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## Review of *Voices of Wounded Knee* By William S. E. Coleman

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*Voices of Wounded Knee*. By William S. E. Coleman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. xxvi + 434 pp. \$35.00.

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.

The heartbreaking words of Black Elk and the tragic events at Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, in December of 1890, became widely known through Dee Brown's 1971 best-selling *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Less than two years later "the Knee" once more topped newspaper headlines as members of the American Indian Movement seized the trading post and Catholic Church in Wounded Knee Village, just above the hill where the victims of the 1890 massacre lay buried in a mass grave, and began a seventy-one-day standoff with Federal Marshals and the National Guard. The odds in 1973 were as impossible as the first time, but the occupation demonstrated the symbolic importance of Wounded Knee for the Lakota people.

William S. E. Coleman met Ben Black Elk, son of Black Elk, in the summer 1971. "My ancestors were desperate," the old man said with reference to the message of Short Bull,

Kicking Bear, Good Thunder, and other Ghost Dance visionaries. This meeting near Mount Rushmore sent Coleman off on three decades of archival research with the aim of bringing together all of the available sources (though missing Will H. Spindler's account)—Lakota, military, and civilian—in *Voices of Wounded Knee*.

Coleman makes full use of the Ricker, Brennan, and Campbell collections as well as the testimony of Short Bull. The letter of Pvt. Walter R. Crickett is another important source. Through these and numerous other sources Coleman traces the chain of events leading to the killing of Sitting Bull, the escape into the Dakota Badlands, and the capture of Big Foot's band of Miniconjous. We can "hear" the tension between soldiers and Indian warriors moments before the first fatal shot and the subsequent massacre of fleeing Indians, mostly women and children.

This compilation and chronological arrangement of statements gives perspective on details as well as adding to a general understanding of the vicious circles or acceleration of the conflict. It does not, however, resolve the problem of contradicting testimonies. Methodologically, one can always raise objections to the merging of sources near in time and space with reminiscences recorded years and decades later. Compared to Coleman's achievement these reservations are minor, however. *Voices of Wounded Knee* is a great and important book.

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