



# **A Call for Reform: The Southern California Indian Writings of Helen Hunt Jackson**

*Helen Hunt Jackson*

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Journalist, novelist, and scholar Helen Hunt Jackson (1830–85) remains one of the most influential and popular writers on the struggles of American Indians. This volume collects for the first time seven of her most important articles, annotated and introduced by Jackson scholars Valerie Sherer Mathes and Phil Brigandi. Valuable as eyewitness accounts of Mission Indian life in Southern California in the 1880s, the articles also offer insight into Jackson's career.

The articles served as the basis for Jackson's 1884 romantic novel, *Ramona*, still popular among Americans today. Jackson journeyed to Southern California in the 1880s to learn firsthand how Indians there lived. She found them in a demoralized state, beset by failed government policies and constantly threatened with losing their lands. The numerous articles and editorial responses she penned made her a leading voice in the fight for American Indian rights, a role she embraced wholeheartedly.

As this collection also shows, Jackson's fondness for Old California helped shape the region's mythology and tourist culture. But her most important work was her influence in getting reservations set aside for the beleaguered Southern California tribes. Although her recommendations were not implemented until after her death, Helen Hunt Jackson's stark and revealing portrait drew national attention to the effects of white encroachment on Indian lands and cultures in California and inspired generations of reformers who continued her legacy. This unprecedented collection offers fresh insight into the life and work of a well-known and influential writer and reformer.

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