

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

We Are Meant to Rise: Voices for Justice from Minneapolis to the World

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5dh5t5dc>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 47(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Liebler, Carolyn

Publication Date

2024-07-10

DOI

10.17953/A3.24888

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

We Are Meant to Rise: Voices for Justice from Minneapolis to the World. Edited by Carolyn Holbrook and David Mura. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021. 223 pages. \$18.95 paper.

Through the voices of more than thirty Minnesotans, this anthology gives visceral testimony about life in Minneapolis for Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC people). Editors Carolyn Holbrook and David Mura build off a series of panel discussions held by More than a Single Story (<https://morethanasinglestory.com/>), a community organization founded by Holbrook in Minneapolis. Many of the book's contributors are on the staff or advisory council of this organization, whose mission is "to provide public conversations with and for diverse voices that have long been marginalized. [They] focus on public discourse and provide a forum for cross-cultural understanding."

Chapters of *We Are Meant to Rise* are brief and vary widely in format, including memoirs, poems, reflections, rants, and family histories. What they have in common is the generosity and power of their messages. Many of the pieces bear witness to the events in 2020 in Minneapolis and surrounding areas during and after the murder of George Floyd, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Others bring deeper context by discussing, for example, childhood experiences of racism, interracial adoption, trauma surrounding money, and sacred truths.

The contributing authors are as varied as the topics and format. The reader hears from, for example, Indigenous people; a descendant of slaves; a new immigrant; a child of immigrants; a refugee; multiracial people; internationally or transracially adopted people; Muslim, Hmong, and/or queer people. This diversity in form, topic, and perspective works to shape an increasing sense that Minnesota has a much richer complexity than is usually represented.

At least five of the contributing authors are Ojibwe or Dakota (tribes indigenous to Minnesota), giving a much-needed American Indian emphasis to the testimony. For many generations, Native people have been subject to innumerable oppressions, and have risen to fight in every way they can think of. Mona Susan Power (Standing Rock Sioux), in a powerful chapter titled "The Courage to Hold Together, the Courage to Fall Apart," bears witness to these twin forces in her ancestral line and her own experiences healing from personal and intergenerational traumas: "We are the generation that heals old wounds, not only to restore the health and stability our tribal nation once possessed but also to give us strength and endurance to transform an ailing world" (58).

In her chapter "Healers Are Protectors/Protectors Are Healers," Marcie Rendon (White Earth Nation) continues the theme, reminding us that, for American Indian people, "this is not our first pandemic, and it certainly isn't our first war" (108).

Drawing on generations of experiences, Rendon traces histories of traumatic removal of children through policies of boarding school and adoption, as well as the purposeful destruction of the clan system by capitalist interests. In keeping with the themes of this book, Rendon traces today's health and social issues in Indian country to these and other ordeals, urging Native people to reach for culturally grounded paths to healing.

When George Floyd called for his mama, Dakota writer Diane Wilson (Rosebud) says in her chapter "We Are All Summoned" that he reminded us that he is someone's child. Wilson's essay focuses on the powerful force of a mother's love and its enduring motivation for activism and protest. By the end of the essay, she expands the scope to motivate her call to rebuild our relationships with our Earth mother.

Anishinaabe and Euro-American writer Melissa Olson (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe) shares "Let Me Tell You a Story," which gives a detailed rendering of the chaos in Minneapolis after Floyd's murder. Among the wreckage of the Third Precinct neighborhood was Migizi Communications' building, which held their legacy radio archive that had not yet been digitized into a permanent form. This valuable archive of Migizi's First Person Radio program holds mostly news stories of American Indian activism (American Indian Movement, Red Power, civil rights, treaty rights, and the like) from the 1970s. Olson's essay recounts the harrowing travels of the archive in 2020, finally stored safely at a local university library.

The book ends with "Humility, Sincerity, and Banana Oil," Louise Erdrich's (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians) entrancing narrative remembering her grandfather, Pat Gourneau. With ceaseless work and a special affinity for jokes, Gourneau was a tribal leader for the Turtle Mountain Band during the termination era. His humility, sincerity, and judicious use of banana oil was instrumental in stopping the termination of the Turtle Mountain Band, which inspired other tribal nations to redouble their efforts against termination.

We Are Meant to Rise is dedicated to the memories of George Floyd, Philando Castile, and so many others who lost their lives to police violence in Minnesota. This book could be read in tandem with another provocative anthology of writings by Minnesotan BIPOC individuals, *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*, published in 2016 by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. The writing is accessible for undergraduates and the educated public, and it will deepen any reader's understanding of being BIPOC and living with racism in a predominantly white place such as Minnesota.

Carolyn Liebler
University of Minnesota