

Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance. By Allison Hargreaves. Waterloo, CN: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017. \$29.99 paper.

Decades ago, when I knew even less about the realities of today's world than now, I asked my friend and colleague Aileen Moreton-Robinson what she had learned from her elders on how to create changes to existing societal systems of inequity and oppression. She relayed that her mother had taught her that such changes are not only quite complex, but exceedingly contingent upon more variables than one could effectively perceive. Therefore, a desirable strategy would be to scatter widely embryonic possibilities, as one might scatter botanical seeds on irregular earth and then wait for something to grow. Reading settler-scholar of literature Allison Hargreaves's book *Violence Against Indigenous Women*, we find that scatterings from our twentieth-century social-equity activisms around the world have taken root, including numerous rights movements and the development of academic area studies such as women's studies. This book is a gift of knowledge about very troubling social issues and it is an honoring of scholars who have informed Hargreaves's thinking.

One role of scholars is the continuous pursuit of knowledge and evidence to support our understandings of realities—pasts, presents, and futures. In this role, Hargreaves brings forward indigenous histories and contemporary knowledges in which we indigenous women assert our personhood in spite of colonizer societies' actions that deny our value. Focusing on the violence against Indigenous women in Canada, she analyzes Indigenous women's stories while critiquing the dehumanizing actions and reports of the Canadian settler society that reflect ongoing oppressions. Hargreaves starts her work with a clear goal: concern "with the social issue of violence against Indigenous women in Canada, and the politics of literary, policy, and activist forms of resistance." Within this she argues "three main contentions: 1) that this violence is systemic in nature and colonial in origin; 2) that representation matters to the material history of violence; and, 3) that Indigenous women writers contribute vital insights into the analysis of gendered colonial violence while envisioning new, non-violent realities" (1).

Clearly familiar with many contemporary indigenous women's works, Hargreaves cites most of the relevant authors I would expect in such an endeavor; however, she does not come from indigenous philosophies and theoretical concepts so the inferences she makes from these works reflect her own positionality as a settler scholar. The bulk of Hargreaves work is in the more than one-hundred pages of these stories, which are dense with facts, data, events, histories, information, and her own settler feminist scholarly analyses. Specifically, she discusses British Columbia's missing women with Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh's film *Finding Dawn* (2006) and the state's 2010 public commission of inquiry; the national campaign for research, education, and policy change with Marilyn Dumont's poem, "Helen Betty Osborne" (2015) and Amnesty International's 2004 report *Stolen Sisters*; systemic racism within feminist service agencies and the publishing industry with Morningstar Mercredi's memoir *Morningstar: A Warrior's Spirit* (2006); and public apologies and commemorations with David Alexander Robertson's graphic novel *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne* (2008) and Yvette Nolan's play *Annie Mae's Movement* (2006) set alongside Manitoba's public apology to Osborne's family.

Turning to Indigenous scholars and creators of text to enhance her understanding of what, exactly, is going on at the aforementioned times and places, she shares indigenous women's stories, claiming that they have better identified the forces in play than colonizers' stories have done. She calls upon Indigenous storytelling epistemologies as the primary means for her work. However, her word choices fail to identify the colonial society's stories as such; rather, we are told they are reports, research, policies, commissions, and so forth, instead of stories comparable to those of the women. I was hoping for a clearer understanding that the settler society's texts are stories and for more ponderings over the historical trajectory of these stories as they inform the settlers' built society. Indigenous storywork as an epistemology pertains to all stories, from all of us: as Thomas King states repeatedly in *The Truth About Stories* (2008), "The truth about stories is, that's all we are"; "we" includes indigene and colonizer alike.

Societal institutions are creations based on philosophies, values, and understandings of realities. Hargreaves promises that indigenous women writers better explain the systemic inequity that is leading to violence. She promises that we indigenes "contribute vital insights into the analysis of gendered colonial violence" (1). Set next to settler texts, her analysis makes a passable start, but I found it to be lacking the fullness or completeness of Indigenous women's analyses and philosophies, as found, for example, in *Keetsahmak / Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, edited by Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt (2018). I would have liked Hargreaves to probe more into the "why" of settler society inequities from her position of being of the settler society. Why did the settler society create systemic inequity? Until we all better understand this "why"—or what George Lakoff calls the "frame" in *Don't Think of an Elephant* (2004)—we cannot begin to effectively strategize to create a different future.

All through the book, I had trouble with the tone but could not quite identify what was troubling me. Her conclusion begins reveals the limitations of her scholarly groundings. The author writes that from the history of social equity clashes with oppressive systems, "we often learn that increased knowledge and awareness lead naturally to social change, that Indigenous women need merely to be better included in dominant paradigms, and that to remember—without a sense of history, location, or responsibility—is enough," adding that "indigenous women's literature tells us otherwise" (166). I counter that not only indigenous women have been "telling otherwise," but almost all contemporary social equity workers and scholars, at least for the forty years that I've been involved. With the conclusion, I began to have some clarity that the author comes from a settler-scholar position that is perhaps short-sighted.

Having said this, it is affirming that Hargreaves attributes current social equity strategies to Indigenous women's literature, but I would again counter with we are not alone in recognizing that increased knowledge and awareness does not lead logically to changes in actions, values, laws, or policies. Yes, we need to better understand the frames and systems that allow for enacted oppressions, reiterated oppressive ideologies, and reaffirmed oppressive values, but Hargreaves has given us a thin analysis. Additionally, any work dealing with colonial systems of oppressions should acknowledge more than just the two parameters of gender and nationality (Indigeneity). I expected inclusion of related parameters of inequity and identity.

Finally, a very serious problem with Hargreaves's book is her reliance on a scholar who has misrepresented herself as indigenous, A. Smith. Not only did I find Smith's work to be troublingly unidimensional when it came out, but the social pathology of playing indian should not be reinforced.

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