belief that Heyman had no choice but to cancel the exhibit, was primarily a political judgment designed to get Congress off their back. By apologising for the political controversy caused by the exhibit, not for what it said, the Smithsonian hoped to placate Congress enough to allow them to keep their congressional appropriation.

The controversy arose in no small part because of the location of the exhibit. Putting it in a national museum made it problematic. As Neufeld argues:

> A university can get away with this if the administration is supportive … No matter what we said it was taken as a statement by the Smithsonian and the United States' government … It's perfectly fine to debate the decision to drop the bomb in an academic forum as long as it does not touch the larger political

[572] Neufeld and Crouch, Interview with the author.

> [issues] because the vast majority of the public could not give a damn about what academics said among themselves.[573]

The atomic bombings have been viciously debated within academia since at least the 1960s. Most academics, and the museum, therefore, did not see what the big deal was about an exhibit which would include aspects of a debate that had been raging for decades. The problem, however, was that the debate had been primarily restricted to the ivory tower. When the museum attempted to push this debate into the public arena it encountered a far stronger and more visceral viewpoint, one based on emotion and personal experiences, rather than reason and logic.

A university could indeed get away with the proposed exhibit as was proved in the aftermath of the controversy. Following the cancellation, the American University in Washington DC, decided to host an exhibit, led by Peter Kuznick, with some of the material that would have been on show at NASM. The material that had seemed so offensive to many veterans and others caused scant outrage or widespread coverage in the media. Harwit summed it up accurately when he stated that: 'Nobody gave a damn. Because it was not the National Air & Space Museum on the Mall, two-hundred yards from the Capitol.'[574] On their own turf academics could resist external pressure. The alternative exhibit at the American University, unlike the one at NASM, did not buckle under the pressure applied by some veterans' groups, such as the Jewish War Veterans, who opposed Kuznick's plans.[575] Kuznick's efforts to keep the debate alive has extended to founding the Nuclear Studies Institute at the American University. In 2003, in protest at the Smithsonian's display of the Enola Gay at the Udvar-Hazy Centre, he cofounded the Committee for a National Discussion of Nuclear

[573] Ibid.
[574] Harwit, interview with the author.
[575] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, Reprint edition (Chicago, 2016), p. 283.

History and Current Policy and the Nuclear Education Project. His most prominent attempt at continuing the debate was a ten-part documentary series, produced with Oliver Stone, that discussed such things as the dropping of the atomic bombs, the start of the Cold War, and America's global power. In this way the debate surrounding the Enola Gay has continued, albeit not in a national museum.

Notwithstanding its admirable intentions, the museum, in its hubris and naiveté, believed that an exhibit featuring the Enola Gay, which problematised the end of World War II, could be done in a national museum on the Mall. The museum provoked the fight in the first place and inevitably lost. There was, however, a silver lining to the controversy. Although unable to display the Enola Gay as they wished, the museum, as Alex Roland argues, introduced the public to the remarkably rich scholarship in the field.[576] Paul Boyer agrees and argues that an ironic outcome of the controversy was that far more Americans undoubtedly became aware of the scholarly debate over the atomic bombings than would otherwise have been the case.[577] Nevertheless, as Richard Kohn points out, the tragedy of the cancellation is that a major opportunity to inform the American people, in a national museum; about warfare, World War II, and a turning point in world history was lost.[578] In the aftermath of the cancellation the historian Martin Sherwin proposed an inversion of Santayana's famous aphorism, that those who do not know their history are condemned to repeat it. Sherwin, who had been on the museum's advisory panel and strongly objected to the exhibit on the grounds that he thought it celebrated the atomic bombings, argues that the controversy was proof that 'Those who insist on only their memories of the past, condemn others to remain

[576] Alex Roland, 'Voices in the Museum', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 39 no. 3 (1998), 483–88.
[577] Paul Boyer, 'Whose History Is It Anyway?: Memory, Politics and Historical Scholarship' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 116.
[578] Richard H. Kohn, 'History at Risk: The Case of the Enola Gay' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 170.

ignorant of it.'[579] Harwit too thought this was the case, concluding that: 'It wasn't the Enola Gay that was being challenged by anybody. It was what we were showing with it. Each side wanted to have its symbolic artefacts shown and the other side's not shown. I think that was, probably, at the heart of it more than anything else.'[580] These views are indicative of how the culture wars have made debates in the US more emotional and less prone to reason and a willingness to see the other side of the issue. As debates in the culture wars involve issues of morals and personal conviction, the solution to diverging views is, more often than not, to suppress those views in favour of one's own.

The struggle over the Enola Gay was one of the best examples of how, in the culture wars, emotion and conviction far outweigh any well-reasoned argument. It is for this reason that the controversy is so important and enduring. We turn to the controversy to explore how scholars and curators can engage the public in conversations about the past. As the historian David Thelen argues, 'precisely because the debate came from and led in so many different directions, precisely because the leading participants were unable to agree about how and where and when to engage each other, this controversy presents an extraordinary opportunity to inquire how history is, and might be, practised in our culture and institutions'.[581] In closing the exhibit, as Edward Linenthal argues, the critics quashed the possibility that an American audience would be ready, willing, and able to face the complex past that the Enola Gay embodies.[582] Exploring the complexities and controversies of US history that the Enola Gay represents was one of many lost opportunities. This was, in part, due to how the controversy was talked about and how it contained polarising points for

[579] Martin Sherwin, 'Forgetting the Bomb: The Assault on History', *The Nation*, 15 May 1995, pp. 692-3.
[580] Harwit, Interview with the author.
[581] David Thelen, 'History after the Enola Gay Controversy: An Introduction', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995) 1029–35.
[582] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 62.

people to rally around. Heyman, in cancelling the exhibit, described the controversy as a struggle between commemoration and historical analysis. Linenthal has similarly characterised it as a struggle between competing commemorative and critical voices.[583]

The problem with such characterisations is that they tend to focus solely on the two main competing interpretations. In the process, they have limited the possibilities for creative conversations about the controversy. As Thelen argues, by providing poles around which participants did indeed gather and mobilize -- commemoration versus scholarship, authenticity versus accuracy, first-hand accounts versus scholarly detachment -- this formulation has made it hard to explore more nuanced views, such as the fact that it is possible to believe that the atomic bombs saved lives *and* were used to deter the Soviet Union.[584] The controversy surrounding the Enola Gay was hampered by a refusal to acknowledge that scholars, and veterans, differed in their conclusions. Not all academics viewed the exhibit the same way. Sherwin thought the script celebrated the decision to drop the bomb. Kohn, on the other hand, thought it sought to criticise the decision. Dick Hallion was seemingly unable to make up his mind – he first praised, the criticised, the script.[585] Similarly, it is by no means certain that all veterans viewed the exhibit as discrediting their service. Brigadier General Roy K. Flint, chairman of the Society for Military History and a former dean of faculty at the United States Military Academy at West Point, spoke for many other veterans when he lamented the decision to cancel the exhibit.[586] In closing the exhibit

[583] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1094–1101.
[584] Thelen, 'History after the Enola Gay Controversy', 1029-35.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 393.

the critics denied the opportunity for these myriad views to be showcased in a national museum.

Clashes over how history should be interpreted were hardly new in American society. The American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Vietnam War, for example, have always aroused strong emotions and different interpretations. Debates on history are easily and all too often misrepresented as pitting unpatriotic historians against patriotic citizens. For some, history that dwells on unflattering or horrific episodes in the American past is unpatriotic and likely to alienate young Americans from their country. On the other side are those who believe that exposing students to the dark chapters of America's history is essential to the creation of informed, responsible citizens. Historians are not trying to trash America when they, for example, analyse the brutality of slavery, or point to the many ways the atomic bombings can be interpreted. Gary Nash, et al, argue that, in this way, the argument is in fact between two visions of patriotic history.[587] On the most general level then, and as Michael Sherry argues, the Enola Gay controversy echoed earlier struggles over who controls American culture, who values its past, who deserves mention within it, and who controls any federal action that touches upon such matters.[588] What sets the controversy surrounding the exhibit apart, however, is the widespread media coverage it received and the extent to which it became a debate about the legitimacy of alternative historical interpretations in the first place. As Mark Leff argues, veterans' groups went beyond the view of the Enola Gay as the equivalent of a sacred war memorial by demanding the exclusion of certain items and

[587] Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 15.
[588] Michael Sherry, 'Patriotic Orthodoxy and American Decline' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, pp. 107-8.

narratives which revealed that the issue was more complex than a simple recounting of how many lives the dropping of the bomb possibly saved.[589]

The media, from all sides of the political spectrum, were instrumental in putting pressure on the museum. This further reflected how the culture wars have broken down traditional political divides and how questions of morals and sources of truth had begun to dominate debates. Ken Ringle, in an article for *The Washington Post*, described the controversy as a 'tug of war' between the way mainstream America viewed history and the way it was viewed in academic circles.[590] Kevin O'Brien, in an editorial for *The Plain Dealer*, saw the controversy as part of a larger effort by the Smithsonian, and others, to change the way Americans saw the world and to promote a paradigm shift.[591] Most disturbingly, as Linenthal argues, much of the media assumed that critics of the exhibit were objective in their view of history and that only anti-American curators and revisionist historians could have dreamt up such an exhibit in the first place.[592] Newspapers consistently misinformed readers that the Smithsonian was ignoring its critics. *The Washington Post's* Eugene Meyer told his readers that many of the recommendations of the museum's Tiger Team had not been accepted, and an editorial for the same paper stated that the museum had promised 'extensive revisions, but it hasn't come through, and the conceptual gap between the museum and its critics remains wide'.[593] It was clear that few of those writing about the exhibit had read the first script in its entirety, not to mention the subsequent versions. As a result, there was no serious attempt to help the public engage in meaningful debate about the strengths and

[589] Mark H. Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100 no. 3 (1995), 829–53.
[590] Ken Ringle, 'At Ground Zero', *The Washington Post*, 26 September 1994, A1.
[591] Kevin O'Brien, 'Spare the Apologies', *The Plain Dealer*, 28 August 1994, C1.
[592] Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', 1094–1101.
[593] Eugene L. Meyer, 'Dropping the Bomb: Smithsonian Exhibition Plans Detonates Controversy', *The Washington Post*, 21 July 1994.

weaknesses of the evolving exhibit which further alienated the public from the efforts of the museum. The media also almost wholly ignored – or conveniently overlooked -- the half-century long controversy over the decision to drop the bomb. Since those covering the Enola Gay controversy had no sense of its historical context they had no way of knowing that what struck them as unpatriotic had certainly not been understood that way in the late 1940s.[594]

The marginalization of a leading museum, and the closing down of the exhibit, carried a heavy price. Following the controversy, curators began asking if historical exhibits, in a democracy such as the US, were not suitable unless they passed a congressional litmus test. The issue is, as the historian Michael Hogan points out, whether or not American history can be openly and critically discussed or whether organized political pressure will encourage censorship and promote a narrow view of the nation's history.[595] Most worryingly, the Enola Gay affair signalled that politicians were prepared to proclaim what is historically correct or incorrect -- in other words, to create something akin to 'official history'.[596] Harwit pointed this out when he argued that: 'Once a Congressman [Sam Johnson] … tells the National Air and Space Museum that it has no business teaching history, or orders one of its exhibitions to be shut down … it becomes difficult to see where his concern for patriotism and national self-image will stop. It becomes a dangerous game.'[597]

[594] Linenthal, 'Anatomy of a Controversy' in Linenthal and Engelhardt, ed, *History Wars*, p. 50.
[595] Michael J. Hogan, 'The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory, and the Politics of Presentation', in Michael J. Hogan, ed, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 231.
[596] Nash, Crabtree and Dunn, *History on Trial*, p. 127.
[597] Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied*, p. 429.

# Conclusion

In placing the Enola Gay controversy within the context of the culture wars this thesis has demonstrated that the controversy should be viewed as not merely an example of political censorship, but as a wider ideological battle in which the opposing sides struggled for control of the nation's history. It argues that the controversy involved irreconcilable claims to truth as to what the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki represented. Conservative critics, led by the AFA and the American Legion, worried that the Enola Gay exhibit risked undermining the collective memory of the end of World War II and the view of America as a just and moral nation. They therefore put massive pressure on the Smithsonian to close the exhibit.

This dissertation has further demonstrated that the controversy was an example of rampant anti-intellectualism that led to a rejection of such notions as objective evidence and the practice of settling disputes through reasoned discourse. In doing so it has outlined how the decline of liberalism, and the steady rise of new more aggressive and uncompromising conservatism, culminated in the so-called culture wars, a series of ideological disputes about everything from abortion, gun control, art, political correctness, education, and views on what should be considered 'proper' history. This dissertation argues that the culture wars produced a new breed of politics, one that was less focused on the traditional left-versus-right divide, and more concerned with moral issues. This in turn led to a greater emphasis on emotions in public debates at the expense of facts and rational discussion. The widely publicised Enola Gay controversy was an example of this new political tradition of squabbling and refusal to compromise in American political and cultural discourse.

This dissertation has argued that the culture wars are not simply a series of heated arguments on various issues. Instead, it has explored how the culture wars emerged over fundamentally different conceptions of moral authority and clashing ideas about the sources of truth. It therefore supports the work of James Davison Hunter in his conclusion that the culture wars emerged due to a struggle over national identity and the meaning of America.[598] In supporting Hunter's original framework, this dissertation rejects the assertion of some commentators, such as Morris Fiorina, who deny the existence of a culture war.[599] This dissertation therefore argues that the culture wars have less to do with political divisions than they do with disputes surrounding truth, moral issues, and the state of public discourse in America.

This dissertation supports Hunter's thesis of a culture war in America by showing how, during the Enola Gay controversy, the museum and its critics engaged in a heated quarrel over what the aeroplane symbolised and how it should be displayed to the American public. During the controversy the aeroplane was almost exclusively characterised as either the means by which the war came mercifully to an end or as an instrument of mass murder. This dissertation argues that the Enola Gay controversy, due to the symbolic role of the aeroplane, and its location in a national museum, fits squarely within the culture wars framework developed by Hunter. Although the controversy is an example of political censorship it should therefore also be viewed as characteristic of far larger and more volatile ideological battles in America's culture wars.

[598] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Reprint edition (New York, 1991).
[599] Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3rd edition (Boston, 2010).

This dissertation furthermore argues that America has long been portrayed in the most moralistic of terms. Public debates in America have rarely been framed merely in terms of a clash of opposing views but as a struggle between good and evil. This was evident during the Enola Gay controversy as the museum's critics saw the exhibit as an attempt to undermine the notion that America was a just and moral nation and had acted as such in dropping the atomic bomb. It was not merely an argument of who was right and who was wrong. It was about whether America had been, and still was, a good and righteous nation. During the controversy, two different narratives of how World War II ended, and the reasons for why the atomic bomb was used, clashed in a well-publicised dispute in the culture wars. For the critics -- mainly veterans -- their experiences of the war were the ultimate proof of how the war had ended. The curators, on the other hand, insisted on using documentary evidence as the basis for their analysis. That meant that the opposing sides were bound to clash over the sources of historical truth. Because of these competing claims to truth the culture wars have become increasingly hostile and bitter affairs, heavily imbued with emotions. Debates in the culture wars frequently involve a questioning of deeply held beliefs and personal identity which inevitably leads to a fierce response from the individuals concerned. This was clearly seen during the Enola Gay controversy when veterans felt that NASM was questioning their personal experiences of World War II and, by extension, the collective memory of the war in America, not to mention their self-worth. The veterans, in contrast, wished to see their actions celebrated in a national museum. This would be achieved at the expense of showing any other viewpoint of the atomic bombings.

The clash of reason versus emotion witnessed during the Enola Gay controversy has underscored many of the battles of the culture wars. In doing so the controversy helped reveal the deep currents of anti-intellectualism in American life. The critics of the Enola Gay

exhibit, despite their arguments to the contrary, opposed it, in part, on anti-intellectual grounds. They were driven by strong emotions relating to personal experiences in the war and what they thought proper history entailed. By arguing that the proposed exhibit did not depict their memories of the war, they rejected theory and logic-based arguments and restricted expertise to those with direct experiences. Their anti-intellectual arguments were therefore a consequence of what they saw as historical truth. By examining the anti-intellectual roots of the controversy this dissertation has outlined how, in the process, anti-intellectualism helped give rise to the culture wars. It argues that, from the 1960s onwards, liberals lost touch with white working-class voters in a way that would permanently damage the relationship between the two. Central to this critique was an anti-intellectual distrust of academics and institutions of higher education which increasingly became viewed as havens for out of touch liberals with distasteful ideas about the nation's past.

This dissertation argues that, while liberalism was discredited, the political right established itself as a coherent and forceful ideology in the 1960s. During that decade, the foundations of modern American conservatism was laid, taking advantage of the decline of liberalism, and heavily infused with religious messages. Building upon the foundations laid in the 1960s the political right united into a full-scale political movement in the 1970s. Especially important were conservative evangelical Christians who played prominent roles in a variety of political efforts against such issues as feminism, abortion, gay rights, pornography, subversive art and, as the Enola Gay controversy made clear, what they saw as revisionist history.

The political activism of these conservatives reached its zenith in the Republican landslide victory in the 1994 mid-term elections which occurred as the controversy surrounding the

Enola Gay was in full swing. This dissertation argues that the culture wars were a key issue for many of the incoming Republicans. They quickly set about pulling apart the Enola Gay exhibit, the National Standards for History, and federal funding for the NEA and NEH as they were viewed as threats to the conservative agenda. With an innate hostility to the federal government, these conservatives saw little point in making it work. The argument over the Enola Gay exhibit was instrumental in helping to foster this tradition of partisanship, bickering, and inability to achieve compromise as its successful cancelation, within days of the new Congress assuming office, emboldened the conservatives on other issues such as Medicare, the environment, and debates over raising the debt ceiling.

For conservatives, control over the meaning of historical interpretation was crucial. To them, it would redeem the country from the evils of the 1960s and heal the wounds of the divisive Vietnam War. In order for the US to return to a morally upstanding position, conservatives believed that it was necessary to win the struggle over historical meaning. The Enola Gay exhibit risked undermining this enterprise. In proposing the exhibit, and setting it in an explicitly historical context, the Smithsonian risked revealing that the prevailing view of the atomic bombings – that the US had to drop the bomb to end the war – were not clear-cut decisions based purely on military strategy, thereby making them open to moral questioning. The Smithsonian's offense was that it attempted to deal with the bombings as history. That the Smithsonian, the nation's national museum, would raise the possibility that there had been alternatives to using the bomb was viewed as an outrage. The museum's critics insisted that the need to use the bomb was beyond any doubt. They viewed it as a betrayal for the Smithsonian even to raise the issue. By suggesting the possibility that the war ended in an American atrocity, the Enola Gay exhibit questioned the supposedly

unquestionable virtue of the entire war, thereby throwing into sharp doubt one of the founding pillars of American national mythology.

For those in Congress who made the culture wars central to their critique of American society, cancelling the Enola Gay exhibit was viewed as essential in reversing the supposed dominance of the left in America. In their minds, stopping the Enola Gay exhibition would have a deterring effect. In fighting the battles of the culture wars these conservatives utilized authoritarian solutions. In the case of the Enola Gay exhibit, Congress laid down an official historical 'line' and demanded the firing of curators and museum chiefs who did not agree with it, along with the elimination of their budgets. These tactics were also used during the arguments concerning the NEA, NEH, and the National Standards for History. Much like the hearings in Congress regarding the Enola Gay controversy, the January 1995 vote in the US Senate condemning the standards represented an effort by legislators to propose that Congress should determine what subjects should be taught in American schools and shown in its museums. It also served the larger point of fighting the culture wars by undermining any effort to set national standards, over which conservatives felt they had little control.

This dissertation therefore argues that the vote against the standards, and the closing of the Enola Gay exhibit, represented a rebuke of the historical profession. In their assault on professional history, conservatives argued that revisionist history was an affront to historical truth. They therefore used the accusation of revisionist history as weapon in the war against the standards and the Enola Gay exhibit. To the academics, revisionist history was simply work that challenged previous interpretations of past events. None of the historians involved in the controversy viewed the idea of reinterpreting the past as being inherently subversive. In the culture wars, however, revisionism was viewed with suspicion and historians were

accused of manipulating 'facts' and destroying the past. The Enola Gay controversy therefore represented a disjunction between the scholarly and public attitude to history.

This dissertation further argues that, with the forced closure of the Enola Gay exhibit, an opportunity to explore the complexities and controversies of US history was lost. This was further hampered by how the controversy was talked about and how it contained polarising points for people to rally around. The prevailing trend has been to characterise the controversy as a struggle between competing commemorative and critical voices. These limited views are also expressed in the existing literature on the controversy. Most of the monographs so far published on the topic, as outlined in the introduction, have been written by key participants such as Martin Harwit or veterans like William Rooney.[600] The academic debate in scholarly journals has similarly been dominated by academics, such as Linenthal, who were directly involved.[601] These partisan and biased accounts have therefore left an opening for a more distanced and less one-sided view. Utilising the extensive archival material of both the Smithsonian Institution and the AFA this dissertation has aimed to fill this gap in the literature. In addition, this dissertation has incorporated oral history using interviews of key participants in the controversy.

Utilising this approach this dissertation concludes that, on a superficial level, the Enola Gay controversy recalled earlier struggles over who controls American culture and history. But the extent to which the controversy became a debate about the legitimacy of alternative historical interpretations in the first place sets it apart from other battles of the culture wars. The wider issue at stake is whether American history can be openly and critically discussed

[600] Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay*, 1st edition (New York, 1996); Charles T. O'Reilly and William A. Rooney, *The Enola Gay and the Smithsonian Institution* (Jefferson, 2005).
[601] Edward T. Linenthal, 'Struggling with History and Memory', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 82 no. 3 (1995), 1094–1101.

or whether organized political pressure will encourage censorship and promote a narrow view of the nation's history. The Enola Gay affair showed that politicians were more than happy to proclaim what is historically correct or incorrect -- in other words, creating something that resembles an 'official history'. The controversy therefore set a worrying precedent for how debates are conducted in the US and ensured that the culture wars became even further entrenched.

It is the highest irony that America, which has been highly critical of other nations, especially Japan, for failing to confront their past, is incapable of hosting a historical exhibit in a national museum debating the reasons behind the decision to drop the atomic bomb. The culture wars have led to a telling double standard. Most Americans would agree that other nations must confront the dark aspects of their history. Apparently, as the Enola Gay controversy revealed, the same was not true of America. The conservatives that swept to power in November 1994 wasted little time in forcing the cancellation of an exhibit which threatened to undo the traditional narrative of World War II and the view of America as a righteous and moral nation. Backed up by the influence of the American Legion and the AFA these conservatives signalled that certain aspects of America's history could not be freely debated and that there was an official line from which Congress expected the Smithsonian not to deviate.

It is this condemnation of historical debate about Hiroshima that is so worrying about the Enola Gay controversy. It showed the wider powerful emotional and ideological impulse to cleanse the historical record of all ambiguity in favour of traditional patriotism. In doing so the controversy represented a significant setback for the historical profession and for principled discussion in American politics and culture. The basis of serious discussions in

academia, and American cultural life at large, lies in principled criticism and in a willingness to challenge entrenched views. The cancellation of the Enola Gay exhibit symbolised a rejection of what historians do and of a balanced discussion of American history. It showed that some things in the cultural psyche of America are above discussion and should not be challenged.

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