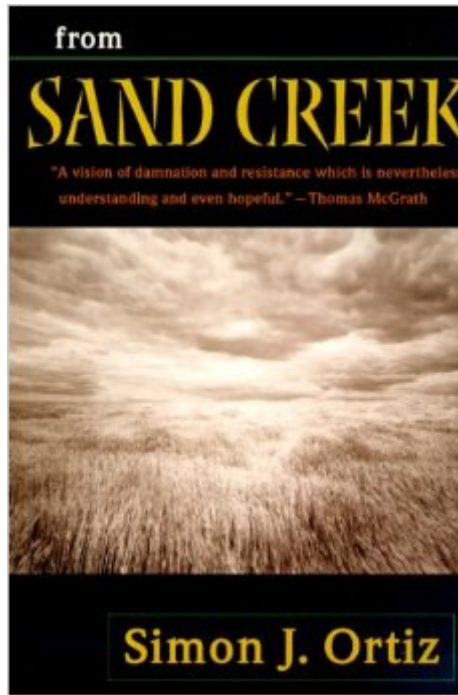


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# From Sand Creek (Sun Tracks)



## Synopsis

The massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho women and children by U.S. soldiers at Sand Creek in 1864 was a shameful episode in American history, and its battlefield was proposed as a National Historic Site in 1998 to pay homage to those innocent victims. Poet Simon Ortiz had honored those people seventeen years earlier in his own way. That book, from Sand Creek, is now back in print. Originally published in a small-press edition, from Sand Creek makes a large statement about injustices done to Native peoples in the name of Manifest Destiny. It also makes poignant reference to the spread of that ambition in other parts of the world— notably in Vietnam— as Ortiz asks himself what it is to be an American, a U.S. citizen, and an Indian. Indian people have often felt they have had no part in history, Ortiz observes, and through his work he shows how they can come to terms with this feeling. He invites Indian people to examine the process they have experienced as victims, subjects, and expendable resources— and asks people of European heritage to consider the motives that drive their own history and create their own form of victimization. Through the pages of this sobering work, Ortiz offers a new perspective on history and on America. Perhaps more important, he offers a breath of hope that our peoples might learn from each other: This America has been a burden of steel and mad death, but, look now, there are flowers and new grass and a spring wind rising from Sand Creek.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In November 1864 in Colorado Territory a village of Cheyenne and Arapaho was savagely

assaulted by the Colorado Volunteers under the leadership of the Reverend Colonel Chivington. Ortiz calls to mind this event in prose, and then offers on the facing page poetry of hope and renewal. That is how this remarkable book begins. Throughout the book, the author (one of the best American poets writing today) pairs poems on one page with historical vignettes, personal notes, and political comments on the facing page. The book moves through alcohol treatment in VA hospitals, American mythology that undergirds a sense of mission, episodes in Indian-white relations, and many other such topics. In this work Ortiz builds toward a vision of America that is political committed, spiritually centered, and humanizing. He expresses this vision in full knowledge and acceptance of the awful truths of patterns of mistreatment and oppression. Unlike so much of the patriotism that is rooted in a "my country right or wrong" attitude, Ortiz writes as an Acoma Pueblo Indian and US citizen who loves this country deeply for what it can be. I came to this book a number of years ago full of anger and cynicism developing as a result of learning the history that had been suppressed from the school curriculum. I had always been deeply patriotic, but was finding the truth might shatter that. Ortiz offered more evidence of the lies, but placed these facts in a framework of a dream "of love and compassion and knowledge" (96). No book has done more for the development of my sense of myself as a white American. From my point of view this book is simply the best book in print (and it was out of print for several years).

There are not many Native American authors and this book brought tears to my eyes. He is an excellent author bringing reality that is not well known (Sand Creek Annihilation) to the reader in a most unique way. I suggest everyone get this book and understand what the Native Americans have suffered in the past and yet today suffer some of the same atrocities. Simon J. Ortiz, my hat is off to you, keep them coming and readers, if you do not have this book, I suggest you get it.

But you better be prepared to have your heart broken by this reporting of the quiet horror that has defined the experience of Native Americans since the genocidal fury of the European Invasion began. This is gorgeous minimalist poetry dealing with existential issues that I could not read for very long without weeping and having to put it down for another day. When I think about the lies I was taught in school: The Winning of the West, Manifest Destiny, all of it, I am disgusted with my white compatriots and have only a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for Ortiz and so many others who have managed to respond from such a compassionate but relentlessly clear-eyed place. Thankfully the role of the artist is to stand for truth in the face of the ignorant and uncaring status quo.

Carefully interwoven and deeply profound. Courage to write of an American history of barbarous brutality fused with a contemporary journey of insight. Spiritually, something a great poet has been able to do. Gentle and haunting. Profound and powerful. Reflective and word-painted with the kind of deep down sorrow I can not put into words.

Some of the absolute best poetry I have ever read. The poems are finely crafted and honed, thoughtful and provocative. Simon Ortiz breathes real life into these stanza; not one word is wasted or out of place. Moreover, there is profound meaning in the work. Read this book; it will change you.

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