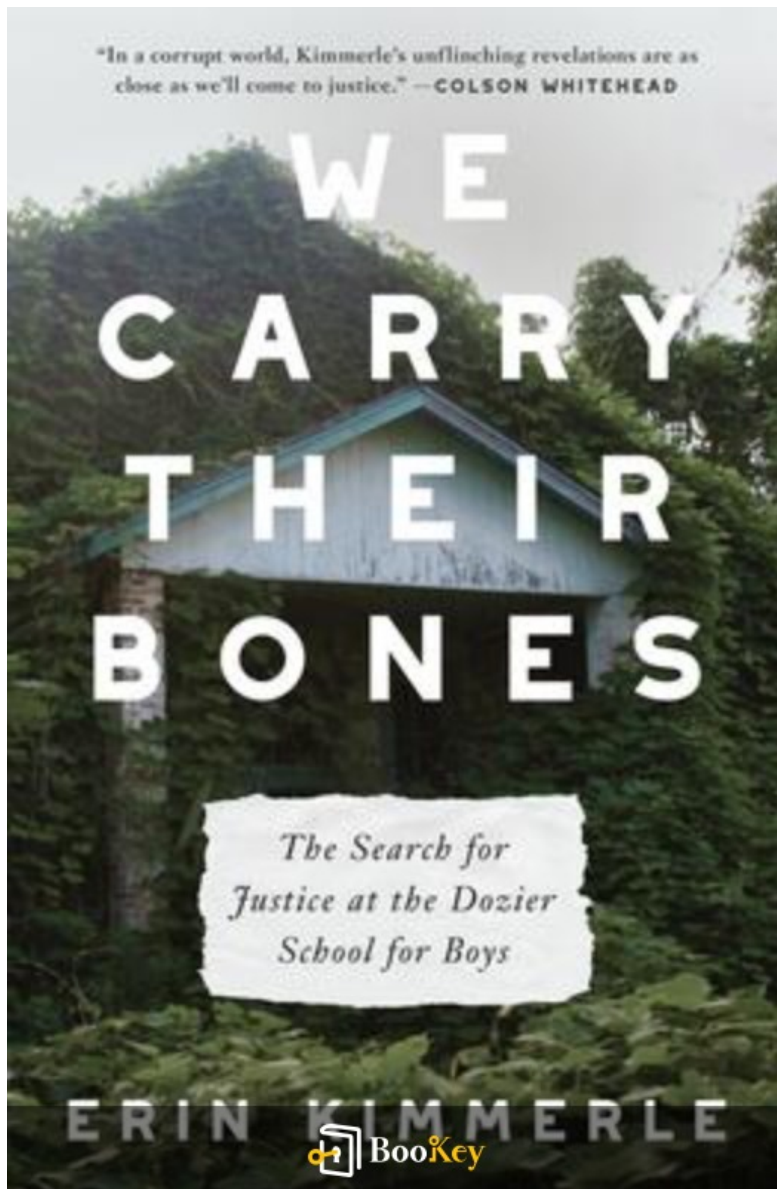


# We Carry Their Bones PDF

Erin Kimmerle



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# About the book

## ### Overview

Title: We Carry Their Bones

Author: Erin Kimmerle

Genre: Non-Fiction, Memoir

## ### Summary

In her compelling work, "We Carry Their Bones," forensic anthropologist Erin Kimmerle delves into the harrowing history of the Dozier School for Boys, a notorious reform institution in Florida marked by tragedy.

Kimmerle's exploration merges rigorous scientific examination with emotionally resonant storytelling, revealing a painful legacy filled with abuse and disregard for countless young lives.

## ### Key Themes

- **Uncovering Truths:** Kimmerle meticulously uncovers the buried realities of the school's past, shining a light on the systemic violence and neglect faced by its residents.
- **Honoring Lives:** Through her research, she pays homage to those whose stories were silenced, giving them a voice and recognition they were denied during their lives.
- **Justice and Remembrance:** The narrative pushes for accountability for the victims, urging society to acknowledge and address the injustices in history.

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- Reflection on Systemic Corruption: Kimmerle's tale serves as a powerful reminder of the profound impact of institutional failures and the necessity of confronting uncomfortable truths.

### ### Emotional Impact

Readers can expect to be both haunted and deeply moved by Kimmerle's poignant narrative, which emphasizes the significance of truth and memory in the quest for justice.

### ### Conclusion

"We Carry Their Bones" is not just an investigation into a grim chapter of history; it's a vital call to reflect on the past and advocate for those who have been lost to it.

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# About the author

Profile: Erin Kimmerle

Title: Forensic Anthropologist

Affiliation: University of South Florida

Role: Director, Florida Institute for Forensic Anthropology and Applied Science

Erin Kimmerle is a highly regarded forensic anthropologist known for her significant contributions to the field of human identification and her dedication to addressing historical injustices. At the University of South Florida, she leads the Florida Institute for Forensic Anthropology and Applied Science, where she focuses on the careful excavation and analysis of human remains. This critical work aims to resolve cases involving missing persons and unidentified individuals.

Kimmerle's commitment extends beyond academic pursuits; she embodies a strong humanitarian spirit and a passion for human rights. Her investigations have tackled some of the most riveting and contentious cases, providing closure for grieving families and shedding light on overlooked histories.

In her book, "We Carry Their Bones," Kimmerle not only demonstrates her scientific expertise but also reflects her deep compassion for the narratives

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tied to the remains she studies, making her a pivotal figure in forensic anthropology today.

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# **We Carry Their Bones Summary**

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# We Carry Their Bones Summary Chapter List

1. Chapter 1: The Search Begins for the Lost and Forgotten Remains of Our Past
2. Chapter 2: Uncovering the Truth Behind Historical Silences and Buried Secrets
3. Chapter 3: The Stories of the Discovered Remains: Connecting Past to Present
4. Chapter 4: The Struggle for Justice and Reclamation of Voices Once Silenced
5. Chapter 5: Reflecting on Legacy: Honoring Those We Lost and Lessons Learned

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# 1. Chapter 1: The Search Begins for the Lost and Forgotten Remains of Our Past

In the opening chapter of "We Carry Their Bones," Erin Kimmerle introduces readers to the poignant and often painful journey of uncovering the lost and forgotten remains of marginalized communities. The chapter sets the stage for a story that weaves history with personal narrative, emphasizing the importance of recognizing those who remain silenced by the passage of time and the complexities of societal neglect.

Kimmerle describes the deep-seated challenges faced by archaeologists and historians as they strive to locate burial sites of those long forgotten. These sites often hold mysteries that speak to broader historical injustices, such as those experienced by Indigenous peoples, enslaved individuals, and the impoverished. As Kimmerle puts it, the search is not merely about recovering bones; it is about finding humanity, reclaiming identity, and connecting present-day individuals with their historical lineage.

The author recounts specific case studies that underscore the significance of this endeavor. One poignant example is the search for burial sites associated with the victims of Florida's notorious "doctors' gold rush" in the 1900s, where Black communities experienced clandestine grave robbing for medical experimentation and education. Through rigorous research and ground-penetrating radar technology, Kimmerle and her team actively seek



these lost graves, demonstrating how each discovery can reshape modern understanding of race, class, and medical ethics in America.

As Kimmerle progresses through her exploration, she touches on the vital role modern technology plays in these investigations. The use of forensic science assists in the meticulous process of identifying remains, allowing contemporary society the opportunity to grant dignity to the forgotten. For instance, DNA analysis not only helps establish identities but also connects descendants with their ancestors, creating an emotional bridge across generations. This scientific approach complements the ethical considerations of excavation, prompting discussions on how to handle remains respectfully and in accordance with cultural values.

The chapter delves into the emotional aspects of this work; it is both a solemn responsibility and a profound privilege to seek out and honor these lost lives. Kimmerle shares her feelings of awe and sorrow as she stands over grave sites, reminding the reader that behind every bone lies a story waiting to be told. The search for these forgotten remains also engages the community, fostering dialogue about the past and its echo in the present. With each excavation, the personal becomes political, as embedded societal issues such as systemic racism and historical erasure come to the forefront.

In concluding this chapter, Kimmerle emphasizes that the search for lost

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remains is just the beginning, a necessary first step in a much larger narrative about justice and recognition. She evokes a sense of urgency to address these historical silences, underlining her belief that every uncovered bone not only asserts the existence of the individual but also stresses the need for collective memory in shaping a more inclusive future. Ultimately, Kimmerle's opening chapter sets the foundation for an exploration that is deeply intertwined with questions of identity, legacy, and the relentless pursuit of truth.

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## 2. Chapter 2: Uncovering the Truth Behind Historical Silences and Buried Secrets

In Chapter 2 of "We Carry Their Bones," Erin Kimmerle delves into the profound implications of historical silences and the buried secrets that often accompany them. The examination highlights how certain narratives have been systematically erased from history, particularly those regarding marginalized communities, including Indigenous peoples, African Americans, and other groups who suffered under the weight of colonialism, racism, and injustice.

Kimmerle sheds light on the importance of uncovering these truths, arguing that silence surrounding such histories not only distorts our understanding of the past but also perpetuates ongoing cycles of trauma and erasure. This chapter serves as a critical reminder that what remains unseen beneath the surface can significantly shape collective memory and individual identity.

The chapter begins by exploring the concept of historical silence as a phenomenon that operates both on personal and societal levels. Historical silence can manifest in various forms, from unmarked graves and forgotten cemeteries to the absence of narratives in textbooks and public discourse. Kimmerle emphasizes that uncovering these buried truths is essential for both honoring those who have been silenced and for informing current societal dynamics.



One poignant example Kimmerle illustrates involves the historical treatment of African American communities in the United States, particularly post-Civil War. The systematic burial of their histories through a lack of documentation, coupled with the physical removal of their bodily remains from their communities, serves as a powerful testament to the racism embedded in historical narratives. Kimmerle connects these findings with the ongoing efforts of various organizations and communities to reclaim archival materials and explore the historical sites of forgotten cemeteries where African Americans were interred. The excavation of these sites reveals stories that demand recognition, not just of the individuals buried there but also of the societal structures that perpetuated their invisibility.

Kimmerle also touches upon several case studies from her own work in forensic anthropology. During her investigations, she often encountered sites where the remains of individuals had been concealed or neglected due to racial prejudices and community neglect. For instance, in her efforts to locate graves for those who were marginalized, the link between historical silence and physical location became evident. Each discovery unearthed narratives of suffering, resilience, and ultimately, a yearning for justice. These excavations serve as tangible connections to the past, allowing communities to confront their histories head-on rather than allowing them to remain buried and forgotten.

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Furthermore, the chapter addresses the emotional and psychological impact of these historical absences. Kimmerle discusses how descendants of those who were silenced often experience a void in their familial and cultural narratives. The inability to connect with one's past can lead to a fractured sense of identity. Kimmerle provides the example of Indigenous populations in North America, who have long battled against the erasure of their histories through colonization. Efforts to reclaim burial sites and honor the ancestral remains found therein bridge gaps in these narratives, providing families and communities with a renewed sense of connection to their heritage.

Kimmerle culminates the chapter by affirming the ethical obligations that come with uncovering these truths. She argues for a collective responsibility to engage with the difficult aspects of our shared histories, to challenge the narratives that have been woven around silence, and to advocate for the acknowledgment of the individuals whose lives, and deaths, have been relegated to obscurity. Uncovering the truth, she argues, is not merely an academic endeavor; it is a moral imperative that fosters understanding, healing, and eventually, justice.

In essence, Chapter 2 of "We Carry Their Bones" not only articulates the significant gaps left by historical silences but also serves as a rallying cry for

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awareness and activism. It stresses that it is only through acknowledged histories—those revealed from beneath the soil—that society can grasp the full narrative of humanity's past, ensuring that no voice is left unheard and no story remains untold.

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### 3. Chapter 3: The Stories of the Discovered Remains: Connecting Past to Present

In this chapter, Erin Kimmerle delves into the narratives that emerge from human remains unearthed in various archaeological contexts, emphasizing the importance of connecting these remnants of the past to contemporary society. The recovered bones, once mere artifacts hidden beneath layers of earth, transform into poignant testimonies that reflect the lives, struggles, and identities of those who lived long ago.

Kimmerle illustrates that every set of remains tells a story, often intertwined with the history of a community and the broader socio-political landscape of its time. For instance, the discovery of bones in a forgotten graveyard can unveil the harsh realities faced by marginalized groups, shedding light on the injustices they suffered and the cultural practices that defined their existence.

One compelling case highlighted is that of a group of remains found in a region that was once a thriving community. Through meticulous forensic analysis and historical research, Kimmerle and her team are able to piece together the identities of these individuals. This not only reestablishes their presence but also revives the stories of their cultural heritage. The investigation into the origins of these bones reveals shifts in population due to colonization and migration, offering insights into the impact of external forces on local communities.



Moreover, the chapter discusses the ethical implications of excavating human remains. Kimmerle emphasizes the need for sensitivity and respect in the process of analysis and presentation of findings. Each discovery must be contextualized within the framework of consent from descendants and the ongoing conversation about cultural heritage. This connection to the present is vital; contemporary communities often seek to reclaim narratives that have long been silenced or erased.

Kimmerle shares stories of descendants of the discovered remains who often feel a deep spiritual connection to their ancestors. They express a profound desire to understand their lineage and the circumstances surrounding their ancestors' lives. These investigations lead to powerful gatherings and memorials, bridging the gap between past and present and fortifying communal ties. One poignant example is the reunion of descendants with a historical site where their forebears were buried. Such events often serve as acts of reclamation, enabling families to pay homage to their ancestors and assert their place in history.

The chapter also addresses how advancements in forensic science have enhanced our understanding of the past. Modern techniques, such as DNA analysis, allow researchers to trace familial connections and migration patterns that were once lost to history. Kimmerle recalls cases where



scientific findings have confirmed oral histories, validating the narratives held by communities for generations and fostering pride in cultural identity.

Kimmerle poignantly asserts that the stories of these discovered remains extend beyond academic interest; they resonate with the collective human experience. By connecting the past to the present, we not only honor those who came before us but also nurture a more inclusive understanding of history that acknowledges the complexities of identity, struggle, and resilience. Each discovery acts as a reminder of the impermanence of life and the enduring legacy of those who have shaped the world we inhabit today. Through storytelling, the echoes of the past reverberate into the present, reminding us of our shared humanity and the importance of remembrance.

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## 4. Chapter 4: The Struggle for Justice and Reclamation of Voices Once Silenced

In "We Carry Their Bones," Erin Kimmerle delves into the intricate web of history that surrounds the search for justice and the reclamation of silenced voices, predominantly those of marginalized communities. Chapter 4 emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the past to rectify historical wrongs and ensure that victims are remembered and honored.

The chapter begins by illustrating how society has often marginalized certain groups, particularly Indigenous populations and people of color, whose narratives have been suppressed or omitted from mainstream history. Kimmerle argues that to truly pursue justice, we must first confront these narratives and recognize the humanity of those who suffered. This struggle is not only about uncovering bodies or artifacts but about the broader implications of who is allowed to tell their own story.

Kimmerle provides compelling examples of how the retrieval of remains from burial sites has served as a critical step towards justice. One poignant case highlighted is that of the burial sites of African American victims of racial violence, which have often been neglected or desecrated over the years. The recovery of these sites, and the dedicated efforts to identify and honor the individuals buried there, represent a powerful reclamation of history. In many instances, local communities have rallied together,

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demanding recognition of the lives lost to systemic racism. For instance, projects like the excavation of burial grounds in various Southern U.S. cities have drawn attention to the historical injustices faced by enslaved individuals and their descendants, pushing local governments to acknowledge and act on this painful history.

Moreover, the book discusses how the ongoing struggle for justice can manifest in contemporary movements, echoing calls for accountability and recognition. Activist groups and descendants of historical victims have been at the forefront, pushing for legal and ethical restitution. Kimmerle notes the significance of movements such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, which sought to address the atrocities of apartheid by allowing victims to share their stories publicly. This model serves as an inspiring framework for other nations and communities grappling with haunting legacies.

Kimmerle emphasizes the emotional weight surrounding these efforts. The excavation of forgotten burial sites often forces communities to confront painful truths about their past, igniting fervent debates about justice and restitution. In some cases, these excavations have led to healing and closure for descendants who can finally lay to rest their ancestors' remains with dignity. The act of repatriating remains to their communities of origin is seen not just as a restorative measure but as an acknowledgment of their

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intrinsic worth and humanity.

The chapter also addresses the intersection of history, memory, and power. It challenges readers to consider who holds authority over narratives and the vital role that storytelling plays in achieving justice. Kimmerle argues that reclaiming voices once silenced is integral to dismantling systematic inequities. This is particularly evident in the testimonies of those affected by historical injustices, as their stories serve to humanize the often abstract concepts of justice and reparation.

In a society that has often turned a blind eye to the suffering of the marginalized, Kimmerle reminds us that the path to justice is fraught with challenges, yet it is essential for collective healing. The chapter concludes with a call to action, urging individuals to engage with these histories critically and compassionately, reminding them that the struggle for justice is ongoing and requires collective commitment to ensuring that the voices of those lost to history are finally heard. Through this reclamation effort, a more truthful and inclusive narrative can be constructed, fostering understanding and empathy across communities.

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## 5. Chapter 5: Reflecting on Legacy: Honoring Those We Lost and Lessons Learned

In "We Carry Their Bones," Erin Kimmerle delves into the profound responsibility that accompanies uncovering lost histories and forgotten remains. Chapter 5, "Reflecting on Legacy: Honoring Those We Lost and Lessons Learned," serves as a poignant meditation on the implications of their discoveries and the importance of memory in shaping both individual and collective identities.

At its core, this chapter emphasizes that the act of uncovering truths about our past is not merely about the retrieval of bones or artifacts; rather, it is a deeply human endeavor that seeks to acknowledge and honor those who have been marginalized, forgotten, or silenced. Kimmerle argues that every discovered remain tells a story—one that often speaks volumes about the struggles, triumphs, and humanity of those who came before us. As she navigates this intricate landscape, she invites readers to consider how we commemorate our collective legacies.

One of the key themes in this chapter is the acknowledgment of loss. Kimmerle illustrates how examining remains from historical contexts—often marked by violence, oppression, or tragic circumstances—invites a broader conversation about societal values and the importance of remembrance. She reflects on how, through the act of



excavation, not only are physical remains unearthed, but also the narratives that accompany them are brought back into public consciousness. This engagement serves as a powerful reminder that acknowledging the past is essential in understanding the present and shaping a more equitable future.

Kimmerle shares instances from her work, such as the identification of remains from unmarked graves of marginalized communities. Each case epitomizes the struggle for recognition and the need to honor the stories of individuals who lived and died under conditions of oppression. Through careful research and forensic study, families can reclaim names and identities that historical narratives have sought to erase. Thus, the chapter underscores the significance of legacy as not merely a collection of stories, but as a living testament to resilience and survival amidst adversity.

The chapter also delves into the lessons learned from these discoveries, emphasizing the notion of stewardship over heritage. Kimmerle argues that there is a moral imperative not only to recover the past but also to advocate for the continued protection of grave sites and historical memory. This aspect of her work reflects a commitment to ensuring that future generations inherit a landscape rooted in honesty and respect for those who have come before. As communities engage with their history, they develop a deeper understanding of identity—a critical component for fostering societal healing in locations still grappling with the repercussions of their pasts.



Moreover, Kimmerle discusses the importance of community involvement in the process of honoring the dead. She highlights the collaborative efforts between historians, archaeologists, descendants, and local communities that seek to create memorials and commemorative events that serve both educational and reconciliatory purposes. This initiative positions the act of remembering not as an isolated endeavor but as a collective responsibility that requires emotional investment from all layers of society.

To illustrate these concepts, Kimmerle draws comparisons to other movements across the globe, where communities have rallied to honor their loss and educate others about their histories. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa is cited as a pivotal example of how the acknowledgment of past injustices can foster healing and reconciliation. Through public testimonies and memorials, the pain of the past is shared openly, allowing communities to confront historical narratives that have shaped their current realities.

In conclusion, Chapter 5 of "We Carry Their Bones" serves as a powerful reflection on the legacies we inherit and our responsibilities in honoring them. Kimmerle encourages readers to participate in the vital work of remembering and recognizing those who have been lost to history. By doing so, she proposes that not only do we allow the memories of the deceased to



persist, but we also gain invaluable lessons that inform our present and guide our future. Through acknowledgment, community engagement, and stewardship, we are invited to carry forward the stories of those who no longer have a voice, ensuring they are woven into the fabric of our shared humanity.

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