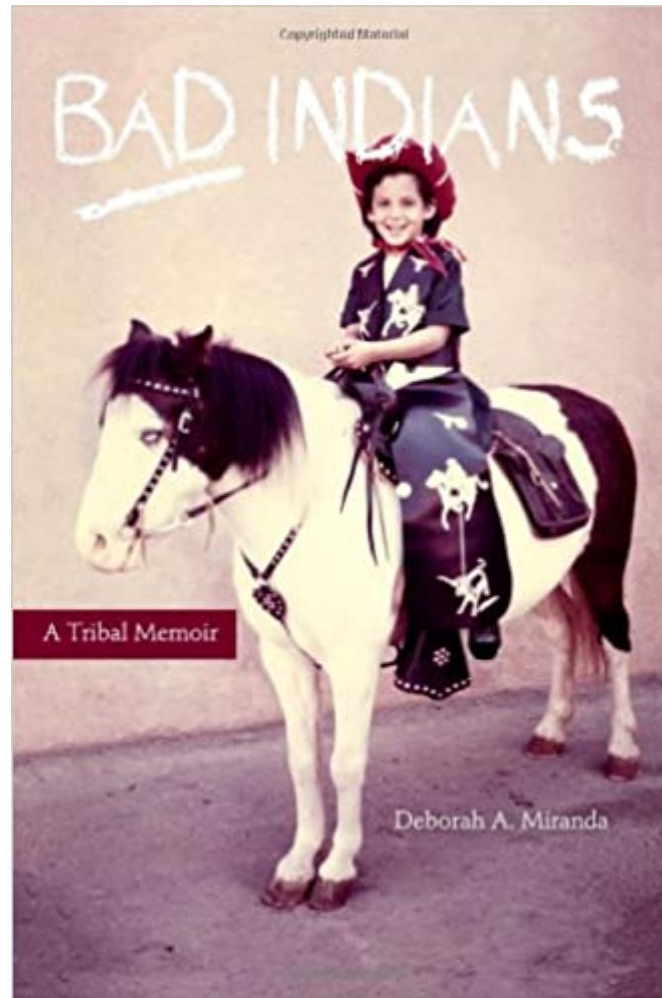




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# Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir



## Synopsis

Winner of the PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles Literary Award This beautiful and devastating book--part tribal history, part lyric and intimate memoir--should be required reading for anyone seeking to learn about California Indian history, past and present. Deborah A. Miranda tells stories of her Ohlone Costanoan Esselen family as well as the experience of California Indians as a whole through oral histories, newspaper clippings, anthropological recordings, personal reflections, and poems. The result is a work of literary art that is wise, angry, and playful all at once, a compilation that will break your heart and teach you to see the world anew.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Heyday; First Edition edition (January 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1597142018

ISBN-13: 978-1597142014

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.7 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #19,534 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Native American](#) #143 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Cultural](#) #198 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local](#)

## Customer Reviews

Miranda is a poet and English professor whose father was a member of the Ohlone Castanoan Esselen tribe of California Indians. She realized early on that the history traditionally taught to California fourth-graders, the "California mission mythology and gold rush fantasy," described California Indians only through their conquest, subjugation, defeat, and disappearance. This clarifying compilation of old government documents, BIA forms, field notes like those written by Smithsonian ethnologist J. P. Harrington in the 1930s, diaries of explorers and priests, family stories, photos, and newspaper articles, all tied together with Miranda's own poems, is her attempt to correct that one-dimensional, untrue depiction of what her ancestors experienced. She begins with the missionization years, 1770 to 1836, the "great holocaust," when the indigenous population in California dropped from one million to 20,000. The years 1836 to 1900 bring reports of slavery and bounty hunters; then, throughout the twentieth century, California

Indians gradually lost their language, culture, and identity. Miranda's is an emotional, powerfully told story that contributes greatly to her goal of "killing the lies" about her people. --Deborah Donovan

"Essential for all of us who were taught in school that the 'Mission Indians' no longer existed in California, *Bad Indians* combines tribal and family histories, tape recordings, and the writings of a white ethnologist who spoke with Miranda's family, together with photographs, old reports from the mission priests to their bishops, and newspaper articles concerning Indians from the nearby white settlements. Miranda takes us on a journey to locate herself by way of the stories of her ancestors and others who come alive through her writing. It's such a fine book that a few words can't do it justice."--Leslie Marmon Silko, author of *Ceremony* and *The Turquoise Ledge*

"*Bad Indians* brings the human story of California's indigenous community sharply into focus. It's a narrative long obscured and distorted by celebrations of Christian missionaries and phony stories about civilization coming to a golden land. No other history of California's indigenous communities that I know of presents such a moving, personal account of loss and survival."--Frederick E. Hoxie, Swanlund Professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

"For so long, Native writers and readers have opened books of our tribal history, archaeology, or anthropology and found that it is not the story we know. It does not include the people we know. It does not tell the stories of the heart or the relationships that were, and are, significant in any time. When we write our own books, they do not fit the 'record,' as created by and confirmed by outside views. From the voice of the silenced, the written about and not written by, this book is groundbreaking not only as literature but as history."--Linda Hogan, author of *Rounding the Human Corners* and a faculty member for the Indigenous Education Institute

Growing up in California, in the Bay Area, I went through the educational system here and reached adulthood thinking that all the indigenous people who used to occupy the land in my backyard were gone. But a few years ago, there was a news story about the response to a small notice placed in a local newspaper announcing a construction project on the site of an old Indian burial ground. 5000 people showed up. I was surprised. Then I was ashamed to be part of this lie, to have believed that they were no longer around and we could just sit in our backyards without a thought of who we robbed to get this land. Deborah Miranda's book, *Bad Indians*, brings the truth of the Bay Area genocide to light. And it lights up the story with the impact of the settler brutality on her and her family going back more generations than any settler group could ever imagine. It is a story that

should be required reading for every Californian and every school child.

An incredible read that grabs and doesn't let go. I'll say first off that you should block off time for this book--it's not something you should read in multiple sittings, and you honestly won't want to read it that way. Miranda defies genre as she mashes together archival sourced-history with personal memoir with tribal history with poetry with essay with visual work. Her rich writing--and oh my GOD is it rich, it's so beautiful--really makes the story she's telling all the more rich and vivid. It's also incredibly accessible, and really important for people to read. I'd strongly recommend this to anyone looking to learn more about the ongoing effects of settler colonialism and the logics of elimination that accompany it

Real life stories told to the author by people whose families knew the true story of an Indian in the mission era and repeated to the generations after them. Also research is not out of musty records kept by Friars, who may have altered their situations to reflect more favorable upon themselves. The Friars historical writings are believed by even the most educated who do not question the written record. The Indian side of the story is in many cases the repeat of actual events as they actually happened. This way information is passed down to the generations. Author is a little chatty, but information she reveals is informative and is the dark side of missionary "progress" in 1700s in California.

This is a beautifully written, and an astonishingly intimate telling of personal history, set in the context of the unsettling story of the writer's ancestors. The California Indians were brutally mistreated, and their culture, history, and land dismembered. Ms. Miranda compels us to end our denial, and to make an accounting for the deep and lasting harm.

Book lover's book!

This is a beautifully written and extremely important book. Anybody looking for a truthful Native Californian voice should read it.

Fantastic read, the right way to learn about the California missions!

Every indigenous and non indigenous woman should give this book a chance. If anything, you will

cry a good cry, or laugh a great laugh. This book really touches subjects no one else would have guts to go to but Miranda did. Courage.

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