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Book Review: The New Warriors: Native American Leaders since 1900

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R. David Edmunds and his colleagues have essayed a needed task, offering readers the premise that American Indians still live in viable societies and generate outstanding leadership. Sadly, the bulk of scholarly and popular attention proffers the romantic image of "noble savages" defending a doomed way of life. Most Americans have a vague idea or two about Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and Geronimo, but no knowledge of Phillip Martin and Robert Yellowtail. The New Warriors is a good start in correcting an ignorance that has unfortunate consequences as Indians struggle to maintain their unique place in America in the twenty-first century.

Contributors offer short biographies of fourteen outstanding American Indians of the twentieth century (some remain active). Charles Curtis of the infamous Curtis Act that obliterated the Indian governments of soon-to-be Oklahoma is the anomaly among the group, the rest having defended sovereignty. Yet it is important to realize that some Indians bought the idea of assimilation.

The rest of the group includes Pan-Indian spokespersons who advocated for Indian issues in the halls of dominant society power, individuals who directed tribal governments, and spokespersons for specialized concerns from Indian Country. The "warriors" described are Charles Curtis (Kaw), Zitkala-Ša (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, a Dakota), Robert Yellow-
These biographies provide a short, person-centered history of the unfolding of American Indian history in the twentieth century. One begins with the assimilationist Kaw who became a vice president of the United States and concludes with the lawyer who leads the Native American Rights Fund. In between are narratives of interesting, courageous, dedicated individuals. Although the title is hokey and inadvertently perpetuates nineteenth-century analogies, the book is valuable. Most of the biographies would have benefitted by less hagiography and more criticism. Readers will now know that Indian communities continue to produce effective leaders, that Indians have not disappeared, and that there is not a single Indian voice.

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