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Review of *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller* By Sarah Eppler Janda

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Press, 2007. x + 232pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00.

In *Beloved Women*, Sarah Eppler Janda offers an important and provocative analysis of the *political* lives of two American Indian leaders in Oklahoma and national politics. Janda uses primary documents, interviews, and secondary sources to examine the nexus between race (Indianness) and gender (feminism) and the acquisition and use of political power by LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller.

Janda organizes the book into three parts. The first devotes two chapters to developing the primary constructs used in the study (image, identity, political activism, and the intersection of feminism and Indianness) for LaDonna Harris. Chapters 3 and 4 (part 2) do essentially the same thing for Wilma Mankiller. Within the context of the study, feminism is defined as a belief in the equality of men and women. Indianness, a more elusive concept, as Janda explains, is concerned with various components of Indian identity, such as cultural beliefs, heritage, and self- and group-identification. Within Cherokee history, the term “beloved woman” is synonymous with “war woman” and was reserved for older women who distinguished themselves in battle and thus earned elevated status in the tribe. Clearly, in terms of *politics*, the first four chapters show how LaDonna Harris, born to a white father and Comanche mother and later married to white U.S. Senator Fred R. Harris, and Wilma Mankiller, born to a Cherokee father and white mother, overcame poverty and racism to become “beloved women.”

Chapters 5 and 6 (part 3) offer a comparative analysis of Harris and Mankiller first with respect to politics and policy and then in terms of the intersection of feminism and Indianness. Although the book’s previous four chapters are essential to establishing the evolving self-identities that made Harris and Mankiller “war women,” the last two allow the book to take on boarder social science significance; testable hypotheses emerge for further study. For example, both Harris and Mankiller trace their

Beloved Women: The Political Lives of LaDonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller. By Sarah Eppler Janda. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University

political roots to their early involvement in community development programs and efforts lobbying Congress and others in powerful positions. They both also focused their efforts on a limited number of policy areas, such as environmental concerns, housing, health care, and discrimination. Janda also notes that Harris and Mankiller shared similar beliefs concerning the intersection of feminism and Indianness. They both believed that Indian women historically have played fundamental roles within their tribes, that sexism came from white culture, and that women and men engage in leadership differently.

According to Janda, "Harris and Mankiller are remarkable women who have effected great change, and this book has been an effort to help place them in the historical context to which they belong." She has succeeded in achieving that goal.

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