



Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream

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On the eve of a new century, an up-and-coming Theodore Roosevelt set out to transform the U.S. into a major world power. The Spanish-American War would forever change America's standing in global affairs, and drive the young nation into its own imperial showdown in the Philippines.

From Admiral George Dewey's legendary naval victory in Manila Bay to the Rough Riders' heroic charge up San Juan Hill, from Roosevelt's rise to the presidency to charges of U.S. military misconduct in the Philippines, *Honor in the Dust* brilliantly captures an era brimming with American optimism and confidence as the nation expanded its influence abroad.

Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream Details

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From Reader Review Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream for online ebook

Jtolan1 says

Interesting and well-written, Honor in the Dust is a pleasure to read.

Easily accessible and engrossing, the author includes the right amount of factual background to help you understand the conflicting priorities and competitive pressures of the time. I felt I was really living this era, with an insider's access to what was happening. I also gained a depth of understanding about the colorful characters of the time, like Teddy Roosevelt.

This book is a great window on a pivotal period of U.S. history full of action and intrigue.

Matthew Gregg says

A GOOD READS GIVEAWAY WIN Excellent history of the rise of the Marines and American imperialism as well as the use and abuse of military power at the turn of the century under President Teddy Roosevelt during the war in the Philippines. Interesting parallels can be made to the invasion and aftermath of George Bush's preemptive war with Iraq, especially the abuse and torture of the enemy by American troops. Water torture was a big controversy back in Teddy Roosevelt's invasion of the Philippines as it was in Iraq. Interesting stuff. The only flaw is the book may focus too much on torture and abuse at the expense of more detail about the war and the president who championed and conducted it for better or for worse....And the author makes no bones about how he feels!

Overall a fast-paced, evocative read that taught me a lot about foreign policy aims of the Republican administrations of McKinley and then of course the Rough Rider himself TR!

KyBunnies says

The book was a Goodreads.com First Read contest win.

Great book about the history of 2 separate wars America fought. The Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War. This book even goes into detail about how Guantanamo was started. This author did his research very well. He included notes and a bibliography for each chapter of the book citing where he got the information. I was very impressed.

This is a great read for any one interested in war history.

The bunnies and I give this book 4-Carrots.

Matt says

The Philippine-American War – often referred to as the Philippine Insurrection – is a footnote to a footnote in American history. It is the double asterisk at the bottom of that history book you are reading. It is the unfortunate epilogue to the Spanish-American War, which is itself almost forgotten today, save for a blurry image of Teddy Roosevelt galloping up a hill, yelling *Bully!* and shooting Spaniards with great alacrity.

The war's downplayed stature is not the result of any historical smallness. To the contrary, it was a protracted and bloody struggle with quantifiable geopolitical consequences. It was fought to secure an important Pacific beachhead; to spread American power and secure American might. In that way, it doesn't fit the neat and tidy ideals of most Americans. We don't like to think of ourselves as warmongers or war-lovers. We like to think of ourselves as peace-loving folk, who fight when we have to, whether that is for a democratic ideal (the Revolution), freedom (the Civil War), or the fate of the world (World War II, and arguably, World War I).

The Philippine War wasn't like that. It didn't even have the brute, geographical necessities of the Indian Wars. Instead, like the Mexican-American War (also mostly forgotten, but which halved the Mexican Empire in our favor), it was spurred by naked aggression, often masked as racial paternalism (the infamous "benevolent assimilation").

The conflict started after the Spanish-American War, when the Philippines, formerly a Spanish colony, came into U.S. possession. Instead of letting it go free – which our dearly held principles of self-determination should have decreed – we decided to keep it, like a wallet found in a bus.

Filipino independence forces, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, declared war on the United States. In a roughly three-year war, some 20,000 Filipino combatants died. The number of civilian deaths run – by some estimates – into the hundreds of thousands. This was a counterinsurgency at its worst; if the war is remembered today, it is because of Hell Roaring Jake Smith and his oral command to Littleton Waller: "I wish you to kill and burn...The more you kill and the more you burn, the better you will please me."

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,000 or so islands. The Philippine-American War took place in different regions of this archipelago. There were different factions and different leaders opposing the Americans, with different ends in mind. In short, this is a complex subject, far too expansive for the 360 pages of Gregg Jones's *Honor in the Dust*.

Rather than attempt to discuss every nuance of the regional politics; rather than describing the various orders of battle; rather than even charting the course of the war, Jones provides a broad (stress: broad) overview of hostilities. Roughly the first 100 pages, in fact, is a recap of the Spanish-American War. This is helpful contextually, but takes space that could otherwise be devoted to the topic at hand.

I'm of two minds of this book. On the one hand, I appreciate its readability. It is accessible to the general reader; that is, one who doesn't read a lot about history in general or a lot about the Philippine War in particular. I read a lot about history. Arguably too much. But as to these events, I am a relative newcomer.

To that end, *Honor in the Dust* does a good job with the broad strokes. For the most part, the book takes a satellite-eye view of the proceedings, refusing to bog down in details. It gives you the sweep of events, and a

summary of the results, without explaining at great length how things got there.

Yet it also attempts to relate the experiential aspect of the war by closely following a few of the participants, most notably the travails of U.S. Marine Tony Waller. Waller served with distinction in Egypt, in Cuba, and during the Boxer Rebellion. During the Philippine-American War, he led the ill-fated Samar Expedition, which almost left he and his men dead in the jungle. After the march, he summarily ordered the execution of nearly a dozen of his porters, accusing them of treachery. He was court-martialed for these actions, and later acquitted.

When Jones wishes to describe something, he is also able to provide a narrative jolt, as he does with his description of the “massacre” at Balangiga, where Filipino irregulars ambushed a company of American soldiers.

As church bells pealed furiously, fighters ripped off disguises, brandished weapons and charged their assigned targets. Units fanned out to attack the mess hall and kitchen, main barracks and two smaller barracks. Those concealed in the church poured into the convent in search of the three American officers.

Most of the Americans were seated at the long mess table sheltered by tents along the eastern side of the plaza, and it was there that the scores of native prisoners and laborers standing around the square converged...First Sergeant James M. Randles was among the first to fall, his skull split with an ax. Another soldier's head was severed from his shoulders by a bolo and fell into his plate. The Americans fought back with anything they could grab – chairs, clubs, knives and forks, pots and pans. Cook Melvin D. Walls, a pitcher on the company baseball team, threw a pot of boiling water at the attackers, then continued to hold them at bay by hurling canned goods.

Passages such as these, however, are mostly few and far between.

As I mentioned above, this book is a survey. It really only scratches the surface. As a survey, it achieves its limited goals. However, I thought the perspective was almost too broad. Much of the war is dealt with in such generalities – bordering on vagueness – that I'm not certain I couldn't have learned more by reading an encyclopedia entry.

More time could have been spent describing the battles. How they unfolded. More importantly, *where* they unfolded. It would have been nice to see a more rigorous and systematic approach. This might have given the book some of the authority I thought it lacked.

While skimping on the war itself, Jones provides an entire section of the war's controversial repercussions, including Waller's court-martial, and the congressional inquiry into U.S. atrocities. Those included water torture, summary executions, and the burning of villages. The debate over the war's conduct pitted unlikely allies such as Nelson Miles (the famous Indian hunter) and Mark Twain (the famous humorist) against the stout imperialist and racialist Teddy Roosevelt.

Though I appreciated this section, it also failed to completely satisfy me. Mainly, it's because these chapters deal with a post mortem on a war that I don't think Jones fully or satisfactorily covers.

I know that there are other histories of the Philippine-American War out on bookshelves, including respected volumes by Stuart Creighton Miller and Brian Linn. I chose this one because it was the newest, on the theory that it was most up-to-date. Despite this book's claim to reliance on "rarely used primary sources," the text often seemed like a recapitalization of secondary sources, rather than a story firmly within the grasp of the storyteller.

In other words, the virtues of *Honor in the Dust* are also its detriments, and vice versa. It might be too simplistic and too general. But it is also a very good gateway to a forgotten war.

Nobody likes to read about the questionable things their country has done. This is a universal trait, not just an American one. The Japanese, for instance, still refuse to grapple with their crimes against China during World War II.

The Philippine-American War was not America's finest hour. This, I suppose, is why it's mostly forgotten. It doesn't fit into our narrative. In some reader-reviews of this book, I noticed a reflexive defensiveness, with cries of "but they committed atrocities too!" It's tough to accept that war crimes were committed – and they were, repeatedly and admittedly – and that one of the stone heads on Rushmore was cheering the whole thing on.

But if history is nothing else, it is the process of accepting ethical complexities and moral contradictions and good-intentioned failures and bad-hearted acts. The slogans and the myths, the parades and the fireworks, all have their place. So, too, does the knowledge of the blood spilled on distant lands in opaque endeavors on behalf of an entire country. I don't think you should read this book and say *America sucks!* or read this book and say *This book lies!*.

You should read this book, think about it, and maybe read another.

Joe says

This was an history of America at one or her greatest and worst hours, pitting "Manifest Destiny" against the horrors of Expansionism and the virtue of disclosure against the practicality of successful management of political and military resources.

the central Character of this struggle was Theodore Roosevelt, who led the America and her "imperialists" to war in Cuba and the Phillipines. A man who was rightly accused of burying secrets in the cellar by his enemies " the Democrats and the Isolationists" whom he out foxed and out stepped with the American People. A man who was President of America ,even before he was President. A rugged man who along with Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and the club of American "Wasps" took to heart the idea and goal of Taking America to the status of a World Power and accepting its duty to "Manifest Destiny".

On the basis of an often quoted, but unpublished letter from Ruiyard Kipling to Senator Lodge , Roosevelt would urge America to take upon itself the "White Mans' Burden" to help its brown skin brothers by giving them the benefit of the correct religion, supervised government and organized use of their natural resources to benefit their government, their economy and the benefit of their fellow man. Of course, fathering these uneducated chlldren of nature often required stern measures and a heavy hand to keep them on course; taking these naked and semi naked peoples on the long trip ignorance to democracy and liberty.

Roosevelt as Governor of New York pushed for war against Spain in Cuba and in the Phillipines. In both Wars, Spain, whose cruelty we advertised, was a easy target. The next target, the numerous, ignorant brown skin people were more difficult. They assumed that after we liberated them from Spain, they would no longer be just a colony and like America would self rule. Judging them to be incapable of same, we engaged in stern measures to bring them under control for their own benefit. We killed the dissenters, burned homes of possible abettors, burned crops, whipped and water boarded confessions from the natives to stop their insurrection as they did not understand our domination of them was in their best interests. We did build schools and showed them the best way to handle their resources which we sold and managed the profits created for them.

The most unfortunate were the 1,100 muslims on the island who resisted until their actions brought them to extinction.

This book offers a two sided look at the conqueror and the conquered, both have good intentions and were not able to accept the ideas of the other. Their differences they take to extremes to human behavior. The Book describes in detail a wonderful and dark part of American and World History.

It reads like good fiction, but unfortunately is true. We are the good guys and the bad guys. Read about us.

Jo Stafford says

This absorbing and well-paced history of the US war in the Philippines contains lessons that are relevant to later US wars, particularly in Vietnam and, more recently, in Iraq.

In light of recent revelations about the use of waterboarding and other forms of torture to extract information from suspected terrorists, the historical context of the so-called water cure outlined by Jones is illuminating. Many of the controversial and brutal strategies employed by US forces in the Philippines have been used in more recent wars.

This is compelling reading.

Tony says

(Another FirstReads win!).

"You can't put down a rebellion by throwing confetti and sprinkling perfumery," General Lloyd Wheaton offered in 1900 in rebuttal to protests from anti-imperialists over reports of abuses by U.S. troops in the Philippines. But this was not a rebellion. The American Philippine adventure turned quickly from emancipation of the islands from the Spanish to a take-over. In doing so, America crushed the Filipino independence movement and became the very evil we said we were fighting to stop.

Why? How could that happen?

First, racism. The men directing the war dehumanized the natives. In this they were not unique. It comes with war. The mother of an intelligence operative came for a visit. She saw the Filipinos as "brutal cowards" and "vermin". The fight, as she saw it, pitted "a scrubby lot of hardly human things, stunted, gnarled pygmies [sic]" against the "fine, manly fellows" of U.S. Troops.

Second, religion, of course. What better and constant justification for atrocity in history is there than the need to civilize, to Christianize another people.

Third, testosterone. That would be Theodore Roosevelt, whose need to be manly favored war. Except when it didn't, that is. He would have doubts, but late. And he'd hide them, always. One lesson of this book is that furor over atrocities fades quickly.

Honor in the Dust is a much-needed expose of this misguided imperialistic adventure. It is about soldiers and atrocities - American atrocities- in war. Yet, my sympathies were largely with the soldiers, especially the otherwise heroic ones like Tony Waller who would face a court-martial for his actions. Instead, I blame the politicians and generals who put them there, gave the orders and then acted shocked ("Gambling? In Rick's?" "Your winnings, Sir.").

The author quotes Thomas Reed, the Republican Speaker of the House, as the conscience of America in summarizing what went wrong:

They were - these Filipinos - only a short time ago our wards to whom we owed sacred duties, duties we could not abandon in the face of a censorious world without soiling our Christian faith. Now they are 'niggers' who must be punished for defending themselves. This is the history of the world with perhaps a stronger dash of hypocrisy than usual to soothe our feelings.

He almost got it.

I liked that the author doesn't slap the reader across the head with a comparison to current times and take political shots. But he doesn't have to. The lessons are palpable. The one that should be most obvious is the memory of our own independence and how much we cherish it.

(By the way, this is a great book for an examination of "waterboarding" and torture as a means of military interrogation, a practice which dates back to our own colonial experience. I'm with John McCain and Mark Twain on this, if only because you never know whether you are coercing the truth or a lie.)

Kelly Knapp says

This well documented and researched book is beautifully written. Teddy Roosevelt has always been one of my favorite Presidents. However, I did not realize how instrumental he was in the invasion of the Phillipines. In addition, I had no idea that this big strong hunter and president was actually born small, sickly, and with terrible asthma.

This book shows how he decided what type of man he wanted to be and that he set his course to make his dreams come true. But some of those dreams took the American people down a road that they did not intend to go.

Jones writes the events as the documents revealed, yet does so in a way that is both knowledgeable and enjoyable.

Richard says

Gregg Jones chronicles a critical four-year period, from 1898 to 1902, in which Americans allowed their blood to grow hot over war frenzy with a European power, allowing their sense of Manifest Destiny to embrace new responsibilities toward newly liberated island peoples, and bringing their anger to a re-boil over the outrage of "inferior" peoples killing American occupying soldiers, culminating in growing skepticism of the military's approach to putting down insurrection and disdain at their own government's agents' complicity in mistreatment of indigent peoples. No wonder the title contains the phrase "the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream."

I believe this book helps to fill a gap in the contemporary American knowledge and awareness of the important events surrounding the beginning of the twentieth century. Especially now, at the almost exact century-mark since the start of World War I, it seems that there is paltry little observance of the earth-shaking and -shaping effect of that war, let alone any acknowledgement of the Spanish-American War.

It's of course the latter conflict that this book is anchored in. Maybe things went too smoothly, or at least too quickly for anyone to linger long on the consequences of winning a war. Within a matter of months after the explosion and destruction of the Battleship "Maine" in Havana harbor in 1898, we put together an army expeditionary force which led to the Spanish surrender over Cuba, while our Navy defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor and opened the way for our land forces to liberate the Philippine people from Spanish domination there.

The underlying rationale for our engaging in war with Spain, besides the national anger over the alleged Spanish attack on the Maine, was our outrage toward the barbaric handling of Cuba's native population by their European masters, including killings, torture, and forced relocation of populations to concentration camps. We congratulated ourselves on winning a moral as well as a military victory. No one profited personally as much as Theodore Roosevelt, the naval undersecretary who sided with the hawks who wanted the war, and did more than any single American official in making that happen by mobilizing the United States Navy for action when his boss was out of town during a typical hot Washington D.C. summer. He would become a war hero for his actions in Cuba fighting with the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry.

Roosevelt would be propelled to the Vice Presidency during the next election, on a ticket with William McKinley, whose abhorrence toward going to war with Spain had led Roosevelt to accuse him of having the spine of an eclair.

Next to Roosevelt, and no doubt William Randolph Hearst, the most famous individual to emerge from the war was Admiral George Dewey. Public adulation followed his naval victory, but he also had to find a way to fight against the Spaniards within the Philippines. Toward this end, he befriended and successfully used the skills and the credentials of Emilio Aguinaldo, a freedom fighter who had been living in exile in Hong Kong since the Spanish kicked him out of the Philippines.

Jones gives a great account of yet another winner to emerge out of the conflict, the U.S. Marine Corps. The Corps had of course been around a long time, from Tripoli to Mexico City to the Civil War, but as Jones shows, they were a very small force whose existence was not assured. Jones shows how the 1st Marine Battalion led the way to the successful American landing on Cuba with its spirited efforts at Guantanamo Bay and Cuzco Well, and started to become established among military circles as an indispensable component of any future actions. The Marines' would soon receive international praise for their role in saving the foreign legations at Imperial China's Peking during the Boxer rebellion.

The trouble in the Philippines began after the Spanish agreed to a peace conference in Paris. McKinley decreed that the American military government that had been assumed to be holding the fort in Manila until a Philippine Republic was formed, would instead be the protector of American sovereignty there. Aristocratic Henry Cabot Lodge led the debate in the U.S. Senate to subsume constitutional and moral objections to Imperialism in favor of America's commercial and strategic interests in the Pacific region (p. 407 of 1121). Aguinaldo found himself frozen out of attending the negotiations in Paris. Eventually, Aguinaldo became the leader of a new anti-American insurrection in the islands; American soldiers found themselves waging war against the people they were supposed to liberate.

The Americans fought successfully against Aguinaldo's forces on Luzon, where most of the early fighting occurred. Aguinaldo narrowly avoided escape several times while his armed forces became depleted. The Americans, thinking the hostilities were coming to a close, found themselves bound up in an ugly guerrilla war. Aguinaldo revitalized the cells of the underground Katipunan which had engaged in revolution against Spain since 1896. Eventually, the Americans adopted the Spanish playbook and instituted anti-guerrilla measures that they had condemned earlier, including martial law, summary executions and relocation of civilians from villages into areas which could not support a civilian population for the purpose of depriving the insurgents of their sources of support.

The Americans adopted an interrogational method from the Spaniards, the "Water Cure", eerily similar in concept to the notorious water boarding justified by Vice President Cheney for use in the Iraq/Afghanistan war of a century later.

Thus began the crux of this book: the engagement of American military forces in what Jones titles Chapter 11, "A Nasty Little War." Just as victory was being predicted on the conventional field of battle, the reports of ambushes, raids and assassinations by the Filipino insurgents began escalating. Jones is careful not to fall into the easy trap of assigning blame to contemporary administrations for the conduct of their wars by comparing them too literally with the events of 1901-02, but the reader cannot help being reminded of eerily similar calamities associated with, especially, Vietnam and Iraq, as I confess to having done in the paragraph above. Having said that, the destruction of Philippine villages by the Army is so reminiscent of the 1960's rationale of "We burned down the village to save it."

There is also the inevitable comparison to be made between the early, optimistic war claims of benevolent change imposed on a country besieged by evil forces, only to have those promises turned hollow by the need to rain destruction on an intransigent enemy. In the case of the scope of what this book covers, there was the original McKinley promise of liberty and "benevolent assimilation" (p. 484 of 1121) for Filipinos which turned into a regimen of fear and brutality in order to try to force the recalcitrants into an appreciation as America's colonial subjects.

The mounting American casualties caused by fighting under environmental conditions far away from home against an unconventional enemy which didn't play "fairly" were successfully used as a rationale for keeping the fight up against the Filipinos by McKinley's successor, Theodore Roosevelt and his administration. There

came a tipping point, however, when the American public's appetite for the war turned sour. Despite earlier efforts to keep reports from the war front optimistic in nature, soldiers and reporters were able to get the word out about a very ugly war. Numerous commissions, boards of inquiry and even courts-martial were empaneled to look into misconduct by soldiers and their superiors. What started out as accusations of institutional laxity in setting limits on the conduct of military operations became a full-fledged scandal.

President Roosevelt was very preoccupied by this issue in the first years of his administration. He ultimately gave a speech in which he publicly, vehemently vowed to uncover every instance of barbarity by American soldiers and to punish those found guilty of the articles of war. Jones makes the point that this was a hollow promise to find justice. The only cases of punishment meted out were minor. Marine General Jake (Howling Wilderness) Smith, who had ordered his subordinate Major Waller to "kill and burn" and to kill all persons old enough to bear arms, with the age limit starting at ten years (p. 723 of 1121), in the wake of a massacre of a company of American soldiers on the island of Samar, was eventually court-martialed. He was found guilty and would be admonished as punishment. Other officers received similar treatment. Major Glenn, a practitioner of the water cure, was convicted by court-martial and received a one month suspension from duty and a \$50.00 fine. Another officer who used the water cure on three Filipino priests, Lt. Julien Gaujot, received three months' suspension and \$150 pay forfeiture for violating the laws of war.

Despite Republican fears of losing control of the Presidency and Congress as a result of negative political fallout from the revelations of torture in the Islands, the American public voted to keep them in power. The hopes of the anti-imperialist opposition to Roosevelt's administration to vote the Republicans out of office were dashed. Part of the reason was that the fighting was effectively over by 1902, and this satisfied the public, regardless of the price in national honor that this conclusion had cost. This shifting of the country's priorities helped Roosevelt to readjust his public statements back to patriotic support of the execution of the war, in which a barbarous foe was forcefully put down and American-backed justice and fair play prevailed while the few transgressors of the rules of war on our side were effectively dealt with. As Jones notes, very little mention of the islands appeared in his autobiography. No mention appears in it about the war crimes scandal. Roosevelt went on to accomplish great achievements in business regulation and preservation of the country's natural resources, while many of the generals and other officers who engaged in the conquest of the islands proceeded with their careers.

Although the majority of Americans supported the idea of the country's emergence as a great power, they also were not eager to see any further military conquests, given the cost in lives and prestige associated with the Philippine venture. Roosevelt lost his appetite for conquering new colonies, as the main European powers were so fond of, but he maintained a build up of American military credibility with his build-up of the Navy and his building of the Panama Canal (made possible through the shady interference into Columbian sovereignty). Jones notes that Roosevelt came to appreciate the concept of Philippine independence, if only as a way to strengthen the islands as a check to what he perceived, correctly, to be the eventual Japanese threat of military dominance in the Pacific.

Griffin Larson says

Very well done and explained. Great book for information and it was still kept extremely interesting. Glad I read it.

Sir says

Investigative journalists have become some of our greatest historians with their shattering of the truth, through epic works. Recent history is again disturbed by reminders of The United States of America's own dirty history of genocide, torture, and cover-ups, past and present, by yet another worthy investigative journalist, Gregg Jones, a Pulitzer Prize finalist. His triumphant historical work, Honor in the Dust, Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream, not merely reminds us of our shameful history but makes our recent history jump out from behind the forest of achievements and setbacks in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Already having witnessed harsh reminders of conveniently forgotten episodes in history with the likes of Adam Hochschild's King Leopold's Ghost and To End All Wars, and Erik Larson, as he takes us In The Garden of Beasts, along with Peter Godwin's screaming The Fear, while penetrating recent history with Zimbabwe's current fate. Now we realize, if not already, we have not seen the full investigation of recent events in the Asian Middle East. Gregg Jones however, does remind us of this fact by taking us with amazing clarity into our forgotten history.

Written with searing documented truth, past events are brought to life with breathtaking speed and sharp unrelenting prose. This modern style of writing history is forcing the hand of all historians and the result is a very pleasing one for future generations. The true thrill of the story of us, and how we became what we are, is now open through the renewed and rewriting pens of all great historians. But I believe that it is the investigative journalists like Gregg Jones, that have forced their hands to write with clarity, truth, and the use of sharper more interesting styles and clear, accurate images, that can hold readers, all readers, not just the few that have the patience and fortitude to persevere in order to learn, enjoy the knowledge, and chew on its elements.

This is one of those must read books. If we are ever to begin to speak of ourselves with clarity, truth, honesty, debate ethics, government, peace, prosperity, wellness, we can begin here with this outstanding vision made clear through this Honor in the Dust.

Melissa Ennis says

Honor in the Dust: Theodore Roosevelt, War in the Philippines, and the Rise and Fall of America's Imperial Dream

This is a honey of a book: brisk, entertaining, surprising, and alarmingly topical. (Clearly, the folks who brought you Guantanamo did not remember the MAINE.) Plus you learn how we got Guantanamo in the first place.

Jones spent decades mining original sources, and there are new nuggets on every page. But his research is so cleverly integrated into his narrative that Honor in the Dust is paced like a thriller.

Jones has connected a myriad of dots:
Theodore Roosevelt
Hearst
the Navy
the Army
yachts
the Civil War (lots of veterans show up)
Iraq
Afghanistan
military justice
civilian justice
enhanced interrogation
yellow journalism
Congress
Islam
Christianity
protest movements
jingoism
labor
management
Hawaii
Cuba
Imperial Europe
Asia...

Deep-dyed history buffs will enjoy this book... but I would assign it to high-school students, too.

I won this book from GoodReads. I'm going to buy more copies for my friends and family.

Scott Benyacko says

It never ceases to amaze how often history repeats. This work about a often forgotten period of US history shows the dangers of the loss of humanity amidst the delusions of empire. The debate on torture from 1900-1902 echoes down through history to today. Jones's writing has a journalistic eye with a novelist's pacing. It just goes to show that those who do not study the mistakes of the past are oft condemned to repeat them.

Beth Cato says

This easy-to-read and intelligent nonfiction work focuses on the Spanish-American War with an emphasis on American behavior and abuses in the Philippines. I have read many books on Theodore Roosevelt, and while works on his early presidency mention the public relations disaster out of the Philippines, none went into detail. This one does. It's disturbing and thought-provoking.

Jones is a Pulitzer-Prize finalist journalist with years of firsthand experience in the Philippines. The events in his book took place over a hundred years ago but remain incredibly relevant today as the United States

engages in war, holds prisoners, and confronts issues of confessions arising from torture. America entered the Philippines in 1898, boasting that it would save the benighted people from Spanish abuses... and within years, ended up doing many of the same things as the Spanish. The American takeover was fairly straightforward, but when the Americans allowed the Filipinos no representation (not even in the peace talks with Spain) and treated citizens as subhuman, a brutal guerilla war began. American soldiers and marines engaged in terrible acts, including "water cure" torture. War trials took place and the media and public were appalled by what happened, but the only soldier to really be punished was a whistleblower.

Roosevelt's role in everything was complicated, as he was a very complicated man. He pushed for an American empire abroad, one with high ideals, and his administration did whatever it could to cover up what really happened in the Far East. He didn't approve of brutal tactics but also excused what happened as part of war. At the same time, he was still a progressive who wanted to see American blacks treated as full citizens; he called out his critics who railed against him about actions in the Philippines, even as the United States dealt with horrible lynchings of blacks across the South.

I found this to be a fantastic book for my research, and one I think more people should read. It's part of American history that is almost entirely ignored due to its shameful nature, and as a country, we should face what happened and actively seek to do better.

Christopher says

[from my review that appeared in the Christian Science Monitor, April 27, 2012].

George Santayana, the eminent Harvard philosophy professor, novelist, and poet is widely known for his prescient observation: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." However, his lesser-known, but similarly poignant quote, "Only the dead have seen the end of war" is just as applicable in Gregg Jones' extraordinary new history of America's campaign for conquest of the Philippines, *Honor in the Dust*.

Jones's extensive research details the efforts of United States Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt to subdue the Filipinos following America's defeat of their previous occupier, Spain, in the Spanish-American War of 1898. His account dovetails perfectly with two other recent books about contemporaneous events: Julia Flynn Siler's "Lost Kingdom" – about American colonialism in Hawaii – and Evan Thomas's "The War Lovers," about US adventurism in Cuba. One of Jones's main theses is one pre-eminent world powers struggle with to this day: that the line dividing liberation and conquest of less powerful nations often becomes blurry and can move with the ease of sharpened skates on fresh ice.

Jones has devoted nearly 60 pages of footnotes to carefully and explicitly document this period of true ignominy for America, which in numerous ways acted as a template for later American incursions into Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Probably the most vivid and startling revelation Jones makes involves a controversial wartime tactic employed against Filipino combatants called the "water cure" – a form of simulated drowning similar to present-day waterboarding – which, despite its adherents' claims that its effects were innocuous, was vehemently denounced by detractors as torture.

The book's central character is Theodore Roosevelt who, from before the time he had completed his education at Harvard University, had already formed the "expansionist" mindset he would maintain and

advance throughout his lifetime. In a post as New York City Police Commissioner, he was intent on making his mark on the national political stage. Roosevelt's friendship with Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was instrumental in securing him an appointment by President William McKinley as Assistant Secretary of the Navy under John D. Long.

The ambitious and energetic Roosevelt took advantage of Long's relative inactivity to build up naval forces and aggressively push for confrontation with Spain in the Caribbean. In Cuba, as in the Philippines, armed nationalist revolt grew out of 350 years of Spanish exploitation and misrule.

Roosevelt, haunted by the constant and embarrassing specter of his father's having hired a substitute to serve for him in the Civil War, believed strongly that by not only advocating but participating in military action, he could reclaim his family's sullied reputation. But Roosevelt went even farther than that. In speeches about the initial campaign in Cuba, he assailed "the unintelligent, cowardly chatter for peace at any price", and that such beliefs would produce "a flabby, timid type of character which eats away the great fighting features of our race." Not only that, he added that "the clamor of the peace faction has convinced me that this country needs a war."

No one who staked a more moderate position on attacking the Spaniards was safe from Roosevelt's taunts. President McKinley, who had distinguished himself in the Civil War – rising to the rank of Major in the process – stated "I have seen war ... I have seen the dead bodies piled up, and I do not want another." His declaration, "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations [and] cultivate peace toward all" was met with angry dismissal from Roosevelt, who huffed that McKinley had "no more backbone than a chocolate éclair."

The Cuban incursion, dubbed "a splendid little war" by then Secretary of State John Hay, was not an unqualified success; for instance, in capturing both San Juan Heights and El Caney, Americans lost 205 men to the Spaniards' 215. And they suffered nearly three times the number of wounded. However, the cavalry Roosevelt had hand-picked to serve with him, the "Rough Riders," acquitted themselves remarkably well, and their bravery was captured by numerous journalists - among them author Stephen Crane, whose novel "The Red Badge of Courage" was a stark reminder of the moral and psychological complexities of war. At the time, Crane (or "Little Stevey", as he was affectionately referred to) was corresponding for Joseph Pulitzer's New York World.

But as relatively faithful as Crane's dispatches had been, the bombasts of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst resembled a Petri dish of yellow journalism - busily "infecting Americans with war fever." Hearst, who just a few months prior to the war's commencement had audaciously inserted himself in the news by allegedly "rescuing a Cuban damsel whose imprisonment had become a cause celebre in the United States", now piloted his yacht Buccaneer to Santiago Bay, bringing with him a correspondent, Karl Decker, and a team of Edison Company cameramen to film the war for New York theatre newsreels.

The Americans emerged victorious in the Cuban theater largely under the leadership of rotund and gout-ridden General William Rufus Shafter – prevailing chiefly through timely support by the battleship Indiana, which relieved Shafter's pinned-down American ground forces and led a blockade that smashed the inferior Spanish fleet led by Admiral Pascual Cervera. With this victory, the McKinley administration, largely through the aggressiveness of the peripatetic Roosevelt and his ally in the US Senate, Henry Cabot Lodge, was led to press its advantage in securing the Philippines. The archipelago was looked upon as an important strategic outpost, and as much as wanting to "liberate" it, Roosevelt wanted to prevent it from instead becoming a British, Russian, or German protectorate.

While Roosevelt's sudden and powerful celebrity earned in Cuba was helping him bulldoze a trench leading inexorably to the Philippines, the political war for the conscience of America raged. Indianapolis attorney Albert Jeremiah Beveridge charismatically and bombastically orated in favor of America colonizing the islands. In doing so, Beveridge asserted, China would become the grand prize, with America sitting on its very doorstep. Admiral George Dewey, who had served with Admiral David Farragut, was sent to Manila Bay to pacify the existing Spanish fleet. It wasn't long before he had successfully achieved victory, for which he received salutary praise – most notably (and resoundingly) from Roosevelt.

However, in places like Massachusetts, another movement ran counter to empire-builders like Roosevelt and Beveridge. In addition to the liberal reformers known as "Mugwumps," the dissenters included some prominent Republicans, including Massachusetts Senior Senator George Frisbie Hoar. Hoar was backed by, among others, industrialist Andrew Carnegie, former President Grover Cleveland and labor leader Samuel Gompers, and sought to counter the imperialist and "unconstitutional" objectives of those intent on subjugating Filipino self-rule and independence. In their unsuccessful opposition to the 1899 Treaty of Paris, critics warned against arousing the same kind of colonial antipathy the Filipinos felt toward the Spanish. Spain balked at the US terms of surrendering the archipelago, but after promising to pay \$20 million to the economically bereft Spaniards, the US government secured their reluctant signature on the treaty.

It wasn't long before tensions in Manila arose to the boiling point, and soon America had another fight on its hands. American ground troops led by, among others, battle-hardened and combative Colonel Fred Funston of Kansas and General Arthur MacArthur, were repeatedly stymied trying to decisively tamp down the forces of Filipino General Emilio Aguinaldo, who, after enduring the ravages of several months of fighting, decided to move from conventional to "guerrilla" warfare, which "placed a premium on ... familiarity with the local terrain and its population, a war without fronts or fixed positions." Though Aguinaldo was later captured, this network of small guerrilla bands persisted in frustrating American forces through intimidation of US informants, setting booby traps, and staging surprise attacks.

The arrival in Manila of veteran Marine Captain Littleton (Tony) Waller in December of 1899 was both propitious and foreboding for the American campaign. Initially, the Marines did their part in trying to fulfill President McKinley's call for "benevolent assimilation of the Filipinos," and helped them to establish local municipal governments and schools. But just as quickly, Waller and his men were re-deployed to China, where they were to join a multinational (including Japanese, Russian, German, and Welsh troops) expeditionary force in Peking to quell what was being called the "Boxer Rebellion" against foreign occupation. Waller's Marines distinguished themselves in the campaign, but this did nothing to mute the increasingly volatile political atmosphere this prolonged military involvement was causing in Washington.

The election of 1900 was looming, and mounting US casualties and inability to pacify the Filipinos emboldened McKinley's opponents, including the populist candidate for president, William Jennings Bryan. However, the soft-spoken Nebraska lawyer's oratory skill was no match for (now Vice Presidential candidate) Roosevelt's fiery and frequent rants from the campaign stump, and along with Bryan's, the anti-imperialists' opposition soon waned, while McKinley's Republican party sped toward victory in November's elections. This emboldened Roosevelt and his allies, and through the recommendations of a Philippines field commander and Roosevelt correspondent, Major John Henry Parker, Roosevelt advocated for the justification of increasingly severe measures against Filipino soldiers by a more "strict" reading of the US military's guide to rules of war, called General Orders 100. This, in Parker's estimation, "authorized the summary execution of murderers, part-time guerrillas, highway robbers, spies, conspirators and other violent elements." As Parker asserted, the administration's current strategy of civilized warfare was "the fundamental obstruction to complete pacification."

Aside from the graphic depictions of the "water cure," which Captain Edwin Forbes Glenn was beginning to order against Filipino captives, Jones saves his most searing indictment of rogue American military actions for a series of incidents that took place in the fall of 1901. Earlier that September, William McKinley had been assassinated, Theodore Roosevelt had assumed the presidency, and by that time, American frustrations with Filipino intransigence had accelerated occurrences of, for example, the routine burning of entire villages in retaliation for Filipino attacks. Guerrilla activity subsided as a result, but still the Americans couldn't extinguish the conflict.

On September 28th, 1901, a US military contingent in the Samar Island village of Balanciga, Company C, was ambushed, resulting in 48 casualties, and had left the Balancigans a cache of weaponry – "a haul like nothing the lightly armed Samar resistance had ever seen." Roosevelt, fearing the loss of his presidency over this "massacre," ordered that the resistance be "crushed," and this resulted in the appointment of Colonel Jacob Hurd "Hell-roaring Jake" Smith to that effort. A man Jones calls "one of the most colorful scoundrels ever to wear the uniform," Smith dramatically accelerated the more severe punishments the new reading of the military guide sanctioned. This included ordering the killing of any male over 10 years old capable of carrying a weapon. Tony Waller, whose Marines had since returned to the region, was slightly more generous – establishing the age at 12 years.

On December 28, 1901, basking in an earlier victory in the Samar village of Sohoton, Waller received clearance from Smith to take 55 Marines on a trek across the island for establishing a network of US outposts. Enthusiasm led inevitably to disillusionment and concern as Waller's lack of preparation, the arrival of the rainy season, and heavy vegetation slowed the men's pace to a crawl. Starvation and disease would later befall them, and inevitably, the band could proceed no longer as a group. Captain David Dixon Porter and Waller proceeded to split their forces. Waller, fortunate to have been rescued by colleagues, traveled up the Lanang River to an outpost at Basey, and readied relief parties for his fellow Marines.

While in Basey, Waller received a call from Porter saying there were 11 treasonous Filipinos he was bringing up. Porter and fellow officer John Henry Quick had convinced Waller that the men, "bearers" and scouts, had tried to kill their Marines. Waller ordered them shot, without trial or investigation, in Basey's central plaza. News of the killings reached Washington, as well as the media, and led to increased public concern over the conduct of American troops in the Philippines which Roosevelt would finally find unavoidable to address. The Washington Post, for instance, reported that in Luzon, US Brigadier General J. Franklin Smith had forced civilians into resettlement camps. And now, beloved humorist Mark Twain was distinguishing himself as one of Roosevelt's harshest critics while continuing to "crank out pamphlets and books denouncing America's actions in the islands."

The Senate was "goaded" into holding hearings on the alleged abuses, and faced with the daily drip of disclosures of even more extensive abuses having taken place in the islands, Roosevelt and his Secretary of War, Elihu Root, were put on the defensive, struggling to provide counter-evidence that the actions of US soldiers should be seen in a "broader" context against the brutality that American soldiers had to face at the hands of "savages". As Roosevelt put it: "In a fight with savages, where the savages themselves perform deeds of hideous cruelty, a certain proportion of whites are sure to do the same thing." Finally, Secretary Root, who continued to hear reports of cruelty committed by Americans, and on March 4, 1902, Marine commander Tony Waller was court-martialed on charges of murdering Filipino prisoners, and though he would eventually escape conviction, as did Major Edwin Glenn, others such as "Jake" Smith would be convicted – though in Smith's case, even superficial punishment was not forthcoming.

Roosevelt and Root now did an about-face on the issue, no longer able to place blame for the revelations on "the fabrications of anti-imperialist zealots and opportunistic Democrats." General Adna Chaffee, the

administration's point officer in the islands, proceeded to step up his revelations of even more abuses, and was now being ordered to "accelerate punishment of misconduct." General Nelson Miles traveled to the islands to gather additional evidence of military atrocities, which revealed the "water cure" being applied to Catholic priests and other non-combatants, and other actions by the torture's chief practitioners, General Robert Hughes and his deputies Glenn and Lieutenant Arthur L. Conger, Jr. But by the time Miles' report was received and released by Secretary Root, public apathy had given it all the force of a balloon landing on a pillow. Roosevelt was later easily re-elected to a second term, and went on to accomplish the establishment of an extensive national park system, as well as social and other important reforms.

Jones, in his "Epilogue," notes that other historians have given the Philippine campaign and its ramifications little attention, and that this might be understandable given "all [Roosevelt's] great achievements in the six years that followed"; but that Roosevelt himself in his memoirs mentioned the archipelago only nine times in a 600-page book and thus "helped create the void in American memories." The exhaustive amount of original research Jones has done has admirably helped to close that void. "Honor in the Dust" is a work of monumental consequence, and its important historical lessons, though they've been frequently unheeded by subsequent administrations, are in any case most worthy of remembrance.
