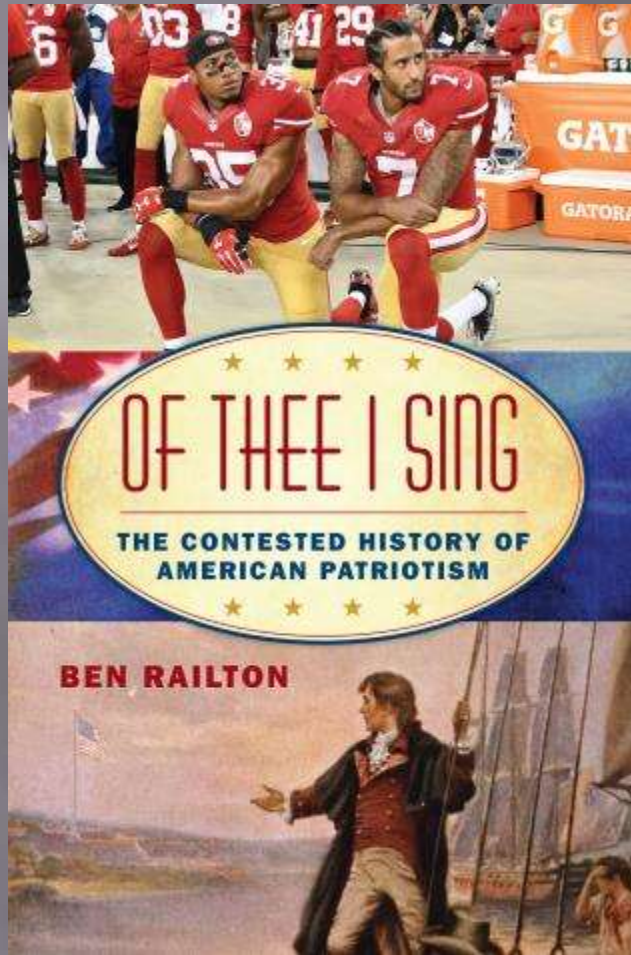


MODELS OF AMERICAN CRITICAL PATRIOTISM AND WHY WE NEED THEM TODAY

Ben Railton
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Contesting Patriotism in January 2021

- ❑ From *Nation* article on 1/6 insurrection: “‘This is not America,’ a woman said to a small group, her voice shaking. She was crying, hysterical. ‘They’re shooting at us. They’re supposed to shoot BLM, but they’re shooting the patriots.’”
- ❑ 1776 Commission Report, released on 1/18 (MLK Day): “restoring patriotic education that teaches the truth about America”; “Universities in the US are often today hotbeds of anti-Americanism...that generate in students and in the broader culture at the very least disdain and at worst outright hatred for this country.”
- ❑ Together embody what I call mythic patriotism, a form that celebrates certain idealized American histories and identities, and that defines protest and critique as unpatriotic and anti-American — whereas I see those alternatives as profoundly patriotic, as an embodiment of critical patriotism

My Four Types

- ▣ Celebratory patriotism
- ▣ Mythic patriotism
- ▣ Active patriotism
- ▣ Critical patriotism

Mythic Patriotism

- ▣ “The construction of mythologized narratives of the past, ones that allow for a concurrent embrace of the historical United States but that do so by excluding certain aspects of, and too often communities from, our history.... Imagines national histories which can then be celebrated as idealized American origin points and legacies – but which also require the exclusion and even the erasure of other histories and communities.”

Critical Patriotism

- ▣ “Highlights the nation’s shortcomings in order to move it closer to its ideals.”
- ▣ James Baldwin, *Notes on a Native Son* (1955): “I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.” -- 1984 Preface: “I was trying to locate myself within a specific inheritance and to use that inheritance, precisely, to claim the birthright from which that inheritance had so brutally and specifically excluded me.”

19C Critical Patriotism: William Apess

- ▣ William Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip” (1836):
“as the immortal Washington lives endeared and engraven on the hearts of every white in America, never to be forgotten in time – even such is the immortal Philip honored, as held in memory by the degraded but yet grateful descendants who appreciate his character; so will every patriot, especially in this enlightened age, respect the rude yet all accomplished son of the forest, that died a martyr to his cause, though unsuccessful, yet as glorious as the American Revolution.”

Apess continued

- ▣ Apess, concluding line of “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (1829): “Do not get tired, ye noble-hearted – only think how many poor Indians want their wounds done up daily; the Lord will reward you, and pray you stop not till this tree of distinction shall be leveled to the earth, and the mantle of prejudice torn from every American heart – then shall peace pervade the Union.”

20th Century Critical Patriotism: The Silent Sentinels



21C Critical Patriotism

- ▣ Colin Kaepernick, August 2016 interview with Yahoo Sports: “To me this is something that has to change and when there’s significant change and I feel like that flag represents what it’s supposed to represent in this country, is representing the way that it’s supposed to, I’ll stand.”

Continuing Conversations

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