



Race and the Chilean Miracle: Neoliberalism, Democracy, and Indigenous Rights (Pitt Latin American Series)

Patricia Richards

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The economic reforms imposed by Augusto Pinochet's regime (1973–1990) are often credited with transforming Chile into a global economy and setting the stage for a peaceful transition to democracy, individual liberty, and the recognition of cultural diversity. The famed economist Milton Friedman would later describe the transition as the "Miracle of Chile." Yet, as Patricia Richards reveals, beneath this veneer of progress lies a reality of social conflict and inequity that has been perpetuated by many of the same neoliberal programs.

In *Race and the Chilean Miracle*, Richards examines conflicts between Mapuche indigenous people and state and private actors over natural resources, territorial claims, and collective rights in the Araucanía region. Through ground-level fieldwork, extensive interviews with local Mapuche and Chileans, and analysis of contemporary race and governance theory, Richards exposes the ways that local, regional, and transnational realities are shaped by systemic racism in the context of neoliberal multiculturalism..

Richards demonstrates how state programs and policies run counter to Mapuche claims for autonomy and cultural recognition. The Mapuche, whose ancestral lands have been appropriated for timber and farming, have been branded as terrorists for their activism and sometimes-violent responses to state and private sector interventions. Through their interviews, many Mapuche cite the perpetuation of colonialism under the guise of development projects, multicultural policies, and assimilationist narratives. Many Chilean locals and political elites see the continued defiance of the Mapuche in their tenacious connection to the land, resistance to integration, and insistence on their rights as a people. These diametrically opposed worldviews form the basis of the racial dichotomy that continues to pervade Chilean society.

In her study, Richards traces systemic racism that follows both a top-down path (global, state, and regional) as well as a bottom-up one (local agencies and actors), detailing their historic roots. Richards also describes potential positive outcomes in the form of intercultural coalitions or indigenous autonomy. Her compelling analysis offers new perspectives on indigenous rights, race, and neoliberal multiculturalism in Latin America and globally.

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