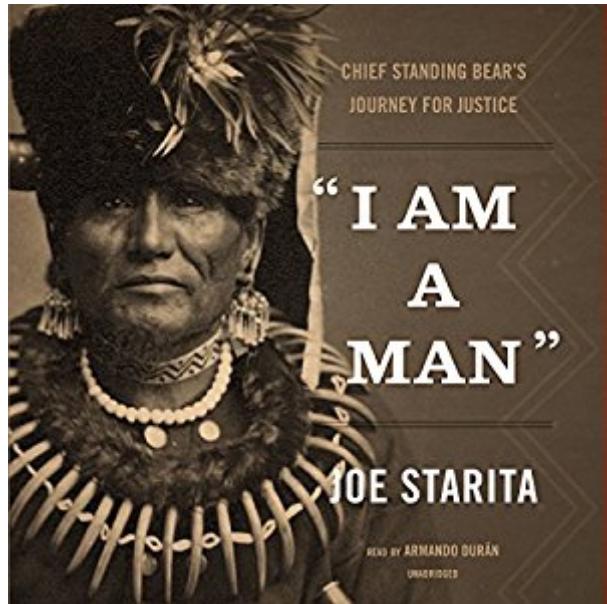


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# "I Am A Man": Chief Standing Bear's Journey For Justice



## **Synopsis**

In 1877, Chief Standing Bear's Ponca Indian tribe was forcibly removed from their Nebraska homeland and marched to Oklahoma - known then as Indian Territory - in what became the tribe's own Trail of Tears. "I Am a Man" chronicles what happened when Standing Bear set off on a 600-mile walk to return the body of his only son to their traditional burial grounds. Along the way, it examines the complex relationship between the United States government and the small, peaceful tribe and the legal consequences of land swaps and broken treaties, while never losing sight of the heartbreaking journey the Ponca endured. It is an account of people left for dead who survived injustice, disease, neglect, starvation, humiliation, and termination. On another level, it is a story of life and death, despair and fortitude, freedom and patriotism; a story of Christian kindness and bureaucratic evil; a story of hope, of a people still among us today, painstakingly preserving a cultural identity that had sustained them for centuries before their encounter with Lewis and Clark in the fall of 1804. Before it ends, Standing Bear's long journey home also explores fundamental issues of citizenship, constitutional protection, cultural identity, and the nature of democracy - issues that continue to resonate loudly in 21st-century America. It is a story that questions whether native sovereignty, tribal-based societies, and cultural survival are compatible with American democracy. Standing Bear successfully used habeas corpus, the only liberty included in the original text of the Constitution, to gain access to a federal court and ultimately his freedom. This account aptly illuminates how the nation's delicate system of checks and balances worked almost exactly as the Founding Fathers envisioned, a system arguably out of whack and under siege today.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

On the banks of the Missouri River on the border of present-day Nebraska and South Dakota lies a tributary of the Niobrara River, a place where history took place in the form of the trials of the Ponca Tribe which drifted from the present-day Carolinas to Nebraska over the course of a several centuries. From this tribe came a leader by the name of Standing Bear who settled down with his people to engage in agricultural pursuits when a boundary snafu between the United States Government and the Lakota tribe resulted in his and his tribe's eviction from the banks of the Niobrara and being relocated to what they called the Warm Country or Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). The removal to the territory down south resulted in the deaths and misery of many of their people in the spring and summer of 1877. Upon the death of Standing Bear's son, he honored his son's request to be buried along the chalk bluffs along the Niobrara River and took a small group of Poncas from the Warm Country back to Nebraska. Braving cold and hunger, they almost made it back to their original home where they were arrested for leaving Indian Territory without permission from the federal government and were imprisoned for some time at Fort Omaha. It was here that a news reporter by the name of Thomas Tibbles heard about their plight and publicized the tribe's travails back on the east coast. Funds were raised to help defend Standing Bear and proclaim that he was a man, a person who wanted to be recognized as such in the court of law. The story is a well written summary of the incidents that occurred so long ago. Vignettes of current day Poncas are included to give a flavor of the Ponca culture today. The book has 236 pages of text along with an extensive bibliography and an index.

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