

What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland

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During the past 150 years, the majority of Minnesotans have not acknowledged the immense and ongoing harms suffered by the Dakota People ever since their homelands were invaded over 200 years ago. Many Dakota people say that the wounds incurred have never healed, and it is clear that the injustices: genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass executions, death marches, broken treaties, and land theft; have not been made right. The Dakota People paid and continue to pay the ultimate price for Minnesota's statehood.

This book explores how we can embark on a path of transformation on the way to respectful coexistence with those whose ancestral homeland this is. Doing justice is central to this process. Without justice, many Dakota say, healing and transformation on both sides cannot occur, and good, authentic relations cannot develop between our Peoples.

Written by Wahpetunwan Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin of Pezihutazizi Otunwe, *What Does Justice Look Like?* offers an opportunity now and for future generations to learn the long-untold history and what it has meant for the Dakota People. On that basis, the book offers the further opportunity to explore what we can do between us as Peoples to reverse the patterns of genocide and oppression, and instead to do justice with a depth of good faith, commitment, and action that would be genuinely new for Native and non-Native relations.

Waziyatawin is a Wahpetunwan Dakota from the Pezihutazizi Otunwe (Yellow Medicine Village) in southwestern Minnesota. She received her Ph.D. in American history from Cornell University in 2000 and spent seven years teaching in the history department at Arizona State University. After earning tenure and an associate professorship at ASU, she left the academy in 2007 to work as an independent scholar. Waziyatawin is the author of *Remember This!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005) and co-editor of *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (University of Nebraska Press, 2004) and *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (School of America Research Press, 2005). Her most recent volume, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2006), is an edited collection that tells the stories, both in words and pictures, of the Dakota Death Marches of 1862 and the commemorative walks that have been held in recent years to honor the memory of those Dakota people who endured the 1862 forced removals. That volume was the recipient of the 2007 Independent Publisher's Silver Book Award for Adult Multicultural Non-fiction. She is founder and director of *Oyate Nipi Kte*, a non-profit dedicated to the recovery of Dakota traditional knowledge, sustainable ways of being, and Dakota liberation. Waziyatawin is living, working and writing on her home reservation with her husband and three children. This is important text not only because it asks the right questions, but because it suggests that actions are as inevitable as scholarship. We must act, says this native historian, in the context of today's possibilities. In answer to the central question it poses, what is required?, there is no doubt that the overturning of racist and ineffectual systems and institutions is mandatory. In addition, in order to get public support for what is required, Waziyatawin was one of the leaders of the first Dakota Commemorative March in 2002, which means that she believes in action as well as scholarship. This commemorative March asks that the struggle for liberation in the Dakota homeland be joined by all who believe in human rights and justice. And this text asks that a de-colonized Dakota Nation take its place in the world with its own fabulous

and flawed history told by its own people. --Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Dakota/Sissetowan, enrolled member: Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. eminent scholar and writer.

Waziyatawin . . . offers a hard-hitting analysis of Dakota-White relations and challenges us to reject the benign narratives that have dominated writings on Minnesota history. The book moves beyond recounting the state's tragic past to offering what needs to be done to put things right today. --Amy Lonetree, Ho-Chunk, assistant professor of American Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz

This book is an invitation to deep truth-telling as a first step toward healing the legacy of genocide suffered by the Dakota people. . . . [It] is essential reading for all Americans who love their country enough to remember and repair the harm caused by its misdeeds. --Howard Vogel, Professor of restorative justice, Hamline Law School, St. Paul, MN.

Other Books

The Human in a Dehumanizing World,

7Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like : The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (Saint Paul, MN: Living Justice, 2008). 8Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, ..."