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Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History. By Alexandra Harmon.

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erasing the structural exclusion of Blacks from temporality, cartography, and embodied action (315).

*Red, White & Black* is both brilliant and idiosyncratic, and bound to be controversial. An increasingly important focus of indigenous studies is the intersections between African American and Native American histories, cultures, aesthetics, and politics, and indigenous scholars will likely find counterarguments as well as points of agreement with this book. Oddly, Wilderson does not cite work by such scholars and writers in this area as Jack Forbes, Malinda Maynor Lowry, and Tiya Miles, and this omission of larger indigenous and comparative studies frameworks extends throughout the work. For example, he does not summarize and historicize the emergent body of indigenous film theory: there are no references to Jacqueline Kilpatrick, Beverly Singer, or Faye Ginsburg and indigenous media theorists from visual anthropology. The final section includes a substantial discussion of representations of the “mulatta” that uses the character Leticia in *Monster’s Ball*, but there is no consideration of Native mixed-blood histories or their considerable attendant complexities of identity, legal status, and popular culture representation. Despite these omissions, Wilderson’s book is a thought-provoking read and an important one for comparative studies of racial representations in cinema because it so vehemently departs from current critical channels in order to reach for the revolutionary power of paradigmatic vision.

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**Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History.** By Alexandra Harmon. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 400 pages. \$41.95 cloth; \$27.95 paper.

During a 1984 interview with *Student Lawyer* magazine, distinguished Dakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. recalled a journalist’s 1969 visit to his Denver home to discuss *Custer Died for Your Sins*: “This team came out and saw that we had a basketball hoop on the garage and that I wrote on an electric typewriter. When they were all done interviewing, they said, ‘You’re a phony. You’re not an Indian.’” Notoriously sarcastic, Deloria retorted, “What do you think—that I was going to live on South Table Mesa with a fat wife and 17 kids and a whole bunch of dogs and old cars in the yard?” “You’re taxpayers,” he jabbed, “you’ve been putting half a billion dollars a year into Indian programs. Don’t you want to see a guy like me who wears button-down shirts and shiny boots and who’s starting to show that your tax money’s paying for something?”

Deloria's biting riposte speaks to a larger problem of non-Indians' discomfort with Native people who succeed in mainstream American capitalist terms, and how such discomfort intersects with ideas about Indian authenticity in complicated ways. This problem is central to historian Alexandra Harmon's innovative analysis in *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History*.

Harmon's interest first stemmed from the public discourse surrounding the late 1990s dot-com boom, when she noticed that criticism of upstart businesses paralleled the discourse surrounding American Indian tribes' recent, equally unprecedented economic triumphs. Questions of greed, morality, wealth distribution, civic responsibility, and entitlement shadowed both economic phenomena. Most problematic has been the idea that making money is somehow inconsistent with being Indian: "In the reactions to Indians' new and growing wealth, moral judgments of economic behavior merged with ideas about Indians," Harmon writes (3). Harmon sought to uncover the roots of that fallacy and its historical effect on Indian/Euro-American relations. As she discovered, attitudes toward Indians and money are situated within deeply entrenched stereotypes about acceptable Indian behavior that reach back to the colonial period.

Seven chronological case studies on many of the most researched topics in Native American history structure the book. Its reliance on secondary scholarship is the result of Harmon's focus on those histories that have generated sufficient public discourse and, within those debates, competing ideologies about wealth. In the process, she considers how instances of Indian wealth both perpetuate and transform stereotypes about Native people and culture. In *Rich Indians* Harmon has successfully produced a work not of original research, but original ideas.

The first chapter discusses Powhatan and English negotiations for power in seventeenth-century Jamestown and the crucial role the acquisition and defense of wealth played during those negotiations. Harmon avoids a victimization narrative, suggesting that the Powhatans "initially responded to the colonists' presence as if they saw a group whose resources and needs complemented theirs and thus could be grounds for mutually beneficial relations—just what the English ostensibly had hoped" (34). Despite the Powhatans' better efforts, colonists wrested away Indian resources and wealth not only through physical dominance, but also through discursive processes that dismissed Indians as "savage," "prodigal," and unworthy of riches. According to Harmon, Indians' apparent failure to recognize their own poverty only further entrenched European assumptions about Native degeneracy.

Chapter 2, "Indian Gentry," focuses on Mohawk leaders Joseph and Molly Brant and Creek cultural brokers Alexander McGillivray and Mary Musgrove,

who, like European colonial leaders, gained universal political power through wealth-based generosity. After the American Revolution, however, Indian gentry who advocated tribal land ownership and political sovereignty witnessed a diminished appreciation for their European-influenced personal virtue. As Harmon explains, "With contempt for Indian nations came contempt for the affluent Indians' bid to associate as equals with elite whites" (57).

In the 1830s, wealth and property played a role in the removal crisis surrounding the "civilized" tribes of the Southeast, forming the basis for Harmon's third chapter. Here she examines not only the discourse surrounding Indian wealth, but also ideas about American wealth. Anxious northern whites who rejected removal's blatant disregard for private property worried about choosing "economic gain over righteousness when the two conflicted" (119). Pro-removal advocates invoked race to justify their actions, claiming that Indians were "improvident savages," and that the fact that most of the wealthy members of the southern tribes had white blood was evidence of Indians' racial degeneracy.

By the Gilded Age (chapter 4), Indians had their own robber barons, and many Indians feared that economic ambition had escalated to a perilous brand of selfishness. In 1873 Choctaw rancher "Old Bob Jones" reportedly was worth \$1,500,000, and Creek rancher F. B. Severs was the "Jay Gould of the [Creek] nation." Harmon contextualizes Indian greed within a larger narrative about Gilded Age robber barons. Like their American counterparts, wealthy Indians invited questions about "indecent selfishness" and possible contributions to "civic disorder" (143). The allotment policy exacerbated such concerns as it drove a socioeconomic wedge between wealthy Indians and the poorer tribesmen with whom they once bonded in defense of sovereignty.

The most interesting chapter, "Osage Oil Owners," discusses federal lawmakers' decision to hold Osage oil money in trust during the 1920s in an effort to teach the tribe thrift. "The history of government controls on Osage money belies or complicates the adage that wealth is power," Harmon keenly observes (172). Not only did Osages lack power to spend their money as they saw fit, they also lacked power to control the discourse of public image-making. For example, non-Indians accused Osages who deviated from "traditional" means of managing wealth of not acting Indian. "Planning in advance is not an Indian trait," one magazine article insisted (184).

A 1979 Supreme Court case that ruled Indians' fishing rights entitled them to only a "moderate living" forms the inquiries in chapter 6. In the late 1970s, racism again emerged as a central problem in the debate over Indians' economic rights. Lobbyists intent on destroying Indian rights and abrogating all treaties argued that it was racist to afford any ethnic group special privileges. Indians countered that treaties were not ethnic privileges and that Native people's

support for the integrity of law made them the true upholders of America's core values. In a summary that perhaps best encapsulates *Rich Indians*' larger lesson, Harmon writes, "When contemplating threatening reactions to tribal gains, Indians had cause to feel damned if they did not get rich and damned if they did" (248).

No book on the problem of wealth in Indian history could conclude without a chapter on "Gambling Money." Earlier disputes over Indian wealth pale in comparison to the debates over tribal gaming revenue that continue today, and Harmon suggests that this is because for the first time Indians are "siphoning cash out of other Americans' wallets faster than other Americans could extract wealth from Indian country" (249–50). She also notes that, complicating the equation, for the first time Indian wealth is flowing toward non-Indians in beneficial ways: casinos hire non-Indian workers, subsidize government services, donate to charity, and fund political campaigns. Still, old questions about Indians and wealth persist. Harmon imagines that if the ghosts of Powhatan chiefs, Cherokee slaveowners, Creek ranchers, or Osage oil owners were to hear public discourse on casinos, they would recognize familiar themes. But as Harmon adroitly points out, there is a remarkable difference in that for the first time Indian wealth is substantial enough to allow Native people the power to influence public discourse.

Harmon's first book, *Indians in the Making* (1998), quickly became essential reading for students of Native American history. Its provocative analysis of Indian identity provided the closest thing we have to a definitive word on that difficult subject. In its willingness to confront large questions and establish a useful framework for thinking about Indian economies, Euro-American economies, and the complicated relationships between the two, *Rich Indians* seems poised to enjoy a similar future. Although *Rich Indians* raises more questions than it answers, such criticism is perhaps unfair considering it delivers a sophisticated, wholly original analysis with undoubted value for all students and scholars of Native American history. Moreover, *Rich Indians* fits nicely alongside works that interrogate the importance of capitalism and labor in Native history, such as those by Colleen O'Neill, Daniel Usner, Brian Hosmer, and William Bauer, among others. Like *Indians in the Making*, ultimately the value of *Rich Indians* will be measured not only by the conversations that it generates, but also by the subsequent scholarship that it inspires.

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