



Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb

By Ronald Takaki

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The bombing of Hiroshima was one of the pivotal events of the twentieth century, yet this controversial question remains unresolved. At the time, General Dwight Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, and chief of staff Admiral William Leahy all agreed that an atomic attack on Japanese cities was unnecessary. All of them believed that Japan had already been beaten and that the war would soon end. Was the bomb dropped to end the war more quickly? Or did it herald the start of the Cold War? In his probing new study, prizewinning historian Ronald Takaki explores these factors and more. He considers the cultural context of race - the ways in which stereotypes of the Japanese influenced public opinion and policymakers - and also probes the human dimension. Relying on top secret military reports, diaries, and personal letters, Takaki relates international policies to the individuals involved: Los Alamos director J. Robert Oppenheimer, Secretary of State James Byrnes, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and others... but above all, Harry Truman.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ethnic studies professor Takaki argues that racism and a desire to intimidate the Soviet Union were important factors in the decision to use the atomic bomb on Japan.

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

My grandfather emigrated from Japan to work on the cane fields of Hawaii in 1886, and my mother was born on the Hawi Plantation. As a teenager growing up on Oahu, I was not academically inclined but was actually a surfer. During my senior year, I took a religion course taught by Dr. Shunji Nishi, a Japanese American with a Ph.D. I remember going home and asking my mother, who only had an eighth-grade education: "Mom, what's a Ph.D.?" She answered: "I don't know but he must be very smart." Dr. Nishi became a role model for me, and he arranged for me to attend the College of Wooster. There my fellow white students asked me questions like: "How long have you been in this county? Where did you learn to speak English?" They did not see me as a fellow American. I did not look white or European in ancestry. As a scholar, I have been seeking to write a more inclusive and hence more accurate history of Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans as well as certain European immigrant groups like the Irish and Jews. My scholarship seeks not to separate our diverse groups but to show how our experiences were different but they were not disparate. Multicultural history, as I write and present it, leads not to what Schlesinger calls the "disuniting of America" but rather to the re-uniting of America.

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