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"And You May Ask Yourself: Am I Right? Am I Wrong?"

John M. Rudy
Gettysburg College

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Abstract

This blogging endeavour is dangerous. Blogging, I believe, should be a personal medium, where you wear your heart on your sleeve and let the real "you" hang out. That's scary. [*excerpt*]

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Interpreting the Civil War: Connecting the Civil War to the American Public is written by alum and adjunct professor, John Rudy. Each post is his own opinions, musings, discussions, and questions about the Civil War era, public history, historical interpretation, and the future of history. In his own words, it is "a blog talking about how we talk about a war where over 600,000 died, 4 million were freed and a nation forever changed. Meditating on interpretation, both theory and practice, at no charge to you."

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Interpreting the Civil War

Connecting the Civil War to the American Public

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"And You May Ask Yourself: Am I Right? Am I Wrong?"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2011

This blogging endeavour is dangerous. Blogging, I believe, should be a personal medium, where you wear your heart on your sleeve and let the real "you" hang out. That's scary.

So who am I?

First of all, I'm a recovering student. I just went through the shock of leaving college for a second time. I attended Gettysburg College for my undergraduate education in History and Civil War Era Studies, graduating in 2007. That took me on a roller coaster year of figuring out the future, trying American University on for size and working as an interpreter with the National Trust for Historic Preservation in DC before I escaped the District and headed back to Pennsylvania. I just earned my Masters Degree in Applied History from Shippensburg University this past December, and so now I seem to float without any paper assignments or major research looming over my head.

The lack of constant academic stress seems sort of funny. It was a comfort to know that after this research project, another loomed on the horizon. But now it's work and slowly drifting away from the field of 'straight-up' history and into the messy world of interpretive theory and training. I miss my academic research safety blanket.

Which is where you come in, dear reader. I need an outlet for my historical stresses. Some of them are research based. Some of them are beefs with public history theory. Some of them are prodding at the system to see what shakes free.

I'm a trouble maker. I like to poke the bear, often simply to see what happens as a result. When I visit an historic site, I'm usually the one asking the Ranger about the ugly patches of our nation's history, just to see how they'll deal with them.

I'm opinionated. The Civil War blogging community, to me, is equivalent to historical punditry. Everyday, we all gather around the Sunday round-table and pick at one another like George Will and Gwen Ifill. We respect each other, but will also call a spade, a spade.

I'm eclectic. I like smatterings of everything from Tchaikovsky and Greig to Chuck Berry and the Who, from *American Experience* to *American Pickers* and from Denzel in *Glory* to Aykroyd in *Ghostbusters*. I'm just as apt to quote President Josiah Bartlet or The Talking Heads (as I did with this post's title) as I am to nod to President Abraham Lincoln or George F. Root.

I'm a racial historian. I see the world through glasses tinted by racial strife, particularly that of the

1860s and 1960s. I believe that much of America's internal conflicts can be traced back to the uneasiness of some folks around other folks just because they look different. I think racism is wrong and amoral, whether practiced in the past or today. I also think that the excuse of, "that's just the times they lived in," is complete hokum.

So what will you see from me in the coming months? Opinion pieces on when and when not to commemorate 150th events, accounts of my attempts to get myself killed while traveling across the American South, questioning of the sacred cows and holy relics of days long past and more are all coming down the pipe. I'll endeavour to be interesting and informative, while still keeping the tone a bit snarky and irreverent. Provocative is the name of the game.

I am, after all, just some punk kid trying to find my place in the historical profession.

-John Rudy