

# Dakota/Lakota Progressive Writers: Charles Eastman, Standing Bear, and Zitkala Sa

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*a cold bare pole I seemed to be, planted in a strange earth*<sup>1</sup>

This paper focuses on three Dakota/Lakota progressive writers: Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) of the Santee/Dakota; Luther Standing Bear (Ota Kte) of the Brulé; and Gertrude Simmons Bonnin (Zitkala Sa) of the Yankton. All three were widely read and popular “Indian writers,” who wrote about their traumatic childhoods, about being caught between two ways of living and perceiving, and about being coerced to leave the familiar for immersion in the ways of the whites.

Eastman wrote dozens of magazine articles and eleven books, two of them autobiographies, *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916).<sup>2</sup> Standing Bear wrote four books, two of them autobiographies, *My People, the Sioux* (1928) and *My Indian Boyhood* (1931).<sup>3</sup> Zitkala Sa wrote more than a dozen articles, several auto-biographical, and nine books, one autobiographical, *American Indian Stories* (1921), and the others Dakota stories, such as *Old Indian Legends* (1901). She also co-wrote an opera *The Sun Dance*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zitkala Sa, “An Indian Teacher Among the Indians,” *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*, Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris, eds., (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 112.

<sup>2</sup>The other titles are *Red Hunters and the Animal People* (1904), *Old Indian Days* (1907), *Wigwam Evenings: Sioux Folk Tales Retold* (1909), *Smoky Day’s Wigwam Evenings: Indian Stories Retold* (1910), *The Soul of an Indian: An Interpretation* (1911), *Indian Child Life* (1913), *The Indian Today: The Past and Future of the First Americans* (1915), *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* (1918), *Indian Scout Talks: A Guide for Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls* (1914), and his two autobiographies, *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916).

<sup>3</sup> Luther Standing Bear also wrote traditional stories in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933) and *Stories of the Sioux* (1934). He began writing in his fifties, whereas Eastman began writing in his thirties and Zitkala Sa in her twenties.

<sup>4</sup> “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” in *Atlantic Monthly* (January 1900); “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1900); “An Indian Teacher Among Indians,” *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1900), “Why I am a Pagan,” *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1902) were autobiographical articles. Her biographer Doreen Rappaport in *The Flight of Red Bird: The Life of Zitkala Sa* (New York: Penguin/Puffin Books, 1997) details Zitkala Sa’s other talents which absorbed her creative energies: violinist, pianist, elocutionist, lobbyist, editor of a magazine, social worker on the Uintah Reservation, investigator of fraud in Oklahoma, etc. However, a list of two dozen published works is included in Gary Totten, “Zitkala-Sa and the Problem of Regionalism: Nations, Narratives, and Critical Traditions,” *The American Indian Quarterly* (Winter-Spring 2005):84(40). According to Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris in the introduction to *Zitkala Sa: American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xiii, her stories were included in high school textbooks and school readers in several states including New York and Virginia by 1920.

Eastman was the oldest, born in 1858. Standing Bear was ten years younger, and Zitkala Sa eighteen years younger than Eastman. Collectively their recorded experiences date from 1862 to 1920. They wrote during a time of great suffering, when the number of Indian people had decreased due to forced relocations onto ever shrinking land, and the banning of traditional ways of acquiring and producing food that resulted in near-starvation conditions on the Great Plains.<sup>5</sup> By the time Zitkala Sa was a child, in the early 1880s, the traditional Lakota/Dakota world was rapidly disappearing, replaced by reservation life, and the people who inhabited those reservations suffered starvation and mental anguish, as she so vividly recorded.<sup>6</sup>

Eastman never lived on a reservation. With the Dakota War of 1862 he left the Minnesota River at age four as a refugee with his grandmother fleeing the U.S. army ultimately to a refugee settlement in Manitoba, Canada.<sup>7</sup> Eleven years later, his father arrived in Canada to bring his youngest son, Ohiyesa, back to the U.S. where he was homesteading in a Dakota community at Flandreau on the border of Dakota Territory and Minnesota. There the teen attended the local school, cut his hair, wore Euro-American dress, changed his name to Charles Eastman, and, with great reluctance, began to

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<sup>5</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, "From Prison to Homeland: The Cheyenne River Indian Reservation before World War I," *South Dakota History* 10 (Winter 1979), 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> In their books of legends and tales they shared the stories they learned from their elders that might be heard around a campfire or inside a tipi at night before sleep. Characters like the trickster Iktomi appear in these stories, functioning similarly to the Uncle Remus Brer Rabbitt stories that had their origin in the slave cabins of the South. Each of these writers recorded the stories that named and claimed them as Dakota/Lakota, capturing these stories in writing for generations to come, and demonstrating in their recounting the complexity and values of their culture. According to contemporary Dakota historian Wazayitawin Angela Wilson, recording the traditional stories is an act of claiming and continuing one's culture and resisting the colonizer's goal of eradicating that culture. Wilson has broken new ground in her work on the central role of storytelling in Dakota/Lakota culture, and by extension in the cultures of other indigenous American groups. She is part of a small cadre of transnational indigenous scholars who call the attention of academia to how it has aided the colonization of native peoples. These scholars assert the right of indigenous people to control how research about their lives and histories is done. Her book *Remember This!* builds on earlier work by New Zealand Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwa Smith and Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o and challenges how historians conduct their work, laying out guidelines for "doing history" among indigenous peoples. She emphasizes the importance of listening closely to indigenous people telling their own stories to learn their historical experience and cultural values. She has begun the process of reviving the Dakota language and interviewing elders, the recognized conveyors of history and tradition, in the Dakota language without interrupting with questions, recording stories passed generation to generation for hundreds of years, stories central to the worldview of the Dakota. Wilson writes, "Dismissal of Indigenous perspectives is symptomatic of the relationship of the colonizer to the colonized. Colonial dominance can be maintained only if the history of the subjugated is denied and that of the colonizer elevated and glorified." Wazayitawin Angela Wilson's insights offer a different way of listening to Dakota writers of the early twentieth century, listening for the values conveyed by the voices as well as the details of historical events that the oral historian/storyteller chooses to include.

<sup>7</sup> William Bean maintains that Charles' father Many Lightnings (Tawakanhdiota) and his brother John fled to the Winnipeg area of Canada 1862, but in the winter of 1864 were betrayed to US Army with 30-40 others by mixedbloods and sent without trial to Davenport prison in Iowa, where Dr. Williamson and Stephen Riggs ministered to them and baptized most of the prisoners. This is a different interpretation than Charles gives in his autobiographies. I have chosen to use Charles' story. See William Bean, *Eastman; Cloud Man; Many Lightnings; an Anglo-Dakota Family*, compiled by William L. Bean, Great Grandson of John Eastman for Eastman Family Reunion, July 6, 1989, Flandreau, SD (at the Minnesota Historical Society).

assimilate. His life from age fifteen is told in his second autobiography, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916).

Reunited with his father and brothers only one year, his father sent him East to “white” schools: “It is the same as if I sent you on your first warpath. I expect you to conquer.”<sup>8</sup> Charles had known his mother for only a few months and his father for only five years. He never again saw his father, who died of an accident, or his grandmother, who returned to Canada. He pushed himself forward on the mission his father had laid out for him. He earned his Bachelor’s from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and his medical degree from Boston University. He adapted to being one of a few Indians in mostly white educational institutions and enjoyed popularity with the ladies and as captain of the football team. He also enjoyed access to leading intellectuals and reformers and speaking to the annual Lake Mohonk Friends of the Indian gatherings.<sup>9</sup>

He returned West to Pine Ridge Agency on the Ogalala Lakota reservation to become the government physician-- his first experience of reservation life and “the dream of my life—to be of some service to my people.”<sup>10</sup> Dr. Eastman invited people into the office, examined them speaking their language, kept records of their health problems, and made house calls.

It was December 1890. A Lakota police officer explained the Ghost Dance movement to Dr. Eastman:

A new religion has been proclaimed by some Indians in the Rocky Mountain region, and some time ago, Sitting Bull sent several of his men to investigate. We hear that they have come back, saying that they saw the prophet, or Messiah, who told them that he is God’s Son whom He has sent into the world a second time. He told them that He waited nearly two thousand years for the white men to carry out His teachings, but instead they had destroyed helpless small nations to satisfy their own selfish greed. Therefore He had come again, this time as a Savior to the red people. If they would follow His instructions exactly, in a little while He would cause the earth to shake and destroy all the cities of the white man, when famine and pestilence would come to finish the work. The Indians ... must fast and pray and keep up a holy or spirit dance that He taught them.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, the newly arrived Indian agent, a political appointee, had called in the U.S. army to put down what he claimed was a planned hostile attack. He told Eastman, “This Ghost dance craze is the worst thing that has ever taken hold of the Indian race. It

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Eastman., *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1977), 32. Luther Standing Bear in *My People, the Sioux*, made the same analogy, volunteering to go to Carlisle Indian School in the midst of enemy territory as an act of bravery, a replacement for demonstrating his bravery in warfare.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

is going like wild fire among the tribes, and right here and now the people are beginning to defy my authority, and my Indian police seem to be powerless.”<sup>12</sup> Eastman protested repeatedly that the Indians were gathering for a religious revival and had no intention of harming settlers or agency personnel: “I felt sure that the arrival of troops would be construed by the ghost dancers as a threat or a challenge, and would put them at once on the defensive ... [but] *the agent had telegraphed to Fort Robinson for troops before he made a pretense of consulting us Indians, and they were already on their way to Pine Ridge.*”<sup>13</sup> This total disregard for Indian professionals’ insights by those charged with carrying out Indian policy would recur in Eastman’s life. Eastman wrote,

The Sioux had many grievances and causes for profound discontent, which lay back of and were more or less closely related to the ghost dance ... Rations had been cut from time to time; the people were insufficiently fed, and their protests and appeals were disregarded. Never was more ruthless fraud and graft practiced upon a defenseless people than upon these poor natives by the politicians! Never were there more worthless ‘scraps of paper’ anywhere in the world than many of the Indian treaties and Government documents! Sickness was prevalent and the death rate alarming, especially among the children ... one might almost as well call upon the army to suppress Billy Sunday and his hysterical followers.<sup>14</sup>

On the morning of December 29, the Seventh Cavalry, Custer’s unit, and the Ninth Cavalry of African American troops began firing artillery guns from the rise overlooking Wounded Knee Creek down on the ghost dancers, resulting in 250-300 Indians dying in this Wounded Knee Massacre. Eastman led about a hundred civilians, all but ten or fifteen Indians, to look for survivors. They found bodies more than three miles from the scene, “scattered along as they had been relentlessly hunted down and slaughtered while fleeing for their lives.”<sup>15</sup>

Eastman said, “I was very much struck with the loss of manliness and independence in these, the first ‘reservation Indians’ I had ever known, I longed above all things to help them to regain their self-respect.”<sup>16</sup> He befriended the traditional healers and worked with them rather than against them. Working under a new agent, this one a military man, Eastman called attention to the way Indians were being cheated out of their annuity payments, losing “from ten to fifteen per cent.”<sup>17</sup> He reported the fraud to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who sent out an investigator who reported that \$10,000 had been withheld from the Indians. Eastman “kept up the fight at Washington through influential friends, and made every effort to prove ... the case of the people.”<sup>18</sup> The agent charged him with insubordination, arbitrarily ordered him about, denied him essential medical supplies, and worked to have him removed from Pine Ridge. Eastman *was*

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 97 (italics added).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 132.

removed from Pine Ridge and later from Crow Creek for exposing corruption and advocating on behalf of reservation residents.

The birth of his first child in 1892 motivated him to recall and record his memories of pre-reservation life for his children.<sup>19</sup> His stories were published in America's premier children's magazine, *St. Nicholas*, from December 1893 through May 1894, alongside stories by Mark Twain and Louisa May Alcott and gathered into his first autobiographical book *Indian Boyhood*.<sup>20</sup>

Luther Standing Bear [Ota Kte] grew up on the Great Sioux Reservation raised by his mother and her sister, who were both wives of the leader of their band, also named Standing Bear. The railroads consumed Lakota land, transporting whites to the area to hunt buffalo for sport and to harvest the hides. He wrote about this:

The plains were covered with dead bison ... I saw the bodies of hundreds of dead buffalo lying about, just wasting, and the odor was terrible. Now we began to see white people living in dugouts, just like wild bears, but without the long snout. These people were dirty. They had hair all over their faces, heads, arms, and hands. This was the first time many of us had ever seen white people, and they were very repulsive to us ... Outside these dugouts we saw bale after bale of buffalo skins, all packed, ready for market. These people were taking away the source of the clothing and lodges that had been provided for us by our Creator and they were letting our food lie on the plains to rot."<sup>21</sup>

Standing Bear's father participated in a delegation to Washington, D.C. in 1875 to bring the grievances of the Lakota before the federal government. Treated well while in the nation's capital, receiving gifts and promises, on his return to the reservation little changed: the U.S. government continued to push for more Lakota land and the distribution of rations continued to be defective. Luther noted that sugar and hundred-pound sacks of flour were distributed, unknown commodities to the Indians who at first dumped out the unfamiliar powdery white stuff; eventually they adapted their diet and learned to make "Indian fry bread" with the flour.<sup>22</sup> Like Eastman he wrote of corruption in the administration of reservations.

In *My People, the Sioux*, Standing bear tells how his mother sabotaged the railroads that intruded onto their land: "My mother cut the ties and the men hauled them away, after which the whole band went back a mile or so and waited to see what would

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<sup>19</sup> He left Pine Ridge in late 1893 to take up private practice in St. Paul, Minnesota, and before the end of that year was a published writer, the well-respected children's magazine *St. Nicholas* publishing a series of his recollections about his childhood from December 1893 to May 1894. Wilson, *Ohiyesa*, 131, 204.

<sup>20</sup> Dedication to *Ohiyesa* in *Indian Boyhood*.

<sup>21</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People, the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1975), 67.

<sup>22</sup> Standing Bear, *My People*, 71-73. Elaine Goodale's observations of the distribution of rations matches Luther Standing Bear's. See *Sister to the Sioux, the memoirs of Elaine Goodale Eastman, 1885-91*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 62-63.

happen when the train came along.”<sup>23</sup> When the train crashed, his resourceful mother salvaged beads from the wreck, and was the first in her band to replace her quills with beads in the embroidery she used to decorate the moccasins and belts she sewed.

Standing Bear’s father, like Charles Eastman’s father, “saw that the white men ... sooner or later ... would occupy the whole country. He believed that fighting would not get the Indian anywhere, and that the only recourse was to learn the white man’s ways of doing things, get the same education, and thus be in condition to stand up for his rights ... He wore a collar, a necktie, a stiff shirt,” and was the first to sign the agreement that reduced the size of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1889 by nearly half and divided it into six parts.<sup>24</sup>

In 1879, his father sent Standing Bear to Pennsylvania to attend the new Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The boy wanted to go because “it occurred to me that this chance to go East would prove that I was brave if I were to accept it ... going away with what was to us an enemy, to a place we knew nothing about, just suited me.”<sup>25</sup> Going voluntarily into the heart of enemy territory was a way of demonstrating bravery, counting coup, for an eleven-year-old boy whose father no longer would go to war. Later he wrote, “Some of the returned Carlisle students were ashamed of their old people and refused to shake hands with them; some even tried to make them believe they had forgotten the Sioux language.”<sup>26</sup>

Luther Standing Bear and his father were often used by the agent-administrators of their reservation as mediators with Lakota who opposed U.S. policies. When the Ghost Dance was growing popular in 1890, Luther was teaching school at Rosebud agency where the majority of the Rosebud Indians joined the Ghost Dance revival. The agent asked Luther to go to them to discourage them from participating. He did. Like Eastman, he then witnessed the Wounded Knee Massacre, writing,

Men, women, and children—even babies were killed in their mothers’ arms! ... it was not a battle—it was a slaughter, a massacre. Those soldiers had been sent to protect these men, women, and children who had not joined the ghost dancers, but they had shot them down without even a chance to defend themselves. When I heard this, it made my blood boil. I was ready myself to go and fight then. There I was, doing my best to teach my people to follow in the white men’s road—even trying to get them to believe in their religion—and this was my reward for it all! The very people I was following—and getting my people to follow—had no respect for motherhood, old age, or babyhood. Where was all their civilized training?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Standing Bear, *My People*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Philip S. Hall, *To Have This Land: The Nature of Indian/White Relations, South Dakota, 1888-1891*. (Vermillion, SD: University of South Dakota Press, 1991), 10, and Standing Bear, *My People*, 210-15.

<sup>25</sup> Standing Bear, *My People*, 124.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Eastman was at Pine Ridge as agency physician during the murder of Sitting Bull, the Ghost Dance revival, and the Wounded Knee Massacre, and wrote extensively about it; Gertrude Simmons was

The reservation was occupied by the U.S. army and Luther's house surrounded by soldiers. Luther and two friends who had also graduated from Carlisle Indian School "each bought a gun and plenty of ammunition, and were ready to fight if it came to a 'show-down'... determined to stick by our race."<sup>28</sup> He rode out to the site of the massacre and found "many little pools of water...red with the blood of my people. I was enraged."<sup>29</sup> The few who escaped fled to the Bad Lands along with Red Cloud and his family, convinced that they would have to "fight to protect themselves against the white man. *Who could blame them?*"<sup>30</sup> Again the agent dispatched Luther's father to carry the pipe of peace to them.

As Standing Bear said, "The white man had started the fight, and now he wanted the Indian to act as mediator!"<sup>31</sup> Luther admired his father's courage riding into the encampment of resisters, but bitterly noted that when his father had accomplished his mission and returned with the rebels, all credit was given to General Nelson Miles, "who was proclaimed the 'great peacemaker.' Perhaps his salary was raised, or possibly he received a few more stripes to his sleeves ... the men who really settled the greatest trouble between the whites and Indians at Pine Ridge each received a dinky button worth about fifty cents!"<sup>32</sup>

Luther Standing Bear started a discussion group to study the terms of old treaties and was "surprised to hear some of the long-haired, uneducated Indian boys .... make really sensible remarks ... the Interior Department [ordered] that all rations and annuity goods that had been issued to all able-bodied Indians were to be cut off unless the Indians were willing to work for them."<sup>33</sup> This was a policy of forced labor.<sup>34</sup> The Lakota had to construct a dam, a road, bridges, and fence in the entire reservation, without receiving any payment with which to buy groceries or feed for one's horses. Later that year, "The Indians were all heavily in debt to the storekeeper. Our houses needed repairs before winter came on. We had no chance to put up hay for our stock ... no wood cut for the cold weather." When the forced work was completed and the workers received their annuities, the money left over after paying the storekeeper was "not sufficient to purchase supplies for the winter. So we had to go in debt again."<sup>35</sup>

Luther and his family had been ranching. Now they were forced to move back to the agency where he took a job as a clerk in a store to support his family:

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also present but never mentioned either event in her writings, according to Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris in Zitkala Sa, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xxxiii. The quote is from Standing Bear, *My People*, 224.

<sup>28</sup> Standing Bear, *My People*, 225.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 229-30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>34</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin/Mariner Books, 1999) is the most extensive study of forced labor in the Congo. Colonies with settler populations often used forced labor or collected taxes that were paid in labor. Zimbabwe and South Africa are notable examples.

<sup>35</sup> Standing Bear, *My People*, 242.

With all my title of chieftain, and with all my education and travels, I discovered that as long as I was on the reservation I was only a helpless Indian, and was not considered any better than any of the uneducated Indians—that is, according to the views of the white agent in charge of the reservation . . . If I tried to better the condition of my people, while on the reservation, I found it was an utter impossibility. So I had to do one of two things—keep my mouth shut or fight the agent all the time.<sup>36</sup>

Determined to obtain citizenship rights and a fee simple deed to his land so that it was his to manage and not managed by someone appointed by the U.S. government, he went to Washington, D.C. In Washington he conducted a type of sit-in to get his papers and the money the government owed him. He told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs he was staying in Washington until he had his papers and money! His strategy worked.

Gertrude Simmons/Zitkala Sa was part of the second generation of reservation children. She witnessed the steady decline of her family into abject poverty as more and more whites came onto their land. She was raised by an older single Dakota mother.<sup>37</sup> She was a mixed blood child. Of nine children, Gertrude and one brother were the only ones to survive childhood.<sup>38</sup> She wrote that her mother told her that before Gertrude's birth whites had forced their family to relocate despite family members being gravely ill at the time, causing the deaths of her sister and uncle: "It is this same paleface who offers in one palm the holy papers, and with the other gives a holy baptism of firewater. He is the hypocrite who reads with one eye, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and with the other gloats upon the sufferings of the Indian race."<sup>39</sup>

In 1884, when Gertrude was eight, she journeyed East to attend boarding school. On arrival, Zitkala Sa recalled being stripped of the special new moccasins and blanket her mother had made for her to wear in this new world. Noises of the school's "iron routine" were terrifying—bells that rang for meals, classes, and bedtime; hard-soled shoes on the wooden stairs; the sound of scissors "gnaw[ing] off one of my thick braids" and leaving her shorn the way her people cut the hair of cowards or mourners.<sup>40</sup> Like Charles Eastman, she attended a predominantly white Quaker college, Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. There she entered a speech contest, the only woman—and the only Native American—to do so, and won, not only at Earlham but also at an inter-college competition in Indianapolis. Here is part of her speech describing the history of the Indian:

Never was he the first to break a treaty or known to betray a friend. The invasion by a paler race did not dismay the hospitable Indian...The Indian

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>37</sup> Rappaport, *Life of Zitkala Sa*, 71, 74.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Rose Dominguez in Zitkala Sa, *American Indian Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2003), viii.

<sup>39</sup> Zitkala Sa, *American Indian Stories*, 110.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 89, 90, 91.



did not cling selfishly to his lands. Willingly he divided with Roger Williams and with William Penn. To Jesuit, to Quaker, to all who kept their faith with him, his loyalty never faltered ... His forests were felled; his game frightened away; his streams of finny shoals usurped. He loved his family and defended them. He loved the land of which he was the rightful owner. He loved his father's traditions and their graves. Do you wonder that he avenged the loss of his home and being ruthlessly driven from his temples of worship? Is patriotism only in white men's hearts?

The charge of cruelty has been brought against the Indian. But ... Puritan Boston burned witches and hanged Quakers, and the Southern aristocrat beat his slaves and set bloodhounds on the track of him who dared aspire to freedom. The Indian brought no greater stain upon his name than these.<sup>41</sup>

A couple years after leaving Earlham College, Zitkala Sa obtained a teaching position at the Carlisle Indian School in 1899. As she wrote in "An Indian Teacher Among the Indians," she was disillusioned by the white teachers teaching Indian children, who were sometimes opium addicted or inebriated from alcohol; only "the few rare ones" were working "nobly for my race." She also reports that "the white visitors walked out of the schoolhouse well satisfied; they were educating the children of the red man! ... But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization."<sup>42</sup> She taught at Carlisle for nearly three years, led the glee club and debate team, and was the only woman in the school band that toured the East giving performances in which she soloed on her violin and recited poetry. Then she was sent back to the reservation to recruit students.

When she performed at the White House and recited Longfellow's "Hiawatha," moving her audience as she described the suffering of starving the Indians, she made repeated curtain calls, and "she was taken among the audience and introduced to Miss Longfellow the poet's daughter." The wife of President William McKinley gave a bunch of English violets to this young Dakota woman who dressed in buckskin and wore her hair in two long braids, her very dress an act of resistance to the assimilation policy of President's Republican Party.<sup>43</sup>

In autobiographical articles for *Atlantic Monthly* published in early 1900s, Zitkala Sa described her culture of origin as generous and hospitable, careful to avoid embarrassing the other, gentle and affirming with children, encouraging them to make their own decisions, and respectful of and responsible for elders. By contrast, EuroAmericans insisted that Indian children follow "One Way" and speak one language and were quick to use physical force and punishment to coerce them to do so.

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<sup>41</sup> Rappaport, *Life of Zitkala Sa*, 62-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-3.

<sup>43</sup> The Carlisle newsletter and magazine references to Zitkala Sa are online at <http://home.epix.net/landis/zitkalasa.html>.

In the spring of 1901 she returned to the reservation: “The old folks have a claim upon us. It is selfish and cruel to abandon them entirely,” she wrote. “Would it not be a great work to write MANY volumes of Indian legends?” Another time she wrote, “I will never speak of the whites as elevating the Indian! I am willing to say higher conceptions of life elevate the whole human family—but not the Indian more than any other. Until Col. Pratt [leader of the boarding school movement] actively interests himself in giving college education to Indians I cannot say his making them slaves to the plow is anything other than drudgery!” She married a man from her reservation and moved to Utah, both working on the Ute/Uintah reservation, with Zitkala Sa teaching and operating a community center.

She did not write again for publication for roughly ten years, when she wrote the libretto for an opera, *Sun Dance*, performed across Utah in 1913. In the 1910s she wrote for the magazine of the Society of American Indians (SAI), a pan-Indian organization similar to the NAACP that Eastman had helped found to advocate for Indians. After thirteen years in Utah, she and her husband moved to Washington, D.C. in 1917, where she became the Secretary for the Society of American Indians, the most prominent leadership position in the SAI held by a woman. A year later she became editor of the Society’s journal.

In Washington, Zitkala Sa began advocacy for Indian rights through the SAI and directed the Indian Welfare work of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. She was outraged by how much the U.S. government’s Indian bureaucracy kept secret from reservation Indians—e.g., how much money was in their tribal funds, how the federal government spent those funds. Zitkala Sa co-authored an investigative report exposing the abuses against Oklahoma’s Osage Indians on whose land oil had been found early in the century, publicized decades later in Linda Hogan’s *Mean Spirit*. In 1926 she and Raymond founded the National Council of American Indians to lobby on behalf of reservation Indians. She was an activist during her twenty-one years in Washington, D.C. from 1917 until her death in 1938 at sixty one.

Eastman and Zitkala Sa lobbied Congress and the Department of the Interior, testified before Congress, and published critiques of EuroAmerican culture and Indian policy.<sup>44</sup> All three had traveled the road of Americanization; Eastman and Standing Bear even marrying women from families that privileged whiteness and distained darker-skinned people.<sup>45</sup> Each of them chose to leave reservation life but returned regularly for

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<sup>44</sup> Eastman and Zitkala Sa were leaders of the Society of American Indians, whose full membership was confined to indigenous people; Standing Bear was president of the American Indian Progressive Association; and Zitkala Sa and her husband founded the National Council of American Indians.

<sup>45</sup> In an undated letter from Elaine Eastman’s sister Dora Goodale to her other sister Rose Dayton, Dora wrote from Tennessee, “Glad the idea of miscegenation shocks you! Elaine’s marriage shocked, shocks, and will shock me as long as I live.” The letter is in a box of new acquisitions for the Eastman papers (dated 1999) in Smith College’s Sophia Smith Collection. Luther Standing Bear wrote that his wife’s mother, a “full-blooded Indian woman,” had “brought her children up as ‘white’” and “did not like me because I was Indian, and the thought that her daughter had given birth to a child which was very dark seemed to hurt her feelings very much,” pp. 199 & 204.

visits. All three lived continually on the verge of poverty, economically marginalized by racism and the prejudicial hiring and retention policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Each writer also used autobiographical storytelling to preserve traditional values and to challenge their readers' preconceptions of what it meant to be "civilized" and presented themselves in lectures, performances of pageants, Wild West shows, or recitations wearing regalia.<sup>46</sup> White reformers pitted Indian Progressives against "Blanket Indians," but Eastman, Standing Bear and Zitkala Sa "returned to the blanket" in valuing and reclaiming their traditional culture.

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<sup>46</sup> Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 2005). Chapter four examines the self-presentation of these three that is most helpful on this.

Focusing on Dakota writers and storytellers, Seneca critic Penelope Myrtle Kelsey offers a penetrating assessment of theory and interpretation in indigenous literary criticism in the twenty-first century. Tribal Theory in Native American Literature delineates a method for formulating a Native-centered theory or, more specifically, a use of tribal languages and their concomitant knowledges to derive a worldview or an equivalent to Western theory that is emic to indigenous worldviews. Kelsey demonstrates this approach with a fresh look at early Dakota writers, including Marie McLaughlin, Charles Eastman, and Zitkala-?a and later storytellers such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Ella Deloria, and Philip Red Eagle. Zitkala-?a was born on February 22, 1876 on the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota. She was raised by her mother, Ellen Simmons, whose Dakota name was That?hiwi (Every Wind or Reaches for the Wind). Her father was a German-American man named Felker, who abandoned the family while Zitkala-?a was very young. For her first eight years, Zitkala-?a lived on the reservation. During this period, Zitkala-?a concentrated on writing and publishing political works. She and her husband had moved to Washington, D.C., where she became politically active. Zitkala-?a was politically active throughout most of her adult life. During her time on the Uintah-Ouray reservation in Utah, she joined the Society of American Indians, a progressive group formed in 1911. Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa) - Author, physician and reformer. Chief Iron Tail. Crow Dog. Henry Standing Bear (Mato Najen), Lakota Sioux. Later day Intancans of the Lakota people. His life spanned the Battle of the Little Big Horn, the Wounded Knee Massacre, and the Indian Reorganization Act. He worked for 10 years to get the Crazy Horse Memorial built. Tall Man Dan. Gertrude Simmons (later Bonnin) aka Zitkala Sa, writer. Luther Standing Bear, Sioux author, actor, and activist. Comedians. Terry Ree, comedian. LAKOTA, DAKOTA, NAKOTA NATION, (L.D.N.), A Sovereign Nation International, Re-Established at a council and solemn ceremony at Bear Butte July 14, 1991 by the descendants of Traditionally appointed Dynastic Line of Grand Chiefs of the General Council - Oceti Sakowin - the Seven Council Fires. "If you are not a part of the solution

Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin) was one of the early Indian writers to record tribal legends and tales from oral tradition. Impressions of an Indian Childhood describes her first eight years on the Yankton Reservation, where she was born in 1876. Her schooling in Indiana revealed a gift for writing that led in 1901 to the publication of *Old Indian Legends*, also a *Bison Book*. For the rest of her life, this Sioux was in the poignant but creative position of trying to bridge the gap between her own culture and the dominant white one, unable to return fully to the former or to enter fully into the latter. With their reissue, Zitkala-Sa takes her rightful place among such native interpreters of Sioux culture as Charles A. Eastman and Luther Standing Bear. Product Identifiers. Publisher. Zitkala-Sa found it a hostile environment and struggled to adapt. After three years at school, Zitkala-Sa returned to Pine Ridge only to find herself estranged from her traditional culture and from her mother. While she was not completely comfortable with the Euro-American culture she encountered at school, she was also no longer at home with Sioux customs. After the publication of the autobiographical essays, Zitkala-Sa composed an Indian opera called "Sun Dance" and compiled collections of traditional Sioux legends and stories that she translated into English. Her outspoken views eventually alienated authorities at the Carlisle School, so she left to work at Standing Rock Reservation. There she met and married Raymond Bonnin, another Sioux activist. Zitkala-Sa, and Luther Standing Bear and extends today to include Vine Deloria, Jr., Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Beatrice Medicine, Susan Power, Delphine Red Shirt, Philip J. Deloria, and Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, to name but a few. Despite Eastman's prominent position in the Dakota intellectual tradition, his ideas and the example he made with his personal and professional life have not always been revered, even by other Indians. That year is a turning point, not only for the Lakota who suffered through the Wounded Knee Massacre but also for all of Indian Country, which mourned the death of what once was before the reservations. Philip J. Deloria observes the significance of 1890 in Indians in *Unexpected Places*. Charles Eastman straddled two worlds in his life and writing. The author of *Indian Boyhood* was raised in the traditional way after the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War. His father later persuaded him to study Christianity and attend medical school. David Martinez explores Eastman's views on the U.S.-Dakota War, Dakota and Ojibwe relations, Dakota sacred history, and citizenship in the Progressive Era, claiming for him a long overdue place in America's intellectual pantheon. © 2009 by the Minnesota Historical Society. All rights reserved. Utilizing Indigenous methodologies and in-depth interviews with 25 Lakota elders aged 55-98 years, this qualitative study explored the traumatic events across the elders' life span.