

often crossed the historical eras into which she divides the text, to be sacrificed. As a result, *Lowcountry at High Tide* too often reads like a not quite complete administrative history rather than as a sizzling, relevant story of the literal making of land that it could be. The reader, unable to learn enough about any of the many historical actors or events, is too often left puzzled by who they are or why they matter.

Still, although not an easy or lyrical read, Butler's book is important. Embedded within it are many illustrative stories. For example, deeper dives into the Horlbeck Brothers—contractors with extent account books who were repeatedly hired by the City of Charleston for in-fill projects across the peninsula over decades—beg for more attention, as does the Harleston neighborhood and the role it played as the location of federal slum clearance and public housing projects. Also ripe for enhanced discussion is the year 1893, a double-whammy for Charleston with both the national economic panic and a major hurricane that undid years of drainage and reclamation efforts. Learning more about characters such as Andrew Murray, a philanthropist who provided a million dollars to the city of Charleston for parks and infrastructure, would go far in humanizing Butler's important study, as would additional information on the very freighted and timely world of race and class relations which, though repeatedly mentioned, are without serious scholarly investigation here.

An important reference tool for historians of coastal cities and lovers of Charleston, *Lowcountry at High Tide* builds on urban infrastructure history, the kind Martin Melosi has undertaken over the last several decades. Students and other readers of Butler's case study of Charleston will find lots of intellectual and archival breadcrumbs leading to research opportunities into additional topics relevant to contemporary life in the midst of accelerating climate change and global warming. Especially helpful are Butler's three appendices, the first two of which feature key primary source documents and the third which provides a "Timeline of Major Fill-and Drainage-Related Events."

Jessica Elfenbein, University of South Carolina

Doom Towns: The People and Landscapes of Atomic Testing by Andrew G. Kirk, illustrated by Kristian Purcell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. vii + 337 pp.; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; paperback, \$21.95.

Andrew Kirk, author, and Kristian Purcell, illustrator, bring to life in a very real and tangible way an excellent example of the fusion of the field of public history and the medium of graphic history in *Doom Towns: The People and Landscapes of Atomic Testing*. *Doom Towns* has wide appeal, not only for the K-12 and collegiate classroom, but for general audiences interested in atomic and Cold War history as well. Kirk notes that the work was "designed to bring research insights to a broad audience, spark interest in an important subject, and open the door to a world

of research possibilities for those who wish to learn more” (xx). *Doom Towns* grapples with the complex cultural, political, legal, and environmental narratives surrounding atomic testing, all as complicated as the science and technologies themselves. Kirk works to expose “the once-hidden histories of the atomic age” (xix) and the challenges scholars of this history face. A significant feature of Kirk’s work is the agency it offers active and passive participants in this intense moment in history to tell their story. As Kirk writes, many of those who were active participants in this history have passed on without leaving much revealing their roles in the story. In order to ensure “at least some of the participants were able to share their memories and perspectives” a major oral history project was launched at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in the Spring of 2004 (xix). The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project (NTSOP) was initially concerned with the experiences of those in the continental US, but eventually incorporated perspectives “from the Pacific test sites” and subsequently the “people who lived in the Soviet ‘Polygon,’ test site region” in Kazakhstan. Kirk and Purcell’s example of global public history shows the power of collaborative efforts to bring together voices from the academy, nongovernmental and governmental partners, as well as public historians and those who lived the experience.

Doom Towns is one of several graphic histories presented by Oxford University Press, but unlike many others in the series which are often illustrated by Liz Clarke, this piece was illustrated by Kristian Purcell. While Clarke’s work has provided an element of consistency across the series, Purcell brings a personal connection to the topic at hand. As with any good graphic narrative, the visuals contribute significantly to how the story is presented and received. Purcell’s art beyond *Doom Towns* draws from “the extensive DOE historic photo archives” to create a foundation for his visual interpretation of history (xxvii). Still, even though the artistic style may be different, like others in the OUP Graphic Histories *Doom Towns* is a serious work not easily dismissed because of its graphic novel-like qualities. The substantial work is broken into four main components: the graphic history (what one may refer to as a “comic” component), the primary documents, the historical context, and the questions. Kirk’s research is rich and detailed, with a global lilt. Offering a comprehensive narrative, Kirk’s written work and Purcell’s illustrations explore the significant moments of atomic history between 1945 and 1963, when the Limited Test Ban Treaty was signed. Even with this otherwise concrete frame, Kirk and Purcell are cognizant of the events after 1963 and their impact on the telling of this story. Particularly revealing is the focus on the 1990s and how atomic history emerged as part of mainstream discourse. Chapter 9 of the graphic history is particularly useful in exploring this historical moment as the book’s creators integrate the historians’ craft, the artists’ insights, and the lived experience of not only those who helped bring about nuclear weaponry but those whose lives were irrevocably changed by those weapons’ existence.

One of the most significant takeaways from *Doom Towns* is its examination of the lives of those who had atomic change foisted upon them. Much work has been

done on the Japanese experience after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but fewer works have covered the impact on populations living around “uninhabited” regions used for above ground tests. Purcell succinctly touches on this history on page 82. One panel discusses, in a narrator’s disembodied voice, the news that British scientists had successfully carried out tests “on their uninhabited Woomera test range in the Australian outback.” The visual Purcell offers belies the uninhabited nature of the region. A dark-skinned man, likely meant to depict an Aboriginal man, stands looking up into the sky. The nature of “habitation” and “uninhabitation” is a theme explored throughout *Doom Towns*.

Kirk, too, is sensitive to the issues historians face in framing their narratives in set periods of time. He notes that problems which arose from the Smithsonian Institution’s controversial decision to curate a story of atomic history around the *Enola Gay* began when the narrative was framed as one starting in the war and ending with the effects on Japanese targets. Kirk points out that while creating a clear framework around a historical narrative is essential it must be carefully considered not only for what it includes, but what it excludes as well. His exploration of how a historian seeks to define the parameters of their book is a subtle, but altogether essential element in any piece of historical interpretation.

It is not surprising to see an atomic history as one with a largely US-centric perspective, but Kirk traces important elements of this history all over the world. Although the historical context section of the book returns us to a fairly bipolar reading of Cold War history, the inclusion of parties beyond the epicenters of political power in Washington and Moscow is significant. If anything jumps out in the work, beyond the scientific and medical history, it is the asymmetries of power presented by atomic history. Powerful politicians and scientists in the US and USSR were able to fabricate and control the most destructive weapons ever known to man, but the vast majority of those who suffered the consequences of these weapons and their development were civilians, and in most cases some of the world’s most disenfranchised civilians: the Japanese, Native Americans, Kazaks, and inhabitants of Bikini Atoll.

Maryanne A. Rhett, Monmouth University

Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era
by Alison Rose Jefferson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. xi+315
pp; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; clothbound, \$55.00; eBook, \$55.00.

Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites during the Jim Crow Era recaptures a previously overlooked history of African American pioneers in leisure during the early twentieth century leading up to World War II. Historian Alison Jefferson was inspired by her own experiences as a third generation Afro Angeleno and by familial connections to such leisure sites, and in this work she incorporates oral histories and private collections to explore a topic that is often