



Bookshelf

2003

Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance

Richard A. Grounds (Editor)

George E. Tinker (Editor)

David E. Wilkins (Editor)

University of Richmond, dwilkins@richmond.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/bookshelf>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grounds, Richard A., George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins. *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003.

NOTE: This PDF preview of *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance* includes only the preface and/or introduction. To purchase the full text, please click [here](#).

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bookshelf by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

NATIVE VOICES

American Indian Identity and Resistance

Edited by Richard A. Grounds,
George E. Tinker,
and David E. Wilkins



University Press of Kansas

The Psychology of Earth and Sky

Joy Harjo (Mvskoke)

It is just before dawn. The mango tree responds to the wind's fierce jostling. A rooster stridently marks the emerging light. We are alerted, and our spirits trek back through night and the stars to awaken here in this place known as Honolulu. Clouds harboring rain travel fast over the city, and now a trash truck beeps as it backs up for collection. And dawn arrives, no matter the struggle of the night and how endless that night might be.

We are part of an old story, and involved in it are migrations of winds, of ocean currents, of seeds, songs, and generations of nations.

In this life it seems like I am always leaving, flying over this earth that harbors many lives. I was born Indian, female, and artist in the Creek Nation. It is still gray out as I follow the outline of memory. Over there is my teenage self getting out of a car, still a little drunk, waving good-bye to friends. We've been up all night, singing into the dark, joining the stars out on the mesa west of the Indian town, Albuquerque.

"When the dance is over, sweetheart, I will take you home in my one-eyed Ford. Wey-yo-hey-ya. Hey-yah-hah. Hey-yah-hah."

That song was destined to become a classic.

The shutting of the car door echoes and echoes and leads to here. I always hear that door when I return to that memory. It's a holographic echo, turning over and over into itself. I am leaving. I am returning.

I turned to walk to my apartment in the back. All of us lived in the back of somewhere in that city where we were defining what it meant to be Indian in a system of massive colonization. It was a standing joke. A backdoor joke. The world was suddenly condensed by the shutting of the door, the sweet purr of the engine as the car drove off, and the perfect near silence of the pause in the morning scramble of sparrows, the oohing of doves. I can still breathe it, that awareness of being alive part of the ceremony for the rising of the sun. I often lived for this moment of reconciliation, where night and morning met. It didn't matter that I didn't quite know how I was going to piece together what I needed for tuition, rent, groceries, books, and child care; how I was going to make sense of a past that threatened to destroy me during those times when I doubted that I deserved a place in the world. The songs we sang all night together filled me with promise, hope, the belief

in a community that understood that the world was more than a contract between buyer and seller.

And that morning, just as the dawn was arriving and I was coming home, I knew that the sun needed us, needed my own little song made of the whirr push of the blood through my lungs and heart. Inside that bloodstream was born my son, my daughter. I was born of parents who would greet the dawn often in their courtship with their amazing passion driven by love, and later heartbreak. Dawn was also the time my father often came home after he and my mother were married, had four children, dropped off by his friends, reeking of smoke, beer, and strange perfume. And I am his daughter. How much do we have to say in the path our feet will take? Is it ordained by the curve of a strand of DNA? Mixed with the urge to love, to take flight? My family survived, even continues to thrive, which works against the myth of Indian defeat and disappearance.