

The following is an excerpt from Wynne Alexander's book, from a section discussing Native American Rights and how they were lost at the hands of oppressors who claimed the entire continent was lost...

GET IT FROM THE DRUMS

**A History of Civil Rights, Protest and
Protest Songs of the 1960s and 70s**

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" The Civil Rights Movement woke up the thoughts of many people who had been just accepting the way things were. They didn't question much.

But the Civil Rights Movement's strides gave birth, hope and momentum to the Peace Movement. Most experts believe the Anti-War Movement would never have been so successful without the groundwork and lessons taught by the Civil Rights Movement. It also helped start the Women's movement. It highlighted the on-going Native American struggle for justice and civil rights. And it gave many Americans the idea to question how the Native Americans had been treated since the white settlers arrived here.

**How did white America get all this land ?
Was America really discovered ?
Was it ever lost ?
The Native Americans were already here.
They weren't lost.
They knew exactly where they were.
Knew exactly where their homes and hunting lands were.
They knew exactly where the lakes, streams and sacred places of worship were.
What or who was "lost" ?
What, therefore, was "discovered" ?**

**If a stranger comes into your house and discovers where you keep your money, that doesn't
mean your money was lost.**

**And it certainly doesn't mean the money is theirs.
But that's basically what happened here.**

The Native Americans were here, living their lives, sharing food and resources with visiting Europeans and then the tables were turned. Over a period of time, they're herded off their property, often taken by force. They're sent thousands of miles away to camps and reservations. They cannot live the way they used to anymore. Valuable lands taken away, just like that. Ways of finding and preparing food all changed and no one was asked. Their culture and spirituality was degraded, criticized and denied. Talk about racism, they've been and still are subject to one of the longer negative propaganda campaigns ever. The case could be made that U.S. racism against Native Americans is unprecedented.

In 2005, Massachusetts still had a law on the books banning Indians from entering the city of Boston.

The legislature and Governor were trying to figure out how to get it off the books at this late date. Even the term "Indian giver" is a racist, insulting slap in the face. A foul phrase impugning the character of Indians by implying they do not keep their word. When the fact is they are victims of hundreds of broken treaties by a power structure full of people who did not keep *their* word.

All of this came to a rolling boil in an incident that occurred in 1973 at a place called Wounded Knee. It's named for the creek in Shannon County, South Dakota. Named for the Wounded Knee Creek where Sioux Chief Crazy Horse's family buried his remains. Chief Crazy Horse was a valiant, visionary warrior who did not want his people to succumb to the unfair takeover of Indian lands. Wounded Knee was a Native American stand for fixing what was wrong in their communities. It was a stand against what had been done to Native Americans for far too long. This protest addressed local issues about housing and safety. There were also points of long-standing concern. The American Indian Movement wanted review of hundreds of treaties the United States government broke with various Indian tribes. Also on the table was the way Indian matters were being handled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. What began as a take-over became an occupation, then a siege. The stand-off lasted 71 days, cost the lives of two protesters, eventually involving the Feds, Richard Nixon's White House and all Native American hands on deck.

All of this made all the more pertinent and poignant by the fact that Wounded Knee was also the sight of an infamous 1890 Massacre. This tragedy at the hands of the U-S Calvary, resulted in the killing of approximately 300 Indians including women and children. The root causes then, are extremely similar to the causes of the 1973 tragedy. According to United States General Nelson A. Miles, the government had failed to give promised supplies of food, they forced the sale of the tribes' best horses, and "They [the Indians] signed away a valuable portion of their reservation, and it is now occupied by white people, for which they have received nothing." That sums it up neatly.

By the way, those words were contained in field dispatches from 1890. You may want to see them for yourself at www.dickshovel.com and search under General Miles or General Scott.

Buffy Sainte-Marie wrote one of the finest protest songs ever written about this incident, it's called Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee.

Very often politicians and social leaders like to claim the "moral high ground".

When we look back at this country's treatment of Native Americans, it is morally unjust and completely corrupt. It is indefensible. And because of this historic reality, there are serious problems today. Health and health care, education, housing, financial stability and social strength and mobility are all troubled areas for these people trying to emerge from enslavement and a forced denial of their very essence.

But the Native American movement has had great leaders over the years and improvements are being made. Today the work and leadership of Sequoyah and Tecumseh are joined by the work of the late Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, Russell Means, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Suzan Shown Harjo, Dennis Banks, John Trudell, et al.

The reassertion of Native American culture continues its burgeoning. An appreciation of the beauty and strength of that culture has been growing in non-native communities as well. There are many Americans of all colors and ethnic backgrounds who are thankful for and revere the ethics and teachings of Native Americans. They are enlightened by the policies respecting the Earth, the fabulous art work, music, philosophies and wisdom."