

“Real Indians”?

“Race” and the Politics of Contemporary Indigeneity



“The question of my identity often comes up. I think I must be a mixed blood. I claim to be male, although only one of my parents is male. ”

--Jimmie Durham, Cherokee artist

Some Problems of Indigenous Self-Identification & Regulated Identities

→ Racial Identity “Shifts”

--American Indians: the fastest growing minority in the US

→ 2 groups of persons reclaiming indigenous identities

PROBLEMS:

- 1.essentialist vs. processual
- 2.higher numbers = resurgence, but also “possible fraud” (depending on the perspective at work)
- 3.self-determination tied up with resources, shared among “members”
- 4.the “we are all hybrids” argument
- 5.“new claimants” need to “prove” their identity
- 6.“Wannabe” Indians
- 7.“Black Indians” --Cherokee, Seminole, Garifuna cases

REASONS?

- (a) racial paranoia, stigma of blackness
- (b) maximize individual enjoyment of limited material resources
- (c) defend indigeneity as difference--“not everybody can be indigenous”
- (d) define indigenous peoples out of existence, utilizing miscegenation