



NEWS RELEASE

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Choctaw & Chickasaw Freedmen Establish New Advocacy Group

In recent years many descendants of enslaved people from Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations have applied for citizenship only to learn that they are rejected for having no blood connection to a recognized citizen. Yet when their ancestors were enslaved they were then considered *Choctaw slaves*, or *Chickasaw slaves*. After freedom, their historic tie was ignored and these human beings were now to be excluded from rights that their slave holders promised to provide through treaty with the United States in 1866.

African-Native American descendants of these two former slave-holding Indian tribes have organized to provide a platform from which the voices of the descendants of the disenfranchised enslaved people from the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations can be heard.

Today, the Choctaw Chickasaw Freedmen Association (CCFA) hopes to be an advocate for descendants, seeking to address this issue, and also to work to include their story in the historical landscape of these two tribes now based in Oklahoma.

CCFA embraces the same name used by their ancestors, in the 1890s, and following in the footsteps of the original group, this group will address concerns and interests of today. Among their issues, is the continued omission of the very presence of their ancestors in the tribal history, *and* the exclusion of Freedmen descendants of these two tribes from citizenship. This exclusion allows both tribes to omit the history of slavery, as if it never occurred.

CCFA seeks to address this very act of historical omission of chattel slavery to any degree, and the group will examine efforts of race-based exclusion that still exists today, continuing the practice that began in the early post- Civil War years.

The founding members of CCFA, are writers, educators, bloggers, nationally known speakers, advocates for historic preservation, and cultural inclusion. The group embraces all people who had ties to the history of both nations. Freedmen reach out to all who have an interest in the history of the Freedmen, to find stories of their legacy from Removal to Freedom to the struggles for citizenship. A major task of this new group will be to identify descendants of Freedmen from both groups.

CCFA hopes to educate and to engage with people both enrolled citizens and descendants of Freedmen from both nations. CCFA hopes to engage with those who see Freedmen as having a presence in their history and who know that the full history cannot be told accurately until it is told entirely.

CCFA points out that black chattel slavery is a part of Choctaw history, and black chattel slavery is a part of Chickasaw history and this story can no longer be omitted. Therefore, CCFA plans to work with descendants and all interested parties to learn more about this history. And the group hopes to assist descendants in learning more about this story, and how Choctaw and Chickasaw Freedmen survived from the days of enslavement, resistance, freedom and into statehood.

CCFA will share the history of how both slave-owning tribes formed regiments in the Civil war as Confederate soldiers fighting for the South, in an effort to keep chattel slavery as part of their way of life. And CCFA plans to tell the story of the many enslaved men, who were able to escape, join the Union Army and fight for their own freedom.

CCFA will be an advocacy group for descendants who are seeking inclusion, and expanding the historical narrative by telling the entire story of the presence of black men, women and children in those two nations.

CCFA hopes to eradicate the *old-south* treatment of black people who have a birthright to the nation where their grandparents, great grandparents and earlier ancestors lived and toiled as a Chickasaw-held and Choctaw-held people.

The group proudly announces the launching of their new website, www.ccfanow.org, and plans to offer a series of workshops, to produce an annual journal to honor the history and heritage of both Freedmen communities.

Descendants of those Freedmen have embraced their history as Choctaw-descended people, and as Chickasaw-descended people. The ancestors lived within the cultural context that was Choctaw, and within the context which was Chickasaw. Many Freedmen descendants even after 155 years have laid claim to their history and their roots from southeastern Oklahoma and their family and community ties to both tribes and they speak to their identity from those tribes.

CCFA hopes to help descendants have a closer tie to the communities from which their families come.