

Praise for *Injustice in Indian Country*

“In *Injustice in Indian Country*, Amy L. Casselman reveals that the long, ugly and ignoble history of violence against indigenous people is not over, but continues today in the form of rampant sexual violence by non-Native men against Native women. These rarely prosecuted assaults are not the product of aberrant acts by isolated individuals, but rather reflect the cumulative consequences of centuries of legal, social, and administrative policies and practices designed to protect white men from accountability for victimizing Native women. Drawing deftly on ideas and analyses developed by a wide range of indigenous feminist activists and scholars and their allies, Casselman makes an astute and sophisticated case for a comprehensive decolonial and intersectional politics grounded in the direct experiences and articulated aspirations of Native women.”

—George Lipsitz, Author of *How Racism Takes Place*

“One of the most significant roles of sovereign nations is to protect the safety of its citizens. This important new work looks deeply into the dynamics of legal and sexual violence created by federal Indian policy. It reframes our understanding of the gendered nature of colonial violence in a poignant and compelling narrative. The author’s engaging outline of decolonial frameworks developed by American Indian women makes an essential contribution to anti-violence movements.”

—Donna Martinez, Professor and Chair, Ethnic Studies, University of Colorado Denver

“Amy L. Casselman’s *Injustice in Indian Country* is a stunning account of one of the most serious yet under-theorized public health crises in the United States. Identifying American colonialism as the most significant pathogen in Indian country, Casselman’s moving narrative shows how the egregious practices of the United States don’t just contribute to, but in fact cause violence against American Indian women. In demonstrating how criminal jurisdiction impacts mental, physical, and community health, the author brilliantly weaves together personal accounts, political analysis, and modern-day activism, giving us all hope that despite this crisis, justice is possible.”

—Alann Salvador, Program Director, Kedren Health

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Book Review

Amy L Casselman (2016) *Injustice in Indian Country: Jurisdiction, American Law, and Sexual Violence Against Native Women*. Critical Indigenous and American Indian Studies Vol. 1, Jolivette A (ed.). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

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Sexual violence against Native, Indigenous, First Nations, and Aboriginal women is a systemic, historical, contemporary and global problem. In the United States of America, the sexual violence of Native American Indian (Native) women is embedded in tribal and governmental history, and continues to remain entrenched in current policy. Through developing an understanding of the timeline of colonization, relocation and genocide that coincide with official treaties between Native American nations and tribes recognised by the United States federal government and that government, we begin to understand how sexual violence was used as an instrument of war by colonists, and how history constructed a definition of Native women as rapeable. This triggered, and is further complicated by, sovereignty conflicts, vague and oppressive jurisdictional guidelines, and the leveraging of privileged racial status in the commission of male-on-female aggression. For these reasons, numerous acts of sexual violence against Native women by non-Native men remain unprosecuted and perpetrators of such acts continue to escape consequence, while their victims are denied justice.

Injustice in Indian Country pursues justice for Native American Indian women and contributes to the diverse narratives of indigenous people globally. The book's main objective is to expose how the ongoing sexual violence against Native women is rooted in a historical and colonial context. Through unveiling the convoluted intersectionality of gender, tribal identity, rural location and multi-layered considerations of jurisdiction, this work identifies and clarifies an intensive angle of a social problem: non-Native men not being held legally accountable for sexual violence against Native women. It furthermore proposes solid, workable solutions to help reduce violence against indigenous women, beginning with more accurate education, continuing with actions which constantly involve the Native women themselves, and ending with legislation that is written, approved, and carried out by, and with equal involvement of, both the federal government and Native American Indian contribution and consideration.

The book's author, Amy L Casselman, offers perspectives from her position as an 'outsider-on-the-inside' in her duties as a case worker for the Native American Washoe Tribe, and also from her position as an 'insider-on-the-outside', as a Native activist struggling to find ways to navigate the numerous, complex government institutions on behalf of Native women. These distinctive roles that are intimate with Native culture, in conjunction with her role as a professor of Ethnic Studies, uniquely position the author to offer a well-rounded yet meticulous view of the intricacies of the current and ongoing crisis which exists due to violence against Native women.

The author draws from, and expands upon, leading and groundbreaking research in various arenas across the academic spectrum in an eloquent interweaving of the scholarships of feminism, differential consciousness, violence against women, intersectionality, history, government, policy, ethics and social science. Common assumptions are bravely challenged throughout the text. Traditional research that tempers colonialism and paternalism is dissected for examination. Liberal assumptions that persuade the federal government to be more conscientious of Native culture is courageously shelved as Casselman calls, instead, for tribal sovereignty and voice, to be held in equally high regard and status as federal, state and local law. She does not hesitate to question conventional one-dimensional theories in her pursuit of justice.

Injustice in Indian Country fills a gap in the scholarship of violence against Native women by showing the complex weaving of such issues and how they exacerbate this social problem by historically analyzing federal law and policy as it applies to indigenous and sovereign Indian country. Frequently, research in the area of indigenous peoples holds a heavy focus and concentration in legal case studies. Relatively few studies focus on the sexual violence against Native women. Even fewer still offer such an in-depth historical context that allows us to understand the present day difficulties and challenges of prosecuting these crimes. Casselman critically analyzes law to find the causes of jurisdictional conflicts, remains steadfastly focused on Native people, and lends active voice to female Native survivors of sexual assault perpetrated by non-Native males.

Throughout the entire text, there is an underlying emphasis of the respect and necessity of personal agency. Casselman stresses this concept by informing us that sharing one's journey is essential to many tribal women, because reverence to storytelling is often a sacred tradition. Self-determination strategies are introduced and suggested as a springboard for legitimacy in creating law. Clarifications are made between 'true justice' and simple 'reparation'. The women in this book are represented as survivors and active fighters of power, rather than the passive protagonist victims of their own stories.

The implications of clarifying complicated intersectionality, incorporating historical context of colonization, and unveiling what crime statistics alone cannot, are immense. By adding this vast amount of knowledge to our arsenal in the resolution of the social problem of violence against women, we can provide Native women a voice in the fight. Those wishing to follow in Casselman's path-breaking footsteps may be interested in applying similar investigations and strategies to the scholarship of Native American women who are located in areas not governmentally sanctioned as tribal lands and, indeed, indigenous women worldwide. Others may want to build on the foundation set by the book, by applying the concepts to Native-on-Native sexual violence against women, or same-sex Native sexual assaults.

In sum, Injustice in Indian Country is a critical analysis of United States federal government's Indian policy and the multi-faceted ways that such treaties continue to encourage and oppress Native women. Casselman does an exceptional job of spelling out this complicated issue through her easy-to-read, yet intellectually profound, research. This book is a fabulous contribution to any scholar's or student's study of indigenous people, violence against women, history, social work or public policy. It is especially significant to those interested in the emerging field of indigenous criminology, and is simply a must-read!

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