The Moral Force of Indigenous Politics

Tracing the political origins of the Mexican indigenous rights movement, from the colonial encounter to the Zapatista uprising, and from Chiapas to Geneva, Courtney Jung locates indigenous identity in the history of Mexican state formation. She argues that indigenous identity is not an accident of birth but a political achievement that offers a new voice to many of the world's poorest and most dispossessed. The moral force of indigenous claims rests not on the existence of cultural differences, or identity, but on the history of exclusion and selective inclusion that constitutes indigenous identity. As a result, the book shows that privatizing or protecting such groups is a mistake and develops a theory of critical liberalism that commits democratic government to active engagement with the claims of culture. This book will appeal to scholars and students of political theory, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology studying multiculturalism and the politics of culture.

Courtney Jung is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics at The New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College. She is the author of Then I Was Black: South African Political Identities in Transition (2000), which was the winner of the Choice Outstanding Academic Title Award 2001.
As the twenty-first century begins, major new political challenges have arisen at the same time as some of the most enduring dilemmas of political association remain unresolved. The collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War reflect a victory for democratic and liberal values, yet in many of the Western countries that nurtured those values there are severe problems of urban decay, class and racial conflict, and failing political legitimacy. Enduring global injustice and inequality seem compounded by environmental problems, disease; the oppression of women and racial, ethnic, and religious minorities; and the relentless growth of the world’s population. In such circumstances, the need for creative thinking about the fundamentals of human political association is manifest. This new series in contemporary political theory is needed to foster such systematic normative reflection.

The series proceeds in the belief that the time is ripe for a reassertion of the importance of problem-driven political theory. It is concerned, that is, with works that are motivated by the impulse to understand, think critically about, and address the problems in the world, rather than issues that are thrown up primarily in academic debate. Books in the series may be interdisciplinary in character, ranging over issues conventionally dealt with in philosophy, law, history, and the human sciences. The range of materials and the methods of proceeding should be dictated by the problem at hand, not the conventional debates or disciplinary divisions of academia.

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The Moral Force of Indigenous Politics
Critical Liberalism and the Zapatistas

COURTNEY JUNG
This book is for Patrick Macklem
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The book I have written is not really the book I set out to write. It has grown in scope, and it is more politically charged than I anticipated. It has surprised me, but I have tried to be honest in following the thread. If I have done my job properly, none of it will seem surprising to the reader. I hope it will even seem obvious, like common sense.

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