

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth HOB
Washington DC, 20515
May 26, 2022

RE: H.R. 5444-To Establish the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States and for other purposes

Hereby Submitted:

Written Testimony to be added to the record of the Sub-Committee on Indigenous People Hearing-05/22

Dear Committee Chair Grijalva , Sub-Committee Chair, Leger-Fernandez, and Membership:

My name is Barbara Anne Namias. I am 73 years old and an enrolled member of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. I welcome the opportunity to provide testimony supporting the passage of HR-5444 and applaud the Committee for recognizing these government policies created schools where Native children were submerged into an environment of cultural and social anomie. The effect of such left the vast majority of these children with grave emotional, mental, and physical disabilities. A number of these children were subjected to such abuse and neglect that they died and were buried without any attempt to notify parents or tribe. These atrocities cannot go unchecked and the Truth and Healing Commission can serve as a gateway to effective federal actions bringing Indigenous citizens, families, and communities' practices that address the many Native societal disorders created as a result of Boarding Schools practices.

A thorough investigation into the number of children who died in the schools, where they are buried and the who, what, when and how; needs to expose, examined and develop corrective action to ensure such systems never exist within the United States again and for other purposes developed by the Commission.

Qualifying Statement:

Both of my Grandparents went to Boarding Schools. My Grandfather to Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania and my Grandmother to Thomas Indian School in western New York State and then Carlisle.

My Grandfather, Dewey Jordan # 4805, entered Carlisle 09/28/12. His DOB: 01/06/1898

My Grandmother, Minnie Thomas #2914, entered Carlisle 10/15/1912. Her DOB: 02/08/1901

Her time at Thomas Indian School is yet to be found.

My Grandfather was an iron- worker and the family traveled the trail: Syracuse, Binghamton, Philadelphia, New York City. My Grandparents had three children, George, called Buddy, Louise, and Barbara. The children were born 1923,26,29 with Barbara, my Mother, the youngest. They settled in New York City about 1932. By 1935/6 the children were removed from the home and sent to the Dominican Home for Orphaned and Abandoned Children located in Nyack and Blauvelt New York. The boys were in Nyack and the girls Blauvelt. The removal was due to family dysfunctions: alcohol

abuse, domestic violence, non-support on my grandfather's part, neglect and abusive behaviors toward the children by my Grandmother. Both of my Grandparents suffered from alcoholism, chronic anger issues on my Grandfather and my Grandmother had extreme feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety, and fear. All the family pictures with my Grandmother in them have her face cut-out. She did it. She would tell me never write anything down on what you did or said. Remain as invisible as possible.

My Grandmother finally was able to regain custody of her children. The year was 1942 and George enlisted in the Air Force while the two girls went to live with their Mother in the Bronx where she had gotten an apartment.

Louise was 15 years old, and Barbara was 12 years old. The alcoholic behavior still dominated my grandmother's household. She worked as a domestic aide mostly for rich people in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. She came home every night and drank, and the girls suffered. Both girls married into miserable marriages which included alcoholic behavior, domestic violence, illegal activities, and young parenthood.

My Grandfather was a veteran. He served in the U.S. Navy aboard the U.S.S. Texas. He was an ironworker and after the alcoholism took that career away, he turned to sewing awnings for various businesses. This was his lifestyle. He drank, worked when he needed to, lived in the streets, and kept sporadic contact with my Mom and us, her kids. But when he did come ..it was such a treat. He was a storyteller.

He died on New York's Bowery section and was buried in Potter's Field in Manhattan. We didn't find out until after he was buried. He was 61 years old.

My Grandmother leaned on my Mother and her son George a lot while I was growing up. She lived with us for awhile but eventually Mom had to make other living arrangements for her. Alcoholism. My Uncle Buddy (George) was my Grandmother's support in her last years. He oversaw her burial and it was done with love, gratitude and respect.

My Grandparents weren't losers or slackers or dumb. They were adults who suffered from severe childhood trauma which filled their lives with obstacles built by the United States Government. We, the next generations, need to forgive our grandparents and parents by understanding the government's intent to take away their identity and their Spirit/Soul. Yet, the Government has hidden this from public knowledge.

HR 5444 can be a springboard to enlighten Native American individuals' families and communities about the effects of Boarding School policies on children and future generations. It can become a pathway to Truth and Healing.

HR 5444 can also be used to determine what if any charges of abuse or more severe can be brought against the organizations behind the schools.

I respectfully ask the Committee to support HR 5444. Thank you.