



CHEROKEE NATION

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Wilma P. Mankiller
Principal Chief

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December 08, 1993

Stacy Smith-Ehrenhalt
Von Zerneck-Sertner Films
12001 Ventura Place, Suite 400
Studio City, California 91604

Dear Ms. Ehrenhalt;

Recently my husband and I were visiting with Robert Conley and his wife Evelyn in their home just outside Tahlequah, and in the course of the evening's conversations I learned that Robert is serving as a consultant to you on a Trail of Tears film project.

I am pleased that film makers have at long last decided to try to set the historical record straight regarding Native Americans. I am glad that someone wants to produce a story about the Cherokee Trail of Tears, and I commend you for seeking out the advice of Cherokees during the development phase of the project.

I must, however, point out to you the irony of the situation you have created. I do not know the Singers and mean nothing against them. I do know Robert Conley. For an introduction to one of his many books several years ago, I wrote, "There is a movement among contemporary Cherokee writers to produce more indigenous literature. Robert Conley is a leader of that movement."

Since I wrote that, Robert has received two Spurs from Western Writers of America, one in 1988 for the best short story of the year and one in 1992 for the best novel. And he has written MOUNTAIN WINDSONG, a novel about which I wrote the following:

At last a Cherokee love story about two ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary period of time. In telling the love story of Oconeechee, Bob Conley takes the reader on a journey that allows one to feel the effects of the Trail of Tears on individual people and their families while weaving in solid historical information about all the external forces which forever changed the Cherokee Nation. MOUNTAIN WINDSONG evokes deep feelings and thoughtful reflection. It is a poignant story, powerful and disturbing.