



Founders' Bios

Athena Butler is a dynamic and passionate Human Resources and Organizational Development Leader. She descends from Catherine (Love) Perry, (Card #1459 Roll #468). In addition, her ancestors include Litcy Perry, & Charlotte Chico (Sheco).

Athena also has DNA matches to many Choctaw natives and is excited to continue researching those connections. While exploring her own family, Athena has taken on additional community research projects related to the Choctaw & Chickasaw Freedmen.

With over 15 years of domestic and international experience, Athena is currently responsible for over \$20MM in international assets for one of the nation's foremost leaders in logistics and supply chain management. Her primary management responsibility centers around: designing, planning, and implementing organizational strategies that impact the company's most valuable assets: its employees. However, she prides herself in her professional brand, which is: a strategic change agent who finds common sense solutions for complex company problems.

Ms. Butler holds a B.S. in Organizational Design with a minor in Political Science from Wilmington University. With that background, she is using that knowledge to establish a nonprofit community to reconcile disparities within the Choctaw-Chickasaw Freedmen communities.

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Jerry Harris Moore is a sociologist and educator from western Arkansas, with family coming from eastern Oklahoma in the Choctaw Nation. He descends from

Wyatt Powell, (Card #1298, Roll #4167). He has taught and continues to teach sociology at Northwest Arkansas Community College, where he also served as Director of the college's Upward Bound program. Prior to that, he worked in Student Support Services at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville for many years. Before working in higher education, he taught high school Social Studies in the Fort Smith Arkansas Board of Education.

Apart from his work as an educator, Mr. Moore has played a key role in his work with the United Methodist Church. In that role, he served on the General Board of Church and Society for 8 years.

Mr. Moore has had much contact with the Native American Community in his participation in the Native American Comprehensive Plan of the United Methodist Church and for 10 years he has served as Chairperson of the Conference Committee on Native American Ministry. In addition, Chair of the AR Conference Native American Ministry for 20 years. He also served 4 years on the General Commission of Religion and Race of the United Methodist Church.

Jerry H. Moore holds degrees in History and Sociology from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. He now resides in Bentonville Arkansas where he continues to teach sociology, research, and work.

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Terry Ligon began his historical and genealogical journey in 1989. He descends from Mitchell Ligon, (Choctaw Freedman Card #106, Roll #2608). He also has other Choctaw ancestors, including Elizabeth Christian (Roll #2615, and Joe Freeman #4046). In addition to those ancestors he is a direct descendant also of Bettie Ligon, (Roll #2604) who made headlines when she became head litigant in the famous case, Equity 7071, representing over 2000 Freedmen seeking enrollment on the blood roll.

Mr. Ligon is also a [writer](#), [blogger](#) and videographer, documenting the story of both Choctaw and Chickasaw Freedmen. In 2010 Terry Ligon launched his first blog titled [“The Black and Red Journal”](#) that provided short articles on the history of Indian Territory and the “Five Slave Holding Tribes,” A short time later Terry launched another blog and called it [“Betties List.”](#) His blog provides some of the

detailed history on what was called “The Most Important Suit in the Territory” Equity 7071, a lawsuit of almost 2,000 Freed people seeking to be citizens by blood in the Choctaw or Chickasaw Nations. Terry Ligon also serves on the faculty of the [Midwest African America Genealogy Institute](#) in the track pertaining to the Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes.

As a founding member of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC), Mr. Ligon has given numerous presentations about Indian Territory and Oklahoma research. He has also taught classes over the years about Chickasaw and Choctaw Freedmen.

As an artist and videographer, Terry Ligon has produced several videos as on his Estelusti channel. These videos pertain to the history of Freedmen from Indian Territory and Chickasaw and Choctaw Freedmen in particular found on his YouTube channel.

Mr. Ligon holds two bachelor’s degrees in Fine Arts from the University of San Francisco and the Academy of Arts. He resides in Nevada where his research and writing continues.

Links:

The Black and Red Journal

www.blackandredjournal.blogspot.com

Bettie's List

www.bettieslist.blogspot.com

Midwest African American Genealogy Institute

<http://www.maagiinstitute.org>

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Angela Walton-Raji is a nationally known professional genealogist, author and writer. She descends from Sam and Sallie Walton, Choctaw Freedmen (Card #777, roll #3747 and #3748 and their son, Sam Jr. #3750)

Professionally, she worked in higher education for over 30 years, retiring from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County as Director of Graduate School Recruitment. She also served as a team reader of scholarship applications for the esteemed [Gates Millennium Scholars Program](#).

In 1991 she located the records of her Walton ancestors on the Dawes Roll as Choctaw Freedmen. Realizing that no one ever spoke of Freedmen in Oklahoma historic circles, she committed herself to studying their history, examining the records they left and telling their stories. She is the author of 3 books all pertaining to researching Freedmen from Indian Territory. Her two volume set, [Freedmen of the Frontier](#), documented 52 families coming from the Five Tribes of Oklahoma. She hosts two blogs one devoted exclusively to the [legacy of Choctaw Freedmen](#). She also hosts an [extensive website](#) devoted to the history of Freedmen from Oklahoma.

Ms. Walton-Raji's research has garnered public attention over the years. In 1999 her Choctaw Freedman story was included in a project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, *My Story is America's Story*, and was featured in a November 1999 issue of Parade Magazine.

In 1998 she was brought in as a professional genealogist to testify in the case for Bernice Rogers Riggs, a Cherokee Freedman descendant to share information on her family background (see Riggs vs. Ummerteskee). Her ties to the Choctaw Nation have also been featured in Smithsonian Magazine.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from St. Louis University, and a Master of Education from Antioch University. She lives in Maryland where she continues to research and write.

Links:

The Gates Millennium Scholarship:

<https://www.thegatesscholarship.org/scholarship>

Freedmen of the Frontier:

https://www.amazon.com/Freedmen-Frontier-Selected-Cherokee-Chickasaw/dp/0999818201/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Freedmen+of+the+Frontier&qid=1632494353&sr=8-1

Legacy of the Choctaw Freedmen:
www.choctawfreedmenlegacy.blogspot.com

Extensive website:
www.african-nativeamerican.com

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Sandy Williams has researched Chickasaw Freedmen from Ada and Tishomingo for many years. She descends from Angie Chico (Card No 1039 Roll #3956.)

She has actively researched the Chico's from Panola County in the Chickasaw Nation, and also the family's history prior to removal. In addition, much of her research has focused on the families that resided in the Yarnaby community.

She has actively researched her family for over 10 years. She recently started a blog "[Underneath The Leaves](#)," which contains information about her Chickasaw Freedman ancestors, the Chico's, who were removed from Mississippi to Indian Territory during the 1830's as enslaved people, in the Chickasaw Nation. And historically speaking Sandy has ancestors from two of the five slave holding tribes.

Sandy has several memberships in genealogy groups, historical societies and social impact groups. She is following in the footsteps of her ancestors who were members of the original Choctaw-Chickasaw Freedmen Association from the 1800s.

She has a strong background in pharmaceutical sales, and today is co-founder of a very successful privately held corporation that features health and beauty products with two major brands sold throughout the US and abroad in numerous retail outlets. Most importantly, her love of family and family history has inspired her to continue her research in-depth.

Ms. Williams holds a Bachelor of Arts from Arizona State University where she also graduated with a concentration in Pre-Medical studies. She resides in southern California where she continues her research.

Link:

Underneath The Leaves

www.underneaththeleaves.com