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Review of *Voices from Haskell: Indian Students between Two Worlds, 1884-1928* By Myriam Vuckovic

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Voices from Haskell: Indian Students between Two Worlds, 1884-1928. By Myriam Vučković. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008. ix + 330 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. $34.95.

"I did not send Her there to be an Irish washerwoman," wrote the angry Indian father of a student forced to work in the Haskell school laundry in 1888. Such expressive words—especially striking to an Irish reviewer—characterize this major study of the Indian boarding school at Lawrence, Kansas. Founded in 1884, it is the only such institution to evolve into a four-year university, Haskell Indian Nations University. Myriam Vučković draws wonderfully well on Indian evidence: letters and other texts by students, reminiscences by ex-students, and contemporaneous correspondence by kin. Opinions of educators are not ignored either. The result is an evenhanded account of the school, its students and staff, weaknesses and strengths, during the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century assimilationist educational campaign.

Adopting "a constructionist approach to the understanding of ethnicity and culture," Vučković moves both chronologically and thematically. She outlines U.S. government policy: to Americanize Indians as Christian citizens. In rich detail she then examines why young Indians of many Great Plains tribes, and others, began to attend. She recounts their first experiences of the school, its regimentation ("the bell"), its curriculum (secular and religious), its impressively varied recreations and rituals, and its often inadequate concern with student health. She highlights the complicated nature of student accommodation and resistance, and suggests how unpredictably diverse "life after Haskell" could be for its alumni.

As Vučković notes, since the 1980s there has been a wave of complementary studies of Native American schooling. Broadly focused, for example, are McBeth (1983), Adams (1995), Reyhner and Eder (2004), and Coleman (1993, 2007). More focused on individual schools: Lomawaima (1994), Ellis (1996), Child (1998), Riney (1999), and Fear-Segal (2007). *Voices from Haskell* certainly merits an honorable place in the latter category. It is a deeply-researched, complex, and convincing book. Coming after so many other studies, however, it lacks a forceful conclusion pointing to the typical and distinctive in Haskell. How, one may also ask, does the book go beyond earlier studies at least partly focused on this school?

"Haskell had not turned them into white people," concludes Vučković, "but it most certainly had transformed them." She conveys in very human terms how Indian people suffered from, exploited, and in myriad ways benefited from Haskell—as they did at the many other government schools during the era of assimilationist education.

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