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Karen Stocker. *"I Won't Stay Indian, I'll Keep Studying": Race, Place, and Discrimination in a Costa Rican High School.* Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005. x + 248 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87081-816-5.

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Place, Indigeneity and Racism as Barriers for Education

Historically, Costa Rica claimed that there were no indigenous peoples within its territory; that they had become extinct four centuries ago during the colonial period. However, in 1977, a process that led to the creation of twenty-three indigenous reservations radically changed this official rhetoric. One of these reservations was in Guanacaste, the northernmost province of the country that is considered Choroteca territory in its entirety. Only a small area, however, was designated as the Choroteca reservation, resulting in a complex situation where the inhabitants became the prime targets of place-based racism, while Choroteca living outside the demarcated area, but who share the same cultural heritage, were exempted from the stigmatized Indian identity in a country that seeks to represent itself through whiteness.

This book examines discrimination and place-based racism in the context of the school system experienced by members of the town Nambué (not its real name) that had become the Choroteca reservation. It is a case study of a predominantly white high school near the reservation, which is also attended by students from Nambué. Mapping the tensions and dynamics created by place, class, gender and race relations, Stocker reveals the prevalent racism in the high school produced and reproduced by white teachers and students alike. She shows how ethnic identity—in this particular case, place-based ethnicity—and academic success are inseparably interwoven. This is well captured in the title of the book, which is a quote

by a male high school student discussing his resistance to the efforts of cutting his education short and the ways teachers encouraged him to drop out. Interestingly, this particular student was not from the reservation, but being a poor student and the son of a single mother may have contributed to his being regarded as Indian. In any case, his comment “I won’t stay Indian. I’ll keep studying” poignantly illuminates the common and predominant assumptions and expectations according to which Indian identity is a serious obstacle to one’s educational opportunities; only by rejecting Indian identity is it possible to be successful in school and, thus, in society at large. In other words, it is not, as I initially read the title, primarily a lament for a loss of an indigenous identity as a result of the schooling system, but rather a conscious survival strategy against ethnic discrimination. (It hopefully goes without saying that it is deplorable that one has to resort to such strategies in the face of white privilege.)

Stocker’s compelling analysis is further complicated by her own positionality as a white woman from the United States married to a man from Nambué. Several individuals from the nearby white town cannot hide their surprise when they hear that she actually lives in the reservation, and some even suggest that she should consider moving to town as soon as possible. In the chapter discussing the complexities and difficulties of her multiple roles, positionality and loyalties, she does not avoid addressing issues that to some may indicate compromising her professional role and ethics as a researcher. Early

on in the book, she notes, “I consider myself extremely biased toward the side of Nambué in the Nambué/Santa Rita rivalry, and I made this bias clear at every opportunity” (p. 15). One rarely sees such candidness among academics who take sides but abhor to discuss their positions in order to not lose credibility. Stocker advocates socially engaged research and questions some of assumptions attached to the “detached observer” status. Her research falls within applied anthropology, aiming to affect schooling practice and policy both on the local and national levels. As she describes in the concluding chapter, she succeeded, at least to certain degree—after reporting her results to the teachers of the high school she studied, the principal agreed that there will be a change in the school despite some teachers’ animosity and negative reactions. Also the national Department of Indigenous Education requested a translated copy of Stocker’s research “to support the department’s as-yet-unheeded claim that a multicultural curriculum is needed in Costa Rican schools” (p. 212).

By applying participant observation and extensive interviews (conducted in 1999) with teachers, administrators, students both from the white town and from Nambué, students’ family members and prominent community members, Stocker carefully examines the high school’s overt curriculum and teaching methods; mechanisms of communicating the value of different identities through hidden curriculum, and the results of this kind of “indoctrination”; and, finally, the resistance strategies and coping mechanisms by Nambueseño students. She contextualizes it within a historical and ethnographic account of the two towns that are the focus of her research. She delineates the process of ethnic categorization in this particular context—how racial and ethnic divisions have been and are created as well as further gendered and affected by social class and place, and how these are being reproduced by various mechanisms. Her careful analysis of what she calls the “makings of status”—reproducing privilege, ethnic hierarchy and class relationship in the school setting—is indeed one of the strengths of the book. Stocker also frames her discussion by previous social science research, drawing on anthropological theory on the social constructions of race, ethnicity and identity, and studies on the significance of place. Her investigation of Guillermo Bonfil Batalla’s concept of *desindianización* (de-Indianization) and Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* in the context of her study is interesting and it expands the scope of the research beyond anthropology of education to fields of sociology and critical race theory.

The book effectively avoids the usual colonial bina-

ries common to scholarship on indigenous peoples. Although Stocker makes it very clear that she is committed to forging change in the lives of Nambueseño students facing sometimes extreme discrimination in the high school (including deliberate lowering of grades without grounds and taking Nambueseños out of popular computer classes to make room for others), she does not refrain from examining the tensions and complex identities within the reservation as well. She points out how some Nambueseños claim that they are not indigenous at all, calling for revocation of the reservation status, while others are in favor of the reservation particularly in the name of protecting the land being sold to outsiders. The division whether the inhabitants were Indian or not sometimes cut through a family. Stocker argues that the Nambueseño case is unique compared to the situation among many other indigenous peoples in the Americas pushing for greater autonomy. The main reasons for some Nambueseños to reject Indian identity include the stigmatization and imposition of an indigenous identity from outside, “de-Indianization,” the assimilationist goals of the Costa Rican reservation system and continuing exclusionary policies. Moreover, the author notes that “anthropological perceptions have affected legal and local definitions of Indianness” (p. 56). This is further complicated by conflating ethnic identification with class—something that has occurred, the book suggests, in much scholarly writing in Costa Rica and elsewhere.

The analysis concludes with a consideration of Nambueseño student resistance strategies. Stocker maintains, “Although the school might have been powerful in teaching their respective lots in life, ascribing their identities, and urging them to accept the relative values placed on their identities, students were not powerless in the face of such teachings” (p. 170). The most common ways of resisting and contesting the school authority include withdrawing, staying within one’s own group, verbal (and sometimes physical) expressions of anger and frustration, and the rejection of Indian identity discussed above. What is most interesting and revealing, however, is how internalization of discrimination was highly gendered in the case of Nambueseño students. More female students from Nambué internalized notions of inferior academic or intellectual skills than their male counterparts. Female students were also ridiculed and verbally attacked not only on the basis of their ethnicity but also because of their gender.

The author’s voice comes through clearly in the book, making it a compelling and inspiring read. She is not afraid to expose herself and to investigate her own re-

actions, responses and even moments of doubt with regard to her research. Her honesty and humility in addressing and confronting numerous dilemmas regarding accountability and representation, combined with solid and rigorous research, makes the book exceptional. The research is well and clearly organized and presented, and it avoids unnecessary jargon, making the book accessible to readers from any discipline and even beyond academic audiences. The only aspect that I missed in the author's careful positioning of herself was a description of her own background as a white woman from the United States. Stocker has clearly done her homework when it comes to research ethics in scholarship dealing with indigenous peoples—to an extent that I would not hesitate to refer to her work as an exemplary piece of a new generation of engaged and engaging anthropology. She could have, however, also heeded one of the first “teachings” among indigenous people: the telling of who you are which necessarily includes where you come from (i.e., not only how you are located in terms of your research

but also what is your background or “genealogy”).

The book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, class and place in creating and maintaining discriminatory hierarchies and white privilege. The nuanced analysis of how race and ethnicity are intricately intertwined with class and gender, and how these interlocking categories create a powerful structure that benefits one group of students while being highly disadvantageous to another offers new insights for considering and addressing racial discrimination in both educational and other settings, including that of indigenous peoples in North America and beyond. What makes Stocker's study particularly worthwhile is her successful integration of gender analysis (such as sexism in the school system, teaching of gender roles and acceptable notions of femininity as well as her own gendered position in the community) to the larger framework of power relations—something lacking in most considerations dealing with racism and indigenous peoples.

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