ForeWord Reviews

LITERARY COLLECTIONS

The Winona LaDuke Reader: A Collection of Essential Writings
Winona LaDuke
Voyageur Press
978-0-89658-573-7
(March 2002)

In this book, the author re-emphasizes her serious

commitment to "the cause." LaDuke is a mother, a writer, a Bear Clan Anishinaabe from the White Earth Reservation, twice a vice-presidential candidate for Ralph Nader, and an ecological advocate. She is well informed on a variety of subjects, from the politics of wild rice, mining, logging rights, and tribal activism to dams, nuclear storage, and abuse of treaty rights. This work exhibits a relentless social conscience, evident in the selection "Honor The Earth Tour Journal," where she percusses the stops along the tour with poignant, and at times tragic, remembrances of people struggling with their life and culture: "Diane Olsen, a 32-year-old mother of four children, was found frozen with a bullet in her head. She was a White Earth enrollee… I cannot stop thinking of Diane Olsen." Even in the midst of great music and camaraderie, (touring with the Indigo girls, with appearances by Joy Harjo's band and the group Ulali), LaDuke's driving need-to seek out the disenfranchised and the abused and to speak out about them-doesn't rest.

The writing is very direct, clear, and precise; the words are not flowery; the points are not vague. Using her broad command of language to make her case, LaDuke is a welcome advocate for the voiceless: the land, elders, minorities, etc. She includes a foreword by Nader, her acceptance speech as Green Party vice-presidential candidate, an excerpt from the novel Last Standing Woman regarding repatriation, and several poems.

In regards to the Yucca mountain nuclear storage site, she writes: "The Shoshone Nation-site of the U.S. Nevada nuclear testing facility… The Shoshone suffer from widespread cancer, leukemia, and other diseases because of fallout from more than 600 atomic explosions in their territory. To add to this is outlandish injustice." LaDuke quotes Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) "God made Yucca Mountain for the express purpose of storing high level nuclear waste. There's nothing within 100 miles of the place." Which leads one to ask, where did the Indians go? The answer is, they didn't go anywhere.

This is essential reading for anyone interested in social justice and ecological integrity.

In her essay “Like Tributaries to a River,” LaDuke writes: “After centuries of attempts to remove us from our land, we are still here. We are not about to go away.”

Gabrielle Shaw