

Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way

Michael L. Cooper



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In 1879 eighty-four Sioux boys and girls became the inaugural group of students to be enrolled at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Carlisle was the first institution opened by the federal government for the education of Native American children. The brainchild of former Indian fighter Captain Richard Pratt, Carlisle, like other schools that followed, was established to teach Indian children the "white man's way." For some, like Olympian Jim Thorpe, Indian School led to success and prosperity, but for many others it was an education in alienation and isolation. Michael L. Cooper examines the Indian Schools and tells the personal stories, often in their own words, of several young students, including Zitkala-Sa, who wrote, "Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature, and God."

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