

## The Delawares as Women: Hospitality as Submission and Resistance

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The association of women with hospitality runs thickly across human societies and history. Within American history, one of the more curious examples of this hovers around the idea that the Lenape peoples, also known as the Delawares, held a special designation as "women" in the eighteenth century. Some interpret this to mean the Delawares had been appointed to serve as intermediaries and peacekeepers (like the matrons of the Iroquois Confederacy) while others treat it as the legacy of Iroquoian conquest and thus a sign of (deeply gendered) political subservience. This paper re-assesses the longstanding controversy over how and why the Delaware were "women" and uses the framework of hospitality to highlight its contested nature and awful consequences in a region famous as a refuge and asylum for Europeans. Reflecting a distinct tradition of accommodating colonists, the Lenapes passed on a set of oral traditions about their early hospitality towards Europeans (starting with Henry Hudson). By the 1730s, the Lenapes were also the first to articulate a sense of joint indigenous identity defined against those same colonists. Lenape religious leaders like Neolin provided the ideological foundation on which the pan-Indian resistance movement was built. This paper suggests it was through these mutual ideas, images, and memories of hospitality abused and betrayed that the Lenapes developed the idea of Indians as a race.