# OLDE NEWS

The Reed College History Department Newsletter



# From the Chair

Associate Professor of History and Environmental Studies Josh Howe

"Historians are the least likely people to find a rupture in the past or an approaching apocalypse," writes Richard White in his recent book on photography, myth, and history in California, *California Exposures*. "We are no shrewder than other people, but we have been inoculated by working lives spent reading past claims of ruptures in the warp of time, and of coming apocalypses that have failed to occur." (196-7)

White is certainly correct that we historians are naturally no shrewder than other people. And yet, I think he is also right to suggest that historical thinking can serve as a kind of prophylactic against a kneejerk end-times despair, even amidst a period of undeniably massive disruption and change. Like anybody else, White writes, we can only inhabit the present moment. But our "special sorcery" is our ability to also summon other moments—past moments—and to make sense out of relationships between moments. That sorcery does not always make the picture a rosy one. A man bearing a confederate flag inside the Capitol Building conjures centuries worth of moments of oppression and injustice—moments that embody some of the worst and most persistent traits inherited from the nation's past. But it does tend to make the picture a more complete and complex one. The apocalyptic

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image of an insurgent with a racist emblem inside the Rotunda has to coexist with a sixth-month torrent of statue-toppling and street-renaming in an effort to repudiate the meaning of that emblem; with the image of Georgia's first Black and Jewish Senators being sworn in just weeks later; and with the moment when Amanda Gorman, a young poet of color, spoke during the inauguration of a woman of color as Vice President of the United States—all artifacts of resistance against the worst traits of our historical inheritance. We are undoubtedly living through tremendous, complicated, and traumatic historical change, but this is not the stuff of apocalypse.

As a practical matter, the historian's "inoculation" against apocalypse tends to mean that whatever happens, we expect to go to work the next day. To their enduring credit, this has certainly been the approach of my colleagues and our students at Reed over the past 10 months. Through the overlapping challenges of the fight for social justice, the historic fires, the contested election and subsequent political violence, and the ongoing pandemic, I have been deeply impressed by our community's resilience and commitment to a rigorous and meaningful liberal arts education.

The spring, for better and for worse, promises more of the same on a number of fronts. The pandemic persists, and so too does the History faculty's commitment to safely, effectively, and equitably delivering a quality Reed education against the backdrop of COVID-19. The fall semester proved challenging but ultimately quite successful, and the department has been actively involved in both formal workshops at the Center for Teaching and Learning and informal discussions amongst ourselves in an effort to implement what we learned from a full pandemic semester. We are once again offering a mix of inperson and online classes as we try to make the most out of both the challenges and opportunities presented by the parameters of COVID. We continue to support and celebrate our History seniors through our monthly "Thesis Friday" workshops. You can read about a few of their projects in the "Senior Spotlight" section of this newsletter. I am also happy to report that the History Department will be hosting Professor of Chinese and Global History at Emory University

Tonio Adrande (Reed '91) for this year's (virtual) MacCaffrey Lecture. You can read more about Thesis Fridays and Professor Andrade's visit on page 3 of this newsletter.

In addition to our regular academic work, the Department also continues to pursue its commitment to inclusive, anti-racist pedagogy. As I noted in our summer newsletter, in June, the History Department faculty signed on to <u>a</u> statement on Anti-Racism and Reconciliation at Reed produced by the Comparative Race and Ethnicity Studies program, of which History is a constituent department. This fall, in concert with Reed's Office of Institutional Diversity, the History Department developed a list of priorities for departmental workshops on inclusive pedagogy to help us to think in creative new ways about engaging with topics on race and racism in our History curriculum. The Department held its first workshop on the fall; we have three more departmental workshops on racial equity and inclusive pedagogy in the works for the spring.

Finally, as is our want as historians, we have also been reading! For a thoughtful and unflinching look at the recent insurrection at the capitol that draws on important historical scholarship new and old, take a look at the piece by our Visiting Assistant Professor of History and Humanities Sabrina Datoo. While you're there, take a look at what other faculty, students, and alumni from the Reed History community are reading at this moment in time in our "What We Are Reading" section.

In the fall, I wrote that the study of history matters now as much as it ever has. That certainly hasn't changed, and we are excited to see students back in class this spring exploring sources, honing their critical writing, and feeding the wonder and curiosity that comes with teaching and doing history at the college.

All the best, Your Humble Chair,

Josh Howe

### Wallace T. MacCaffrey Distinguished Lecture

### Professor Tonio Andrade '91



"Wang-in-than" one of the dangerous Eighteen Shoals near Ganzhou, China

#### The Last Embassy: The 1985 Dutch Mission to the Qianlong Court

Thursday, March 25 4:40pm-6:30pm

It will be a virtual lecture and registration information will be announced later.

This lecture is about a little-studied embassy to the Qing court, a Dutch mission of 1794–95. Drawing on Dutch, French, Spanish, Qing, and Korean sources, it explores not just the mission itself but also the question of why it has been neglected and misunderstood.

Tonio Andrade (Reed History '91) is professor of Chinese and Global History at Emory University. His books include The Last Embassy: The Dutch Mission of 1795 and the Forgotten History of Western Encounters with China (2021), The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History (2016), Lost Colony: The Untold Story of China's First Great Victory over the West (2011), and How Taiwan became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century (2008). He believes that people should drive cars as little as possible and lives in Decatur, Georgia, with his wife, Andrea, and three children.

Image Source: By anonymous Chinese artist, Canton, China, Watercolor and Ink on Paper, 1790s, in Albums of Paintings Commissioned by Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest, Courtesy of Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, USA, Museum purchase, 1943, AE86344.44, No. 44

### Spring 2021 Thesis Information

Thesis Fridays, the informal Zoom gatherings for history seniors, will reconvene this semester on January 29 and March 5, 3:00-4:00 p.m. Seniors will receive more information over email. All members of the Reed community are invited to the final Thesis Friday of the year, on the afternoon of April 2, when seniors will offer brief presentations of their research, and we'll all join together to celebrate them! This is a great opportunity for future thesis-writers to get a glimpse of what writing a thesis in history is like. Look for details, including the schedule of presenters, in March. The HSS first draft thesis deadline is March 19 at 12pm.

### On the Insurrection at the Capitol Building

From Visiting Assistant Professor of History and Humanities Sabrina Datoo

On January 6, the Capitol Building in Washington was overrun. As we have seen from the footage of mobile phone cameras and television crews, hundreds of mostly white men ransacked the building, smashed windows, vandalized the interior, stole property, and generally desecrated the seat of democracy in this country. These men performed their acts of terror whilst smiling, brandishing their stolen trophies, and prancing around in military costumes and animal-drag like attendees at a meth-infused fancy dress party. Of all of the spectacles of violence we have seen televised over these awful four years, this one was unique. We, for once, were spared from seeing a phalanx of police gassing, beating, and bombing, peaceful students and middle-class professionals protesting anti-Black racism. Nor did we have to suppress the nausea that comes from witnessing the grainy images of uniformed officers murdering young Black men who were simply going about their daily life. Instead of police brutality we saw a smiling officer posing for a selfie.

Understanding the mix of racism, militarization, anxious masculinity, and media manipulation that underlies the longer history of this event is no easy task, and in the



Photo via Getty

insurrection's aftermath I find myself reconsidering historical scholarship, new and old, to help me process its origins and impacts. I have recently turned to Kathleen Belew's Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America, because she does this in a manner that is smart and highly accessible and makes an explicit link between American Cold War marauding abroad and the acceleration of white power movements at home. The people who stormed the Capitol last Wednesday believed they were defending American democracy. In this sense they were doing at home what Americans celebrate themselves for doing abroad. Like the Iraq War of 2003, the casus belli here was a complete fiction, a fantasy created by media gadflies and the profitability of lies, a connection made quite elegantly by the Booker Prize winner and activist Arundhati Roy in her brilliant anti-war essay from 2003, "Instant Mix Imperial Democracy: Buy One Get One Free." More appropriately, the militancy on display last week bears a similarity to global jihad, as analyzed by many, but very early on by Faisal Devji in his extended essay, Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity, bravely published by Hurst & Co in 2005. In trying to understand the history of global social forces that motivate nationalist thinking, I also

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periodically return to the work of my former teacher, the late Professor Moishe Postone. The best introduction to Moishe's theoretical work on global capital, subjectivity, and culture is his recorded lectures, delivered in 2009, available on <u>YouTube</u>.

The racism that underwrites domestic terrorism is just the more visible manifestation of a spectrum of attitudes which, on the milder end, continue to persist in more prosaic and genteel forms. It is for this reason I would recommend books that I thought were quite dated but whose basic arguments seem not to be as widely known as I had assumed. The most important texts in this regard are Edward Said's Orientalism and its sequel, Culture and Imperialism. The latter is a more sophisticated intervention in literary analysis, but the former, more polemical, made him, quite rightly, famous. His work persuasively illustrates the subtle ways in which the production of knowledge about a place, a people, or a religion, even when making claims to objectivity, neutrality and indeed sympathy, can be itself be a fundamentally racist enterprise connected to the maintenance of global asymmetries of power, and the suppression of other peoples' right to selfdetermination and self-representation.

The politics of representation isn't simply an issue when writing about Asia or Black lives - I think the self-reflexivity it demands is fundamental to historical practice. I am trying to grapple with this by thinking through how claims to neutrality and objectivity are inherently unstable by returning to Peter Novick's *That* Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession, and also Lorraine Daston's Objectivity. Although post-structuralism and discourse analysis have been criticized for heralding a post-truth era, these methodological tools may actually enable "a stubbornly realist attitude", as Bruno Latour puts it, in his essay on how to address the unsavory political appropriation of constructivist histories, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern" Critical Inquiry, 2004. I imagine it will take a stubborn realism based in matters of concern to confront what has unfolded over the last five years, and some sensitivity to global history.



Photo via Washington Post

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### What We Are Reading

#### Faculty members share what they've been reading

#### Professor Jackie Dirks

Since January 6th, 2021 people have been asking me to explain what just happened. I found a seven-page 2018 article from Modern American History by political historian George Derek Musgrave on the deep history of GOP rhetoric about voter fraud. Musgrave contends that, "Though President Trump is a gifted fabulist, his ability to transform paranoia into policy is less the product of his talents than of five decades of racial and economic transformation and the GOP's use of the same to build a white voting majority."

In fact, I have been thinking about conservatives quite a lot during break. Back in December, I read the illuminating and grimly hilarious A Libertarian Walks Into A Bear: The Utopian Plot to Liberate an American Town (And Some Bears) by Matthew Hongoltz-Hetling, in which contemporary libertarians take over the small town of Grafton, New Hampshire, mostly abolish taxes, and then find that voluntarily putting out fires, clearing snowy roads, and policing hungry bears is . . . hard. The guy writes like Mark Twain, with real compassion for human folly and animal intelligence, with genuine respect for (and fear of) the gun-toting libertarians and doughnut-fed bears who are his subjects. I read it in two sittings, and fell off my chair laughing . . . but maybe it's just the isolation?

Less amusing is another thoughtful exploration of the evolution of grassroots conservative thought: Jennifer Holland's Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement (U. Cal. Press, 2020). Holland charts the post-Roe v. Wade (1973) opposition to legal abortion, focusing on adult activists who recruited young people to

support the rights of unborn fetuses.
Starting in Catholic and Baptist churches and Sunday schools, aimed at white, black and Latinx congregants, these educational campaigns combined pro-life rhetoric with abstinence-based sex education, and ultimately expanded from religious to secular (public school) settings. Required reading, especially given our newly constituted U.S. Supreme Court and its interpretations of "religious liberty."

#### Professor Margot Minardi

My plan to read a lot of fiction over winter break did not pan out, but I did get to finish one excellent novel, Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King*. It is a good example of how a novelist can tell stories that are often left out of conventional histories—in this case, by focusing on women who fought against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

#### Assistant Professor Radhika Natarajan

I am reading Roberta Bivins' Contagious Communities: Medicine, Migration, and the NHS in Post War Britain. Bivins examines how British doctors, officials, politicians, and the public figured immigrants as a threat to the individual health of Britons and the social body. It's a great look at how public health discourse can overlook the role played by poverty and racism in determining the health of migrants to justify surveillance and intervention into the lives of particular populations.

### What Reedies Are Reading

#### Alumni share what they've been reading and what they recommend

"I recommend John Barry's *The Great Influenza*. You can learn why it's called "the Spanish Flu" when it didn't originate in Spain, and the potential damage caused by hiding bad but essential news from the public." **Frances Moore** '59

"The best book I've read recently is *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. It's really incredible how Gyasi manages to write a sweeping historical epic spanning centuries and continents in such a concise, intimate book." **Veronica Vichit-Vadakan '96** 

"I feel like I have dozens of half-read books right now. But most recently I've been reading Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds by Natalie Zemon Davis, Isak Dinesen's memoir Out of Africa, and Jane Smiley's novel The All-True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton — all of which have been interesting, although for different reasons. Davis has a wonderful way of weaving together her story from a range of sources, which is especially fitting for a history about connections and movement between places, cultures, and languages. Smiley's novel takes place on the eve of the US Civil War and follows a young women as she leaves Illinois for Kansas Territory with her new husband who is an abolitionist from Boston. So far the novel has mostly dealt with how do people form connections and relationships with others in a divisive and politically tense time — but it's also about someone figuring out who she is and who she wants to be." Janet Sebastian-Coleman '20

"Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year (1722) gained a lot of attention for obvious reasons this year. I re-read it when the university shut down due to the pandemic and I assigned it to the students in my seminar on the history of the book in early modern Britain in the fall." Brian Cowan '92

"David Cressy's Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension. An excellently written book with a unique methodology. Cressy demonstrates how to write history through variegated narrative, assembling less a history book in the traditional sense as much as a compilation of odd stories that tie together into an argumentatively cohesive whole. What Cressy presents to the reader is not a concrete thesis but a subtler "sense of things," yet the work is all the stronger because of that approach."

Achinoam Bentoy '20

"Coincidentally, last night I picked up a collection of Kafka's short stories that I must have purchased when I was a student in HUM 220 at Reed, and started rereading "The Penal Colony." Other than that I am hanging out in Iran, reading Everything that is Sad is Untrue by Daniel Nayeri to my kids at night and The Enlightenment of the Greengage Tree by Shokoofeh Azar to myself." Jessica Stern '01

"Lose Your Mother by Saidiya Hartman;
Hartman's book is a model for how the
personal and the scholastic can be interwoven,
reminding us all that our work as historians is
never neutral, and that embracing the personal
within the historical makes our scholarship
more poignant and more honest." Nikki
Georgopulos '12

And more! Sally Denton's The Plots Against the President FDR, a Nation in Crisis, & the Rise of the American Right from Caitlin McKenna '08; Isabel Wilkerson's Caste from Kathryn Mapps '86; Cedric Robinson's Black Marxism from Natalie Sheehan '10; Nicholas Ostler's Empires of the Word from Matt Snyder '04; Soetsu Yanagi's The Beauty of Everyday Things from Christopher Bligger Simpson '85; and Mieko Kawakami's Breasts and Eggs from Maya Campbell '15.

### An Interview with Archivist Tracy Drake

From History Major Lauren Mondroski '21

When I was a first-year, I dreaded the day when I would have to make the all-important decision of choosing my major. That all changed, however, when I walked into Special Collections and Archives for the first time. The ancient books, the fascinating artifacts from Olde Reede, and of course, the archives employees who couldn't do more to help me find what I needed — all of these things and more convinced me that I needed to study history during my time at Reed. Now it's my last semester, and due to the pandemic, it's been over a year since I've been able to walk down to the basement stairs to archives. I decided to catch up with Tracy Drake, Reed's very own archivist extraordinaire, in hopes of learning what archives have been up to the past few months, and maybe convince a few history majors to get inspired by archives, even if it's from a distance. We talked about We're All in this Together, their pandemic documentation project, as well as a brand new goal to collect oral histories relating to the on-campus protests led by Reedies Against Racism. An excerpt of our conversation follows.

**Lauren Mondroski:** I guess I'll start with the pandemic project. What was the inspiration for the project to document the Reed College response to COVID?

Tracy Drake: I [was] really kind of active on the library Twitter. What I have been noticing is that a lot of institutions, both locally and nationally, have started to do call-outs for archival material related to the pandemic. When you think of archives, it's usually us going back years later, archiving stuff from the past, you know, 20-30 years later. But now, we're in this interesting moment, where we recognize that we're living through history, and we're seeing it as a historical moment... It's kind of interesting to actually be actively archiving material as it's going on.

TD: Sometimes people get rid of stuff, or they think that their stories aren't important to what's going on. And so I felt like this was, in this moment, a really great chance to tell the stories of everybody that's included at Reed College. So I have this opportunity where I can actively speak and engage with folks and tell them how important their narrative is to what's going on now. I can actively engage with students and say, "Hey, we need your narratives!"

"We're in this interesting moment, where we recognize that we're living through history, and we're seeing it as a historical moment..."

TD: I just really wanted to make sure that we had the information for future students and researchers to kind of go back. Because when I look back at 1918, most of what we had were like newspaper accounts. There just wasn't a whole bunch of material, so I felt like this was a chance so that we can get some of that stuff while this is actively going on. And this will be a continual process. Also, it was an opportunity for me to tell everybody that their stories, narratives, their perspectives, point of views are a part of that story too, so that we get multiple perspectives about what was going on. Because even though we all experienced it, the ways in which we experienced it are different, right?

Tracy continues, telling me about the types of items that can be or have already been donated to this project, and the possibilities seem

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endless — different types of masks, examples of signage around campus, a journal written by a student documenting every time they left the house. A series of photos taken during another student's lonely, two-week quarantine. Images taken by staff of the empty campus right after lockdown, which she aptly described as painful and poetic all at the same time. Things as mundane as the labels from cleaning products, which now advertise their ability to kill bacteria and viruses like COVID-19. As we conclude our conversation about the pandemic project, Tracy emphasizes one thing: it's okay if you're not ready to donate yet.

"It's okay if you want to donate, but you can't donate now.
That's okay, we're still gonna be here, years down the line."

**TD**: I also want to preface this because, you know, I'm a person who models like ethics of care. I believe that, even though this is a moment where we want to actively document material, I realize that this is a moment that people are living through, and that there is trauma and grief associated with this historical moment. It's okay if you want to donate, but you can't donate now. That's okay, we're still gonna be here, years down the line. We'll still be accepting donations for this.

Tracy also introduces me to the archive's newest project: a call to collect oral history interviews to document the history of Reedies Against Racism. The idea for the project came from a student who hoped to capture the stories of seniors who participated in the HUM 110 and divestment protests before they graduate, and Tracy hopes to obtain as many stories as possible, since so many people were involved, and make them accessible via the digital collections. One of her priorities is centering student voices above all, and of course, the voices of the students of color that led this transformative moment in Reed's recent history.

TD: I think as archivists, a lot of times we decide what is important. There's power, [in deciding what objects] to keep and name as significant to historical moments or movements. So I actually want to speak back to the students and ask them, "What do they want us to remember? What's important?" So for me... we have to go to the source.

LM: I think that's really important, I know, especially since institutional memory is super short... I would want future students and historians at Reed to know about the protests because it's, as you said, a very important part of Reed history.

**TD**: I think that it speaks to creating this inclusivity, you know, the archives hasn't necessarily always been the most inclusive space as it relates to collections... I see that as part of my job too. A lot of folks use the word "decolonize," decolonize the archival space. Because actually, we do get a lot of questions from students. So, as I'm in the archives, we get in requests, or students come down there, students actually ask about previous movements that have happened on campus, and they come to the archives looking for that. And so we should be able to provide them with that story, because it's an important part of the history and narrative of Reed College. I think also it shows that [Reedies Against Racism] didn't just happen in a bubble, there were some other things that precipitated it, so we need to go back and collect that stuff...The past is connected to the present and the present is connected to our future. And so we just gotta have that information there.

Tracy Drake is available to help all students in their archival needs, whether it be a virtual research consultation or locating digital resources for research papers or theses. If you would like to contribute to either We're All in this Together or the Reedies Against Racism Oral History project, feel free to contact her at draket@reed.edu, or visit Reed Special Collections and Archives online for more information!

# **Senior Spotlight**

#### Three Members of the Class of 2021 Discuss Their Theses

### Jonathan Lederman

I've been studying political approaches to managing the legacy of violence in post-conflict societies, using Chile after the transition to democracy in 1990. I wrote my first chapter about the Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which officially recognized the victims of the dictatorship but in my reading contained a lot of silences that were related to the dominant political culture's inability to address potentially destabilizing truths about violence. Right now, I'm working on tracing the legacies of these silences and how they limited later governmental approaches to social justice and human rights trials. Originally, the thesis was inspired by the 2019-2020 social protest movement in Chile which I saw some of while visiting family that eventually toppled the Pinochetera constitution, but of course recent events in the United States have informed my understanding of how politics moves on from "evil" leaders-in fact, Portland itself is creating its own Truth Commission to address past and continuing racist policing, which I'm hoping to follow as it develops.

#### Alyssa Feigelson

I'm thesising on Jewish women in mid-19th century San Francisco, and how they reinvented their culture and their religion in a new land without much history of Jewish settlement. I've been looking at how women like Mary Goldsmith Prag and Ray Frank make space for themselves within a largely patriarchal culture and contributed to the growing Reform movement at the time.

#### Nick Campigli

I have been researching the Missionary Schools Affair between the South African Catholic Church and the apartheid state in the early 1950's. The South African government wanted to take control of the missionary schools that had been primarily responsible for Black education in South Africa. Yet, instead of handing over their schools the Church attempted to keep control through a massive donation campaign. The campaign was a success, but the missionary schools still faced drastic budget cuts. While I naively hoped this was a story about the Catholic Church standing up for their Black church members, it was not. Before, during, and after the funding drive the Church explicitly framed the affair as a Catholic issue and not a racial one. What I've learned is that the Church in 1950's South Africa was concerned with preserving Catholic identity and influence in South Africa, while racial equality was a secondary concern at best.

### Working Wisdom

Alumni share their best advice for surviving the pandemic and working from home!

"Reclaim.ai (developed by a Reed alumnus!) for staying focused." Caroll Casbeer '10

"Disconnect and go out into nature!" Zachary Ellison '09

"Find some "in-person" zoom classes to take where you get to learn something new." Caitlin

McKenna '08

"Play board games, take hikes, write letters and start or join a Zoom book group." Kathryn Mapps '86

"Have a designated workspace that is not where you sleep or eat." Alison Wise '96

"Get a good keyboard and chair if you're working from home."

Julia Rudden '90

"Enjoy the opportunity to spend time alone. Keep in touch with friends but stay safe." Alison Rose '85

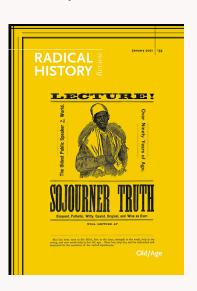
"Group chats and sweatpants!"
Natalie Sheehan '10

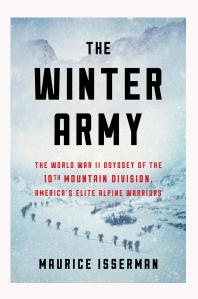
"Foster an animal in need from your local shelter!" Veronica Vichit-Vadakan '96

## **Alumni Updates**

#### Three recent projects from history alums

"Devin McGeehan Muchmore '09 has co-edited the latest volume of the journal Radical History Review (January 2021). The theme is histories of Old/Age, and with Amanda Ciafone, Devin has penned a moving opening essay about putting this issue together while elders around the globe were perishing from COVID-19. Devin got his PhD in American Studies from Yale University in 2018, and is currently a lecturer at Harvard."





"The paperback edition of my 2019 book *The Winter Army: The World War II Odyssey of the 10th Mountain Division* was recently published. The book is dedicated in part to 10th Mountain vet Harris Dusenberry, (Class of 1936) who I met some years back at a Reed reunion."

Maurice Isserman '73

Edward Peters '72 recently read *The Winter Army* and recommends it!

"The Ground Breaking: An American City and Its Search for Justice, publishing on May 18, 2021, will tell the story of the Tulsa Massacre, how it was covered up, and how it was uncovered, leading all the way up to our archaeological discovery this fall and the current call for reparations. In the book, I also write about working on my Reed thesis, and how it was a Reed professor – the late William McClendon of the Black Studies Program — who first helped me unlock my hometown's terrible secret."

