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Professors Bruce Dorsey and Farid Azfar
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Abstract:

This paper questions the supposed linkage between Native Americans' military service in World War 1 (1914-1918) and the Native American Citizenship Act of 1924 that granted citizenship to the remaining 125,000 noncitizen Native Americans living within the territorial limits of the United States. Historians tend to cast the Citizenship Act as a 'boon,' a legislative move that advanced Native Americans' social and political rights and rewarded them for their courageous acts on the battlefield. Within the Native American context, however, citizenship was fraught with far more complex and conflicted meanings than the secondary literature often suggests. Despite Native Americans' outward displays of U.S. patriotism via wartime service, the Act of 1924, in many ways, cemented Native Americans' status as an 'inferior' race.

Native American Military Participation in World War 1: What Kind of Victory?

As part of his 1920 documentation of Native Americans World War 1 veterans, Joseph K. Dixon, photojournalist and proponent of Native American rights, distributed a questionnaire to 904 Native American veterans asking two questions; the first, "Are you a citizen?" and the second, "Are you a ward of the government?" Of the 904 veterans who answered that they were U.S. citizens, 325 also identified as wards of the government.¹ Moreover, of the 374 veterans who answered that they were not U.S. citizens, 321 also noted that they were wards of the government. As wards of the government, Native Americans could neither vote nor exercise complete control over their land or other assets held in trust.² The fact that citizens and non-citizens alike identified as wards of the government even after wartime service, demonstrated that World War 1 did little to further the Native Americans' political rights and privileges.

The meaningless distinction between “ward” and “citizen” illustrated in Dixon’s 1920 interview persisted beyond World War 1 and even after the Native American Citizenship Act of 1924, in which the U.S. government conveyed blanket citizenship upon the remaining 125,000 noncitizen Native Americans living in the United States.³ Indeed, the U.S. government continued to recognize Native Americans, veterans and non-veterans alike, as dependant political actors, largely incapable of self-governance. Many contemporary historians and proponents of Native American rights during and after the World War saw a direct link between Native Americans’ military service and their subsequent granting of citizenship, perceiving the latter as a direct reward for heroic acts and demonstrations of Native American allegiance. In examining whites’ perceptions of Native Americans on the battlefield, specifically in the context of newspaper articles of the period, however, combined with the limitations of the Citizenship Act, one finds that the connection between Native American military service and Citizenship was far more tenuous than many suggest.

The great irony of the Native American wartime experience lied in the fact that despite any and all attempts to prove their loyalty, manhood, and Americanism—all pillars of U.S. citizenship —Native Americans could not participate fully as American citizens even after the grant of citizenship. Moreover, despite the U.S. War Department’s agreement to integrate Native Americans into all-white units, suggesting possibilities for interracial camaraderie, Native Americans were continuously barred from achieving the social and political equality, both on and off the battlefield, for which most of them fought in the World War. In truth, Native Americans’ experience on the battlefield was one of alienation and marginalization and the Citizenship Act was a further attempt by

the U.S. government to establish greater controls over the race, thereby reinforcing their status as inferior people.

Native American participated in American military campaigns long before World War 1. They fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, as well as in cross-tribal wars in the west. In all such cases, however, they fought in segregated units both due to their noncitizen status and the prevailing white notion that they were not ‘disciplined,’ ‘trustworthy,’ or ‘American enough’ for regular army service. The integrated units of World War’s 1, however, represented to Native Americans the possibility for social and political equality that had heretofore been unavailable to them. Military service seemed to promise future citizenship, economic benefits, and foreign travel as well an opportunity to demonstrate tribal and national patriotism, a ‘warrior ethic,’ and internal pride.⁴

The irony of the Native American experience began with the fact that nearly 90 percent of Native Americans who volunteered for service had come from the government-administered Indian schools that emerged in the in the late 1880s. These schools including the Hampton Institute in Virginia, the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma, the Haskell Institute in Kansas, and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania were specifically designed to prep Native Americans for the ‘real world’ and stressed the importance of manhood, military expertise, education, and above all, U.S. patriotism – all necessary qualifications for U.S. citizenship during the period. “Dovetailing with public school programs,” writes Paul C. Rosier in his book entitled, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, “an 1889 BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] directive had instructed school

superintendants to require Indian students to sing patriotic songs, fly the American flag, and celebrate important patriotic holidays, including the date marking the passage of the Dawes Act to “impress upon Indian youth the enlarged scope and opportunity given by them this [act] and the new obligations with it imposes.”⁵ Indeed, since these schools were should have convinced white politicians and policymakers greater trust in assimilated Native Americans one would have expected Native Americans’ wartime participation to have proven Native Americans’ ‘fitness’ for citizenship both on and off the battlefield. The irony of the matter lied in the fact that Native Americans endured contestations of Americanism and U.S. allegiance regardless of their educational backgrounds, as whites continued to treat Native Americans as inferior both during and after the World War. The 36th “Panther” Division, for instance, which referred to one of the most prominent Native American-white army division, might have been the perfect climate for fostering interracial trust and respect between whites and Native Americans. The Division seemed to have comprised the ‘ideal’ Native American fighters from a white perspective. Of the 600 Native American “panthers” who fought in this division, nearly half were already seasoned fighters who had partaken in the 142nd Infantry Regiment in Oklahoma National Guard prior to World War 1. Moreover, most of them came from highly educated Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole tribes, who had already, did everything in the power further their acculturation process. However, treatment within this division was the same as it would have been in any other division. No credentials, however ‘impressive,’ would be sufficient in convincing whites of Native Americans’ inherent equality and potential to participate fully as American citizens.⁶

Importantly, questions surrounding Native Americans' 'fitness' for citizenship emerged long before Native Americans' entry into battle and prior to the congressional hearings surrounding of the Act of 1924. The first questions surrounding citizenship in emerged context of voluntary versus involuntary enlistment and the second, in the context of segregated versus integrated military units. In regards to enlistment, many Native Americans, regardless of citizenship status, wished to prove their loyalties to their country. The Selective Service Act of 1917, however, set forth by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells, stipulated that noncitizen Native American could not in fact enlist, and issued extensive criteria for what constituted a Native American citizen in the first place including, "Indians who trust or restrictive fee were dating from May 8, 1905, were considered citizens as provided by the Dawes Act of 1887" to "minor children of parents became citizens upon allotment, and children born to Indian citizens who were also considered American citizens."⁷ Michael Tate, in his article entitled, "From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians into the Military, 1891-1918" credits the sudden shift in U.S. policy to the Canadian authorities who discovered that expanding army recruits to include Native American citizens and noncitizens alike would benefit the Allied forces.⁸ Indeed, with Canada as its example, the U.S. War Department finally did away with its citizenship criteria in 1919. For some Native Americans, however, this legislation was unwelcomed. The 'inclusionist' legislation may have seemed egalitarian in principle it subjected all Native Americans, citizens and noncitizens alike, to the draft.⁹

The fact that Native Americans who were enthusiastic about serving could only serve if they were citizens further pointed to the irony as well as disappointment endemic

of the Native American experience. Even those Native Americans who outwardly exhibited loyalties to their country were stymied by virtue of being “other.” Indeed, The U.S. War Department used their enlistment power to classify who were citizens and who were not, and Native Americans had no say in the matter. Moreover, the fact that citizens and noncitizens, alike, were eventually subjected to the draft further exemplified that the label of “citizenship” meant little in the context of furthering Native Americans’ rights. The U.S. War Department would apply the same jurisdiction to all Native Americans, irrespective of their citizenship status.

The complex and conflicted meanings of Native American citizenship emerged once again in regards to segregated versus integrated military units, for these debates not only had social implications, but political ones as well. Joseph K. Dixon, an advocate of segregated units and self-described proponent of Native American citizenship contended that Native Americans would perform best if they were to fight amongst themselves and that any racial mixing would compromise the “old Indian spirit.”¹⁰ Dixon, a cultural preservationist, worried that integrated units would compromise Native Americans’ uniqueness within the broader currents of American society. By contrast, an advocate of integrated units, Commission of Indian Affairs Cato Sells declared, “The military segregation of the Indian is altogether objectionable. It does not afford the associational contact he needs and is unfavorable to his preparation for citizenship.”¹¹ The U.S. government ultimately agreed to integrated units. Once again, according to Tate, the Canadian authorities were responsible for instigating this policy decision, for they initiated integration as early as 1914, whilst the U.S. did so in 1918.¹²

While the “associational contact” for which Sells advocated in his campaign for integrated units seemed to have been a step in the right direction for Native Americans and their road to citizenship, it did little to reverse white attitudes of hostility, distrust, and racism. While Native Americans might have been prepared to embrace white contact on the battlefield, whites were largely unwilling to accept them into their fold. It was precisely this social and psychological distancing, despite physical proximity on the battlefield, that perpetuated Native Americans’ status as an inferior race. While Sells proclaimed that integrated units would accelerate Native Americans’ readiness for citizenship, he failed to acknowledge that a readiness for citizenship depended just as much on whites as it did on Native Americans, if not more so.

Merging Native Americans’ obstacles to citizenship into a narrative of military service assists in debunking the false notion, popularized by many historians, that wartime participation laid the foundation for future social and political progress. As was evident in the media depictions of Native Americans during the conflict as well as in the practical consequences of the Citizenship Act of 1924, Native Americans wartime contributions affected Native Americans’ status in name (“citizen”) but not in practice. Much of the historical scholarship that addresses Native Americans’ military participation in the World War, however, casts this period as one of social breakthrough; a period in which Native Americans’ internal pride, patriotism, and cultural resilience flourished. The historical scholarship also tends to invoke phrases from white military men that acknowledged Native Americans’ military prowess and acts of heroism, implying that the battlefield fight pointed to future interracial camaraderie. In emphasizing Native American agency and semblances of social progress on the

battlefield, historians seem to have desired to ascribe more power to Native Americans than they actually had. In doing so, they fail to address the citizenship rights that were promised yet unfulfilled in the aftermath of war.

Michael Tate, in his 1986 article entitled “From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians in the Military 1891-1918” privileges the social over the political and incorporates only a brief discussion of citizenship in to his narrative. Tate focuses mainly on Native Americans’ readiness to serve and the resulting appraisal from whites. In regards to Native Americans and wartime service, Tate writes that, “it [wartime service] sparked a pride that could reach the heart across all tribes and stir the heart of even the noncombatant.”¹³ Moreover, in regards to white response, Tate invokes the positive assessment of white Captain Ethan A. Simpson who contended he “would rather have a company of education Indians than an ordinary company of white men.”¹⁴ In regards to the citizenship, however, Tate provides an overly simplistic and rosy picture of what the privilege entailed writing that the Citizenship Act of 1924 “completed the legislative circle by authorizing the secretary of the interior to issue certificates of citizenship to all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States and concluding, “the overwhelming majority of Native Americans reacted in a positive fashion to the legislation.”¹⁵ Tate’s dual implication that the Citizenship Act solved Native Americans’ plight and that Native Americans were content with their newfound status fails to unpack the complex and conflicted meanings that citizenship actually entailed. Tate writes that Native American ‘reacted in a positive fashion to the legislation,’ but in reality, Native Americans reacted in a multitude of fashions. For many, citizenship represented a breach of tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

Similar to Tate, in his 1991 article entitled, “American Indians in the Great War,” Russell Lawrence Barsh emphasizes the social over the political, thereby revealing an inattention to the issues of citizenship in his history. Barsh explains how Native American military service was integral to shaping Native Americans’ identities as well as their sense of belonging in the U.S. In referencing newspaper publications including the *New York Evening World*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Barsh also explains that the war produced a significant amount of journalistic commentary on the ‘Native American character,’ creating what was arguably one of the most important media symbols in the conflict. Unlike Tate, however, Barsh admits to the brevity, if not complete lack, of a national or political perspective in his discussion, writing “The full significance of the Great War generation of Indians for the national Indian movement and government policy remains to be explored.”¹⁶ Moreover, Barsh argues, “It is clear, however, that twentieth-century Indian social history should be reexamined in the context of attitudes and leadership born on First War battlefields.”¹⁷ Barsh points to his historiographical shortcomings, admitting that the questions of citizenship, as they emerged before during and after the World War, were largely absent from his own narrative.

Citizenship is again given inadequate attention in Thomas Britten’s book entitled *American Indians in World War 1: At War and at Home*. Britten emphasizes Native Americans’ cultural and psychological resilience amidst the fight writing “Participation in World War 1 opened new channels for Native Americans to practice (if in a modified fashion) their traditional values and customs, and it encouraged the resurgence of victory dances, war songs, feasts and giveaways...Although Indian cultures had exhibited

resilience during the first decade of the twentieth century, the war added renewed vigor and vitality, especially to those traditions associated with warfare.”¹⁸ Britten’s discussion of the social comes at the expense of the political, for Britten writes that Native American military service served as the catalyst for Native American citizenship but fails to address the practical implications that such a ‘privilege’ entailed.

The privileging of Native American agency and the emphasis on the social and cultural consistently illustrate above can be credited to the Red Power Movement of the late 1960s. The Red Power Movement, according to Donald L. Fixico in his 1996 article entitled, “Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History,” which encompassed Native American activist and military campaigns including “the occupation of Alcatraz (1969), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1972) and Wounded Knee (1973), brought greater visibility to Native Americans, thereby encouraging historians to adopt a more Native American-centered approach to the history at hand. Before this shift, historians typically approached Native American studies from an ethnocentric lens, evaluating Native Americans’ culture and people at a distance and from a white Anglo-Saxon standard. “Even in the twentieth century, Fixico concedes, “historians have written about the American Indian with little understanding of ‘him’ and the depth of his distinct culture.”¹⁹ The new Native American historiography, however, largely concerned itself with Native American “culture, community, and environment, and metaphysics.”²¹ Indeed, this is the approach that is largely evident in Tate, Barsh, and Britten’s respective works.

While a historiography that focuses on Native American agency and social and cultural resilience seems like a step in the right direction for encouraging greater white

acceptance, it eliminates the very real political struggles that Native Americans endured at the expense of the U.S. government. In his 2006 article entitled, “Beyond the New Indian History: Recent Trends in the Historiography on the Native People of North America” Nicholas G. Rosenthal criticizes the “New Indian history” enumerated by Fixico, that above all, “sought Indian perspectives, stressed Indian agency, and took a critical view of U.S. colonialism.”²² For Rosenthal, exclusive focus on Native American culture with little regards to how that culture has been affected by broader currents of American society, both socially and politically, negates the cross-cultural relationship between white America and Native Americans. In regards to Native Americans and World War 1, specifically, the “New Indian history” might be inadequate for Rosenthal because it privileges the Native American agency and stresses the social and the cultural without connecting those to the political struggles and fortunes of Native Americans. In this vein, it is crucial to examine the ways the political influences the social and vice versa, specifically in regards to Native Americans’ experiences on the battlefield and their subsequent grant of citizenship.

The obstacles to citizenship that the U.S.’s government imposed on Native Americans both during and after of the World War can be traced to a prevailing sense of fear and distrust that whites harbored towards Native Americans from British colonialism through the early 20th century. In his 1735 scientific publication entitled, *Systema Naturae*, for instance, Carol Linnaeus classified Native Americans not as *hom sapiens* [for which he constructed four separate categories: Americans, Europeans, Asians, and Africans], but rather as “feral and monstrous people.” Moreover, Linnaeus’ physical description of Native Americans read: “reddish, choleric, erect *Hair* black, straight, thick

Nostrils wide Persevering content, free *Paints* himself with skillful red likes Governed by custom.”²³ Linneaus’ understanding of Native Americans as savage, barbaric, and subhuman represented the majority white opinion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

White fear of Native Americans persisted through World War 1. Native Americans were continuously perceived by whites as foreboding, untrustworthy, and backward ‘creatures,’ further attesting to their unfitness for citizenship and inherent inferiority. During the World War, this fear manifested in the major values and political ideologies of Progressivism and the Red Scare. Progressivism, centrist progressivism in particular, was perhaps the most popular socio-political attitude during the World War. An ideology that reaches its peak between 1898 and 1912, centrist progressivism was spearheaded by President Theodore Roosevelt and aimed: 1] to cleanse the U.S. government of any political corruption leftover from the Gilded Age and 2] to instill in the U.S. education, political, and cultural movements a greater sense of nationalism.²⁴ Most notably, however, centrist progressivism stressed cultural homogeneity, the dangers of non-European immigration, the burden of black enfranchisement, and the maintenance of separate spheres for men and women, all the while emphasizing an unwavering commitment to democracy and civil rights.²⁵ In his book entitled, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, Rogers M. Smith further ties centrist progressivism to notion of Native American citizenship, arguing that centrist progressivism perpetuated a hierarchical system of citizenship” in which Native Americans were classified as “second-class.” Second-class citizens were not subject to total social and political exclusion as were some other minority groups of the day, like the

Chinese, but their racial distinctness perpetually casted them as inferior to their white counterparts.²⁶ Rather, in the Native American context, second-class status meant no guaranteed voting rights and no guaranteed jurisdiction over landholdings. It also meant being subject to federal rather than local and state governments, and thereby being severely limited in power.²⁷

The other prevailing political sentiment that exacerbated Native Americans' obstacles to citizenship was the Red Scare. Just prior to World War 1, in 1871, Paris had endured a series of insurrections on behalf of the French working-class that contested the French government's bureaucratic ways. The French government later deserted Paris for Versailles, leaving the city up to a stand-in communist government under the name of Central Committee of the National Guard. They adopted a red flag, a symbol of communist ideology. Opponents of this new government called the communards "Red Indians" and "blood-thirsty Indian squaws" likening them to "fierce Apaches" or a "Comanche horde." The conflation of Native American imagery with that of communists had political ramifications within France, but within the U.S. as well. Indeed, the conflation of Paris "Reds" with American Indian "Reds" instigated greater fears in the U.S. government that began to view Native Americans as a potential threat to industrial civilization, both at home and abroad.²⁸ Paul C. Rosier, in his book entitled, *Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, makes greater sense of this threat – sparked by France's adoption of Native American imagery – arguing that "The internalization of Indian-white frontier conflict, especially "in the Southwest, painted Indian resistance not as a defense of an ancestral homeland but as a savage attack on the sacred institutions of American life."²⁹ In light of Native Americans'

history of communal land ownership, many white politicians and policymakers viewed Native Americans as expressly anti-capitalist and therefore, un-American. Cherokee politicians contested this view in Congress stating, in 1800, “The statement made man to you that we, or any of the Indians, are communist are entirely erroneous. No people are more jealous of the personal right to property than Indians....[Our] farms and lots are practically just as much the property of individuals as yours are.”³⁰

The fact that World War 1 did not resolve issues of white racism and stereotyping is further revealed in the flurry of media representations surrounding the conflict. The depictions Native Americans in newspaper articles, specifically, contested Native American manhood, trustworthiness, and Americanism. When Native Americans’ military prowess was highlighted, as it often was, it stemmed from whites’ distant, stereotypical conceptions of the Native American character rather than from meaningful interracial contact or a genuine understanding of these racialized “others.” It was precisely this mental and emotional separation that whites constructed between themselves and Native Americans that cemented the latter’s inferior status well beyond 1924.

Contestations of Native Americans’ manhood came to the forefront in a June 6, 1918 *New York Times* article entitled, “Creek Indians Rise Against the Draft: Three Whites Reported Killed in Oklahoma – Pro-German Plot is Blamed.” The author recounted the insurrection of 200 Creek Indians who wished to avoid the Selective Draft of 1917. The *New York Times* referred to the Creek farmers as “delinquents,” which conveyed opposite notions military heroism or praiseworthy manhood. The author spent a significant portion of the article focusing on an unnamed Creek woman who was

anonymously accused for having had not only initiated the insurrection in the first place but for partaking in “systematic pro-German propaganda practiced among the tribe” as well. The Creek woman was also said to have returned from Washington, D.C. “just ten days ago” where she “consulted with persons suspected of Anti-American sentiment” and ever since, “has been lecturing among the tribes” telling “the leaders that their young men could not be forced into army service” and that the U.S. government was “robbing them and they were to be sent across the water to be killed.”³¹

Despite constructing the Creek woman in both dangerous and irrational terms, the author imbued her with far more agency than he had with the Creek men. In doing so, the author indirectly emasculated the Creek men. The article read like this; While the Creek woman is going “on a wild rampage” to free both herself and her male counterparts, the Creek men are dodging any responsibility they have towards either themselves or their country. Both the Native American woman and the Native American were painted as unfit for citizenship since the former was portrayed as irrational and the latter as unpatriotic and unmanly.

Challenges to manhood did not only manifest in comparisons between the cowardice of Native American men and the intractability of Native American women. In a May 30, 1919 *Stars and Strips* article entitled, “Yank Indian Was Heap Big Help in Winning the War: American Redskin Knew No Equal in Patrol Work and Scouting,” contestations of manhood manifested in the author’s portrayal of Native American males in the American Expeditionary Force as meek and submissive characters. The author described how these men returned to their “base ports and thence to their homes” as “silently and impassively as they came into service.” The author then concluded that,

“Most of them [Native Americans of the A.E.F] will take up their routine duties on the reservation again, as quietly as turtles’ head sinks below the surface of a mill’s pond.”³²

The passivity that the author here assigned to Native American men in the American Expeditionary Force negated the fact that most of these men enlisted with keen consciences and dreams of social and political equality. Moreover, the analogy the author drew between these men and turtles served to undermine any demonstrations of military prowess and determination that Native Americans exhibited on the battlefield.

Comparing men to animals was a common means of demeaning Native American manhood in this era of American history.

White denial of Native American manhood and Americanism did not always manifest in allusions to Native Americans’ subhuman qualities. Challenges to manhood sometimes manifested in less obvious ways, such as in depictions of Native Americans as larger-than-life, fictional characters. While depictions of Native Americans as overly heroic figures might seem promising at first, they seemed to have attested to, and exacerbated, the mental and emotional distance that whites constructed between themselves and the former. In a November 8, 1918 *Stars and Stripes* article entitled, “13 Redskin Tribes in Single Company,” the “13 Redskins” featured in the article referred to the 13 Native American tribes represented in “The Millionaire Company,” a well-known volunteer squadron of oil-rich Oklahoma natives. The first section of the article, entitled “Like Leatherstocking Tales,” immediately highlighted white tendency to romanticize Native Americans during the period. *The Leatherstocking Tales* referred to the acclaimed nineteenth-century book series by James Fenimore Cooper about protagonist Natty Bumppo, a child of white parents, and his adventures growing up in the American

wilderness. These books traced Natty's transition into a great fight and credit his power to his proximity to and close relationship with Native Americans. The series' most popular book, *The Last Mohicans* (1826), documented Natty's experiences in the French and Indian Wars, specifically, when Natty and his two closest companions, Chingachgook and Uncas, devised bold rescues and sought to dodge the French plan of unleashing their Mexican allies in a wave of hysteria through English encampments. While the author of this *Stars and Stripes* article sought to draw a connection between the heroics of Native Americans and those of Natty, his overly romantic conception of Native American fighters indirectly stripped them of their innately human or manly qualities. In treating Native Americans as storybook characters rather than as fighters like any other, the author further casted Native Americans as a "species" unto themselves.³³

The article's author went on to address the intimidation tactics, both conscious and unconscious, that the Millionaire Company employed against the Prussian Guards in Germany. In his section entitled, "Machine Guns First" the author wrote "They [The Millionaire Company] came out of a forest in true woodsman style and dodged into shell holes that looked up to where the enemy was entrenched" continuing with, "They reverted to typical Indian tactics, showing almost utter contempt for the enemy's machine gun fire...searching their keen eyes for the exact points from which the enemy was firing." The author's use of classifications including "true woodsman style," "typical Indian tactics" and "their keen eyes" attributes larger-than-life qualities to Native Americans, all the while setting them apart from dominant white society. While these classifications appear encouraging, even admiring of Native Americans' military feats, they perpetuated Native Americans' distinctness from whites. The fact that whites,

despite fighting alongside Native Americans in integrated units, were unable to conceive Native American army men as men no different from themselves, further attested to the irony of the Native American wartime experience. Native American and white men, alike, were put on an equal playing field, otherwise known as the battlefield yet deep-seated white prejudice curtailed Native Americans' ability to be accepted into the greater American fold. The Citizenship Act of 1924, which limited rather than expanded Native Americans' social and political progress, would further demonstrate this reality.

Finally, it speaks volumes that one of few available newspaper articles actually affirming Native Americans' manliness and Americanism surfaced in the letter-to-the-editor section of the *Stars and Stripes* that represented a dissenting or minority opinion. The May 30, 1919 article entitled, "We're All Yanks Now" deplored "3,000 New Englanders in the 90th Division" for having had issued a complaint to the authorities of the A.E.F. stipulating that they [the New Englanders] were not "cowboys or Indians, but were put into the 90th as filler-ups." The full background of this "letter" is unknown to its readers, but it is clear from the author's criticism that these "3,000 New Englanders" figured they were being relegated to lowly positions by virtue of doing that they conceived as 'belonging' to Native Americans. The author contested their proposition writing "For I have been highly impressed with the good qualities and learning of these men [Native American soldiers] from the far Eastern states and their Americanism, which latter I rank more than anything else in the present emergency," continuing, "Besides, it seems all formed friendship with us, regardless of their former residence in the States."³⁴ The author's goal of restoring the manliness – much less the humanity – denied, in this case to Native American males by some 3,000 white men, reflected an anomaly in white

opinion. Moreover, the author's affirmation of Native American patriotism and Americanism disrupts the dominant conception among whites that Native Americans were unpatriotic and untrustworthy.

An important question to consider is why Native American were granted citizenship at all if citizenship proved: 1] unbeneficial and 2] a further manifestation of the harsh attitudes that whites exhibited towards Native Americans on the battlefield. The most viable answer is provided by Frederick E. Hoxie, in his book entitled, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*, who wrote that the Act of 1924 represented a "new" campaign for assimilation; one that incorporated Native Americans into greater American society as an excuse to maneuver greater social control and to reinstate their status as a marginalized race. Hoxie writes that assimilation "became equated with locating each [minority] group in a discrete place within the social structure...Guardianship would define the "proper" place for Indians," continuing that guardianship "would hold them in a spot appropriate to their racial characteristics, at once protecting them from exploitation and limiting their progress."³⁵ The guardian-ward relationship that Hoxie here describes demonstrates that under citizenship, Native Americans were not only subject to complete governmental jurisdiction, but that the treaties and statutes that had once dictate the boundaries of federal power no longer applied. Citizenship, in other words, was an institutional means of perpetuating Native Americans' ascribed inferiority. The U.S. government's distrust in Native Americans' ability to government themselves conjures newspaper perceptions of Native American s on the battlefield that often portrayed the latter as untrustworthy, intractable and unmanly, 'creatures.'

It would be misleading to suggest that no whites were sympathetic to Native Americans' plight, or at least claimed to be. After all, if this were indeed the case, the Citizenship Act would have been unlikely to pass. For most white activists, however, Native American citizenship was tied to notions of assimilation, rather to the bestowment of explicit political or constitutional rights. A notable photojournalist and believer in Native American military service, Dr. Joseph Kossuth Dixon spent four months in France and Belgium in 1921, photographing battlefields where Native American soldiers had fought and military cemeteries where they were buried.³⁶ His ultimate goal was to incorporate his findings into a future book entitled, *From Tepees to Trenches* that would promote citizenship for military service although he was unable to complete the work due to his then declining health.³⁷

Dixon's campaign for Native American citizenship, however, was not without its flaws. Dixon documented, photographed and filmed Native Americans with an expressed desire to grant them citizenship, but did so at a distance. His engagement with the people whom he was supposedly helping was rather superficial, for he rarely interacted with them face-to-face, on a deep or interpersonal level. In 1908, 1909, and 1913, Dixon embarked on a three-part expedition, distinct from his trip 1921 France and Belgium, commissioned by Rodman E. Wanamaker both to document the plight of Native Americans from European colonialism to the present and to celebrate Native Americans' distinct culture and military prowess. This expedition too contained a 'citizenship incentive,' yet it is remarkable that Dixon barely engaged Native Americans on a political level, asking them about their own wants and needs. Rather, Dixon's documentation was

fueled by stereotypical understandings of the ‘Native American character’ in a similar way to that which was evident in the newspaper articles above.

In *The Vanishing Race*, documenting the second of Dixon’s three expeditions, Dixon invoked particularly hyperbolic and romantic descriptions of Native Americans. In regards to Native Americans’ military prowess Dixon remarked, “The Indian aspires to be a great hunter, he seeks fame as noble warrior; he struggles for the eagle feathers of distinction, but his greatest longing is to become a Medicine Man and know the Great Mystery.”³⁸ Further, in regards to Native Americans’ physical appearance Dixon proclaimed, “the minor details of Indian dress are an index to Indian character and often tell the story of his position in the tribe, and surely tell the story of his position in the tribe, and surely the story of his individual conception of the life here, and what he hopes for in the life hereafter...”³⁹ Such myopic conceptions of Native Americans, in their entirety, reflected Dixon’s own psychological and emotional remove from Native Americans.

In her book entitled, *North American Indians in the Great War*, Susan Applegate Krouse draws on these ideas explicitly, invoking the criticism of other historians. Krouse writes:

Russell Lawrence Barsh referred to the 1913 expedition as an “*American Heart of Darkness*” and to Dixon as a “troubled and mysterious man” who manipulated his sponsor and imposed his own vision on Indians. Allison Griffiths criticizes Dixon, along with Thomas Edison and Edward Curtis, for making films of Indian people that concentrated on “fabricated and idealized versions of American Indians’ cooperation and assimilation. Griffiths notes that Dixon’s films of the 1913 expedition show Indians dressed in traditional regalia but pleading their allegiance to the United States.⁴⁰

In a similar vein to these historians, and in light of Dixon's *The Vanishing Race*, it is unclear the level to which he wanted these veterans political voices to be heard with the onset of citizenship. The stereotypes and finite understandings he attributes to Native Americans in *The Vanishing Race* surely points to Dixon's tendency to transcribe his own voice onto the marginalized race, rather than let the race speak for themselves. Herein lies yet another irony of the Native American experience. Even those self-described proponents of Native American citizenship imposed limits, whether overtly or inwardly, consciously or unconsciously, in regards to how much power they were willing to confer. It will forever remain mystery as to whether Dixon would have given Native Americans their own political voices had he been able to complete *From Tepees to Trenches*.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the Native American wartime experience is that at least 5 percent of the 12,000 Native American participants died in actions, translating to roughly 600 casualties in total.⁴¹ Moreover, Native Americans had been assigned to particularly hazardous duties as scouts, snipers, and runners since dominant portrayals of Native Americans as 'born fighters' dictate that they were better suited for such jobs that were their white counterparts. One would assume these such outright displays of determination, military valor, and patriotism would be sufficient in proving to the U.S. government that Native Americans were 'ready' and willing to participate fully as American citizens. The 'boon' of citizenship, however, proved to be little more than a symbol for Native Americans' greater American society. Citizenship might as well have been renamed "guardianship," for under the Act of 1924, Native Americans held no explicit right to vote and the U.S. government had complete jurisdiction over Native

Americans trusts and land tenure.⁴² Native Americans' perceived racial inferiority by the majority of whites and most notably, the U.S. government resulted in their manhood, patriotism and Americanism being delineated for them rather than by them. Wartime service in World War 1 did little to change this.

Russell Lawrence Barsh concluded that, "Twentieth century Indian social history should be reexamined in the context of attitudes and leadership born on First War Battlefields."⁴³ Barsh could have gone one step further in arguing that social history should be examined in the context of political history, and particularly the history of citizenship in the United States. One must not divorce the social from the political, as social conceptions of Native Americans on battlefield, paved the way for institutional treatment of Native Americans, manifested in U.S. government legislation. It is commendable that much of the historical scholarship on Native Americans, influenced by the Red Power movement, attempts to restore the humanity historically denied to Native Americans. Stressing the race's social and cultural vitality amidst periods of hardship and oppression is a noble endeavor as it re-establishes Native Americans' inherent equality to whites. On the other hand, admitting that Native Americans had limited power at the expense of whites, non-allies and allies alike, is no failure on the part of the historian. Rather, such a concession gets to the heart of Native Americans' lived- experiences as Native Americans' transition warrior to veteran offered no real political advancement. No matter how much Native Americans wished to transcend their marginalized status, the harsh institutional structures in place during and after World War 1 perpetually casted them at the bottom of the totem pole.

Notes

¹ Susan Applegate Krouse and Joseph Kossuth Dixon, North American Indians in the Great War (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007) 155.

² Krouse 165.

³ Thomas A. Britten, American Indians in World War I: At Home and at War (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997) 179.

⁴ Paul C. Rosier, Serving Their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009) 47.

⁵ Rosier 47.

⁶ Michael L. Tate, "From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians into the Military," The Western Historical Quarterly 7.4 (1986): 430.

⁷ Britten 24.

⁸ Tate 425.

⁹ Britten 56.

¹⁰ Britten 47.

¹¹ Rosier 47.

¹² Tate 426.

¹³ Tate 436.

¹⁴ Tate 436.

¹⁵ Tate 437.

¹⁶ Russell Lawrence Barsh, "American Indians in the Great War," Ethnohistory 39.4 (1991): 297.

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- ¹⁷ Barsh 297.
- ¹⁸ Britten 187.
- ¹⁹ Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," American Indian Quarterly Vol. 20 No. 1 (1996): 31.
- ²¹ Fixico 32.
- ²² Nicolas G. Rosenthal, "Beyond the New Indian History: Recent Trends in the Historiography on the Native Peoples of North America," History Compass Vol. 4 Is. 5 (2006): 962.
- ²³ Robert F. Berkhofer, The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Knopf, 1978) 41.
- ²⁴ Rogers M. Smith, Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1997) 411.
- ²⁵ Smith 413.
- ²⁶ Smith 429.
- ²⁷ Ronald Kahn and Kenneth Ira Kersch, The Supreme Court and American Political Development, (Lawrence, Kansas: Kansas UP, 2006) 402.
- ²⁸ Rosier 19.
- ²⁹ Rosier 20.
- ³⁰ Rosier 37.
- ³¹ "Creek Indians Rise Against the Draft: Three Whites Reported Killed in Oklahoma—Pro-German Plot is Blamed," New York Times 6 June 1918: 11.
- ³² "Yank Indian Was Heap Big Help in Winning The War: American Redskin Knew No Equal in Patrol Work and Scouting," Stars and Stripes 30 May 1919: 1.

³³ “13 Redskin Tribes in Single Company,” Stars and Stripes 8 November 1918: 6.

³⁴ “We’re All Yanks Now,” Stars and Stripes 30 May 1919: 8.

³⁵ Frederick E. Hoxie, The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920, (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska UP, 1984) 228.

³⁶ Krouse 136.

³⁷ Krouse 166.

³⁸ Joseph Kossuth Dixon and Rodman Wanamaker, The Vanishing Race, the Last Great Indian Council, a Record in Picture and Story of the Last Great Indian Council, Participated in by Eminent Indian Chiefs from Nearly Every Indian Reservation in the United States, Together with the Story of Their Lives as Told by Themselves - Their Speeches and Folklore Tales - Their Solemn Farewell and the Indian's Story of the Custer Fight. The Concept of Rodman Wanamaker, (New York: Doubleday Page, 1914) 12.

³⁹ Dixon 18.

⁴⁰ Krouse 169.

⁴¹ Rosier 58.

⁴² Krouse 164.

⁴³ Barsh 297.

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