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**Making a Difference: My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice.** By Ada Deer with Theda Perdue. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. 204 pages. \$26.95 cloth.

We are citizens of sovereign tribes, and we need to act like it. Ignorance, racism and greed continue to threaten Native people, tribes and resources. We must remain vigilant, prepare to defend our rights and ready to make a difference.

—Ada Deer

Infused with humor, excitement, and pathos, *Making a Difference: My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice* is a political memoir of the first Native American woman to, among other accomplishments, run for Congress, chair the Menominee tribe, head the BIA, earn an MSW at the Columbia School of Social Work, reside as a fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics, and serve as director of the American Indian studies program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is, first and foremost, the consummate Indigenous activist who led the Menominees "in an epic struggle for the historic reversal of American Indian policy and the restoration of Menominee's legal status as a federally recognized tribe" (33). During her tenure at the BIA, Deer established government-to-government relationships with 226 Alaskan Native villages, expanded self-governance to 180 tribes, approved gaming compacts between 130 tribes and 24 states, approved federal recognition of four tribes, and oversaw 52 percent of Indian schools moving to tribal management (181).

A combination of an "as-told-to" autobiography, historical encyclopedia, and hagiography, the book offers descriptions, with breakneck speed and much detail, of her fight against annihilation to restore federal recognition. Although at times events are chronicled that perhaps belong elsewhere, they provide critical archival information to be treasured. The most precious aspect of this volume is Deer's compelling and intimate description of her early life and the development of her identity as an Indigenous person, as a Menominee and as an Indigenous activist. Telling her early experiences with racism, poverty and discrimination in matter-of-fact terms, Deer avoids emotional affect, except when describing her love of the land, its beauty, and the sound of the Wolf River that serves as her totem.

Ada has no problem identifying who she is: "My Menominee identity was rooted in place, family and history, not culture . . . Despite everything, I have never had any doubt that I am Menominee. Nor have I struggled with my biracial ancestry. While some people view their mixed ancestry as a burden, for me it is not a big deal. I accept all of myself. Some Indians who write or speak about this issue see themselves as living in both worlds. I do not. Although my mother was white and I have little connection to ancient Menominee culture, I have no doubt who I am, I am a Menominee" (20).

The book follows a chronological format, beginning with Deer's birth on the Menominee Reservation to a white woman, a BIA nurse and daughter of a Philadelphia minister, and a Menominee tribal member, a horseman who worked as a logger and had been institutionalized at a Catholic boarding school. Her mother, to whom the

book is dedicated, brought Ada to political meetings about termination as a child. At thirteen, when Ada was forced to drive her mother to the hospital because she was in labor, Ada's presence of mind and determination were up to the task and they arrived safely. Her mother not only educated her about Menominee history, the dispossession, and the callousness of the US government's assimilationist policies, but she also "encouraged me to channel the anger I felt about our mistreatment into trying to change things" (19).

Ada's relationship with her father is depicted as complex. She was eager to learn Menominee, but her father refused to teach her, telling her "he didn't want his children to go through what he had been through—the burdens he carried and the struggles he experienced . . . I feel a great sense of loss for all the things he knew but did not teach us" (11–12). Deer reports her mother divorced him "on the grounds of cruelty." As a victim of the inhumane boarding school movement, her father struggled with shame, despair and alcoholism. Although he had four children, he was drafted into the army and served in a segregated white unit. There, considered African American because he was "dark-skinned," he experienced racism and discrimination. Deer writes that she "became aware of how my father made me Menominee, not through self-reflection, but because of the way people treated me" (18). Ada's most painful experience with racism was with her mother's family who came to "rescue" her mother from the reservation. Ada came face-to-face with her mother's twin, who cringed when she ran toward her, and heard her minister grandfather say to her mother, "All right Constance, stay in the backwoods with your half-breeds." They wanted her mother to put them in an orphanage and reclaim her life in Philadelphia. Ada wanted to know what a "half-breed" was.

At Columbia University School of Social Work, she added social worker to her identity and her purpose. She found the institution ignorant and indifferent to Native struggles and saw herself there as a macro social worker in a micro world, but describes Richard Cloward as a role model "for how social workers can move beyond helping clients navigate government bureaucracy to organizing them to challenge the system and precipitate positive change" (42). She later brought social work training onto the reservations when teaching at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The National Association of Social Workers honored her as a "pioneer" of social work, perhaps not a word she would have appreciated, but her social work training is surely seen in her efforts in coalition building, negotiating between the tribes and the government, and mediating at the expense of being harangued by both Indigenous people and government bureaucrats. As she puts it: "At times I feel like I had arrows in my back from the Indians and spears in my front from the whites!" (180). Of Deer's tenure at the BIA, *Indian Country Today*, usually critical of BIA policies, wrote: "Ada Deer is a good woman, she has fought the good fight and if there is an American Indian in this nation who could have and should have won the battle, it is Ada Deer" (181).

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