

Our Fight Has Just Begun: Hate Crimes and Justice in Native America. By Cheryl Redhorse Bennett. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2022. 215 pages. \$29.95 paperback; \$100 hardcover; \$100 e-book.

Cheryl Redhorse Bennett creates a compelling and informative framework to exhibit the entrenched anti-Indian hate that exists within the Four Corners region of the United States (Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico) and, more specifically, the continued impacts on the Navajo Nation. Bennett weaves historical, legal, cultural, and personal accounts of racism that implicate the United States and American culture as a whole. *Our Fight Has Just Begun* is, therefore, not only a detailed resource on racism in the Four Corners but also a valuable account of anti-Indian sentiment in the United States generally.

Bennett seeks to answer three fundamental questions in her book: What types of hate crimes have been perpetrated against Native people in Farmington, New Mexico, and the Four Corners? How have hate crimes in Farmington impacted the lives of Native Americans? How have survivors responded to hate crimes?

Bennett distinguishes her analysis from others, stating that racial and cultural components are often overlooked in anti-Indian hate crime research, which tends to focus on legal and jurisdictional issues. The emphasis on these sociological components fosters an accessibility and shared understanding to *Our Fight Has Just Begun* that is frequently missing from research that relies on potentially esoteric legal definitions that do not address the American Indian experience. For example, Bennett not only defines “hate crime,” “Indian hating,” “border town,” and “anti-Indianism” for the reader but also defines different levels of hate crime severity and provides a detailed history of “Indian rolling,” the appalling action of white Farmington citizens targeting Navajos for theft, physical abuse, or far worse. The in-depth analysis of Indian rolling provides distinct examples of various levels of hate crimes and how these crimes uniquely impact the Navajo community as American Indians. What is most important, the Indian rolling analysis sheds light on racism so deeply rooted in Farmington’s social fabric that it is utilized as a white rite of passage where perpetrators keep “trophies” from their victims, highlighting the indifference to Navajo lives and an environment without accountability.

By clearly defining terms and developing a robust sociological foundation, Bennett successfully frames her historical review of anti-Indian colonialism and US jurisprudence from an American Indian cultural lens that is integrated throughout the book. This includes a review of seminal Indian law cases, violated treaties with the Navajo tribe, and “The Long Walk,” an 1864 attempt by the federal government to remove and exterminate Navajos from their land.

The strong sociological foundation and historical context then leads to the core of the book—the 1974 Chokeycherry Navajo Massacre and the resulting 1975 US Commission on Civil Rights investigation and report (*The Farmington Report: A Conflict of Cultures: A Report of the New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights*, referenced henceforth as the “1975 Report”), and the commission’s 2005 progress review report (“2005 Report”). Bennett gives appropriate details of the Chokeycherry Massacre while honoring the victims, the families, and Navajo cultural norms surrounding death. In summary, the bodies of three Navajo men were found bludgeoned and burned in Chokeycherry Canyon in 1974. Three white highschoolers were arrested and convicted of the murders but were only sent to reform school. The town of Farmington refused to acknowledge the significant racial problems in the community, the Navajo community was ruthlessly attacked in the editorial pages of the *Daily Times* by white citizens, and more murders occurred subsequently. In fact, one of the murderers “represented the killings as an activity that everyone did that had simply gotten out of hand” (82). Bennett describes how the Navajo community responded with peaceful protests (one sign reading “Our Fight Has Just Begun,” the title of the book) and the ensuing 1975 Report which concluded that Navajos were “in almost every phase of life . . . basically unequal” in Farmington (95).

Bennett takes a fair but critical eye to the 1975 Report, analyzing each of the recommendations made, including policing reforms, addressing substance abuse, addressing discrimination, and employment reforms.

Before reviewing the subsequent 2005 Report, Bennett provides a history of anti-Indian hate crimes in the ensuing thirty years. This includes examples of the continued prevalence of Indian rolling and additional murders of Navajos by white youth without appropriate sentencing. Furthermore, Bennett discusses the reluctance of the criminal justice system to charge perpetrators with enhanced hate crime sentencing despite clear evidence that Navajos continued to be singled out based on their race, due to the same systemic cultural racism that fomented the 1974 Chokeycherry Massacre. Bennett highlights this unwillingness through the murder of a transgender Navajo youth in 2001, wherein the perpetrator bragged about the killing but was not charged with a race-related hate crime and was subsequently released in 2019 (federal and state protection against gender and sexual orientation hate crimes did not exist at the time).

Bennett appropriately uses these examples to criticize some of the superficial recommendations and omissions of the follow-up 2005 Report, which failed to review one of the most important recommendations made in 1975—to create a forum on mechanisms whereby complaints could be made. With the racial component of these violent crimes consistently ignored by Farmington officials, the lack of a complaint process removes a venue for Navajo community members to address acts of racism immediately and constructively. An opportunity to proactively address race-related issues is lost.

Our Fight Has Just Begun concludes with several powerful testimonials from Navajo tribal members regarding the impact that specific racial crimes and the racist cultural environment has had on them and the Navajo community at large. With an appropriate air of hope and empowerment, Bennett outlines tools for the Indian

community to combat racism, including activism, policy advocacy, and utilizing restorative justice to bring community members together to cooperate to repair the harm caused by criminal behavior. These testimonials provide anecdotal evidence to the unique impacts hate crimes have on American Indians.

Bennett successfully answers the three fundamental questions with a thorough analysis of hate crimes in the Four Corners region, discussing how racial hate crimes isolate Navajos by creating a covert system of control and oppression, and how the Navajo community has rallied with activism, protests, and even with conciliation.

Additional reading on this topic, which Bennett references on several occasions, is *Silent Victims: Hate Crimes against Native Americans* by Barbara Perry (2008). Perry similarly discusses the unique impacts that racism has on the American Indian community, including the threat of violation solely on the basis of group identity. In addition, Perry provides examples of critical tools, such as activism, development of victim resources, and self-determination to combat systemic anti-Indian racism. As such, *Silent Victims* provides a perfect companion piece to *Our Fight Has Just Begun*.

Our Fight Has Just Begun is recommended for anyone with the desire to understand the influence that racism has had and continues to have on the American Indian community. Readers will walk away understanding the unique way racism, culture, jurisprudence, and history intersect with and impact the Navajo experience—impacts that the Navajo continue to fight to this day.

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