

# THE NEW TRAIL OF TEARS

How Washington Is Destroying American Indians

NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

"A much-needed revelation of heartbreaking conditions on American Indian reservations"  
—THOMAS SOWELL



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*Naomi Schaefer Riley*

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*Naomi Schaefer Riley*

**The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians** Naomi Schaefer Riley  
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.

## **The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians Details**

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## **From Reader Review The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians for online ebook**

### **cbalexander says**

#### **Very interesting**

Intriguing portrayal of what it really means to be an American Indian today - brutally honest, but with potential remedies offered.

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### **Nicholas Galiardo says**

This book was difficult to get going for some reason but I'm glad I finished it. The author does a good job of getting to the root of the systemic and perennial issues impacting native nations and how much of it can be traced back to well intentioned, yet harmful government involvement. But instead of merely focusing on the problems, she also examines what strategies have proven successful. The book is dense with empirical case studies and will definitely warrant additional future rereads. A worth while read.

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### **andrea says**

Sad and enlightening, wish the author would have listed some ways to help.

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### **Mariam says**

If you want to find out how Indians are suffering and how the free market is going to save them, then this is the book for you

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### **Darci says**

WOW, she did an amazing amount of research. She presents some good suggestions, but all in all this is a very sad story.

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### **Margo Kelly says**

I am not Native American, but I am interested in all cultures and I jumped at the opportunity to read this book by Naomi Schaefer Riley. She stated in the acknowledgments, "When people ask me how I came to write a book about American Indians, I can only say anger. For years, I had read about the poverty, suicide, abuse, and alcohol and drug problems on reservations with deep sense of sadness" (page 187).

THE NEW TRAIL OF TEARS is a well-written book addressing current concerns of Native Americans. Riley included so many facts in the narrative that I often had to set the book down, because I felt like I was taking an accelerated sociology class. Riley cited her research throughout and included an extensive list of references at the back of the book. I did not take the time to verify any of the information.

Some interesting details mentioned by Riley caught my attention:

“There are 562 federally recognized Indian nations in the United States – about half of which are in Alaska – and 310 reservations” (page xii).

“Violent crime on the country’s 310 reservations is on average about 2.5 times as high as the national average” (page 7).

“American Indians, it turns out, have served in the military at the highest rate of any group since the American Revolution. According to the Defense Department, as of 2012 there were more than 22,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives on active duty, and the 2010 census identified over 150,000 American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Twenty-seven have been awarded the Medal of Honor” (page 175).

“It was not until after World War II in the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act that all states were required to allow Native Americans to vote on the same basis as any other American” (page 175).

A great portion of the book addressed the issue of property ownership. I had zero knowledge of this beforehand. I found it quite mind boggling how complicated the federal government has made it for Native Americans to own land, and the problem still exists today. That’s ridiculous. Furthermore, it’s not just in the USA but also in Canada. “In Canada, there are three types of individuals not allowed to own property – kids, the mentally incompetent, and Indians living on reserves” (page 44). The issues are too complicated for me to highlight in my review. Read the book.

“Underlying federal policy are the assumptions that Indians are simply incapable of managing their own affairs and that natural resource development somehow runs contrary to their traditions” (page 13).

Tribal economics represented another relevant issue addressed in Riley’s book. “The unemployment rate for the 8,000 tribe members [of the Northern Cheyenne] who live on the reservation is more than 80 percent ... the most talented people on the reservation tend to leave” (pages 20-21).

So the federal government has offered Native Americans “what you might call a loophole economy. We allow Indians to engage in enterprises that we can’t or won’t have in other neighborhoods. It used to be selling tax-free cigarettes, liquor, and gasoline. Then it was the gaming industry. Now, more states are allowing casinos to be run by non-Indians, and casinos aren’t the source of profit they once were. But never fear. The Justice Department decided in December 2014 to allow marijuana to be grown on reservations – even if the drug is illegal in the state where the reservation is located. Gambling, cigarettes, alcohol, drugs – who wouldn’t want these businesses to form the economic backbone of their community?” (page 50).

I could go on and on referencing the disappointing details presented in this book, which only reflect the current state of affairs for Native Americans, but I’ll let you read the book. I was surprised at my lack of awareness, which I attribute to my own privilege and naivety. So whether you think we should continue to celebrate Columbus Day (touted as celebrating the explorer who launched a genocide) or replace it with “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” take the time to look at this book. It is a very worthwhile read, especially for anyone interested in equal rights for all, sociology, or psychology.

For a terrific commentary on this topic by a Cherokee descendant, visit my site:  
<http://www.margokelly.net/2016/08/boo...>

[I received a copy of this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This in no way influenced my opinion of the book.]

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### **Rashel says**

Important information, though maybe too much time spent on education issues. Gaining an education is not the most important aspect of solving Indian issues, and the ability to assimilate the education is degraded when there is no steady homelife or family support, no basic food, health, housing. But all in all well researched and pointed. I gained a lot reading this.

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### **Bill says**

My grandmother was a full blooded Cherokee and married my grandfather when she was only thirteen. She raised his five children and gave birth to seven of her own. One of these was my father who looked like an Indian. I enjoyed the book but I had trouble grasping the huge amount of facts brought up. The author is an amazing writer.

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### **Clara Roberts says**

This book is full of statistics and information. This book deals with the dysfunction of dependency. Today we pay 9,000 employees to lobby for more money for 3 million people on 310 reservations. Energy resources on these reservations would make these places self supporting. The problem is a culture of dependency, violence, alcohol and drug addiction. The waist of money is enormous with no improvement in the lives of the people they are suppose to help. This book was depressing.

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### **Ashley says**

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. Us white folk tend to only think of Native American issues in terms of the past, but I thought this book did a great job of discussing modern Native American issues. Of course, not every tribe or individual view their issues in the same way, but it was very enlightening to see their view on government policies and how they affect their lives.

With that being said, I decided to knock a star down of my rating due to this book's conclusion. In the conclusion, the author compares the Native American assimilation into society as no different than what immigrants are currently facing. Sure, I understand that the lose of identity and one's closeness to their culture decreases with each new generation, but that in no way can compare to the utter devastation and violation of the Native American culture by colonialism. The author also states that the Native community is focusing too much on political correctness (Redskin team name, media stereotypes, etc) rather than on the

important issues of education, entrepreneurship, etc. I disagree with this statement wholeheartedly. For once, we need to LISTEN to their concerns and if they want to focus on the exploitation of their culture in sports and media then they damn well have earned the right to. The author also suggests that maybe forgetting the past is the answer and quotes an English professor discussing the The Dakota War of 1962 blockquote:

"I can feel in my bones the anger and resentment of the Dakota at scurrilous agents, empty promises, and a legacy of broken treaties. But I also know I could come to hate the red man for the murders or babies, yet to be born, of children, of women and men, I can feel these emotional tremors in me, rising, rising, And with that realization, my soul weeps.

No, just no. It is no comparison. NO COMPARISON.

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### **Jessica says**

The New Trail of Tears attempts to offer an explanation for the startling statistics that plague Native American communities. Naomi Schaefer Riley successfully moves the conversation beyond the romanticization of First Nations in the pre-contact years but arrives at another extreme. Undoubtedly self-determination can explain certain aspects of the crime, violence and poor education on reservations; however, Riley fails to offer explanations outside of pathology. Had more varieties of opinion been included, clarification on her definition of a “tribal leader” been provided and had she not used the term “negroid,” the argument would have felt less condescending. The New Trail of Tears is useful in detailing the unique problems facing Native peoples, particularly the pros and cons of legal loopholes, but overall the book left much to be desired.

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### **Kristina says**

I didn't agree with a lot of what the author discussed, especially in terms of education, but I did learn more about current issues facing American Indians.

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### **Miriam Downey says**

Read my full review here: <http://mimi-cyberlibrarian.blogspot.com>...

One of my childhood memories occurred at our family cabin in Bemidji, Minnesota. My father and I were out fishing, near one of the inlets of Big Turtle Lake. I saw some people in canoes doing something along the edges of the stream. My father took me closer so that I could see natives harvesting the wild rice that grew there. They pulled the stalks over the edge of the canoe and then whacked the stalks with sticks, loosening the seeds, which then fell into the bottom of the canoe. It was a fascinating operation, and my dad told me that Indians were the only people who could legally harvest wild rice in Minnesota.

I grew up in areas where Chippewa and Ojibwa Indian reservations were prevalent; Native Americans were

the "minorities" in Minnesota—they were part of our everyday life. The people on the reservations were poor and powerless. There are approximately 3 million Native Americans living in reservations, and all these years after my childhood, they are still poor and powerless.

Many people think that the lives of Native Americans improved with the advent of casinos and the money that came from working in the casinos. Riley's thesis is that the government has a paternalistic attitude toward native peoples and that paternalistic attitude is what has kept them in poverty with inferior educational and medical opportunities. I do have to mention that Riley is very conservative and her book reflects her conservative bias.

I received *The New Trail of Tears* from the publicist, and while I didn't read the book all the way through, I found what I did read to be enlightening. I would recommend it to students of sociology and those interested in social justice issues. It is to be published this week.

Riley is married to Jason Riley, the author of *Please Stop Helping Us*, which I reviewed a year or so ago. His thesis about African Americans in American society is quite similar in tone to the thesis of *The New Trail of Tears*.

I would also recommend books by Sherman Alexie because he explores some of these same difficult themes in fiction—poverty, alcoholism, and identity. My favorite is the *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Then I love the Minnesota Native American author Louise Erdrich. I read and reviewed *The Round House*, a novel that deals with violence against Native American women very effectively. She has a new novel *LaRose*, which I plan to read yet this summer.

Finally, I have been watching *Longmire*, a Netflix series based on the books by Craig Johnson. It features a Wyoming sheriff whose district includes a reservation. Although it is primarily a mystery solving series, it includes the interplay between the white population of the county, the people who live on the "Rez", and the owners of the casino that is being established. It is very good.

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### **Audrey says**

"The New Trail of Tears: How Washington is Destroying American Indians" maintains that American Indians would be better off if they did not receive "special privileges or monies from the government. The holding of lands in trust by the government prevents Native people from utilizing it as collateral to open businesses and also prevents them from selling or transferring land between themselves. The author believes when Native people receive a monthly stipend it prevents entrepreneurship and ambition. One of the few "success" stories mentioned in the book are the Seneca tribe who have multimillion dollar companies but are still taking advantage of "loopholes" that are available to them based on their ancestry. But surely most business people take advantage of any and all loopholes available to them. From this point on, the water gets murkier....

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that the school system is failing Native American children. The author places the responsibility for this on the tribal government, nepotism, and parents, preferring instead teachers from Teach for America and catholic institutions available on some of the reservations. However, the statistics to prove that teachers provided by Teach for America achieve better results do not seem to be available in the text provided. It surely wouldn't be difficult to imagine why it would be impossible for some of the parents and grandparents on the reservation to trust catholic schools when, as the author acknowledges, these institutions were a source of humiliation, pain, violence, and abuse to them. The author would like the Native

American children to be placed under the auspices of the Child Protection Agency instead of the "incompetent" tribal social work system. However, charges of incompetence have been leveled many times against the Child Protection Agency and just as many cases of anecdotal evidence could be found where calls were ignored and children perished. Native families have no great love of the State governments either as they have often been complicit in spiriting their children away and leaving them with little or no recourse. See: <https://www.npr.org/2011/10/25/141662....> See also: <http://www.newsweek.com/wrongs-we-are...>

Lastly, out of concern for the harsh sentences that Native Americans receive due to being tried on Federal vs State charges, the author, rather naively, believes they would receive more justice in the regular judicial system. One wonders whether she has encountered any statistics regarding African American conviction and imprisonment rates. It certainly wouldn't be good advertisement for her belief in the purity of justice.

Overall, this book that started out as promising and interesting, fell apart after the first few chapters.

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### **Jeanette says**

This is a book that was harder for me to take than most non-fiction. I could only do about 50 pages at a time and then come back to it after lighter fare or fiction reads in between.

It's not a topic that I feel I can review well outside of the fact that Naomi Schaefer Riley did immense research and covers considerable angles in under 300 pages. My Minnesota friends would probably have much more to say in reaction to this than I can as they have and have had tremendous intersect. All I can state is that the stats are so abysmal for these res groups, that there HAS to be a better policy. Whoever had a part of making them autonomous within their own societal Native American structures should (if they are still around or their same thinkers' "we think" philosophy is strongly present to continue this) wake up and understand what these stats ARE to the way (structure and mindset) they are currently living. Completely linked.

That they are not able to own their own property within their own individual tribe's laws or that they are insignificant within law to such extent as individuals. That's despicable to me.

Full blown example of social engineering at its worst turn of and for all. Not only from the Washington federal end either. Tribal decisions are probably worse.

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