

Chairman Mao's Children

In the 1960s and 1970s, around 17 million Chinese youths were mobilized or forced by the state to migrate to rural villages and China's frontiers. Bin Xu tells the story of how this "sent-down" generation have come to terms with their difficult past. Exploring representations of memory including personal life stories, literature, museum exhibits, and acts of commemoration, he argues that these representations are defined by a struggle to reconcile worthiness with the political upheavals of the Mao years. These memories, however, are used by the state to construct an official narrative that weaves this generation's experiences into an upbeat story of the "China dream." This marginalizes those still suffering and obscures voices of self-reflection on their moral-political responsibility for their actions. Xu provides careful analysis of this generation of "Chairman Mao's children," caught between the political and the personal, past and present, nostalgia and regret, and pride and trauma.

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Generation and the Politics of Memory in China

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For my mother, Zhang Siwei, a former zhiqing who
went down to Subei.

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