

Strickland explores Native American life in new book

In his new book, the law school dean also looks at Hollywood's images of Native Americans

By Carl Yeh
Freelance Editor

Rennard Strickland, dean of the University's law school, has recently published a new book titled "Tonto's Revenge." Strickland, who is of Osage and Cherokee descent, has been the author and editor of more than 35 books.

"Tonto's Revenge" is a collection of essays exploring aspects of Indian culture, art, literature and law. And, as indicated by the title, Strickland also explores Hollywood's stereotypical images of Native Americans.

One of the reasons Strickland was interested in Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans was his strong interest in film. "I also think that what people believe about American Indians comes primarily from what the media has told them," Strickland said.

"People's perceptions of the Native American comes not from personal experience, but grows on what was seen on the screen or television," he said. "So a lot of

what I wanted to do in the book was contrast the myth of the Indian and the reality of [their] existence."

Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans directly affects them socially and economically, Strickland said. "Much of Indian policy is dominated by Hollywood — more than any other [ethnic] group in this country," he said.

The reason for this is because the life and economy of Native Americans is controlled by people other than Indians, Strickland said. "[Native Americans] are in the hands of the U.S. Congress. [Congress] legislates what Indians can do with their lands because the titles to the land are held by the federal government."

Another myth the media perpetuate is that the Native-American population is a disappearing group, Strickland said. "Far from being on the road to extinction, Native Americans are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in this country," he said.

One of the things Strickland said he hopes his book does is encourage people to think of Native Americans as living, breathing "20th- and 21st-century people."

But many films about Native Americans do not accomplish

this, he said. For example, the popular film "Pocahontas" is one of the many films that transform the Indian into idealized forms, Strickland said. That was why the original title for the book was "Savage Sinners and Redskin Redeemers," he said.

"We don't ever think of the Indian as a real person," Strickland said. "We think of the Indian as either the savage sinner or as the new-age idealized person, that if we follow, we can have cultural salvation. The real Indian is somewhere very much in between."

Hollywood's depiction of the Native American affected not only what others thought of them, but also how Native Americans thought of themselves. Strickland described how a Native American actor would act like a Native American based on what he had seen on television and how some other Native Americans watching "cowboy and Indian" movies would root for the cowboys.

But Strickland said that with good teachers and education, he was able to develop a strong identity for himself. "I had a distance between the [movie] screen and me. I think my identity was so strong that I didn't root for the Indians to be killed."

One of the points Strickland tries to make in his book is that the situation Native Americans faced at the end of the 19th century is similar to the situation all Americans face currently, he said.

"When the old buffalo-hunting ways and the nomadic life that the plains Indians were a part of were being changed, these people were forced to face with a new century, a new economy and a new way of life," Strickland said.

"That experience is almost exactly analogous to the experience that mainstream America is facing as we begin the 21st century — that the way the world of the Indian changed is much the way the world of all us is changing."

Strickland said people who face great change cannot only survive the change, but can prosper. "Indian society survived [the last century]," he said. "That we have 2 million Native Americans today when we had only 250,000 at the beginning of the last century — they've not only survived, but they've prospered."

Strickland said he is optimistic about the future, but he thinks American society has a daunting challenge ahead of it. "I think for the 21st century, if as a nation, that all of us, blacks, Hispanics,

Asian-Americans, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, people from Ireland or Germanic countries, have a great many things in common. And if we don't get past our 'tribalism,' then our chances of surviving at least as a people — what we would like — are substantially reduced."

But not all of Strickland's book is serious. He says there is also a lot of humor. The beginning of the book features a "Far Side" comic showing the Lone Ranger reading an "Indian dictionary" and discovering that "kemosabe" is an Apache expression for a horse's rear end.

Strickland said he noticed that some Native Americans would laugh at different places and say, "Yeah, that happens," while non-minorities would say, "Gee, I never thought of that, but that makes sense."

Strickland said he thinks his book will appeal to everyday people and to the "educated generalist" interested in the status of Native-American culture today.

"I hope what this book says about Indian culture is that Indian-ness is more than the physical aspect of the culture. The Indians may be driving a broken-down Ford and still be Indian because he's not riding a painted pony."

White House scandal aside, students should seek internships

The career center says internships are vital to college students

By Ashley Bach
In-depth Reporter

Parents and students alike were appalled last week at allegations that President Clinton may have had an affair with a 21-year-old White House intern, but University officials say the news shouldn't discourage anyone from seeking an internship before graduation.

The alleged affair, which is said to have occurred in 1995 between Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, a graduate of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, raises disturbing questions with many about an intern's well-being in the workplace. Among University advisers, however, an internship is still seen as a generally safe, if not vital, part of the college experience.

"Honestly, I feel that it was an isolated incident," Beth Swank, assistant director of the University Career Center, said of the allegations. "I don't think students should worry about it."

Swank directs the Career Development Internship Program, which helps line up off-campus positions for students, who then earn credit for their work. A screening process for employers and orientations for students help make the internships run more smoothly, Swank said.

"Most of our employers have had interns before and know what it means to be a supervisor," she said. "And we're talking to students about what it means to be a professional and part of a team."

Charlene Phipps, director of the internship program for the planning, public policy and management department, agrees that stu-

dents shouldn't jump to conclusions about the Clinton scandal, but it doesn't mean they shouldn't be careful.

"I don't think [the scandal] has anything to do with the internship," she said. "Everybody who enters the workplace has to be aware of their surroundings."

The potential for problems, whether they be harassment or mistreatment, exists in any internship, Phipps and Swank said. But students working through official University programs have certain safeguards against such problems, they say.

Swank said once students start an internship through the Career Center, for example, the center's counselors are available to help sort out any problems that may arise.

"We can play that mediator role, too," she said. "We just have

to trust that the student will share their concerns with us."

Even if students obtain internships on their own, they can still take precautions to ensure a safer and more productive experience, Swank and Phipps said. These include researching the potential internship site extensively, forming a contract with the employer, and aligning themselves with a University program or department.

"All students have to take care when they approach an internship," Phipps said. "There's any variety of problems they might encounter."

Still, both advisors note that the majority of internships turn out to be enjoyable and valuable experiences for the student. Senior Abigail Handa is currently in her third internship and says she's never had any problems.

Previous positions at the Lane County Law and Advocacy Center and the Hult Center were both positive and educational for Handa, a journalism and psychology major.

"My boss [at the Hult Center] was really helpful, and we established a real good friendship and professional relationship," she said. "The internship definitely expanded my horizons."

That's what internships are supposed to do, Swank and Phipps said. A position in a professional environment can give students a leg up in the job market, as well as help them focus on career goals. It is an experience vital to students' future, they said, but one that should always be approached with caution.

"The most important thing to any internship is that the student is comfortable," Phipps said.

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