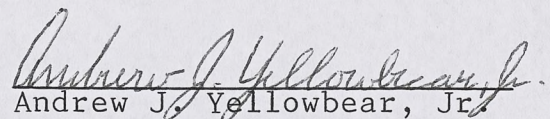


I have had fifteen years to observe, first hand, the American justice system and its treatment of the original inhabitants of this continent. I am an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

I wish that I could report that things are going well and that Native Americans, and our legal issues, are fairing no worse than non-Indians and theirs. Unfortunately; no such account is forthcoming, instead the current state of affairs on this front reads more like the ever familiar plot of a cheap dime store Cowboys & Indians novel. A plot in which the Cowboys, non-Indians or perhaps more apropos the good guys always win. No matter the scenario or what is at stake.

It seems to me that lady justice treats my people as an unwanted or perhaps annoying house guest, from which she jealously guards justice against. She is, and has been, a hard taskmaster towards Native Americans. She demands that we have been offended by overt acts of forced colonialism centuries before we were barely grasping the meaning or workings of her system of justice, let alone the meanings or true intentions of the many treaties, acts of congress, or other laws at issue today. What is more, lady justice and the many anti-Indian interests that rely on her cavalierness, sharply rebuke us for seeking clarity on these issues or for frankly daring to remember any rights that might stem from them. Of the long line of issues that appear to offend lady justice, two in particular draw her ire: Native American sovereignty and our traditional religious beliefs. Both of which it appears must be begrudgingly spoon-fed to us by both the federal and state governments.

No, for us there is no justice, only the illusion of justice. I posit the noble quote that is affixed over the doors to our nations highest court "Equal Justice Under The Law" be altered to reflect the historic and current situation "Unless You Are Native American."

  
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