January 21, 2002

Paul Bloom
Philippine Study Group of Minnesota
1515 Hythe
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

Dear Paul:

Minnesota's plaque about the United States's conquest of the Philippines got it all wrong. But at least, as I argue in *Lies Across America*, the war got onto the landscape in St. Paul. Just about everywhere else, this war, not Korea, is "America's forgotten war." Recently I visited Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, one of the key staging grounds for the war and also a hospital for American casualties. Now a state historic site, Angel Island does a fine job telling of the difficult times experienced there by Chinese immigrants to the United States—but it still mostly omits our war against the Philippines.

Minnesota's new corrective plaque does much better. It is still not perfect: The war did not simply "erupt" on Feb. 4, 1899. At 9PM, U.S. soldiers opened fire on our Filipino allies, killing three, as plaque on the site in Luzon tells accurately. We then used this incident as a pretext to launch a full-scale assault on Filipino troops in the Manila suburbs. And United States victory did not come until July 4, 1902 (by proclamation of Pres. Theodore Roosevelt) or 1906 (according to some historians) or 1913 (according to historian John Collins) or even 1916.

Nevertheless, the country is in your debt. Your new plaque does the best job I know of, anywhere in America, of telling the truth about this unfortunate undertaking. Hopefully generations of school children will be inspired to learn more about the Philippine War.

Even more important, all visitors will be prompted to realize that history is a process of ongoing correction, illustrated here before their very eyes. We must not believe uncritically what we read, whether in bronze on a wall or in ink on a textbook page. Again, across America there are only a few corrections on the landscape. This plaque adds the Minnesota State Capitol to this exclusive list. Congratulations to the small band of Minnesotans who worked many months to achieve this outcome

Sincerely,

James W. Loewen