

Man vs. Nature or Man vs. His Own Nature?

Educator pens a fictional tale of his struggles against bureaucracy, cultural friction, and natural forces while teaching in the Navajo Nation

BELAGANA-BELAZANA: An Outsider's Quest in the Navajo Nation

by T. Lloyd Winetsky

An educator for four decades, T. Lloyd Winetsky's dedication to teaching was spurred by the assassination of Martin Luther King. Since that day, he has worked tirelessly for those who lack access to quality education. Winetsky is the author of the American Teachers Series, a fictional line of books that reveal a spectrum of intense issues that teachers sometimes face. From racism and cultural conflict to political upheaval and blind bureaucracy to apathy and substance abuse. His latest novel, *Belagana-Belazana* takes place in the Navajo Nation, where Winetsky taught for five years.

In the book, Sean Noland—a middle-aged, recently-divorced English teacher—takes a job at a remote U.S. Government school in the Navajo Nation in northern Arizona. An outsider to the Navajo people as well as his employer, Sean begins to bond with his students despite their deeply ingrained distrust of the *belagana*, or white man. Some bitter staff members and an oblivious bureaucracy complicate matters.

Sean forms a surprising connection with his half-Navajo dormitory assistant, Leonard Santos. When Leonard and Sean discover that the school's water is contaminated, they covertly set up a temporary drinking system—but know they will eventually have to answer to their agency supervisors.

One frigid night, two boys flee from the dormitory because one fears his family's lives are being threatened by his alcoholic father. Sean and Leonard embark on a manhunt to find the boys before they freeze to death. Their desperate search is complicated by a disabled vehicle, the ensuing trek in a frozen wilderness, and Sean's worsening hypothermia. They struggle on toward the boy's house, not realizing a hostage situation awaits them there. Can the men and the runaway boys survive the forces of nature and the volatility of human aggression?

Talking Points

- Teaching in the Navajo Nation: Overcoming obstacles in order to best serve your students
- The importance of positive role models for pre-teens
- Using fiction to tackle child abuse and other tough topics
- Bureaucracy and prejudice in the education system
- Secluded Communities: Cultural friction between natives and outsiders in the Navajo Nation
- How to create trust and unity within the classroom
- The contrast of humanistic and religious points of view

Book IV in The American Teachers Series

BELAGANA BELAZANA

An Outsider's Quest in the Navajo Nation



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BOOK DETAILS

Pen-L Publishing

January 2, 2017

ISBN: 978-1-68313-068-0

Paperback, \$17.50

288 pages

FICTION | HISTORICAL

PR  THE BOOK

About the Author

Born and raised in Los Angeles, T. Lloyd Winetsky has been an educator for more than four decades. After a stint in the Peace Corps, his first teaching post was in South-Central L.A.—six classes of low-income seventh-graders. It was the spring of 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated.

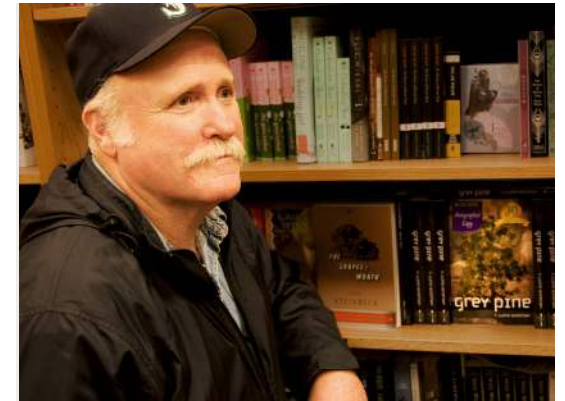
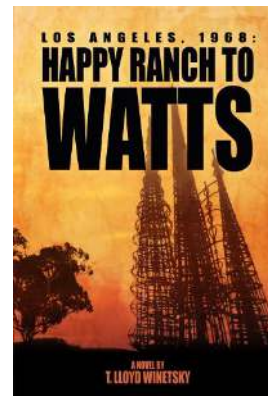
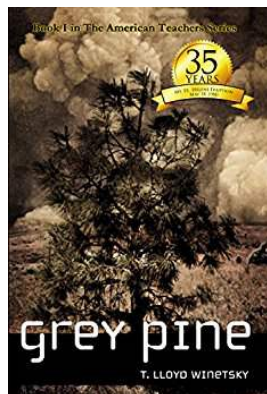
That event, the violence that followed, and then Robert Kennedy's assassination all had a great impact on Winetsky's life. They validated his life's mission, and he devoted his work to those who lack access to quality education. Those first teaching experiences were germane to both the setting and conflicts of his historical novel *Los Angeles, 1968* (Pen-L Publishing, 2014). Pen-L also republished his first two novels (below) as part of the American Teachers Series. All four of Winetsky's books are "stand-alone" novels, and also available for e-readers at Pen-L and Amazon.

After 1968, Winetsky returned to college for his certification, then taught English and Spanish to students of all ages in the Southwest and Northwest, including four years in Alaska. A school administrator for some of those years, he retired from full-time work in 1998 after surviving a brain aneurysm and stroke. He was a bilingual education specialist in Yakima, Washington, where he is currently a part-time volunteer for La Casa Hogar, working with adult farm workers.

Winetsky faithfully writes every day. His rich stories are woven with real-life experiences. He lives near Yakima with his wife of 47 years, Kathleen, a Special Education teacher. They have four grown children.

The American Teachers Series

- **Grey Pine** (June 11, 2009): In 1980, a six-inch ash-fall from the Mount Saint Helens volcanic eruption complicates the life of a junior-high science teacher already struggling with his alcoholic father and suicidal depression.
- **Maria Juana's Gift** (March 31, 2011): During the 1976 Bicentennial, two bilingual teachers attempt to save their newborn child as they are forced into conflict with a small hospital on the U.S./Mexico border.
- **Los Angeles, 1968: Happy Ranch to Watts** (March 17, 2014): An inexperienced and directionless young white man is hired to teach in Watts during the volatile spring when Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy are assassinated.



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