10-1-2009

This Republic of Suffering by Drew Gilpin Faust, Knopf (Vintage, reprint edition 2009)

Susan Sutherlin
Butler University, ssutherl@butler.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews/33

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in LAS Faculty Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact omacisaas@butler.edu.
Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings

This Republic of Suffering

by Drew Gilpin Faust, Knopf (Vintage, reprint edition 2009)

Reviewed by Susan Sutherlin

With an historian's curiosity and a humanist's sensibility, author Drew Gilpin Faust, the current President of Harvard University, meticulously examines the cultural and social impact of mass death on the American consciousness in the aftermath of the Civil War in his book, This Republic of Suffering. From the sheer magnitude of identifying the dead and ministering to the wounded, to burying the dead and informing the family, the Battle of Antietam still imparts a stinging reminder of the single bloodiest day in American history, September 17, 1862, which left twenty-three thousand dead or wounded along with thousands of horses and mules lying in the same fields. Where battles were enormous, hospitals sometimes even more dangerous, and mourning a national undertaking, the poignancy of some of the smallest acts, soldiers pinning their names to their uniforms before going into battle certain they would die, a letter written on the only paper available with an urgency and earnestness to convey that it had been a 'good death,' the power of consolation as a parent dresses the body of a son on the field-is magnified and emblematic of what national character could possibly mean.

- Susan Sutherlin is an instructor of English at Butler University.