

powerful forces in the channeling of individual desires into effective action and long term programs during this period. *Working Class Cultures* shows us how complex, non-determined and conflictual any historical treatment of the construction of common activity would have to be. It is an excellent corrective to the vague and simplistic generalizations of some modern British social and labour history. But it does not invalidate that need to connect individual experience, outlook and behavior to larger trends and developments over time which lies at the heart of the historical enterprise.

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Ward Churchill, *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America* (Toronto: Between the Lines 1994)

In this collection of essays Ward Churchill, a Co-Director of the American Indian Movement of Colorado and an associate professor of American Indian Studies and Communications at the University of Colorado/Boulder, revisits a set of intellectual and political issues that have featured prominently in debates between American Indian activists and academics in recent years. Of central concern to Churchill is the manner in which Euroamericans' past and present cultural representations of Native North American peoples reflect and sustain a set of genocidal proclivities that continue to operate and to reinforce one another at several levels within contemporary North American society. He also devotes approximately equal attention to naming and describing the practices of "a whole herd of hang-around-the-forts, sell-outs and 'nickel' Indians" whose "collective negative example" he cites in the acknowledgments as having done much to propel this book to completion. These twin targets for cultural and political critique come in for a ranging examination that is buttressed by large numbers of footnoted secondary sources and cadenced with

abruptly dismissive rhetoric. It is, among other things, an exercise in the praxis of identity politics that balances some perceptive arguments against assumptions and purposes of an essentialist stance.

The author's treatment of genocide proceeds from the United Nations' 1948 Convention on Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, a document which specifies five categories of action deemed to be genocidal when directed against an identified "national, ethnical, racial or religious group," only one of which involves the outright killing of members of such groups. He gives particular attention to establishing the rate of Native American population decline from the arrival of Columbus in the Americas to the end of the nineteenth century, concluding that the overall population in 1500 was probably in excess of twelve million and had decreased to 237 000 within a period of 400 years. This precipitous decline is presented as powerful evidence of the multifaceted practice of genocide. Previous academic estimates that the Native American population at the time of Columbus was not more than a million persons have been increasingly questioned by a number of writers. Churchill adds no new evidence to this debate, but he does discern larger political and economic interests that have been served by more conservative population estimates which have also propped up a social Darwinian myth about the "inevitability" of the "vanishing Indian." The legitimacy of the appropriation of Indian lands accomplished by Euroamericans during the past two centuries becomes, to put it mildly, morally and legally problematic when placed within such an interpretive framework.

The appropriation of various forms of traditional and contemporary Native American culture, artistic expression and spirituality by Europeans and Euroamericans constitutes, according to Churchill, yet another set of genocidal tendencies. In the essay which provides the title for the book, Robert Bly's pillaging of aboriginal spiritual traditions (for the purposes of constructing a mythology for the men's movement) and the remarkable claims of some contemporary European enthusiasts that they are "spiritually Indian" are succinctly pilloried. Churchill advises intensely sympathetic Ger-

mans whom he has met during tours of Europe to begin by first decolonizing themselves and discovering their traditional pre-European and pre-Germanic ethnic identities and roots, albeit not in the manner advocated by the Nazis. This advice seems to call for an “indigenous” European folk self-reclassification calculated to undermine the taken-for-granted legitimacy of the contemporary nation-state. This post-modern proposition raises alternately intriguing and alarming possibilities, although these are not followed up in any depth by the author.

The sharpest invective appearing in these essays is directed towards Native American leaders and figures whose politics offend Churchill or whom he deems to be engaged in the pursuit of personal gain through participation in corrupted forms of cultural commodification. The key to understanding this scheme of preferences is revealed in the second last essay where he reports his discovery (after he had been to Viet Nam and subsequently joined the American Indian Movement) that homogeneous Native American histories and traditions had ended at the time of the Columbian invasion. From that juncture on at least two “mutually exclusive histories and traditions” had arisen within Indian nations. On the one hand there was “the reality of native patriotism signified by those who fought back against overwhelming odds to defend their people’s rights and ways of life. On the other hand is an equally important, if much less discussed, history of those who weren’t up to the task, who obediently, and often for petty reasons of perceived self-interest, joined hands with the invaders to destroy their people’s ability to resist colonization. Both histories are real and both are ongoing.”(285) This schema may serve particular political and nationalist purposes, but how helpful will it be to those aboriginal and non-aboriginal scholars and readers who seek to understand past relations of native peoples with national societies and economies from a critical perspective and who interpret these as foundational components of contemporary realities?

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