We're Not There Yet, Kemo Sabe

Positing a Future for American Indian Literary Studies

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A few days after receiving the news that I would be teaching a 200-level section of Native American literature, I attended the regular meeting of UNITE, the Indian student group at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.[1] At the end of the meeting, I asked my fellow members—graduate students and undergraduates, mostly women, with representation from tribes all across the United States—what they would want from an American Indian literature class. They were quiet for a little while and then, for nearly forty-five minutes, responded to my query. No one in that room had ever been asked that question, and the floodgates opened. What did we want from a class that is meant to reflect, at least in part, the diversity of experiences and worldviews that we represent? We moved beyond literature to a general discussion about what we as Indian students would want from any course in American Indian studies. Nearly all the comments centered on the difficulties between what is taught, what non-Indian students and faculty expect, and what information Indian students and faculty think should be included in these classes. Not surprisingly, stereotypes and the ignorance of many non-Indians about Indian Country ranked among the most pernicious and pervasive issues.

It has become something of a truism to state that academia is a problematic space for Native peoples, being the place most fraught with conflict over the intellectual justifications of imperialism as well as intellectual resistance to those same justifications. Native American studies programs have now reached a stage of institutionalization, at least on many campuses, that provides some secure horizon for the status of Indian intellectualism in "the academy." But that same institutionalization has a grim side as well, for with institutional support comes pressure, both subtle and heavy-handed, to conform critique and scholarly integrity to the goals and structure of the academy—which remains largely white, largely male, largely straight, and largely dominated by Euro-American ideals of individualism, capitalism, conformity, and knowledge as property.

In the course of our discussion, the members of UNITE reflected on this state of affairs and our own complicity or resistance to this shift in purpose. Who do Native American studies programs serve? Are they programs run by non-Indians for the edification of non-Indians? This is a noble goal, but are these programs really Native studies? And what is the place of Indians in such programs? Are we just (literally) disembodied voices, names, and faces used when convenient to justify the program's existence, or are we active, welcome participants? What would a program that truly reflects the intellectual traditions and life experiences of Indian Country demand of its scholars and students? What would we demand of one another?

These questions are of vital importance to many of us, especially those, like me, who plan to spend our lives in this "enemy territory." I am a student, a young scholar who looks at the job market with some trepidation but whose optimism has not yet been squelched by the increased demands on time, energy, and scholarship. I am looking at the current state of affairs in Native American studies—particularly Indian literary studies and history, my fields of experience—and imagining how, or if, it will continue to serve the needs of Indian people in the coming years. As such, this essay is less a treatise on the way things *should* be as it is an exploration of the way things *could* be. It is not The Answer; instead, it is a series of questions and ideas to reconceptualize what the field of Native American studies is, who it serves, how it accomplishes its stated and implied goals, where it is heading, and who has a place in its future. It is not simply the general seventh generation we think about today; it is also the seventh generation of scholars to come.

In our conversation that cold November afternoon, we came up with a number of issues that we felt to be the most pressing for any study of Native America, most pressing for *us* as Indian students, instructors, educators, and scholars. We know from experience that a strong Native studies course is vital to the intellectual, moral, and humane understanding of all people who call this land home but particularly for those students most affected by either the misrepresentation and absence or the honest and enriching exploration of the intellectual, spiritual, political, and social accomplishments of tribal nations. It is Indian people who can most benefit from an American Indian studies course that represents us respectfully and as participants and inheritors of intellectual and complex traditions; conversely, it is Indian people who most suffer from unchecked stereotypes, lies, and colonialist rape fantasies that masquerade as apologetics for manifest destiny and white supremacy. Below are some of the issues we discussed, along with those gleaned from conversations I have had with other Indian educators, students, scholars, professionals, family members, and friends.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

Although reflecting on the complicated lives and intellectual histories of Native peoples in the twenty-first century is vital to any American Indian studies course, another important aspect, increasingly important as the number of students of European ancestry increases in the classroom, is analysis of white privilege. As long as Euro-American students see themselves as devoid of cultural influence and social privilege based on skin color, and as long as "whiteness" remains the unspoken standard against which all other peoples and communities are compared, the necessary work of dismantling corrosive stereotypes about Indian people will fall short, as all these indigenous communities and immigrants of color will continue to be seen through the lens of "Other." Their struggles and righteous anger will continue to be seen as either the unprovoked rantings of an overindulged minority or the last gasps of a noble race inevitably fading before a more culturally sophisticated and technologically superior *uber*-race.

For Native students on a primarily white campus, any classroom experience is a culture clash; when in a Native studies course, the expectation is that this clash will be minimized, if not erased entirely. (This is an unrealistic goal, perhaps, but it is one that many of us still harbor when we walk through those doors.) The UNITE students all commented on the frustration of having a course that ostensibly reflects the values, intellectual traditions, and histories of Native people but in reality is made up of Euro-American students who not only ignore or vociferously deny their white privilege but also vigorously assert that privilege through their words and demeanor inside the classroom and beyond.

But it is not enough to simply talk about the obvious examples of white privilege—walking in stores without being followed by security, driving in an upper-class neighborhood without fear of being pulled over or arrested, seeing oneself accurately or at least heroically and nonpathologically depicted in nearly all media and texts, and so on. The minutia of such privilege, the very reading experience itself, must be examined as well.

We have learned this lesson too well. My classes—those I have taken and those I teach—are almost exclusively populated by those who are Euro-American, Christian, and straight, and the most common feedback I hear when my classmates or students read Sherman Alexie, Wendy Rose, Ward Churchill, Chrystos, bell hooks, Cherríe Moraga, Dan Savage, and other "angry" writers is that they cannot see themselves in the work, that they are not the *real* audience and thus are not participants in the reader/writer relationship (or, apparently, participants in the oppressive system the writers are responding to). Thus, for many non-Indian students to really "get it," these texts are expected to reflect themselves back again—a well-intentioned, benign, culture-free entity who appreciates fast food multiculturalism that is easy to digest and leaves no bitter aftertaste. Ann duCille writes of a similar phenomenon in regard to black women writers and their white audience: "This, then, is the final paradox: to be valid—to be true—black womanhood must be legible as white or male; the texts of black women must be readable as maps, indexes to someone else's experience, subject to a seemingly endless process of translation and transference."[2]

The function of white privilege (or straight, or male, or economic privilege) in my classrooms has been similar. What, then, happens to an Indian studies curriculum that teaches all the right books, addresses all the right issues, and yet does not address the privileged readings of the students? Those of us who have not had the luxury of seeing ourselves in the literatures and media of the dominant order have had very little choice but to see the texts as the author gives them; whatever resistance and subversive readings we give to the pieces tend to be secondary. We have not typically had the option of simply dismissing the text altogether. But when our students and colleagues of the dominant order do not see themselves in our texts—or their desired image of themselves—they often stop, dismiss, or erase the text entirely and thus our voices and perspectives. Of what use is a Native studies curriculum if it is expected to simply be a road map for white tourism through Indian Territory? The dark destination of such a journey is grimly predicted in Alexie's "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel": "In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written, / all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts."[3]

MIXED BLOOD ANGST

Those who work in any of the fields of American Indian studies are well familiar with the political and social complications surrounding blood quantum in the United States and Canada. This is nowhere more evident than in the often tense conversations about "full-blood" versus "mixed-blood" Indian literature, roughly represented by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Gerald Vizenor (or Louis Owens), respectively. In her essay "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," Cook-Lynn critiques many of today's best known Indian writers—"Vizenor, Owens, Wendy Rose, Maurice Kenney, Michael Dorris, Diane Glancy, Betty Bell, Thomas King, Jo[seph] Bruchac, and Paula Gunn Allen"—for their "aesthetic that is pathetic or cynical, a tacit notion of the failure of tribal governments as Native institutions and of sovereignty as a concept, and an Indian identity which focuses on individualism rather than First Nation ideology."[4] In Cook-Lynn's analysis, a responsible assertion of Indian

identity is immersed in and indistinguishable from the sovereign tribal polity and its land base. Owens responds to Cook-Lynn's essay at great length in his book *Mixedblood Messages* and states that

> there are indeed countless thousands of Indian people . . . who do not live in reservation communities and who, if they are artists, may create art about urban or rural mixedblood experience at a distance from their tribal communities. Should the stories of such people, the products of colonial America's five hundred years of cultural war against indigenous peoples, not be told because they do not fit the definition of what one Lakota critic thinks is tribally "real"?[5]

Leaving the issue of whether or not "mixedbloodedness" is a viable subject for Native studies—and advocates for both perspectives have strong arguments—I wonder instead whether too much attention is placed on the apparent *divisiveness* of mixed-blood identity, rather than seeing it as a realistic and inevitable part of human communities. After all, while violence, self-hatred, and isolation are significant aspects of many interracial relationships, there is another simple and maddeningly elusive contribution to many others: unpredictable and often unsuspected love.

Too many of us forget this notion and the fact that skin tone is not an effective indicator of ethnicity. Unfortunately, in the United States, non-Indians have ignored this reality and take it on themselves to determine who is and is not Indian according to their own definitions of identity. No Indian person has ever asked what my blood quantum is, but many non-Indians, looking at my light skin and thinning brown hair, have felt such a question not only appropriate but *necessary* for me to genetically credential myself. All of the self-identified mixed-blood (or cross-blood) writers Cook-Lynn names, while focusing on their individual experiences and not on overt political and philosophical sovereignty, nonetheless see themselves as members of distinct tribal communities, histories, and traditions—and most of them are seen as such by those communities. In this, at least, tribal sovereignty is fully manifest.

But again, is there too much focus on "mixed blood angst"? And who benefits from that focus? Is that where the true conflict rests? For some, perhaps it is, but Indian people are more realistic about cross-community intermarriage than are most non-Indians—both scholars and the general public—who seek a "pure," pre-invasion "Super-Skin" who fully represents aboriginal America. Tribal members intermarried with those of other tribes long before invasion and continue to do so now; smaller tribes often joined larger ones for mutual benefit. "Mixed bloods," as such, have always been an integral part of Native America.

The modern conception of mixedbloodedness as something shameful, something that makes one *less* a person, *less* an Indian, is rooted in racist U.S. politics and social policy—in its political definition, it has no precedent in Indian Country. Economic displacement, racist U.S. adoption policies that target Indian children and other children of color, and continued attacks on tribal land holdings also contribute to a scattering of communities and intermarriage—a darker side of mixedbloodedness. Add to this the high numbers of Indian men and women in state and federal penitentiaries across North America—in the United States, mostly in states that are governed by notoriously anti-Indian politicians who prey on such sentiment to increase public hostility toward the tribes—and we have a smaller population of eligible men and women available to bring continuity and security to the Native communities.[6] The U.S. criminal justice system is a brutally effective weapon being used against tribes today, a barbed wire Dawes Act erected all over Indian Country.[7] And while we cannot ignore the reality that resources are allocated by the U.S. government according to those very racist criteria, and while nearly every tribe has had to deal with the many issues regarding blood quantum, we can continue to shift attention away from a colonialist tool of eradicating the tribes and back toward our communities and their traditions.

We might better serve our communities by exploring other, more immediately relevant issues and spending less energy under the colonialist mind-set. What about the differences between those raised in urban environments and those raised in rural or reservation communities? Their experiences as Indians are certainly different and deserve attention. What about the continuing conflicts, as well as cooperative measures, between traditionalists and acculturated or assimilated Indians? These issues are frequently conflated with blood quantum, but such comparisons too often break down with even cursory investigation. What about the Christian traditionalists, the technotraditionals, or the tribal "assimilates"? What about those Indians whose experiences in boarding schools and with missionaries were not negative or were sometimes even enriching and positive? What about those traditionalists who refuse to enroll or those Indians who come from tribes "terminated" by the U.S. government because of greed and racist ideas about mixed bloods not being "real" Indians? In UNITE, we have about equal numbers of members who were raised on reservations and those raised outside their tribal communities; they are not necessarily the same students who are visibly mixed blood or phenotypically Indian. Some of us are enrolled members of federally recognized tribes; others are not. Some are acknowledged as members of their communities without being enrolled; others are not. The rigid categories break down when applied to living people; simplification is the reigning concept of stereotypes, not reality. The realities of Indian lives are complicated, and those convoluted realities should be reflected in the classroom and in scholarly works.

ARBITRARY BORDERS

The borders that determine the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Central and South American countries are all drawn with the blood of indigenous people, not to mention the Native populations of Hawai'i, Alaska, and other not-quite-officially-colonies of U.S. imperialism; we should not continue to replicate such a system. While the government policies and issues facing Indian communities in each country are certainly different, there are also many shared experiences that deserve acknowledgment and discussion. Many Canadian Natives, including Maria Campbell, Tomson Highway, Thomas King, and Jeanette Armstrong, have entered the Native literature canon; they and many others deserve to be read and studied as much as U.S. tribal scholars and writers. But there are few Mexican, Guatemalan, Peruvian, or Brazilian Indian writers known to most scholars in Indian literature; nor are many Chicano/a writers seen as participants in Indian literatures. This seems to parallel the general U.S. cultural trend to categorize communities in rigid boxes and then ignore, dismiss, or trivialize some of those communities entirely.

Take, for example, the 1999 American Literature Association (ALA) symposium on Native American literature held in Puerto Vallarta. One of the first presenters was Domino Perez, whose paper explored the deep indigenous roots of much of contemporary Chicano/a literature. Over the next two days, the white scholars who discussed Chicano/a literature following her presentation each made a point of explaining why Chicano/a and Mexican writers are not Indian. This was rather convenient, I suppose, as it would have been difficult to participate in the colonial tourism of Puerto Vallarta if those scholars had to acknowledge that the people serving food and liquor, cleaning rooms, selling various goods on the beach, driving buses and taxis, and begging for change in the city were Indians as much as the idolized Momaday or Silko.

MOVING AWAY FROM THE "NOBLE NINE"

A few of the UNITE students I spoke with reiterated what many of my other friends in Indian literature have thought for some time: there are more than nine Native writers worthy of discussion.[8] I do not deny that the "Noble Nine" (more a term in keeping with the writers' tokenization by many non-Indians than one reflecting the legitimate honor and respect each artist deserves) are important figures in Native literature or that they have a very clear place in our studies and our discussions. But there are literally hundreds of powerful Indian writers, from Nunavit to Columbia and all points between and below, who have something to contribute to the broader understanding of Native peoples in the twenty-first century. We cannot represent all indigenous peoples of this hemisphere equally, but we can certainly combine lesser known Indian writers with those already established in academic circles. And we can write essays on other authors and provide them with an audience as well, rather than focusing on the same authors, the same issues, and the same texts over and over again. While the Cherokees are certainly well represented by Diane Glancy and Betty Louise Bell, other Cherokees—Marilou Awiakta, Robert Conley, William Sanders, Geary Hobson, Wilma Mankiller, and the late Carroll Arnett (Gogiski)—are powerful voices for the diversity and continuity of the Cherokee people today. Just as our communities are diverse, so too should be our scholarly studies.

"RIGHTS" VERSUS "RESPONSIBILITIES"

Any responsible work of scholarship in Native studies will discuss the many debts owed to our nations by the U.S. government, through treaties and other compacts negotiated, endorsed, and ratified by U.S. officials and Congress itself—debts and promises broken by those same officials, their predecessors, and their successors in exchange for money, land resources, or political expediency. The 371 treaties and numerous U.S. court decisions that stand as law in this country have been repeatedly violated or interpreted against the tribes at various times by the U.S. government and its representatives;[9] it is also true, however, that those treaties and decisions have, with varying degrees of success, provided support for indigenous rights activists in the U.S. courts. As Indian people, we have many rights acknowledged by the U.S. government, as well as many we recognize ourselves apart from U.S. definitions and terminology.

But rights are just half of the issue. As Hawaiian sovereignty advocate and scholar Haunani-Kay Trask notes:

> Once indigenous people begin to use terms like language "rights" and burial "rights," they are moving away from their cultural universe, from the understanding that language and burial places are born from our ancestral association with our lands of origin. These indigenous Native practices are not "rights" that are given as the largesse of colonial governments. These practices define, instead, who we are, where we live, and how we feel.[10]

Rights, as such, are incomplete. There is far too little discussion of our *responsibilities* as Indian people (and scholars/students in Native studies) to our nations, to our families, to our communities, and to our world. Rights without responsibilities are the way of imperialism and colonialism, not the way of Native America. There are many responsibilities that most of us as tribal people share, including reciprocity; recognition of the innate spirits of all the cosmos and our familial connection to those spirits; respect of all members

of that family; and respectful, responsible, and healthy personal behavior that will enrich our communities and preserve them for the future generations. Even in our scholarship, our writing, our poetry, and other activities, we share responsibilities in this life—those responsibilities do not end at the classroom door.

WE TALK, YOU LISTEN, OR "WORDFIGHT" AT THE ALA CORRAL

Those of us who are Indian recognize these responsibilities to varying degrees, but non-Indians, on the whole, still seem to operate under the too often exploitative mantra of "academic rights" when held accountable for their scholarship. At the aforementioned 1999 ALA conference in Puerto Vallarta, the final night of the conference saw an academic showdown unlike any seen by most of us in attendance. After days of insulting behavior by non-Indian "poachers"—one woman who repeatedly referred to a mixed-blood writer as a "breed" and then complained to the white co-coordinator of the conference when an Indian woman *privately* and respectfully corrected her racist terminology, numerous participants' continued reiterations that they did not know much about American Indians or Native literature though they clearly felt competent enough to make sweeping claims and judgments about our intellectual traditions and expressions, rude and demanding expectations by many non-Indian attendants of the indigenous employees of the resort at which we were staying—the Indians and our non-Indian allies had ourselves a good, old-fashioned uprising.[11]

We stood up against the poachers, against the mind-set of appropriation and exploitation that so many irresponsible scholars have wielded in our world. Many of us spoke—elders, students, professors—about the responsibility that was assumed when we entered this field and how we expect no less from our non-Indian colleagues. We were angry Indians, and it was a liberating moment, a time when *we* spoke and demanded to be heard. The resentment of the poachers was palpable, but so was their fear and the knowledge that we were right. They would never go to an African American studies conference and wallow in ignorance of African American traditions, histories, or issues. Nor would they dismiss African American concerns and claims as simply "political correctness."[12]

I left Puerto Vallarta with a newfound energy, a reclaimed purpose for why I am in this field—to serve my people; to give voice to my family, my ancestors, those who have so long been silenced and erased from the physical and symbolic landscape of America; and to *listen* to the needs, issues, and concerns of Indian people and other oppressed groups and work to heal the wounds of colonialism and enduring exploitation. It is not a career or a goal accom-

plished in ivory tower isolation—it is a duty shared with the community, on the ground, face to face. The community does not serve our purposes; we serve the community and its continuity.

Of course, the poachers circled the wagons after the conference, but we had spoken, and that would not soon be forgotten. Our non-Indian friends and allies shared their stories with us, and we shared a purpose together. It was never Indian against non-Indian—it was always people of good heart fighting for respect and freedom against an institutional system and its agents who would deny us any place other than as antiquated museum pieces gathering dust in the American imagination.

Since that conference, we have seen the retrenchment of many of those same scholars and the cautious understanding of others. And we keep talking, we keep asking the questions. At the last Modern Language Association conference, my friend and elder, Eastern Cherokee scholar Virginia Carney, again asked the question that was asked at ALA and again received the same chilly response: *Why are you doing this work?*[13]

Why are we in American Indian studies? If we cannot answer the question, we should choose another field. Unlike some other areas of study, this field has material effects on the communities being researched. These studies are not just abstract musings about a vanished people—they define, construct, and interpret the living lives and ways of people today as well as tomorrow. To deny us a role in that interpretation is to become, once again, *Other.* In this regard, duCille points out, "we become objects of study when we are authorized to be the story, but have no special claim to decoding that story. We can be, but someone else gets to tell what we mean."[14]

Academic freedom is an important philosophy that deserves protection and acknowledgment, but it cannot—it should not—be used as a club by scholarly poachers to further exploit and dehumanize Indian peoples.[15] When anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, and other academics intrude on Indian people and communities, decide for themselves who we are and were without consultation with us, unearth our ancestors and engage in destructive testing on their remains, or otherwise wield academic and Euro-American privilege to impose themselves and their ideas on our communities, they are merely replicating the all too familiar pattern of colonialist domination of Indian Country. Indians have too long a history of being brutalized by both the physical and the intellectual processes and products of Euro-America. As Trask writes about historians (but could easily be writing about academics in general): "Historians, I realized, were very much like missionaries. They were a part of the colonizing horde. One group colonized the spirit; the other, the mind."[16] To ignore that legacy, to hide behind academic freedom, to pretend that academia is value neutral and then continue the imperialist missionary

campaign of stripping our communities of resources and humanity, is to simply change the mask on the monster: the monster remains the same.

Indian scholars are held accountable for our work by many entities: our communities, our families, our friends and colleagues, and others in Indian Country. Such accountability can be painful at times, but on the whole it works to insure the quality, the respect, and the responsibility of the work being produced. We hold each other accountable, and we do the same for those who enter our world, our lives, and our minds, spirits, and hearts.

It has never been as simplistic as "only Indians should teach/write about/talk about Indian issues." Considerate non-Indians have a place in our communities, and we hold enormous respect for those who are sincere and responsible, regardless of their ethnicity—just as we are ashamed of those Indians who hurt their communities and families by selfish, unthinking, or uncaring behaviors and thoughts.

We have many responsibilities, all of us, to the people whom we claim to study and speak for. We must move beyond the simple dichotomies that the dominant order has prepared for us and work to honor the complex, multifaceted people with histories we truly are. Some of the most revolutionary work in Native studies emerges from this philosophy, which itself is as old as the hills—it comes from our tribal histories, our tribal traditions, the family knowledge and experiences that have provided us the strength, intelligence, and adaptability to survive in the face of multigenerational holocaust. Craig S. Womack (Muskogee Creek/Cherokee) writes of this in his deservedly much cited *Red on Red:*

> Rather than revising dominant-culture literary and critical aesthetics and "fitting" Native texts and cultures to such criteria, the criteria themselves will be questioned as to their applicability, and more radical approaches will be posited as possibilities. Integration, acceptance, and assimilation to literary norms will no longer be our highest goal. Native critics will turn toward more disruptive tactics, and this new group might be closer kin to Rabbit, leaping away with the very flames themselves, rather than victims outside the campfire waiting for someone to invite them over for a little warming up.[17]

The future of American Indian studies, like the future of Native people ourselves, will depend not only on our increased visibility and tribal advocacy in all fields and disciplines but also on the knowledgeable and respectful understanding of non-Indians that we have both the right and the responsibility to represent ourselves. Many of us who are students now—Indian and non-Indian—are looking with some discomfort at the state of Native studies today, but we also look with an eye to the future and an understanding that we can work together, along with those who have come before and will come after, to insure that Indian people have a rich, vibrant presence in the intellectual and cultural life of the future.

Regardless of our ethnicity, all of us in this field and its disciplines are, through our scholarship, teaching, and interaction with others, challenging over 500 years of erasure and misrepresentation. The days of the Lone Ranger and the Indian Wars are past—it is Tonto's turn to ride.

NOTES

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1. UNITE is an acronym for the University of Nebraska Inter-Tribal Exchange, an academic, community, and activist Indian student organization at the university.

2. Ann duCille, *Skin Trade* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 118.

3. Sherman Alexie, "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel," in *Native American Songs and Poems*, ed. Brian Swann (Mineola NY: Dover Publications, 1996), 29.

4. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 124–25.

5. Louis Owens, *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 158.

6. Nebraska, Washington, the Dakotas, Montana, and Oklahoma come to mind, as do the "protectorate" states—Hawai'i and Alaska—whose Native populations have largely been ignored by the U.S. government, even when it acknowledges the unlawful territorial expansion and occupation by the United States and its economic interests over those communities and their lands.

7. The Dawes Act was one of the preliminary steps toward U.S. citizenship—another dubious "gift" exchanged for the political sovereignty and millions of acres of land stolen by the U.S. government—that further extended the judicial and political hand of the United States over Indian Country. A side effect of the criminal justice system today in many states is that any Indian prisoners who are convicted of felonies are no longer accorded one of the basic rights of that very citizenship: voting. Thus, an enormous percentage of Indians—already suffering the effects of racist "justice" that imposes stiffer sentences and longer terms on Indians than on whites—is disenfranchised and silenced, even after the Indians have served their sentences. For a brief but in-

sightful analysis of Indians and the criminal justice system, see Donald E. Green, "The Contextual Nature of American Indian Criminality," in *Contemporary Native American Political Issues*, ed. Troy R. Johnson (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira, 1999), 179–96.

8. Many of us can think off the top of our heads just who these writers are, with some variation. A quick study of any literature conference program will show many of the same names over and over again. My own list includes Momaday, Silko, Alexie, Glancy, Erdrich, Dorris, Allen, Harjo, and Vizenor. To have their names here is not to assert that they should not be read or studied; it is to say, however, that we should include many other, equally worthy names to this group of Indian writers and artists. Rather than shrinking the number of Indian writers whose work we explore, we should expand our options and our experiences.

9. Take, for instance, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), which encapsulated much of contemporary U.S. claims about the rights of Indian people in the United States. The reigning judicial claim of the first case was that Indian nations were not foreign nations but, rather, in John Marshall's words, "domestic dependent nations," thus setting the stage for increased and usually arbitrary extension of U.S. authority over tribal sovereignty. On the other hand, the *Worcester* case was ruled in favor of the Cherokee Nation, with the claim that while tribes were not foreign nations, their domestic nationhood was such that states—such as Georgia, which had precipitated the case by extending its laws over the land base of the Cherokee Nation in order to drive Cherokees from our homelands to the "Indian Territory"—had no jurisdiction over the tribes (limiting such jurisdiction to the federal government and its agents). The response by President Andrew Jackson is reputed to have been, "John Marshall has made his decision—now let him enforce it." Six years later, in spite of the Supreme Court decision in its favor, the bulk of the Cherokee Nation was driven by U.S. troops and the Georgia citizenry onto the 1,000-mile death march that came to be known as the Trail of Tears. For the court decisions, see Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 2d ed. expanded (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); for information on the Trail of Tears, the best source still remains Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932).

10. Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 88.

11. *Poachers* is a term coined by James Cox to describe those non-Indians who come into Native studies to nab a few of our resources, pick up a publication or two, tell the Indian folks who we are and how we think, and then head back to tenure land, leaving us with the bloody gut pile and, yet again, nothing to help our communities, either intellectually or physically.

12. Or perhaps they might, as duCille points out in regard to African American studies:

> Much of the newfound interest in African American women that seems to honor the field of black feminist studies actually demeans it by treating it not like a discipline with a history and a body of rigorous scholarship underpinning it, but like an anybody-can-play pickup game played on an open field. Often the subject of the fame seems to be to reinvent the intellectual wheel: to boldly go where in fact others have gone before, to flood the field with supposedly new "new scholarship" that evinces little sense of the discipline's genealogy. (*Skin Trade*, 95)

Such problems may be endemic to minority disciplines that are growing in demand and popularity, drawing attention and funding away from more established areas of scholarship. If this is the case, it is no less troubling because it is pervasive and systemic. If anything, it is more of an indictment of the system and its adherents.

13. In response to her question, a non-Indian professor in the audience angrily responded, "How condescending of you to suggest that we teach Native literature for any other reason than because we want to!" Following his outburst, he explained to all of us in the audience how Thanksgiving is the perfect example of Indian and non-Indian cooperation—apparently because Indians give to the non-Indians and they take all they want. The man was apparently unaware of or unconcerned with the full meaning of Thanksgiving for Indian people, particularly the slaughter and dispossession that followed the gift giving. This scholar's combination of the myth of Thanksgiving with his answer to the question is both ironic and sadly illustrative of the issues we are so concerned about.

14. DuCille, *Skin Trade*, 98.

15. As Devon A. Mihesuah points out in her introduction to *Natives and Academics*, numerous tribal councils are placing limits on the research being done on their communities—an eminently reasonable exercise of sovereignty, especially considering the history of exploitative research often done on those communities. I imagine that much of the scholarly resistance to such measures is less a response to infringement on academic freedom than a visceral reaction to the likelihood of "uneducated" Indians making judgments about the quality and value of those scholars' work. Such reactions demonstrate a very clear misunderstanding of the place of knowledge in Indian Country and the roles of our elders, who are typically the bearers of ancient traditions and ancestral knowledge, in spite of a frequent "lack" of the academic credentials that Euro-Americans demand for the legitimacy of knowledge. See Mihesuah, "Introduction," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 10–11.

16. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 114.

17. Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 303.