

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Fall 2000

Review of *The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty* By Mario Gonzalez and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn

Rolland Dewing
Chadron State College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Dewing, Rolland, "Review of *The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty* By Mario Gonzalez and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn" (2000). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2115.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2115>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty. By Mario Gonzalez and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999. Maps, appendices, notes, sources, index. xiv + 428 pp. \$39.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

This is an insider's account of the attempt of the Oglala and Minneconjou tribes to establish the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre as a national American monument. The preface states, "This book is neither historiography, biography nor autobiography. It is what might be called a mixed genre, informal anecdotal writing of social and political history." The authors suggest this format is an attempt to present history in a more conversational and anecdotal way, allowing the story to be told against a background of federal laws and historical events that will give the reader a better understanding of Sioux culture, history, and government. The heart of the book is the diary Oglala attorney Mario Gonzalez kept during 1989-1992 when he represented the Pine Ridge Wounded Knee Survivors Association. Author Elizabeth Cook-Lynn provides a narrative interpretation of Gonzalez's diary accounts which she describes as chronicle, allowing her wide interpretive latitude.

Gonzalez, an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux tribe, gained his reputation in Indian law when he represented the Oglalas on the Black Hills claim. The University of Saskatchewan conferred on him its first Distinguished Aboriginal Lawyer Achievement Award in 1995. He is currently attorney general of the Kickapoo tribe in Kansas.

Cook-Lynn—novelist, poet, founder of the *Wicazo Sa Review*, and professor emerita of English and Native American Studies at Eastern Washington University—is an enrolled member of the Crow Creek Sioux tribe. Her *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner* (1996) won the Gustav Meyer Award for Human Rights. She resides in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Gonzalez and Lynn-Cook see the world through a pro-Indian lens. Tribal sovereignty and Indian self-determination must be asserted against an ever-encroaching United States government. "A colonial government whose main government principle is theft is what Lakotas say has confronted them from the beginning of their relationship with the United States," Lynn-Cook claims, maintaining as well that "the crisis in Indian leadership can be confronted only if the legitimacy of tribal government is acknowledged." Most Indian history, the authors hold, has been written from the viewpoint of white historians.

These issues, along with internal Sioux politics, define the impasse over the proposed Wounded Knee national historic site. By 1991, after serving five years as the representative for the Pine Ridge Wounded Knee Survivors Association, a frustrated Gonzalez exclaimed in his diary, "I still find it difficult to understand why Indian people are so hard to please." By then a mountain of seemingly irreconcilable differences had blocked the proposed national historic site at Wounded Knee. These included a desire by the Minneconjou of Standing Rock for a second memorial on their reservation since those buried in the mass grave were Minneconjou; the residents of the community of Wounded Knee's insistence that they control the project rather than the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council; and the Sioux demand that the 1890 tragedy be interpreted as "a crime against humanity for which the United States must be indicted."

Gonzalez and Cook-Lynn include a 132-page appendix and over forty pages of notes. Both are of great value. James Mooney's *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (1896), unfortunately, is not included.

Anyone interested in contemporary American Indian affairs can profit greatly from this book.

ROLLAND DEWING
Department of History
Chadron State College