



Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity

Joanne Barker

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In the United States, Native peoples must be able to demonstrably look and act like the Natives of U.S. national narrations in order to secure their legal rights and standing as Natives. How they choose to navigate these demands and the implications of their choices for Native social formations are the focus of this powerful critique. Joanne Barker contends that the concepts and assumptions of cultural authenticity within Native communities potentially reproduce the very social inequalities and injustices of racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia, and fundamentalism that define U.S. nationalism and, by extension, Native oppression. She argues that until the hold of these ideologies is genuinely disrupted by Native peoples, the important projects for decolonization and self-determination defining Native movements and cultural revitalization efforts are impossible. These projects fail precisely by reinscribing notions of authenticity that are defined in U.S. nationalism to uphold relations of domination between the United States and Native peoples, as well as within Native social and interpersonal relations. *Native Acts* is a passionate call for Native peoples to decolonize their own concepts and projects of self-determination.

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