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Part One of a Trilogy of Middle-Grade Historical Fiction

Native American History and Empowerment

Women and Girls Empowerment

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Red Dove, Listen to the Wind
Book One of the *Red Dove Trilogy*

1890, and the vast prairies of the Dakota Territory are empty of the buffalo that once sustained the people. Thirteen-year-old Red Dove faces a stark choice: leave her Lakota home to live in the white man's world her father came from, or stay, and watch her family starve.

On the long, dusty trail between her village and the fort, she breaks a sacred tradition and eats the fruit of the Dead Man's Plum Bush. Her grandfather, wise in the ways of her people, gives her a medicine pouch that allows her to enter the thoughts and feelings of others—and truly listen. With it, she confronts the cruelties of the nun at the boarding school, and the horrors of the massacre at Wounded Knee.

With her beloved pony, she begins a journey across the Great Plains to find her true place in the world—and learns that her greatest power comes from within herself.



Red Dove, Listen to the Wind was inspired by the life of Zitkala-Sa and is dedicated to my Goddaughter, Lily Spotted Elk, descendant of the man who led his people at Wounded Knee. Her parents, Calvin and Michelle Spotted Elk, Native activists, as well as Linda Six Feathers, Oglala Lakota, and Mary Puthoff, Lakota educator and director of the Society of American Indians, have all worked with me to make the novel as historically accurate as possible.



Of Swiss, British and Syro-Lebanese ancestry, **Sonia Antaki** was born in Egypt and came to the U.S. as a child. Before discovering her passion for middle grade and young adult fiction, she had several careers—as a professional singer, a financial analyst, a Tony-nominated Broadway producer and an advocate for the Arts and Native traditions. She and her amazing dog Ziggy live in California.

Rachel Jagareski, ForeWord Reviews:

Red Dove is the adolescent heroine of this thoughtful historical novel for middle grade readers set in the Dakota Territory in 1890-91. She is the daughter of a white settler and a Lakota Sioux mother, though she and her half-brother Walks Alone live with their mother and clan. Times are hard for the Lakota now that buffalo and other game are scarce, and they face starvation if they can't obtain more food for the long winter ahead.

Rebuffed and attacked in the nearby market town when they bring beaded items for trade, Red Dove and her mother walk back to their village hungry. There, Red Dove stealthily eats forbidden fruit from a plum tree sheltering the grave of a fallen warrior. This act gives her guilt-ridden dreams and convinces her family to send Red Dove and Walks Alone away to a missionary-run boarding school, where they face many challenges, from harsh punishments to obliteration of their traditional dress, language, and customs.

Characters from many backgrounds, including nuns, Lakota ghost dancers, Irish American soldiers, pioneer orphans, and schoolteachers introduce a variety of stories about the settlement of the American West. References to the Battle of the Little Bighorn (Battle of the Greasy Grass) and the massacre at Wounded Knee also shed light on these historical events from both Washichu (white) and Native American perspectives, and offer launching points for further discussion and research. (The ugly, un-Wonderful vitriol of Oz author L. Frank Baum is one such eye-opener.) Author Sonia Antaki does not shy away from depicting scenes of brutality and violence, but she also shows how some characters develop their bigotry from their own experiences with cruelty.

Antaki mixes in elements of Native American mythology and spirituality in this otherwise straightforward retelling of the clash of cultures. While away at school, Red Dove receives guidance from visions of her beloved grandfather and is also able to perceive events through others' eyes by touching her opahte (a pouch containing her dried umbilical cord). Frequent use of Lakota vocabulary, defined in a rear glossary, also effectively situates Red Dove's heritage in the story.

There is deep meaning tucked into Red Dove's story of transformation. As she navigates her trying adolescence and life away from her family, she also learns what it means to truly "travel between worlds," how to deeply listen to and develop empathy for others, and how to advocate for greater justice for her community. When Red Dove chafes against the gender restrictions of her own culture ("You're not supposed to hunt. It's not our way."), Antaki also touches on the question of whether longstanding customs and ideas should be reevaluated among traditional societies.

Red Dove is as full of ideas as it is of action. It is a lively, sensitive portrayal of a young woman who traverses cultures at a pivotal time in history.

Midwest Book Review:

“An exceptionally well written novel for young readers ages 9-14 that showcases author Sonia Antaki’s distinctive flair for narrative storytelling, “Red Dove: Listen to the Wind” is an especially recommended addition to school and community library collections. It should be noted for personal reading lists that “Red Dove: Listen to the Wind” is also available in a digital book format.”

Mary Puthoff, Educator and Program Specialist***Title VI American Indian Education Program:***

Red Dove is a respectful and loving portrayal of a young Lakota girl growing up during the turmoil of the late 1800’s. Her spunky and courageous nature is demonstrated in her tale of a time when all Native children were forcibly taken to boarding schools, hundreds of miles away from their home. I recommend this book as a captivating story that needs to be told to young and old alike.

C. Lee McKenzie, Author of *Alligators Overhead* and other middle-grade and young adult books:

Red Dove is a thirteen-year-old Native American girl whose father is wasichu (anglo) whom she’s never met. While she has inherited gray eyes from her father, her heritage and her heart is with her mother’s people, the Lakota.

When she’s taken from her home and put into a school operated by nuns, Red Dove must withstand harsh treatment and try to make sense of their foreign ways. Her grandfather, a powerful medicine man, has provided her with a magical pouch that allows her to see and feel what others can’t. This helps her survive, it guides her through the misery that is Wounded Knee, and even opens the eyes of those who are the cruelest and most misguided in their treatment of her.

In her journey between two very different worlds, she meets some anglos with good hearts, she discovers the truth about her father, she says farewell to her beloved grandfather, and she comes to understand that it’s up to her to find a place she belongs. This was a touching story of bravery and endurance in the face of injustice, and one that will be appreciated by young readers who have only read about the Battle at Wounded Knee in textbooks. Told from the perspective of a young Lakota girl, it makes the history of this period very real and accessible, and it sheds light on the discrimination by the white settlers toward the native people of North America. Red Dove will be a great addition to a school library.

E. Katherine Kerr, Actor, Playwright, Teacher, Seminar Leader, Author of *The Four Keys* and *The Four Principles*:

Vivid and fast-moving, this tale of a young Lakota girl struggling for her identity and life in the late 1800’s engaged me from the beginning and never let go. It’s a hero’s journey that will inspire every child, male or female, Native American or not. Plus, it is chock-full of surprises, adventures, and actual history. A great read even for an adult.

Gabi Coatsworth, author of *Tangerine Tango*:

I loved this historical novel. Red Dove, the feisty 13-year-old Lakota girl at its heart, comes to life on the page as she tries to find her place in a changing world after the battle of Wounded Knee. A gift from her grandfather comes to symbolize more than she ever imagined. She uses it to help navigate between her native culture and the world of the white man who seeks to destroy it. But she knows one day she will have to do this alone. Sonia Antaki brings this 19th century world to vivid life, and Red Dove's adventure-filled journey kept me turning the pages as I watched her coming into her own.

Lori Stewart, author of *Travels with JJ* and other award-winning books:

A rich and utterly captivating portrayal of a transitional time in our nation's history, and in a brave and spirited Lakota girl's young life. Growing up in the Dakota Territory during the time of Wounded Knee, Antaki's Red Dove must learn to travel between worlds – preserving the cultural values, memories and traditions of her tribal Lakota upbringing, while finding her own promising future in the newly-white world spreading across the America west. Thoroughly researched and beautifully written, Red Dove, Listen to the Wind shines a light on history, and on the pain and possibilities that come with change. The book has an epic quality. I can only hope for more!

Maggie Hardy, author of *Sweater Weather*:

Red Dove is the girl we all wanted to be, when we were growing up. Although Red Dove's story, *Listen to the Wind*, takes place 130 years ago and is set against the battle of Wounded Knee, the thirteen-year-old Latoka girl is a modern day heroine and role model. She is not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Stubborn and proud, Red Dove is continually caught between two worlds: the white world and the native, the world of magic and realism, the just and unjust, and the past and the future. Red Dove bravely navigates her way through them. Armed with her magic pouch and her grandfather's wisdom, she learns the lessons of compassion and empathy along the way.

Coming Events

Public:

October 15, 2019, 1-3 pm,
Book Launch and Signing,
River House Books,
208 Crossroads Blvd.,
Carmel, CA 93923

October 17, 2019, 7-9 pm,
Book Launch and Signing,
Book Passage,
51 Tamal Vista Blvd.,
Corte Madera, CA 94925

November 30, 2019, 11 am-3 pm
Prairie Edge & Sioux Trading Post
606 Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

By invitation—for details, contact soniaantaki@gmail.com:

October 19, 2019
Book Launch,
The Lotos Club,
New York, NY