# UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

## Title

For This Land Writings on Religion in America. By Vine Deloria, Jr.

Permalink https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8n94j5bf

**Journal** American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 23(4)

**ISSN** 0161-6463

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Publication Date

#### DOI

10.17953

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Powered by the <u>California Digital Library</u> University of California people recovering a sense of self: "Grandmother, do not forgive/them, they know/what they have done" (p. 51). Turcotte's verse is succinct and evocative. He conveys emphatically his sense of wonder at being Chippewa, confounded by the realities of urban, industrial life. "Half Blood" is perhaps the most telling of the poems in *The Feathered Heart*: "When my brother/loves me,/he calls me/Anishinnabe,/but when he does not/love me,/he mentions the paleness/of/my hands" (p. 59). The book is a moving and provocative addition to the growing body of Chippewa poetry and prose specifically, and to Native American literature in general. Like many of his successful contemporaries' poetry—Sherman Alexie's *Old Shirts & New Skins* (1993) and Paula Gunn Allen's *Life is a Fatal Disease* (1997)—Turcotte's work demonstrates competence and ingenuity in its presentation of Indian identity.

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For This Land: Writings on Religion in America. By Vine Deloria, Jr., edited and with an introduction by James Treat. New York: Routledge, 1998. 311 pages. \$75.00 cloth; \$19.99 paper.

Reviewing Deloria's *For This Land* requires undertaking at least two separate tasks. First, we must examine the collection that the editor, James Treat, has presented. Second, we analyze the collection itself, in this case the writings of Vine Deloria, Jr. Without argument, Treat has collected powerful writings. Through his selections, *For This Land* addresses a specific set of topics including theoretical bases of social activism, world view discrepancies, the role of the church and the state in American Indian affairs, and the contemporary need for the reclamation of tribal wisdom. The overall picture that emerges from the selections unveils the importance of the author's contributions to religious thought; it is unmistakably vintage Deloria.

As another Native scholar working on religion in American Indian communities, Treat is naturally drawn to Deloria's thought and writings. This connection, however, is clearly not obvious to those that who only know Deloria as a political and legal activist. As noted by Treat, most people who have some knowledge and interest in Deloria's work consider *God is Red* to be the "definitive statement of his views on religion" (p. 4). But Treat's collection shows that this perspective ignores other substantial works that clearly focus on religion and religious issues; furthermore, reducing the author's religious views to *God is Red* categorizes and decontextualizes his writings in the exact manner criticized by Deloria. *For This Land* thus serves as a landmark in reflecting the diversity of American Indian issues that Deloria has addressed from multiple religious perspectives, and fills the gap of Deloria's lack of treatment as an important figure in religious issues. To this end, Treat's editorial endeavor has proven quite successful.

Structurally, the writings are presented in a loosely chronological fashion within the thematic categories introduced by Treat. There are a total of

twenty-eight chapters, an afterword (by Deloria), a pair of hilarious, classic Deloria writings listed as appendices, and a featured bibliography. Although the bibliography excludes reviews, revised chapters, video and audio productions, and his *NCAI Sentinel* pieces, it nevertheless "represent[s] the most comprehensive accounting of Deloria's published writings available in print" (p. 297). Treat's more than ten years of research on the list will certainly allow interested researchers to more easily locate his more obscure writings.

For over three decades, Vine Deloria, Jr. has been a powerful voice for Indian Country. In *For This Land*, the reader finds an extraordinarily valuable resource for attempting to both gain an understanding of this scholarly, tribal figure and for broadening our perspectives on the world. Treat's introduction provides a stimulating context for the work by describing Deloria's family history and academic and religious backgrounds. From this point, we begin to construct a broad picture of Deloria's thought processes and interests.

Although many of us are quite familiar with God is Red and Custer Died for Your Sins, few of us are familiar with his many other books and articles. Almost as a result of those two books alone, Deloria has become an important figure in American Indian studies and in the lives of many American Indian people. But he is rarely valued beyond those works. Despite the efforts of works such as The Metaphysics of Modern Existence—a philosophical treatise extending far afield from American Indian studies—Deloria's readers often remain unaware of the breadth and depth of his work. For This Land generously contributes to a more complete understanding of religion in Deloria's thought.

Deloria's writings engage readers in the process of reanalyzing what we believe. Obviously, the beliefs (or purported beliefs) and actions of European and American societies have had enormous impact on the original peoples of the Americas. In this context, *For This Land* is appropriate as a preface for anyone serious about American Indian religions or current issues. It serves nicely to help scholars in American Indian studies begin to identify some of the implications of the frameworks of understanding that they currently use and rely upon.

The majority of the writings utilize broad and generalized statements about the differences between American Indians and non-Indians. This, however, is a necessary tactic when dealing with an audience largely ignorant of anything Indian outside of the superficial products of the popular media and the "sad history" given from early school years through the university level.

In light of this, it is not so amazing that these basic commentaries demand attention. For example, in the fourth section of the book, "Habits of the State," Deloria chronicles the various issues that are confronted by peoples who attempt to convince others that indeed American Indians are human and that they deserve the respect that should be accorded to every people. While this may seem an obvious concession, the reality of practice often defies this point. Current battles in repatriation, land and resource use rights, treaty interpretations, and genetic research projects show this concern to be still relevant. Thus, the broad nature of his writing does not detract from this value. Indeed, they contribute a general framework that can be used to further evaluate specific aspects of our lives in order to determine how they may be similarly affected. Of course, his methods are often indirect. Deloria's sarcasm is famous (or infamous if you happen to be an especially hard-headed anthropologist or archaeologist). But his writings are always grounded in the principle of self-analysis. What do we accept as our point of reference? How does this point blind us to other options? Where do we need to go in order to understand and change this limitation? These are the types of questions that his writings seek to ask and answer, and they always do so from the context of American Indian experience and knowledge.

The title of the book reflects a framework of understanding that Deloria has long touted as critical to comprehending American Indian existence and criticism in America. As Treat alludes, the relationship to the land plays a fundamental role in people's existence. On page seventeen, he quotes Deloria's "for this land, God is red," which is to say that this place is basic to American Indian existence, and that physical realities defy the intellectual and theoretical ones. The land tells the story, the people listen to it. American Indian peoples learned this long ago, but also relearn it over and over again. To close one's ears and eyes to the stories is to close one's possibility of connection with the land. This is the message still largely lost to the new Americans, and continually emphasized in books like *For This Land*.

In For This Land, James Treat paints a picture of Vine Deloria's religious thought and activity using more than thirty years of his writings. Considering the broad range of critical interests in all of Deloria's work, Treat has effectively selected and grouped the works that showcase one of the most fascinating dimensions of one of America's eminent scholars. For This Land is a must-read for anyone interested in Deloria as a person, or in his scholarly pursuits, religious criticisms, and representations of Indian perspectives. In all, the collection is an invaluable resource to anyone interested in issues of religion in the context of American Indian perspectives and critiques on the subject.

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**The Heart is Fire: The World of the Cahuilla Indians of Southern California.** By Deborah Dozier. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1998. 159 pages. \$16.00 paper.

The Cahuilla people now live in the desert portions of San Diego, Riverside, and Imperial counties on reservations containing a few thousand acres. They experienced dramatic changes in their lifestyle, culture, and political system when the Spanish and later the Mexicans entered their territory. The introduction of new political, economic, and cultural systems only increased when Euramericans settled in southern California early this century. The tribe experienced severe population decline during this period, due largely to starvation, community stress, and the introduction of new diseases. The Cahuilla, thankfully, are now beginning to gain in numbers.

Deborah Dozier used portions of a project called "Cahuilla Voices: We Are Still Here," which gathered five Cahuilla people, representing a cross section