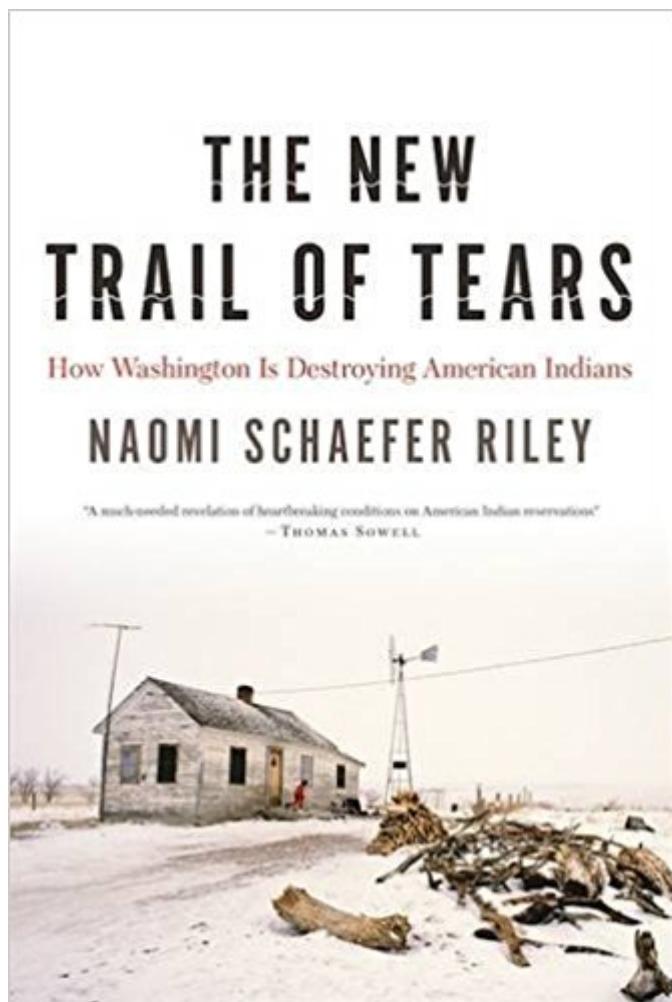


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The New Trail Of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians



Synopsis

If you want to know why American Indians have the highest rates of poverty of any racial group, why suicide is the leading cause of death among Indian men, why native women are two and a half times more likely to be raped than the national average and why gang violence affects American Indian youth more than any other group, do not look to history. There is no doubt that white settlers devastated Indian communities in the 19th, and early 20th centuries. But it is our policies today—denying Indians ownership of their land, refusing them access to the free market and failing to provide the police and legal protections due to them as American citizens—that have turned reservations into small third-world countries in the middle of the richest and freest nation on earth. The tragedy of our Indian policies demands reexamination immediately—not only because they make the lives of millions of American citizens harder and more dangerous—but also because they represent a microcosm of everything that has gone wrong with modern liberalism. They are the result of decades of politicians and bureaucrats showering a victimized people with money and cultural sensitivity instead of what they truly need—the education, the legal protections and the autonomy to improve their own situation. If we are really ready to have a conversation about American Indians, it is time to stop bickering about the names of football teams and institute real reforms that will bring to an end this ongoing national shame.

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Customer Reviews

It used to be that most people's knowledge of Indians consisted of the Little Big Horn and nothing

since; nowadays it consists of the Little Big Horn, the Trail of Tears, and nothing since. People really ought to read this book. I have lived most of my life near several Indian reservations and have worked as a lawyer in Indian courts. This book's description of reservations and reservation life is accurate. (In fact, it seems to understate or skirt certain issues, perhaps because they might be seen as criticisms of Indians themselves.) I wish, though, that Riley had given more attention to the problems of Indian courts. The principal barriers to Indian economic development include not only the regulatory policies she analyzes but also the fact that on many reservations non-Indians cannot expect impartial resolution of legal disputes. (One Indian judge I encountered was a very old lady, appointed judge because she was related to the winners of the most recent tribal election, who had no training in law or in anything else and who could barely speak English. The tribe saw nothing wrong with this, though it did try to keep secret the fact that she could not read.) Typical of books by journalists, stylistically the book is more like an extended newspaper or magazine article. But it is a nicely-written article.

In 1830, Congress passed, and President Andrew Jackson signed, the Indian Removal Act. Over the next several years, Andrew Jackson forcibly removed the Cherokee and other nations from the southeastern United States to lands further west. To this day the Indians (or Beringians as some call themselves) call this removal the Trail of Tears. (The Cherokee remember this with bitter irony. After all, Cherokees saved Andrew Jackson's life and command at Horseshoe Bend during the War of 1812.) Today, Naomi Schaefer Riley tells us, the federal government wrongs the Indians further. Her latest book, *The New Trail of Tears*, does not speak of removals. But it speaks of an almost deliberate ploy to keep the Indian low. Yet not only should the Indian take warning from this book. Ms. Riley sounds a warning for any social group whom politicians tempt with "free stuff." Her warning: don't take it. Three lanes in the new Trail of Tears How does the federal government keep the Indian down? Ms. Riley describes three "lanes" in the new Trail of Tears. Lack of private property First, Washington colludes with shortsighted Tribal Councils to run a stultifying economy on the reservations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs speaks often about "native rights." But they describe tribal rights. No one on the reservation may hold land "in fee simple," that is, with private title. Instead, the government holds it in trust for the whole tribe. Any student of American history should know how private property founds a thriving economy. After all, Governor William Bradford of the original Plymouth colony used private property to save his colony. One winter of communal living killed half the colonists. When Bradford gave the survivors private property, they thrived. The BIA never learned that lesson. But they also

distort history. As Riley shows, Indians did respect private property. The original nations did not lead strictly nomadic lives. Of course, many leftists insist the Indians understood one could not buy or sell land as a commodity. They either don't understand how the Indians really led their lives, or they flat-out lie. They would substitute their ideals of communal living for real history. Lack of education Along the second lane, Indians on reservations today do not get good educations. Blame the first whites who promised education for some of this. They wanted, not to educate, but to indoctrinate. The first Indian schools forbade students to speak their original languages or learn about their own history. And modern Indians remember that travesty of education. Today, when some want to offer them a real education, all too many Indians don't trust them. They especially don't trust people from outside. The Indians have more trouble than this. Teachers often accept wrong answers as correct. Maybe they think they are doing the children a favor, by not hurting their feelings. But they do their pupils no good by offering those kinds of favors. No respect for individual rights Along the third, most dangerous, lane, neither government nor Tribal Council respects the rights of individuals. Everyone hears of resentment against the owners of sports teams with Indian mascots: Braves, Redskins, Seminoles, Chiefs, and so on. But what concern do they show for a single person after a criminal act against that person. Usually that concern depends entirely on the race of the one doing the deed. So an Indian can get away with rape or even murder against a fellow Indian. What can one call this, but a travesty of justice? Indians are Americans, too! Riley ends *The New Trail of Tears* with a ringing call: recognize Indians as fellow Americans! Let them have private property, let them get good education. Most of all, enforce the law the same for everyone, on or off the reservation. In fact she ends as she began: stop throwing money at the problem and those who suffer from it. The government throws money enough at the Indians. But today more of them know they don't need that. They need the same rights to dignity, and chances to thrive, their fellow Americans have. That, more than money or even territory, will serve them properly.

Naomi Schaefer Riley's latest book, *The New Trail of Tears*, looks at why American Indians have the highest rate of poverty, why suicide is the leading cause of death among American Indian males and why American Indian women are two and half times more likely to be raped than the national average. The statistics the author presents in the opening pages will surprise and shock readers. There are three million Indians today with one million living on reservations. Indians have the highest rate of poverty of any racial group in the nation, twice the national average. Poverty rates contribute to higher rates of crime, higher rates of suicide, alcoholism, gang membership and

sexual abuse. The author explores today's modern policies toward Native Americans and what's lacking and why those policies seem to harm versus help this population. The main message of her book, "it is time to stop bickering about the names of football teams and institute real reforms that will bring an end to this ongoing national shame." The author has traveled to Indian communities around the United States and Canada. She's interviewed tribal leaders, economists, educators, business people and government officials. She found that Indians living on reservations often feel they are the highest regulated race in the world. She looks at everything including the educational systems, land ownership, the casinos, the dependency on the federal government, colleges and much more. One of the surprising facts I found in this eye-opening book is the amount of government regulation Native Americans endure such as the limitations of the types of businesses they are allowed to open and run. This is a no-nonsense book about what is happening to Native Americans. There are so many Americans that have some part of their ancestry linked to the American Indian. My own grandmother was a full Cherokee living in the hills of Kentucky. She married an English which made my mother part Cherokee. This is an important book that looks at an important population that has been part of America since before its official founding. It's shameful that this population is treated as a forgotten race.

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