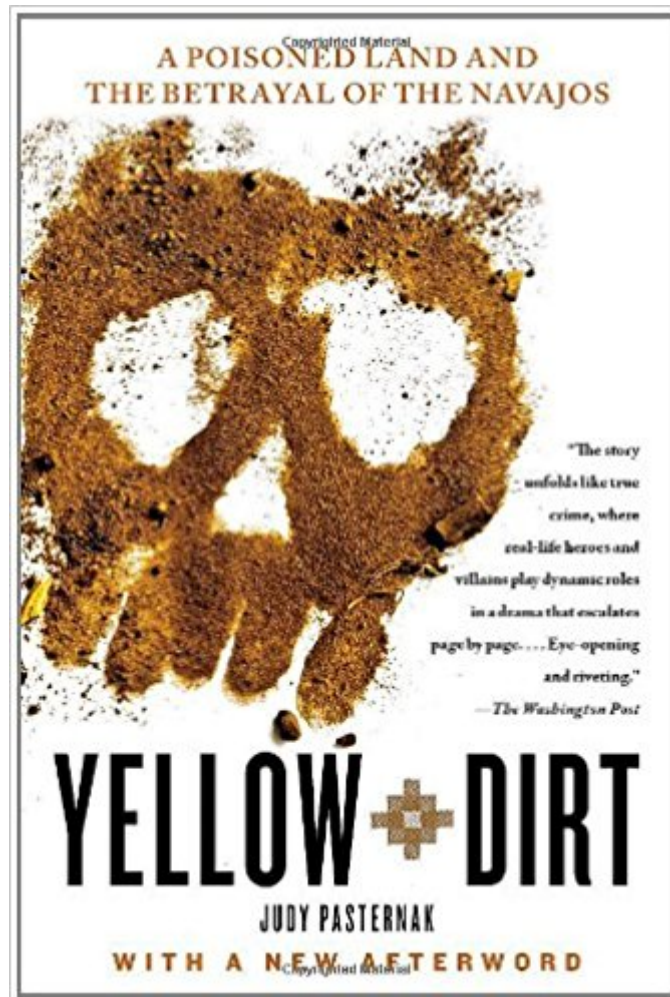


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# Yellow Dirt: A Poisoned Land And The Betrayal Of The Navajos



## Synopsis

This investigative feat tells the shocking, heartbreaking story of uranium mining on the Navajo reservation and its terrible legacy of sickness and government neglect, documenting one of the darker chapters in 20th century American history. Now in paperback, the critically acclaimed *Yellow Dirt*, will break your heart. An enormous achievement "literally, a piece of groundbreaking investigative journalism" illustrates exactly what reporting should do: Show us what we've become as a people, and sharpen our vision of who we, the people, ought to become. (The Christian Science Monitor). From the 1930s to the 1960s, the United States knowingly used and discarded an entire tribe of people as the Navajos worked, unprotected, in the uranium mines that fueled the Manhattan Project and the Cold War. Long after these mines were abandoned, Navajos in all four corners of the Reservation (which borders Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona) continued grazing their animals on sagebrush flats riddled with uranium that had been blasted from the ground. They built their houses out of chunks of uranium ore, inhaled radioactive dust borne aloft from the waste piles the mining companies had left behind, and their children played in the unsealed mines themselves. Ten years after the mines closed, the cancer rate on the reservation shot up and some babies began to be born with crooked fingers that fused together into claws as they grew. Government scientists filed complaints about the situation with the government, but were told it was a mess too expensive to clean up. Judy Pasternak exposed this story in a prizewinning Los Angeles Times series. Her work galvanized both a congressman and a famous prosecutor to clean the sites and get reparations for the tribe. *Yellow Dirt* is her powerful chronicle of both the scandal of neglect and the Navajos' fight for justice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Only once in a great while comes along the combination of a compelling story, exquisite writing, and substantial research so lacking in these days of internet journalism. "Yellow Dirt" is the true story of the exploitation and abandonment of the Navajo people in the United States' quest to fuel their nuclear arsenal. Judy Pasternak, former report for the Los Angeles Times, has filled the book with facts and timelines, but always in the context of the families and their lives that she came to know so well. You feel as though you are standing among them, feeling their pride, their anger, and their anguish. This story is in the hands of a very capable journalist, and the craftsmanship is evident on every page, but what makes this book unique is you feel her heart was in every carefully chosen word. YOU MUST BUY THIS BOOK, devour it in one sitting, and pass it on to someone else, with the strict instructions to do the same.

Judy Pasternak's "Yellow Dirt" is a must-buy, must-read and sure-to-pass-on book. It is certain to make the top non-fiction lists and should be a Pulitzer Prize candidate. The book is an outgrowth of a series of four articles published by the Los Angeles Times in 2006, when the author was one of that newspaper's top investigative reporters. It is the engrossing and frightening story of what happened to four generations of Navajo men, women and children who fell victim to cancer-causing radiation poisoning when remote corners of their reservation were mined for uranium. What the Navajo called "yellow dirt" was the explosive ingredient for the two atomic bombs that killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Later, the Indian miners and their families continued to die of cancer, pawns in the international chess game of the Cold War. When the policy became "atoms for peace," more Navajos were killed as their ancestral lands were exploited to fuel nuclear power plants. For decades, the plight of the stoic Native Americans was shunted aside, ignored and even covered up by state and federal officials. Bureaucratic negligence and the misdeeds of the mining corporations that plundered tribal resources is presented by the writer in readable, compelling prose. Much of the narrative comes from Pasternak's painstaking interviews with the usually reticent Navajo miners and their families. Copious end notes and bibliography provide evidence of her diligent research--and a case study of investigative journalism at its best.Â Yellow Dirt: An American Story of a Poisoned Land and a People Betrayed

A penetrating study of what happened to the Navajo people when they started to mine Uranium in the early 1940's. This occurred on the Navajo reservation that is located in Arizona and Utah. A great deal of the mining was in Monument Valley. The initial reason for extracting the Uranium was the real fear that the enemies of democracy, particularly Nazi Germany, would also start to process Uranium for the purposes of making a nuclear explosion. In the early 1940's little was known of the affects of radiation from exposure to Uranium. There was no effort to protect the Navajo workers. The debris from the mines was dumped pell-mell all over the reservation. Some of the debris was utilized to build homes on the reserve. The water sources were also becoming contaminated by the dynamiting at the mine sites. After the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki the affects of radiation became very obvious. But on Navajo land nothing at all was done to protect the workers. With the advent of the Cold War and the Korean War Uranium mining kept accelerating in Navajo country. Eventually workers started dying of cancer (lung cancer, colon cancer, brain tumours). More and more women and children became diagnosed with cancer and died prematurely. Tests and studies were made on people, on the drinking water, and the habitats - some of which showed severe levels of radiation. The radiation was literally spreading more and more across their land. And nothing was done! The companies and the managers got rich. The Navajo's got hardly anything, particularly compared to miners off the reservation. Both the companies and the various government organizations (and there are many) obfuscated the issues and "Passed the Buck" as people continued to get sick and die. This was certainly not "Government of the people, by the people, for the people...". To extract this Uranium, haste and utility were used; to compensate and aid the victims and to clean up the radioactive environment, only a withering and inept bureaucracy was encountered. It took over sixty years for a real cleanup to begin in earnest. Some parts of this book make one want to scream in frustration at the intransigence of government and the immorality of companies who put profits ahead of protection of workers. Ms. Pasternak's book is very well written and frightfully convincing. There is no scientific jargon on radiation to deter readability. We are left saddened once again at the plight of a dispossessed people in North America. A highly recommended read.

The book itself is organized somewhat poorly, the writing is slightly awkward, and it feels like crucial information is missing. Now once you get pass all of the books apparent faults, what you are left with is a really important story. The bottom line of this story is that in the name of fighting the Cold War and the Arms Race we had to sacrifice the lives and land of many humans; young ones and old ones too. Was it overkill?, was it racial?, was it greed?, read the book and decide for yourself!, but

for me the trail of tears continues, just differently. Also check out:Â The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy.

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