

# Tom Bias

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4-29-94  
received  
6 Hickory Tree Lane  
Sparta, NJ 07871  
(201) 729-4043 Fax: (201) 726-0913

April 25, 1994

Wilma P. Mankiller, Principal Chief  
Cherokee Nation  
P.O. Box 948  
Tahlequah, OK 74465-0948

Dear Chief Mankiller:

First, thank you for your gracious and prompt reply to my letter and book review. I wonder if you would be willing to allow us to publish excerpts from it as a letter to our July-August issue as follows:

"Thanks for sending along a copy of your review of my book. Thank you for taking the time to do such a thorough and positive review. The format of the book is an authentic Native American form of Native American autobiography--that is, a personal story told within the context of the tribe and its history. Perhaps you know that when Geronimo was asked to work with a writer to tell his life story, his response reportedly was, 'first, let me tell you about my people.'

"For me the transition from a Bay area activist to a leader in a very conservative government was easy. More important than ideology or abstract politics was creating community-based change--getting health care, children's services, housing and so on to people. I went from being a purist (no federal funds, etc.) to a master of garnering federal support for everything from rural water lines to a youth shelter.

"It was good to hear from you. Best wishes.

"Wilma P. Mankiller

"Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation

"Tahlequah, Oklahoma."

Your reply to my question about the transition from a Bay Area activist is something I would like to share with every activist I know. I believe that ideas and goals are important, but you win people's trust by what you do, and too many of us don't understand that. I had a similar discussion with an International Rep in my union (Communications Workers of America), with whom I'm working to build a new labor-based political party. She explained that she is taken much more seriously by workers because they know her and the work that she does on their behalf.

Now, I would be a poor excuse for a journalist if I didn't aggressively follow up on an important story. I understand that