



# American Indians in Philosophy

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Anne Waters, Editor

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## FROM THE EDITOR

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Spring has arrived in Albuquerque. Once again we are having an annual symposium in honor of Viola Cordova. This is the time of year that the sun feels strong here in the high altitude, and people begin to walk with an abandon in their step, almost as if our feet were unpredictably set free of the ground. Predictability in the world is a human asset in need of cultivation with respect to First Nations and settler nations in the Americas. Being able to predict a continuity of life patterns is a healthy ambiance for every culture group. In this issue, questions commonly addressed in discussions of genocide are taken up and move the dialogue forward to discuss futures for indigenous nations. (This paper was first presented at the American Academy of Religion Conference in Atlanta in 2003, and subsequently read at the APA Pacific Division Conference in Pasadena, California, 2004.)

Most important on the international indigenous agenda are issues of a land base and sustainability. Land recovery, for indigenous nations, is crucial to our self-determination for economic and all other forms of sovereignty. A nation requires a land base to be self-sustaining, to ground religion, to have vision, and to see a future for a community. Without such land bases, no nation can survive.

As philosophers, and most especially as social and political philosophers, for those of us engaged in thinking deeply about moral issues, the issues of land-based sustainability, reparations, sovereignty, and politics are not new to our profession. What is new, however, is the taking up of these issues by academic philosophers turning their attentive historical analysis to the Americas. I would be happy if more discussion would occur in this *Newsletter* about these topics.

Issues of reparations are hot topics in contemporary moral problems courses, and issues of indigenous and settler relations in North America are becoming even hotter topics. Talking about indigenous reparations in classes is reminiscent to me of efforts to talk about abortion issues during the second wave of feminism, and the moral concerns of investing in our post-apartheid South Africa. Classes taking up topics of this nature are still “hot” and meaningful in the everyday lives of students.

But we still need to ask, as moral philosophers, how despite all the discussion about abortion in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s, American Indian women, who experienced genocidal rates of sterilization during this time, were left out of the dialogue. And in seeking a response to this inquiry, it is important to think about comfort levels.

It is so easy to dismiss, ignore, and pretend that we, the survivors of centuries of genocide in the Americas (five to be exact) don't exist. Just yesterday one of my students wanted

to know why, if the majority of the American population were Christians (the student indicated some 80+ percent), this nation did not simply have Christian law and “be done with all of this bickering about what the law should or should not be!”

At times like this, I am proud to have knowledge of the history of law in the Americas, and more specifically, in the United States. I remind all students that in the Americas, Christianity is a settler colonial religion that did not come here without a history. I jog our students' intellectual memories about something that they know academically, but as members of a settler nation, sometimes forget in their heart. I gently explain to them that Christianity came to the North and South continents of the Americas primarily through Spanish colonization as well as English law that arose in the context of Christian law. When I do this, they realize that they are not alone on these continents, that there were people here before the soldiers and the settlers came, and that we are still here, sitting beside them in these classrooms.

The time has not yet come for this class, when native students would offer a counterargument for why the laws in the United States might more appropriately reflect the lifestyles and values passed on through descendants of indigenous nations. Thus, as a prelude to the time in history, when our classrooms can take on the subject of indigenous rights, just as our classes currently take on other moral issues, I hope that more philosophers will join this space provided by the APA to discuss important moral and legal issues of First Nations and our relations with(in) the Colonial Nations of the Americas. I hope we hear more in the future about who has benefited, and continues to benefit, from this historical epoch, which remains in motion. What kind of equitable solutions might be found to our contemporary dilemmas of First Nations' survival.

The second and third articles, are by Jack Forbes, now Emeritus Professor and former Director of the American Indian Studies Ph.D. Program in Davis, California. Forbes draws our attention, in these two short articles, to “. . . views about early skeletons being essentially ‘non-Indian,’ an oxymoronic intellectual concept . . .” (Forbes), and the inter-being of our bodies with other environmental elements. “I began to see that ‘our body’ is bigger than what we normally think of as our physical body; that we have such absolutely essential connections with air, water, plants, earth, and animals, and also with the Sun and Moon, that we literally have a physical body which embraces all of these things . . . we are made of these things . . .” (Forbes).

There is no seminal work written by a person indigenous to the Americas (that I know about) that takes on the challenges of archeologists about indigenous origins (except Vine Deloria's classic *Red Earth, White Lies*). Nor do I know of any academically trained American indigenous or non-indigenous person writing about how our human bodies are extended into, and are a part of, our environment. The thought that our philosophy and culture arise from our land-based

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environment, and that our bodies themselves participate in the ecology of particular land bases, are indigenous themes beckoning for attention. Forbes' articles draw our attention to these issues, and I thank him for providing us with some of his unpublished work that was "laying around."

Finally, we have three more reviews from the new *American Indian Thought, A Philosophical Reader* (Anne Waters, ed., Blackwell: 2003). These reviews are helpful for those considering adopting the text for a course in American Indian Philosophy. I encourage writers, particularly those who are using *American Indian Thought* in their current classes, to submit additional reviews on this text. I will be teaching with this text next fall, and hope to write an article about using it in a graduate seminar for American Indian Studies.

As a final note, I thank those who carry on supporting the projects of the Committee on American Indians in Philosophy, and the American Indian Philosophy Association. I appeal to all who are currently teaching moral philosophy courses to take up issues of local or international indigenous concern, and let us know what you think about these controversial topics! Students will gain a broader perspective of their human, personal, and national place in the world through the study of issues such as reparations, land base, sustainability, cultural maintenance, and indigenous environmental concerns. And, if you are thinking about dropping us a line, do so!

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## ARTICLES

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### ***Indigenous Genocide: The United States of North America***

**Anne Waters, J.D., Ph.D.**

" . . . the European conquest of the New World, including the U.S. government's destruction of its own indigenous peoples, was the most massive interrelated sequence of genocides in the history of the world. Over the course of four centuries . . . tens of millions of the Western Hemisphere's native people were consumed in a holocaust of mass violence that, in locale after locale, *typically* destroyed 90-95 percent and more of the indigenous inhabitants. David Stannard<sup>1</sup>

#### **1. Genocide is historical, material, spiritual**

Understanding why the above claim by David Stannard warrants our immediate attention is, for some Americans, like trying to figure out why President Theodore Roosevelt identified the USA military's dismemberment of hundreds of Native American Indian women and children at Sand Creek in Colorado as a "righteous and beneficial a deed as ever took place on the continent."<sup>2</sup> The only way to understand the statement by Roosevelt is to know the ideological and historical value context of the policy of manifest destiny, as applied by Europeans to the Americas, beginning in 1492.<sup>3</sup> This means a religious context of what counts as righteous, and a political context (and perhaps also religious) of what counts as a beneficial deed.<sup>4</sup> "Righteous" and "beneficial," as value terms, grant positive, or good value, to actions, and in the instant case, to the acts of slaughtering innocents.

Similarly, understanding why Stannard's claim warrants our immediate attention requires knowing what kind of attention an aggregate act of performing a series of genocidal<sup>5</sup> slaughters over five centuries warrants. Genocidal acts are firstly, historic, spiritual, and material acts interfacing with time-space events in the world; and secondly, they are acts of value or disvalue. They are historical because in the sixteenth century, both Spanish law from the crown in Spain, and English law from the crown in England, explicitly prescribed indigenous people as lesser than, inferior to, and unworthy of the same type of respect due to other human beings. Acts of genocide are material as space-time events that destroy specific human beings in the living of their lives. They are spiritual because the world is more than matter; and because the world of humanity holds intentions and wills to do harm or good, psychological dispositions are created. Acts of genocide are acts perceived to be of value to the destroyers and of disvalue to the victims. The question, "Who are the terrorists," is always answered by the question, "Who won the war?" In war, destroyers win, victims lose. Soldiers and citizens, from the eyes of the conquerors, betray, only to the extent that their group loses the battle or war. The betrayers are dispirited; the winners are honored patriots whose icons are crystallized as heroes.

#### **2. Genocide practices support empire building**

Indigenous people, from the colonial settler eyes, were seen as standing in the way of, and at times aggressively fighting against, the expanding settler communities of the colonial empires. Any form of resistance by indigenous people to genocidal military tactics was perceived as aggressive resistance to and struggle against the imperial nation, and swift retaliation, by a declaration of war, was the chosen means of extermination. The historical context of the perception of America's indigenous nations as less worthy than other human beings, and even as not being a part of humanity, was not unique to the Americas, but had a long history in the imperialism carried out in other nations, including Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The notion of an empire sending out nomadic and settler military groups for the service of empire building, and thereby reducing indigenous people and peoples to genocide or slavery,<sup>6</sup> created an honorable status for the conquering soldiers in some cultures. Hence, in the earlier quote of Roosevelt, his bestowing honor upon men fulfilling the military mandate (and USA national legal policy) of indigenous extermination in the Americas, by claiming their acts to be righteous and beneficial, meant that, in the service of the USA empire state, they were commended for doing the correct and worthy murderous acts.

#### **3. Genocide injustice requires reparations to make whole again**

In the eyes of indigenous peoples in the Americas, however, and in the eyes of individuals not honoring genocidal tactics of economic imperialism of empire state building, these same acts are (and were) viewed as horrific, detestable, unconscionable, illegal, and unjust. From this perspective, nothing can be right about USA political policy until past acts of genocide against indigenous people can be recognized, and apologies and reparations give back to indigenous people what was taken by the USA over the past five centuries. The scales of justice must be weighed.

This giving back would include not only large land bases (which can be negotiated on an equal playing field), but also leveling the economic field with respect to America's indigenous nations and the USA. Quite simply, relations

between the USA and indigenous nations cannot be normalized until the USA gives back what they took, in land and resources. The legal principles here are quite elementary to anyone who has done any research on the historical construction of the USA or has any sense of equity and justice. The moral principles are also clarifying: Fact 1) I belong to the land; Fact 2) You took the land away; Fact 3) You nearly totally destroyed me; Fact 4) Give the land back (or, repair your damage done to me!) If the subject of discussion were a hat rather than land, it would not be so difficult, perhaps, to have it returned!

#### **4. Genocide has created identity issues among indigenous people(s)**

So what is the problem? Some folks will claim there are many problems with such an approach. First, historically creating a genocidal definition of who counts as indigenous individuals and indigenous nations, has been carried on as part of extermination practices by the USA through its legislature.<sup>7</sup> Hence, issues of sovereignty come to fore. How is or who is going to decide who or what counts as an indigenous tribal or nation group for purposes of reparation?<sup>8</sup> Obviously different groups are going to require their own sovereign status to determine who, for them, counts as members and nations, and this could be made part of negotiation proceedings. At least one indigenous nation has recently declared that anyone willing to live on their land and learn their language will be accepted as a tribal member into the indigenous nation. Many tribes follow tradition in assimilating visitors to their nation.<sup>9</sup>

Some indigenous individuals may argue that this is an unfair advantage: there are indigenous nations being controlled by members and tribal governments that hold allegiances to the USA (historically, such as goons). This may be true especially of those groups who fear losing what they have gained through cooperation and treaties with the imperial government. These difference places “recognized” indigenous nations (and people) in the position of being pitted against “non-recognized” indigenous nations (and people). Using the criterion of identity created to satisfy extermination policies set by the colonial settler nation is oxymoronic. Some tribes and nations have not signed treaties for good reason, and many individuals have elected to not sign tribal rolls for good reason. Ward Churchill and others have not signed a tribal roll because this act shows a complicit acceptance of the sovereignty of the imperial nation. To not sign a treaty is to refuse to accept the other entity as an independent sovereign nation. Historically, many Seminole and other nations do not sign treaties and tribal rolls for this very reason.

#### **5. Genocide reparations historically pit indigenous people(s) against many groups**

Indigenous nations are sovereign nations, and as such, bear a unique relationship with the USA. But what about the “minority” groups that currently compromise part of the USA land base? In a reparation system, would Hispanic groups, some that emerged from indigenous roots, and then later self-identified as descendants of the Spanish settlers in the Americas (but more recently colonized by the English), require their own land and nations as well? And why shouldn’t they? What criterion separates the colonized from the colonizer? New Mexico, Arizona, and California, for example, still home to many Native American Indians, were once part of the *Estados Unidos de Mexico* (the United States of Mexico), as conquered by the Spanish colonials, and then later settled by the English (just as *Las Floridas*). Maybe justice would require that these lands be returned to indigenous people of this geographical area, just as control of Mexican lands and economic gain might be given back to Mexico’s indigenous nations. What principles

of international justice and equity for indigenous nations support such a plan?

Some groups in the Americas may argue that African Americans and Asian Americans also deserve a part of the nation’s pie, given their historical building of the imperial nation with their labor. Building a nation may entitle a group to the fruits of that nation which may or may not include a land base. Arguments for the remuneration of indigenous lands and sovereign title do not logically necessitate the entitlement of remuneration and sovereignty for other groups as well. However, remuneration to all who have suffered under the American genocide of African Americans seems appropriate, whether there would remain anything left of the USA international imperial power. A majority of USA citizens may readily acknowledge arguments on behalf of dismantling the international and national American empire. However, if non-indigenous European Americans, and all other groups, want to have their own internal nation, the USA may not stand such a political shakedown.

Whether the current USA empire would continue to exist, an international justice system may legally require the USA to abolish their alleged judicial sovereignty over indigenous nations and people (such sovereignty as was given to them by the illegally constructed USA Supreme Court). The USA would have to relinquish powers, such as taxes on individuals and commerce, responsibility for health, education, welfare, and other legislated powers passed by Congress or claimed by the Supreme Court to belong to the states or federal government in the past.

#### **6. Genocide acts and subsequent reparations have international consequences**

The aggregate sovereignty of America’s states could remain as a federal empire, the USA government, but the sovereignty of America’s indigenous nations and this imperial government of the states should, by historical justice, at least be on equal footing, with regard to the rights and responsibilities of citizens of each nation, and the international status of the nations. Further, whether sovereign indigenous nations created, confederated, or consolidated nations, would be aggregately determined by each indigenous nation. The status of USA citizens residing in the geographical territory of indigenous nations would be determined by policy developed with the indigenous nations and placed in treaty with the USA. All other international relations could be settled by recognizing the indigenous nations to be seated at the United Nations table.

#### **7. Genocide requires a calling forth of witnesses**

Arguments on behalf of remunerations to Native American Indians may be countered with arguments portending to prove that significant remunerations of land and capital would necessitate the USA decline in economic and imperial international power. This may not be such a bad thing, internationally, and may improve the character of the USA and its citizens, requiring a playing field that is more equitable than the current playing field. It may force recognition that the USA was not founded upon a vacant land, that it’s democratic republic created was not one where all persons were equal, and that its subsequent legal and economic systems were never intended to, and never have, brought equality or equity to its citizens or indigenous people. The founders built, and their subsequent descendants continue to build, a colonial economic and cultural power empire, that’s capitalist in nature, racist in culture, sexist in rule, and fascist in law. This claim is substantiated by several law texts that interpret the aggregate history of US Supreme Court decisions.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, descendants of those who colonized the USA continue to benefit from this colonization, and thus continue to benefit from the genocide of indigenous people, and from the labor of groups whose descendants continue to be treated as though they are justifiably members of a lower caste (e.g. African and Asian Americans). Politically, and historically, it is time for a reinterpretation of America's history, as written by its betrayers of indigenous people, and a reassessment of the imperial colonial empire's collective responsibilities to its citizens and the rest of the world. Indigenous people of the world call upon academics to play their role in this process. As an indigenous person, as a Seminoli, a free person, I stand as witness to this calling. And I ask academics to stand with me, to witness the historical and contemporary reality that almost all (and possibly all) non-Indian title to North America is flawed, illegitimate, and illegal, because the treaty processes of sovereign relations were broken during or after negotiation by the rulings of the US Supreme Court. As Ward Churchill would say, it is illegitimate<sup>11</sup> and the lands sought for actual recovery have been governmentally and corporately held.

### **8. Genocide consciousness calls for environmentalism and other social changes**

In many geographical areas, indigenous people constitute the majority population, yet are subordinated, disenfranchised, and waged war against by settler populations. These populations refuse to recognize the political sovereignty of indigenous nations, which results in armed conflicts over the land and its resources, and cultural continuance that arrives from living with the land. Indigenous identity springs forth from the environmental conditions of the land; we are, in essence, born of the land, and hence bear a special relationship with that land that gives us birth. Moreover, our indigenous nations bear unique identity based upon our interdependencies and histories with all our relations.

Land recovery, for indigenous nations, is crucial to our self-determination for economic and all other forms of sovereignty. A nation requires a land base to be self-sustaining, to ground religion, to have vision, and to see a future for a community. Without such land bases, no nation can survive. The historical operations of corporate capitalist enterprises have used illegal instruments, usually in collusion with an aristocratic federal government, to control human global resources. The overriding historical code of USA corporate management and stockholders/stakeholders has continued to be to increase profit. From the moment Spain set foot upon the Americas, the gold, the labor, and all the other resources of indigenous groups have been used by the settlers to build an empire that benefits "their own"—first in Spain, then in England, and then in the indigenous lands. Such empire building has devastated much of America's lands and indigenous people(s) that spring from these lands.

There are ways that Native Americans may be able to use the USA law to recreate a more equitable economy that protects the land for future generations. Vine Deloria, Jr. has, as recently as 1992, noted that shunting aside the trust responsibility to tribes<sup>12</sup> may be of benefit to indigenous nations to further substantiate sovereign rights. In essence, Deloria suggests that the most fruitful thing to replace the old Trust Doctrine may be a return to the treaty settlement process. And hence, *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery* may be remembered in Indian Country as a positive legal landmark, regardless of the US Supreme Court's intention.

Conservation and ecological groups, who have stood by and witnessed corporate greed and manipulate lands held in public trust by the USA to further their economic gain, may need to recognize that some 35% of USA land base belongs to

the public as a whole, and that public opinion could be important politically in the management of those lands.<sup>13</sup> Organizing to dethrone corporate America of its long-standing exploitation of public resources to fill the pockets of stockholders/stakeholders could mean an opportunity to sound an international bell of corporate economic restraint. Such a strategy might hold the kernel of an international movement alongside the continuing struggle for international indigenous rights. Academics today, just as in the past, have a role to play in this political struggle for human survival, which could strike a mighty blow to current global environmental destruction.

Finally, there are several strategies to build local economies in environmentally protective ways. One way to begin dismantling corporate control is for indigenous communities to start taking control of local traditional medicines.<sup>14</sup> Creating an economy of sustainability is possible via fairly trading indigenous medicines, for example, in an international market. Such a market could begin to develop with other indigenous nations and whoever else wants to join the scientific/economic enterprise with a will toward ensuring indigenous communities maintain sovereign control over these enterprises. An important benefit of this project would be the protection of traditional fauna and flora that might otherwise disappear. Traditional methods of learning could accompany such efforts.

Strategies, like supporting local indigenous healing, may help to stop some of the appropriation and distortion of indigenous resources and traditions. Other strategies include innovating ways to protect water, creating new energy sources, and developing other sustainable ways to protect our environment.<sup>15</sup> In this way, we can continue to act as humans should, interdependently with all our relations.

Since "women have formed the very core of indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict between Indians and invaders,"<sup>16</sup> it is appropriate that women step up to crucial leadership positions and take the lead in this field. I hope that we will support our traditional elders and join our sisters and brothers who feel the call to this, and other projects that will provide desperately needed alternative paths for our youth to sustain our communities for future generations.

November 16, 2000

### **Endnotes**

1. This is found in David Stannard's preface to Ward Churchill's, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), xvi.
2. David Stannard quoting Roosevelt from Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980) 79.
3. Glenn Morris, in "International Law and Politics," *The State*, 68-69, claims, "The expansion of the U.S. was fueled by the racism philosophy of Manifest Destiny. Under this philosophy, the American believed that through divine ordination and the natural superiority of the white race, they had a right (and indeed an obligation) to seize and occupy all of North America . . . The U.S. definition of civilization, not surprisingly, was a pungent combination of fundamentalist Christianity, unrepentant racism, and economic Darwinism."
4. Although there are different historical religious contexts for the Spanish and English colonization, the distinctions between the notions of Christianity relevant to the subjugation of "heathens" is not so important here, as is the common context of Christian conversion, and the willingness to defer to any arguments on behalf of non-just wars. For discussion of this point, see Glenn Morris, *The State*, 61-63.

5. The term “genocide,” as used here, is characterized by killing or attempts to kill all the members of a national, ethnic, or religious group. This term is distinguished from “holocaust,” meaning a wholesale or mass destruction of any kind. Though it can be argued that each massacre by U.S. forces of indigenous people in the Americas constitutes a holocaust, I prefer to use the term “genocide” to maintain the connection to nationalist, ethnic, and religious purging, as each of the tribal groups were members of distinct national, ethnic, and religious groups.
6. Slavery, in some cultures, was considered to be the death of the person; hence slavery could be tacitly a form of genocide. See, for example, Ramon A. Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriages, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico 1500-1846* (California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 176-206.
7. It is commonly recognized among indigenous academics that the “blood quantum” game was intended, and was successful, in lowering the number of indigenous people to whom the government had contractual obligations. It is also recognized that the practice of making remnants of nations that have survived genocidal attacks subject to policy that deny them tribal, or nationhood existence, has operated on behalf of the colonial empire, and against America’s tribal nations.
8. Current racial/familial terms imposed by the settler government are not consistent with many indigenous traditional ways of defining ourselves politically. For example, culture, socialization, and commitment to the good of the group, are traditional determining factors used to bring outsiders inside an indigenous group, e.g., by way of marriage, birth, adoption, and naturalization. See Lenore A. Stiffarm with Phil Lane, Jr., “The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival,” in *The State*, 45.
9. M. Annette Jaimes, “Federal Indian Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America,” in *The State*, 123-138.
10. See for example Deloria, Williams, Churchill, etc.
11. See “The Earth Is Our Mother” in M. Annette Jaimes, ed., *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 175-177.
12. *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* (108 S. Ct. 1319 (1988)).
13. Deloria, *The State*, 287.
14. There are, of course, many projects that coalitions of indigenous and socially responsible people of conscience engage in, especially those having to do with preserving the land. See Donald A. Grinde, Bruce Elliott Johansen, and Howard Zinn, *Ecocide of Native America: Environmental Destruction of Indian Lands and Peoples* (New Mexico, Clear Light Publishers, 1995).
15. For some interesting strategies of change see Ward Churchill’s last chapter in *A Little Matter of Genocide*.
16. M. Annette Jaimes with Theresa Halsey, “American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in Contemporary North America,” in *The State*, 311.

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## ***The First American Hijacking Caper: Another Attack from the Political Archaeologists***

### **Jack Forbes**

The “NOVA” Program on “Mystery of the First Americans:” A 10,000 Year Old Skeleton Embroils Scientists in a Debate Over North America’s First Inhabitants (Nova # 2075) will be broadcast here in northern California at 8 p.m. on December 10, 2002, channel 6 (KVIE). Perhaps it will also be shown at the same time in other locations.

I am very concerned about this program because PBS often shows programs on Native People that are put together by white, Eurocentric scholars, without any Indigenous involvement. Frequently, PBS shows videos about Mayas, Zoques, Incas, and other First Americans without the use of any scholars of Maya, Inca (Andino), or other Native background, and often these shows have controversial features that are contested by Native authorities. I fear that this program may be of the same kind.

The publicity states that, “For fifty years our picture of prehistoric America has rested on the premise that the earliest inhabitants of the Americas were East Asians of Mongoloid stock, *the ancestors of today’s Native Americans*. But the discovery of the Kennewick Man, along with several other startling findings in recent years, has thrown that once widely accepted idea into question. Tune in as NOVA follows the efforts of paleoanthropologists to decode the story in the bones of people who died 10,000 years ago.”

In my opinion, that type of language indicates that the NOVA program producers have bought hook, line, and sinker, the current myths of a group of anti-American Indian archaeologists who, fundamentally, are trying to sell the preposterous notion that the First Americans were somehow *not the ancestors of Native Americans*, but were some kind of lost people who just disappeared.

Let’s see if Vine Deloria or any other Native scholar is interviewed! I know that I was not contacted, even though I have an article about Kennewick on my website and have had versions of that article published in Native newspapers, as well as other articles on Ancient America, and an entire section in my book on *Native Americans of California and Nevada*.

Here’s the picture: to my knowledge, no Native Americans have ever pushed the idea that we are of “Mongoloid” race. Our traditions simply do not speak of race, nor do we attempt to classify Native people into lineages based upon physical appearance, although most of us have long been aware of a great deal of diversity among First Americans. In fact, since I started teaching in the late 1950s, I have instructed students that Native American Indians are NOT Mongoloid, and, in fact, that modern science and empirical evidence rejects the notion of groups called Mongoloid, Negroid, Caucasoid, etc.

It is a group of anthropologists and archaeologists who have come up with the East Asian-Mongoloid idea, a stupid idea, given the tremendous variations found among all human populations and the specific appearance of many American groups such as the Delaware, Hopi, Iroquois, Pueblos in general, and numerous Meso-American and South American groups, all of which have a tendency to look rather intermediate between Europeans and Asians, or between Pacific peoples and some southeast Asians, etc. I have, in fact, suggested in my lectures and writing that American groups may well represent an ancient stock from which others, such as Europeans and Asians, have branched off.

Other scholars have also suggested over the years that First Americans include many ancestral stocks. For example, Ibarra Grasso in his *Los Hombres Barbados en la America Precolombina*, gives many examples, not only of bearded Indians, but also of scholars who saw this diversity in the First Americans. *Thus there is nothing new in suggesting that we have had a history of physical diversity in America.* In fact, it has been the majority of archaeologists who have created the “Paleo-Indian” and the idea of Mongoloidism, in spite of the physical evidence to the contrary.

But now the new attack on *Native American “Primacy” is Coming from a Fringe* of archaeologists who are seeking to suggest the *Oxymoronic* notion that the idea of diversity is a new concept and *that the diverse elements (of alleged Southeast Asian type, of European type, of Ainu type, or whatever) are not our ancestors.*

In other words, they are trying to get around NAGPRA by claiming that early skeletons do not belong to our ancestral pool. But at the same time, they are giving support to the notion that our ancestors were not the first people here, which helps to weaken the arguments for recognition of Native rights, in some people’s eyes. I will never forget the pleasure displayed by a white female commentator on one of the major news shows when she talked about the idea that Caucasians were here first!

In any event, I hope that you will critically watch this show and then let NOVA and PBS know what you think about it! Maybe, it will be balanced?

P.S. I managed to watch the show, and it was as bad as I predicted. Dr. Bea Medicine was interviewed as the only Native scholar, and she did a good job; but she did not speak about the issues referred to above. All of the other “authorities” were white, and their opinions were exactly as I had anticipated. One young Native girl was put in the show to prove that some Indians are pro-archaeology, but she was not confronting any of the key issues at all. It was carefully engineered to support the white archaeologist’s views about early skeletons being essentially “non-Indian,” an oxymoronic intellectual concept, which was never challenged.

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## ***Native Intelligence Where Do Our Bodies End?***

**Jack Forbes\***

*University of California-Davis*

Most of us have been taught to think of our body as a physical structure, isolated from everything else. But if we think of it as a *living system*, a different picture emerges. Traditional indigenous thinking points towards an open system, connected with the universe and the Creator.

In the mid-1970s, I wrote what I had been saying in many Indian gatherings:

I can lose my hands, and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live. I can lose my hair, eyebrows, nose, arms, and many other things and still live. But if I lose the air I die. If I lose the Sun I die. If I lose the Earth I die. If I lose the water I die. If I lose the plants and animals I die. All of these things are more a part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. What is my real body?

We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches. . . We are rooted just like the trees. But our roots come out of our nose and mouth, like an umbilical cord, forever connected to the rest of the world. . . Nothing that we do, do we do by ourselves. We do not see by ourselves. We do not hear by ourselves. . . That which the tree exhales, I inhale. That which I exhale, the trees inhale. Together we form a circle.<sup>1</sup>

When I was growing up, I had a strong feeling of relatedness to the earth, to the animals, and to the trees and plants. At age 22, I wrote a poem that expressed my feelings of wonder, and of relatedness, as regards the non-human world. But it wasn’t until I read some of the teachings of Black Elk, the Lakota Holy Man, that I started thinking deeply about “nature” as being part of us, and we being part of nature. He told a British writer, John Epes Brown, in 1947, that “. . . peace comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all of its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells Wakan Tanka, and that this center is everywhere, it is within each of us.”<sup>2</sup>

He also said, on many occasions, that humans and animals are to be relative-like, and that we humans were like a suckling child, all of our lives, in relation to the mother earth. And then, too, I remember reading of what Pete Catches and Lame Deer both said: that all of nature is in us.<sup>3</sup>

Gradually I began to understand that our relationship with the earth, with the air, with the water, and with all of the living creatures of the world, is more than simply a relationship of mutual dependence, kinship, and respect. I began to see that “our body” is bigger than what we normally think of as our physical body; that we have such absolutely essential connections with air, water, plants, earth, and animals, and also with the Sun and Moon, that we literally have a physical body which embraces all of these things.

From about 1967 on, I began to give lots of talks to Native audiences, from Virginia and New Jersey to Seattle and the Southwest. In these lectures, I often focused on the “Greatness of the Native Mind,” and one of the major aspects of this greatness was the idea of unity between humans and other

living creatures. “If we lose the water we die. If we lose the plants and animals we die.”

In the early 1970s, while struggling with racism in the university, I experienced a spiritual transformation. I began to write in a manner quite different from most of my earlier books, incorporating many of my deepest feelings and insights even if they might be very displeasing in Eurocentric and materialistic academic circles. I wrote a book that was originally entitled, “The Wetiko Psychosis” (about the cultural disease of cannibalism, or conscious exploitation of others, which I believed was dominating much of the world). When published, it was entitled, *A World Ruled by Cannibals*. This book was to have been printed by Akwesasne Notes in 1976, but they had insufficient funds. It came out in 1978 instead (from D-Q University). In this work, I gave written expression to the idea that our bodies included more than simply our arms, legs, head, and trunk.

It is certainly true that we can lose part of our “flesh,” and go on living, but we cannot lose the air, the Sun, the animals, the plants, or pure water. These gifts are not simply added to us; they are the core of our flesh. We are made of these things.

Still further: “Our eyes are not clear-glass windows. We do not look directly out upon. . .the world surrounding us. . .” We must therefore eliminate “. . . the border between mind and universe. . .”<sup>4</sup> I have also written that “We and all the animals and living things, we complete the world. If the world be a drum, we are its taut skin vibrating with its messages. . .”<sup>5</sup>

We are, indeed, bodies without borders.

\*Professor Jack D. Forbes, Powhatan-Delaware, is the author of *Red Blood, Africans and Native Americans, only approved Indians* and other books. He is professor Emeritus at University of California, Davis. His website is: <http://cougar.ucdavis.edu/nas/faculty/forbes/jfhome.html>.

#### Endnotes

1. Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* (Autonomedia, 1992), 145-146; *A World Ruled by Cannibals*, (1978), 85-86.
2. “The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,” *Tomorrow*, 12(4) (Autumn 1964): 302. Also in *Sacred Pipe*, (1953), 115.
3. John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions* (Simon and Schuster, 1972), 149.
4. Jack D. Forbes, *What is Space?* (2001), 13.
5. Jack D. Forbes, “The Universe is Our Holy Book,” unpublished poem (1993).

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*

(Editor, Anne Waters, Blackwell Publishing, 344 pp.)

**Bernard den Ouden**  
*The University of Hartford*

*American Indian Thought*, edited by Anne Waters, is a genuine resource for teaching and scholarship in philosophy. It is written and edited by Native American thinkers as they communicate philosophical insights from within their shared and differing perspectives. This fine volume includes articles by individuals who have completed graduated work in American Indian philosophy, and by scholars from the fields of education, architecture, regional planning, criminal justice, American studies, psychology, government, history, science, legal studies, religious studies, philosophy of mathematics, political science, interdisciplinary studies, and Native American studies.

What binds the essays together, regardless of the discipline or expertise, is the genius and rich philosophical gifts of Native American thought. This shared vision comes through with clarity and power. Distinctive ways of being in the world and families of relationships with all life forms are documented and described in compelling ways. The implications of Native American philosophies for knowledge in general, for ethics, for community, and for rethinking ontologies are well described. Fundamental questions, such as what constitutes evidence and through what methods do we engage in philosophy, are aptly elaborated.

Any individual or community that is genuinely interested in expanding concepts of and the related responsibilities for a genuinely respectful pluralism will find this volume a gift. People who view philosophy and multicultural studies as a way to heighten their sensitivity to being in the world or being with others will find this book to be a source they can consistently turn to when they individually and collectively try to walk a more enlightened road.

*American Indian Thought* will make an excellent textbook in philosophy courses. In addition to general courses in Native American philosophy, it will make an excellent companion text in introductory philosophy courses, as well as courses in philosophy of science, ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophies of community, philosophy of law, biomedical ethics, philosophy of religion, and comparative philosophy. Instructors will definitely broaden the conceptual horizons of their students by requiring this fine collection as one of their course texts. Researchers in any aspect of Native American studies and multicultural studies will find this collection of essays to be an excellent research tool because of its superb bibliographies.

*American Indian Thought* achieves its goal of being a testament to the ability of Native American thinkers to “continue to walk in two worlds, alongside our ancestors and elders, and on the paths of cultural struggle that articulate our Indigenous being.” It is a gift to anyone who believes that philosophy and any other mode of inquiry is the search for a more thoughtful and appropriate relationship with everything that is.

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## ***American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays***

(Editor, Anne Waters, Blackwell Publishing, 344 pp.)

**Reviewed by Lilian Friedberg**  
*University of Illinois*

Students of philosophy and “professional” philosophers alike will be delighted and challenged by this new release. With an extensive bibliography that includes a wealth of online sources, in addition to a very thorough listing of print sources in book and article form, *American Indian Thought* is an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Indigenous philosophy or American Indian studies. Editor Anne Waters has brought together an impressive cadre of Indigenous thinkers to comment on diverse aspects of philosophical inquiry ranging from Vine Deloria Jr.’s general comments on “Philosophy and Tribal Peoples,” to more specified treatments of epistemologies, ontologies, metaphysics, phenomenologies, ethics, esthetics, the philosophy of science, and social and political philosophy by Indigenous contributors of greater and lesser renown, all of whom are familiar with the rigors of Western discourse. The volume promises to pose a formidable challenge to what Deloria describes in his introduction as the “last bastion of white male supremacy,” because it persistently fatigues the pillars of prejudice upon which that fortification rests. What emerges from over 300 pages of carefully developed argument is an outline of Indigenous thought that resists placement on a linear continuum from some mythological prescientific or “primitive” stage of human intellect to a “scientifically sound” system of knowledge firmly rooted in articles of faith taken for self-evident philosophical truth.

For all the diversity of perspectives presented in this volume, several key principles emerge repeatedly to point to salient differences between Western and Indigenous systems of thought. Brian Yazzie Burkhart identifies the principle of relatedness as central to Indigenous philosophy. The pivotal epistemic distinction between Indigenous models and the Cartesian model of “I think, therefore I am,” is succinctly summarized here in Burkhart’s formulation, “We are, therefore I am.” The same theme runs like a red thread throughout the contributions reappearing in Viola Cordova’s treatment of ethics in, “The We and the I,” in Gregory Cajete’s contribution, which uses elements of chaos theory to demonstrate principles of relatedness in Native science, and again in Marilyn Notah Verney’s discussion of differences between Indigenous and Western frameworks philosophy that stresses the “interdependent relational bond” between people and places and the way philosophy makes “connections among all things” and gives “meaning in relation.”

What is more, several of these contributions point to parallels in the Western philosophical tradition—as in Viola Cordova’s references to Wittgenstein, in Burkhart’s utilization of Thales, in Verney’s citation of Heidegger, or in Waters’ dialogue with Kant. This, in turn, relates to Deloria’s central question of how Native philosophy “fits” in a discipline traditionally dominated by paradigms and methodologies diametrically opposed to and fundamentally at odds with even the basic premises of Indigenous thought. We see here that there are intersections and junctures that can act as points of entry and of departure through which a dialogue characterized by mutual respect, reciprocity, and reconciliation between very disparate systems of thought and conceptual

models can be initiated. Waters, in one of her three contributions to the volume, demonstrates how the tools of Western philosophy can be applied in educational settings to the benefit of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. By examining such potentially volatile issues as the Bering Strait theory, Native population decline, and genocide through the lens of informal logic and by demonstrating logical fallacies behind many of the doctrines currently cherished as “self-evident truths” in most academic disciplines, Waters presents an effective model for developing critical thinking skills in students using topics that are of relevance to Native communities both in and outside academia.

Other ideas—such as the notion of Indigenous thought being much more firmly rooted in experiential knowledge of the world summarized by Thurman Lee Hester, Jr. as the difference between Western “orthodoxy” and Indigenous “orthopraxy”—similarly resurface throughout the volume. The marked presence of anecdotal evidence, of first-person narrative, and of the interjection of personal histories distinguishes many of these contributions from the abstractionist discourse we are so familiar with in the world of philosophy. But this is merely a reflection and validation of Deloria’s claim that “there is no philosophy of American Indians apart from the concrete actions of people in a well-defined physical setting.” The careful reader will be quick to draw the connection between this notion of “experiential knowledge” and what might be considered some of the more controversial political issues raised by work of the “word warriors” (Dale Turner) gathered here. One conclusion drawn by many of these scholars is that American Indian philosophy must be “defined and clarified by the Americas’ Indigenous philosophers.” As Hester puts it, Native American people must be placed at the center of any dialogue between or about Western and Indigenous thought systems, and “insight gained from experience will be crucial.” Viola Cordova ranks the inclusion of Native Americans in the activity as one of the most important factors in creating a Native American philosophy.

The general consensus here is that, however it is defined, manifest or construed, Native American philosophy must be by, for, and about Native American people. Of course, taken out of context, in a conceptual framework that tends to view all things in isolation and is positioned on the febrile foundations of propositional knowledge, this basic premise is likely to be vilified as “essentialist” and exclusionary. Native philosophy derives from the American Indian experience in the world—in all its historical, genocidal, political, spiritual, existential, ontological, metaphysical and epistemological facets. This is not to imply that non-Native scholars have no role to play in the ongoing development of Native philosophy as an academic discipline. Like the pole beans that the Yuchis plant between rows of corn, non-Natives are invited to join in a relationship of mutually sustaining symbiosis with Indigenous philosophers. As Thurman Lee Hester describes this relationship, “pole beans [. . .] are [. . .] vines that you put poles next to so that they can crawl up them, get sun, and yield beans. The Yuchi cornstalk acts like a pole for the bean, while the bean acts as a guywire, supporting the cornstalk in even the stiffest wind.” The experiences and exegeses outlined in this volume should provide enough sophisticated and coherent argument to counter any charges of essentialism, but of course, such charitable readings are always contingent on the receptivity of the reader, and—considering the current demographics and dynamics of the discipline—it would be unrealistic to expect any flood of candidates stepping up to the plate to apply for the role of the pole bean. We can only hope that those few who do will have the temerity and tenacity to sustain even the

stiffest wind because, as an excellent example of “insurgent scholarship,” this volume is likely to stir quite a storm.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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1. Submissions are requested for the *APA Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy*. Email as attachment to [brendam234@aol.com](mailto:brendam234@aol.com), or snail mail to Anne Waters, 1806 Arizona, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87110.
2. *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Anne Waters, is available from Blackwell Publishers. A special roundtable session to discuss this book was sponsored by the Committee on the Status of American Indians in Philosophy at the 2004 Pacific Division APA meeting (Pasadena).
3. Proposals for upcoming 2005 APA conferences are requested. They can be sent to Dale Turner, for the Committee session(s) and to Anne Waters for the American Indian Philosophy Association session.

