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Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood (review)

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done more, had its focus been more theoretical, is to engage with the recent work of theorists of affect—such as Brian Massumi, Sianne Ngai, and Antonio Damasio—and begin to theorize what could become a useful category of critical inquiry, “indigenous affect,” with productive political implications. Carpenter’s concept “playing angry”—building on Philip J. Deloria’s concept of “playing Indian”—is a wonderful potential start, but its representational and ideological consequences remain somewhat underdeveloped. Nevertheless, Carpenter builds an important bridge between nineteenth-century articulations of indigenous anger and twentieth-century Indian activism, where anger brings nations together. And, although Callahan, Johnson, and Winnemucca are not equally successful in their representations of indigenous nationhood, Carpenter’s conclusion is optimistic: “their anger—and sentimentality—point toward an activist future in Native American literature” (140).

N O T E

1 See, for instance, Catherine Lane West-Newman, “Anger in Legacies of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and Settler States,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7 (May 2004): 189–208; and

Andrew Day, Martin Nakata, and Kevin Howells, eds., *Anger and Indigenous Men: Understanding and Responding to Violent Behaviour* (Leichhardt, N.S.W., Australia: Federation Press, 2008).

REVIEW ESSAY *by Michael W. Simpson*

**Forced Federalism:
Contemporary Challenges
to Indigenous Nationhood**

by Jeff Corntassel and Richard C. Witmer II
University of Oklahoma Press, 2008

Suzan Harjo recently stated in a presentation at the University of Arizona that we should not get too hung up on eras of federal Indian policy in that we are always in an era of assimilation. While admitting the truth of this statement, we can still recognize that policy eras can help us to be critical about changes in the political landscape that are so important to American Indian peoples who are and must be political, given their unique status within the U.S. system. Shifts in eras can be especially important in warning of future potential pitfalls and current questions, actions, and responses. Corntassel and Witmer use tribal government surveys, interviews with tribal leaders, and analysis of documents and discourse to examine changes wrought by the enactment of the 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). Specifically, they highlight the political

mobilization of indigenous nations since the 1990s to the new challenges to community governance and self-determination during what they term is a new era of Indian policy: forced federalism (1988 to present).

IGRA forced indigenous nations to negotiate a compact with states. This has changed the traditional status of tribes, which had a somewhat higher political status than states because they had powers that existed before the United States and its constituent states were conceived and because of the special federal relationship under the U.S. Constitution that makes Indian affairs a national concern. Thus, under the original federalism (a system of power sharing among governmental units), Native nations have had less interaction with states than with the national government. Now the national government is forcing more interaction with states, which throughout history have consistently been a threat to Native nations.

Perceptions of Native nations and the representations and racist stereotypes produced allow policymakers to shape and frame the debate and negotiations. IGRA has aided in the perpetuation of "rich Indian" racism, which has placed Native nations on the defensive to prove they need sovereignty to survive and that they need political independence because gambling has somehow made them less authentic and different.

Thus, the authors examine the changes in intergovernmental relations and how socially constructed images influence policymaking. Table 1.1 is especially valuable in that it places time, policy, major laws, and political status/image side by side. A major concern is that Native nations have become just another competing interest group in the U.S. system rather than being unique and special nations within a protectorate. The authors essentially agree with Ms. Harjo's statement above when they note that, about every twenty years or so, the Native nations face elimination or assimilation. Forced federalism is seen as the latest attempt, as states simply ignore the treaty-based relationships they have with the national government.

In chapter 3, "Managing the Politics of Perception," we see the changes wrought by the new era. A fundamental question is asked: does an increasing indigenous participation in dominant politics compromise nationhood, or is it essential for reframing the politics of perception? Differences exist among Native nations. We are shown that lobbying is increasingly done by non-native firms with more money being paid, voting is encouraged, and lobbying is now in the state capitols and not just Washington. This increased lobbying at the state level has brought increased suspicion and regulation from states.

Chapter 4, "The Forced Federalism Survey," demonstrated that Native nations increasingly support candidates for state office based upon the issue positions of the candidate. Two issues are most important when dealing with states: economic development and

self-determination. Native nations strive to get out the vote and make contributions. Contributions have a strong correlation with gaming compacts. The contact and attention paid by the state to Native nations influences their participation in the process. The more they feel they can have influence, the more involved they are. The danger of focusing on the candidates is that the public can act in many states through referendum and initiatives. The politics of perception should not be forgotten.

Chapter 5 is a nice narrative on compacts that can aid Native leaders in understanding them, the process, and the effects on nations. Compacts recognize Native nations as governments, but such agreements are something less than treaties. Compacts have been made on various subjects. When a state confronts the "emerging contenders" in economic development, such as Native nations and casinos, the public officials who confront them often gain points with the public. In chapter 2, the authors constructed a model that combined power with social construction of whether the nations were deserving or not. States are able to extract concessions in such construction where nations are perceived as undeserving and when the federal guarantee of state good faith is essentially unenforceable. Compacts in other areas are often less contentious but raise the specter of compact overuse. The emerging contender stereotype beckons substantial state surveillance and regulation. This is a common reaction to visible indigenous people. The system needs to keep people in their places.

The authors end with a call for Native nations to get back into their places as a people using the peoplehood model. Long-term solutions to false perceptions and the resulting policies will not come from lobbying and political behavior in the white or dominant way. Regenerating cultural practices and acting as a nation will protect the long-term sustainability of the people. The authors offer specific suggestions for future actions, one of which is especially valuable from my perspective: insurgent education. Ignorant Americans need to be schooled on the nature of indigenous self-determination, nationhood, and status within the system. But insurgent education is also needed among the Native peoples. How long will Custer be allowed to run Native schools? How long will assisting the U.S. government in global genocide be seen as noble warrior enterprise and an excuse for support of conservatives that often are not friends to Native nations? The call for centers of critical tribal education in books such as *For Indigenous Eyes Only*¹ seems most appropriate.

This book is worthy of substantial consideration by all concerned about where gaming and policy are taking Native nations. My personal concern is that the era of self-determination has become the era of self-assimilation. This book asks important questions that can serve as critical questions in the education process. The book provides both

theoretical and practical analyses. The evidence is survey, interview, case study, history, and more. This is reflective of indigenous knowledge. The appendices serve as primary sources: interviews with Chad Smith and Brad Carson, actual compacts, treaties, and the Indigenous Government Survey. The goal of all of this is to see the continuation of Native nations as distinct peoples.

N O T E

- 1 Angela Cavender Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization*

Handbook (Santa Fe, N. Mex.: SAR Press, 2005).

REVIEW ESSAY *by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh*

Mediating Knowledges: Origins of a Zuni Tribal Museum

by Gwyneira Isaac
University of Arizona Press, 2007

"Museum" is a dirty word in some parts of Indian Country. And not without good reason. We now know too well the stories of pilfering and misrepresentations. The movement to transform museums, this instrument of colonialism, into a device for self-determination is thus in some ways contradictory and incongruous. And yet, over the last two decades, we have witnessed the birth of the National Museum of the American Indian, the opening of major museums to more collaborative and inclusive agendas, and a surge of local museums run by and for tribes. Why and how have museums become a site of affirmative power for some Native Americans?

Gwyneira Isaac's new book is the story of one community's efforts to make a museum of its own, the Pueblo of Zuni's A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center. (A disclosure: I have personally known Dr. Isaac as a colleague for several years and I have worked with the Zuni museum on several small projects.) Although she gives a thorough history of the museum's politics and economics, Isaac's focus is on the question of knowledge: how knowledge is made and transmitted in Zuni and museums and what happens when different ways of seeing the world meet and collide. This book narrates the Zunis' struggle with reconciling different ways of transmitting knowledge and the Zunis' attempt to define their museum and, in turn, themselves.

In 1997, Isaac began her ethnographic fieldwork at Zuni and relatively quickly came to see the museum as a place where Zunis could