INDIGENOUS HOLOCAUST

INVISIBLE IN THE DATA

INVISIBLE IN THE MEDIA

INVISIBLE IN DEATH

A haunting American Holocaust is claiming new victims every day in the most frightful and dangerous way.

Out of sight and invisible, Indigenous women are statistically the most murdered members of our society, killed with such regularity that victims are ceaselessly underestimated.

Native American women are allowed to disappear three times, advocates charge: in life, in the media and in the data. It is like they never existed. They did exist. Data is shocking.

Hundreds of law enforcement agencies have no category for Native American crime victims and lump them in with White women. Hundreds of known murder victims and disappeared women appear in no law enforcement records whatsoever.

No law enforcement or Native American advocates will even take an educated guess at how many women have been killed or disappeared in recent years. All fear the number is staggering, but no one is counting.

Were it not for a single DOJ study of the problem we would have no empirical evidence to describe a problem that we know anecdotally exists on a horrifying scale.

Indiana Senator Lisa Murkowski and Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto are members of a bipartisan group of lawmakers concerned about America’s missing and murdered Indigenous women. They introduced the “Not Invisible Act” this month in an effort to bring forward meaningful recommendations from law enforcement, tribal leaders, federal agencies and victims.

A previous bill, Savanna’s Act, was signed into law in October. It is a small step in the right direction, introduced by former North Dakota Senator Heidi Heitkamp in 2017. The legislation bears the name of 22-year-old murder victim Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind of the Spirit Lake Nation. She was eight months pregnant when she was killed by a neighbor.

Savanna’s Act aims to:

• Track and report statistics on missing or murdered Native Americans;
• Make it easier for Native American tribes and organizations to enter crime information into the system;
• Set up a National Missing and Unidentified Persons System;
• Create a federal database of murdered or missing Native Americans;
• Help Native American tribes and organizations find enrollment of victims in federal databases;
• Educate the public on the National Missing and Undercounted Persons System;
• Make it easier for Native Americans to begin to enter crime information into the system;
• Train law enforcement to better respond to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans;
• Track and report statistics on missing or murdered Native Americans;
• Create a federal database;

Crimes against Native American women are not isolated to remote reservations. Health care advocates report that thousands of women living in urban centers are also victimized, but fall through the bureaucratic cracks. Canadian and Mexican women face the same dark fate. Some of America’s most cosmopolitan cities have some of the highest crime rates against Indigenous women, according to The Urban Indian Health Institute. Wealthy, well-run cities like Seattle, San Francisco, Tucson, Sacramento, Albuquerque and Anchorage are among the urban centers with high rates of murder and other forms of violence against Native women and girls.

Other cities almost certainly have comparable or worse records, but again, there is little or no data. Part of the reason is likely incompetence by law enforcement and victims.

To say that coverage of Native American women murdered and missing is pathetic would be generous. We have been too busy salivating over Donald Trump’s despicable tweets, the kooky Kardasians and COVID deniers at motorcycle gatherings to give any meaningful attention to the barbaric treatment of our Native sisters.

Native Americans are the powerless in this country, and need us to add our voices to theirs. Native American women are disappearing without a trace. They need our voices most of all.

By Julia Woenix
Editor-in-Chief

• T rain law enforcement how to record tribal enrollment of victims in federal databases;
• Educate the public on the National Missing and Undercounted Persons System;
• Make it easier for Native American tribes and organizations to enter crime information into the system;
• Train law enforcement to better respond to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans;
• Track and report statistics on missing or murdered Native Americans;
• Create a federal database;
HOMELANDS OF THE OLD ONES

Kumeyaay People have lived in this region for at least 12,000 years after traversing the Bering Strait Land Bridge during the Ice Age. They are thought to have lived primarily west of the Cuyamaca Mountains, though they are known to have wandered great distances north to the mountains to the ocean with trade with the Yuman People in present-day Arizona.

Kumeyaay moved back and forth from the mountains to the ocean with the seasons, harvesting plants and small plants of crops they had cultivated earlier along the way. During summers they gathered acorns and hunted in the mountains, during the winters they would live closer to the beaches. They were acute stewards of the land.

As Spaniards, Mexicans and Americans invaded their homelands, Kumeyaay were forced to the east, losing most of their existence in the dry foothills and mountains. After the Mexican-American War of 1846–48, an international border was drawn between the two countries right through the heart of Kumeyaay land. During the Indian Wars of the period from about 1865–1900, Kumeyaay lost much of their remaining land to greedy settlers, prospectors and other invaders. They also lost most of their culture and heritage for more than a century until Mexican Kumiai helped to reestablish it in recent years.

Kumeyaay were nearly exterminated by Americans invading their homelands, their food sources and their way of life. During the years of the Caucaus, Kumeyaay were hunted and decimated a culture that flourished on a vast area of life-sustaining land from what is now Oregon and Washington to the north to the beaches and mountains of Ensenada to the south. They also gathered food and traded as far east as modern-day Yuma and Las Vegas.

By the rest of the original frontier became the Berlin Wall or the Korean Demilitarized Zone, separating families and decimating a culture much older than the Berlin Wall or the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

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We were here first — Kumeyaay lived in harmony with the land in what is now Tecate, where the border splits through ancient lands, and the border wall desecrates burial grounds and cultural sites.

Ronny Pajpa, a Campo Kumeyaay, said separation feeds sadness. “Obviously the border separates us and I think it’s really hard for Kumeyaay living in Mexico or in the United States,” said Pajpa. “I think people tend to forget that our people are not just there, too. Just because the border crossed us (people may think it’s just Mexico or they’re Mexicans, but that’s not the case),” Baines said. “That’s the most important thing to realize the border-spanning reality of the Kumeyaay.”

“I feel like it’s very important that the Border Patrol has a good understanding that our people are on both sides and that it affects us and it saddens our heart that we can’t just easily come together,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just not enough opportunity to plan a day where we are all out together and have a gathering right here,” she said. “This border wall and all these ads are splitting our people and they can hear us. There’s just
In 2002 there were 20 undocumented people buried in this place. Now there are hundreds ... If they cannot be identified they are buried without ceremony or anything. It’s truly sad.

— Enrique Morones, Gente Unida

**ACRES OF THE DEAD**

**AMERICA’S SECRET CEMETERY OF THE UNKNOWN**

**BY JULIA WOOCK**

**STAFF**

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HOLTVILLE, CA — Holtville keeps a terrible secret.

Death is underfoot.

Even more of its 6,700 citizens are unaware that this humble agricultural oasis will spend eternity beneath the desiccated soil that collects like chocolate powder on the boots of the migrants who drown in the filthy New River, withered under the relentless desert sun, freeze during frigid mountain nights or starved ambling toward an American agricultural oasis who never expected to end up there. As the gate creaked open volunteers emerged an unknown world of the dead before them in a sprawling horizon of the verdant Terrace Park Cemetery. A Catholic priest offers blessings in English, and gave his blessing.

“People do care,” he said to the departed, “In this place we open our hearts.”

Enrique Morones and Gente Unida volunteers place handmade crosses at the unmarked graves of unidentified migrants.

“[It’s] a cemetery where people that don’t have the money to be buried are buried,” he said. “It’s a cemetery where people that don’t have the money to be buried are buried.”

“It’s important that we honor them and pay for it. They are people who died in the United States and there could be Americans here too.”

Gente Unida Vice President Ari Honarvar, an Iranian refugee, said she could not make a wish when the butterflies spread out over the grave sites, Morones said America needs to do more to remember who is in the ground.

“Money is an obstacle, so are arguments about which governments should pay.”

“We don’t know if they are all Mexicans,” said Morones. “Then the excuse is: ‘what if they’re Central Americans?’ I say regardless, we should find out who these people are. The U.S. government has the money to pay for it. They are people who died in the United States and there could be Americans here too.”

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“People do care,” he said to the departed, “even if we do not know your names.”

Then a moment of grace and beauty. Volunteers released painted lady butterflies which pranced and bobbed in the warming morning air, carrying the hopes and dreams of the departed Heavenward.