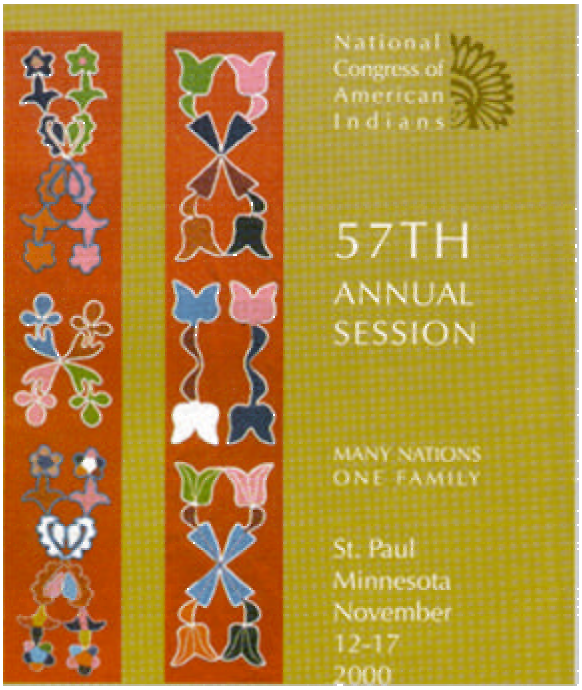
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TRANSCRIPTION

AFTERNOON CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSION NOV 14

EXPLORING THE LEGACY AND FUTURE OF

BLACK/INDIAN RELATIONS

WILMA MANKILLER,
MODERATOR, with
Dr. Willard R. Johnson, Dr. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. , Dr. Patrick Minges, Ms. Deborah Tucker, Dr. David Wilkins

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Principal Speakers

Ms. Wilma Mankiller
former Principal Chief,
The Cherokee Nation

Dr. Willard R. Johnson
Professor emeritus of Political Science,
The Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dr. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr.
Professor of History
and Director of the American Native Press Archives,
The University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Dr. Patrick Minges
Director of Publications,
Human Rights Watch Inc.

Ms. Deborah Tucker
Director of Community Outreach and Cultural Activities,
Adamany Undergraduate Library
Wayne State University

Dr. David Wilkins
Associate Professor of Indian Studies,
University of Minnesota

57th Annual Session, National Congress of American Indians

Afternoon Concurrent Breakout Session November 14

EXPLORING THE LEGACY AND FUTURE OF BLACK/INDIAN RELATIONS

Moderator Wilma Mankiller:

with Dr. Willard R. Johnson, Dr. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. ,

Dr. Patrick Minges, Ms Deborah Tucker, Dr. David Wilkins

Chief Wilma Mankiller – I became interested in the relationships and the connections between Native American and African American people many years ago. I had been reading a book called Things Fall Apart by Achebe. Before that, I was like everybody else who learned from the national news about the struggle against Apartheid in Africa. I knew there were a lot of political organizations, but I really didn't put it together until I read Achebe's story about an individual family, an individual community, and the destruction of the people. The situation was strikingly similar to what has happened to Native People in this country. It is almost as if the colonizers had "a little black book" that they used to colonize the people, as they went around the world. They took away the leaders, destroyed their medicines, destroyed their governmental system, sent the kids away to distant schools and, in the case of Africa, to French and other European schools, and in our case, to government boarding schools, the native boarding school. That piqued my interest and I have been interested in these issues since that time.

I later found that there were many connections in this country between African Americans and Native Americans, some positive and, some not so positive. In some of the large southeastern tribes, the mixed-blood population were slave holders, and there was and continues to be what I would describe as almost a class system, in the southeastern tribes. And by and large the full blood people were absolutely opposed to holding of human beings in bondage. And so we have that history. On the other hand, we have a history of a great deal of intermarriage; we have a history of our people joining abolitionists in their struggle. It is a complicated history. It is important for us to talk about that a little bit today and think about it.

Why is that important? Why is it important to Indian country? One of the reasons it is important is that, as we in tribal governments continue to be under siege, it is critical to build coalitions with African Americans to advance our issues and theirs. Sometimes our issues are not the same as theirs. In the seventies and the late sixties I had a great deal of trouble explaining to my friends who were working in the Civil Rights Movement that while the civil rights movement tried to help people gain entry into the system, we were fighting for the right to have our own system. And so sometimes we need to understand our different issues here, and talk to one another about those issues so that we can support their civil right issues and they can support our issues to retain our separate tribal government and our traditional way of life. Coalitions are important.

The other reason it is important is because there are a couple of issues in Indian Country now, where things that happened to African American people happened to all of us. For example, in the case of the Pequots, with the Benedict book, and the fact that the Pequot Nation [is being challenged in] the federal recognition process–- is about racism, not just about questioning their ancestry. Society tends to accept tribal people when mixed

with white people, without any problem whatsoever. If you meet someone who says I am half white and half Yakama, or half white and half Oneida, or whatever, people tend to accept those people. But, if you find someone who says I am half black and half Oneida, Yakama, or Cherokee, people have more difficulty with that. That is the reality of the time that we live in. And, I believe, watching this issue from afar, that is what is driving the issue of the Pequots -- part of it is greed, just plain old greed, in envy of their financial success -- and part of it is racism.

There is another issue that I hope Daniel Littlefield will touch on, which is the current issue of freed slaves who generally were a class of citizens, described as Freedmen; and I mean citizens, they were full citizens in the Seminole Nation, until recently. There were two bands that participated fully in the Seminole Nation until very recently, and then in July in the year 2000, there was a tribal vote and they were excluded from further participation in the Seminole Nation. Which raises a couple of questions -- it raises two issues that I think are important for people to talk about, (one) the tribal right, which tribes have fought for since the beginning of contact, to determine who is their membership, (two) the civil and human rights of the Freedmen, and to bring together these very different issues -- they are sort of at a juncture, and I think that we are going to see these issues arise more often.

And finally, I am not a scholar of this issue, I think this is an issue we need to talk about, and that is why I got scholars to talk about this issue -- because I react emotionally, rather than intellectually. One of the things that struck me in going to the South--the last NCAI Congress was in Myrtle Beach --was that I saw people who appeared to be African-American, who I could absolutely look at and say "that person is Creek, or that person is Cherokee. "And, I saw three or four people like that, and I thought that the whole area of family connections between African Americans and Native Americans was very interesting and we should have a dialogue about it.

Anyway, that is where we are, and that is what got us here. I have sort of abused the prerogative of the moderator, I am sounding too much like a retired MIT professor (laughter) so I am going to start with Willard Johnson.

Willard had a very distinguished career at MIT. But, I have known Willard in another capacity. His wife, Vivian, and I were both on the Board, in the sixties and seventies, of an organization called Rainbow Television, and, just to show you what we thought when we were young, we thought that we were going to change the perception of minorities in this country -- through television! And so, we had our own television group and went to Hollywood, and you can tell how well we did, because you never heard of it! (laughter)

Willard Johnson was very involved in the anti-apartheid movement. He was one of the authors of some books, published by the Ford Foundation that laid the basis and determined what ultimately became the reconciliation agreement that brought South Africa to democracy. He also started the Kansas Institute of African-American and Native-American Family History (the KIAANAFH.) And so, with that I will let him begin.

Dr. Willard R. Johnson: Thank you Chief Mankiller. I am very honored by your introduction. I should make sure you introduce me to whatever program in which I may participate. Thank you so very much.

The first question that we have to think about, that you see on the little program hand-out, was: "what is this relationship historically? "And, because I am not a scholar on this, I will speak more from my experience as an African-American and through the Kansas Institute's work with families, to say that I will make three points -- The first point I would like to talk about is kinship -- in the sense of the relationship being one of kinfolk. The second point, which I will come back to, has to do with a relationship of

slavery. Those two interact, but with Native-Americans they interacted somewhat differently than they did with white Americans. Somewhat! And, the third point has to do with "comrades in arms. " There are a number of ways in which Blacks and Indians had collaborated and in some cases, have been in conflict with each other. So-- kinship, slavery, and comrades in arms.

On the kinship side, it's a question of a memory that is very, very widespread, and sometimes clear, among African-American families. I would say that, by far, the majority of African American families I know, or that I have come into contact with and have worked with, claim to have an Indian connection. A majority, by far. Some scholars have argued that maybe up to two-thirds, or even three-quarters of black Americans have some Native blood tie. I wouldn't go that far. But, I say that the memory is clear in some cases, fuzzy in others. You have some very noted cases--Tiger Woods, who has most recently brought the issue of a complex background for African-Americans into sharper focus; Della Reese, Jesse Jackson, Alice Walker (a close personal friend of Chief Mankiller and a person with Cherokee ties), are others. Those are very noted cases, and no doubt those are documented cases.

We often came across families that could remember the tie, and insist on it, but it was a fuzzy memory when it came to documentation. And often, we would get the story from families in the South and Mid-West-- "Oh yes, we have an Indian tie--it was Blackfoot" Well, it was not Blackfoot, you know; that tribe was far away in Montana and so forth, far from where blacks were. So, we just took that to mean that there was some kind of Indian connection, and they didn't really know what it was!

That is the clearer side of the memory, actually. The foggy side, and often even close to amnesia side of it, was that this connection also involved slavery. In my own family, we had been told stories about my great great grandfather, as a Cherokee. And only much later did I find that he had Cherokee rights of citizenship as a Freedman. It doesn't mean that he could not have had blood ties! But, I doubt it because he never claimed to. And, it was much easier to get whatever rights there were through blood ties, than simply from Freedman ties.

But, we also have a very famous case of Dr. John Hope Franklin, one of our most imminent American historians, whose great great grandfather was in fact married to a Choctaw. His family had every right to be on the rolls of the Choctaw by blood ties. But, they are not there. You go and look at the record--they are only on the Freedman roll. He tells the story of how that came to be.

But, very few African-Americans remember that the connections came through slavery with the Indians, that they were slaves of Indians. And, this is an important dimension of the relationship.

The final aspect of what was the relationship-- and I will come back to the other questions about "what are the interests involved and what is at stake?" and the question "where is all of this headed?"-- was the dimension of "comrade in arms. " We have two important experiences about this in the work of my Institute (well, one of them is more of a personal concern.) The first comes directly from the Institute's program--what I call "The Great Escape" of Creeks (mostly, but also lots of Shawnee, Seminoles and some Cherokee were involved) in fleeing from Confederacy controlled Indian Territory into Kansas. They were referred to in the history texts as "the Loyal Indians. " Hundreds and hundreds of Blacks joined them and, I am led to believe that was because word got out that, in fact, a promise had been made that if they stuck together and made it to Kansas, that would end slavery among them. And, as far as I can see, through the record, and we can debate it, that was a promise made and a promise kept. And, it wasn't simply the imposition in the treaty negotiations in 1866 that put citizenship rights into the books. There was also the earlier episode with the Seminoles, the rise of the Seminole nation in Florida as a comrade in arms collaboration

between people who had escaped from the U. S. --Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas--into what was not the U. S. namely Florida. They were mostly Creeks, but included lots and lots of Africans. And, the rise of that tribe--you can't say that there was NO Seminole identity at all, separate and apart from the Blacks, but--their rise and survival, and their later history, was intimately connected. It is a story of an intimate "comrade in arms" relationship between those two peoples! So, we were very touched, very deeply troubled, deeply, by this most recent move among the Seminoles of Oklahoma to expel the two Freedman bands.

So, it is a memory of kinship, fuzzy and clear, and it’s a fact of slavery, but it's also a fact of (having been) comrades in arms, that is a very important part of the story of the survival, in some cases, of Indian culture, as well as the origin of the only reparations, actually, Blacks have gotten in terms of land. (The "forty acres and a mule..." never came from the Federal Government. The only forty acres blacks ever got came from the Indians.)

Dr. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr.: I formulated some more general kinds of statements about the first question, and I was looking at the nature of the relationship between African Americans and American Indians in the long scope of history and I came up with five generalized points that I would like to make and than we can pursue these later in the "question and answer" if you want that in more detail.

The first thing I would point out is that this relationship is longstanding. As the historical record suggests, from the first contact with Spanish in the western hemisphere there was contact between African-Americans and American Indian people. It became a factor, that relation, became a factor in tribal politics and international relations and intertribal relations as early as the eighteenth century. And from that point on to the present, it has remained an issue in American Indian affairs.

Secondly, I would say that that relationship was shaped by the characteristics of slavery as it was practiced by individual tribes. I was asked by the Smithsonian Institution to write a chapter for the last volume of the Handbook on American Indians that it is putting together, on African-Indian relations, and I refused to do that because I didn't think it could be done in an overall essay, it needs to be done on a tribal basis. Because the practice of slavery varied widely among the tribes in the Southeast, from something that approximated chattel slavery among some of the Cherokees, Choctaws and Chickasaws to a kind of loose coalition that existed in the Seminole and Creek Nations. Also, as Willard mentioned, there was a military alliance that existed for many decades between the Seminoles and African people, people of African descent, in Florida, before removal to the West, and the military officials in Florida who were fighting that war determined early that it was not an Indian war but "a Negro war," in their words.

The relationship among those five tribes was legalized in the treaty in 1866 and then again in the agreement that the tribes came to with the Dawes Commission. And in enrolling the tribes for allotments, the Dawes Commission made a roll of the Freedmen members of all of those tribes. The treaties required that the tribes adopt their former slaves and free blacks as members of the Nations. The Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles adopted theirs immediately, the Chickasaws never did, and the Choctaws did reluctantly in 1885. And those processes of adoptions under the treaties in late 1866 put a particular slant on the day to day lifestyle of people of African descent within those tribal nations.

How all the freedmen fared under the tribal governments varied widely. As Willard has indicated, the Seminoles created two tribal bands for the Freedmen. They had equal representation in the National Council along with

the twelve Seminole bands. In the Creek nation there were three tribal towns created for the former slaves and free blacks, they had one representative in the House of Kings and then one representative in the house of Warriors, the lower house of the National Council, plus another member of the National Council for every 200 people in the tribal towns. There was less representation in the Cherokee Nation because the Cherokees elected their members of the National Council at large from the legislative district. So the difference in political power that was wielded within the tribes by Freedmen members varied considerably. In the Chickasaw Nation they had no rights whatsoever, legal, civil, educational. In the Choctaw Nation (they had) very little participation in tribal governmental affairs after adoption in 1885.

The relationship between people of African descent and the tribal nations in the twentieth century has been marked by the racism that has informed our society in the twentieth century. The federal government built into its structures in Oklahoma, when the tribes were dissolved, a racial factor. The legislature in Oklahoma declared Indians white by law and then of course the first two bills passed by the state legislature in Oklahoma, (were) Jim Crow bills, that segregated people of African descent. This meant that tribal Freedmen who were admitted under the treaty of 1866 fell under the segregation laws. So the two groups were on a different track throughout the 20th century and even here today, I think, we have been hearing the results of that.

Chief Mankiller: Thank you Daniel. Daniel Littlefield wrote a number of very important books on the subject and we hope to post on the NCAI website, after the conference, his suggested readings and films that you can see.

I would like to turn next to Dr. David Wilkins-- he is a Lumbee, and an authority on federal recognition processes. He is an Associate Professor of Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, a political scientist, and a specialist on the Lumbee Nation. And most of you know the Lumbees had been trying to get federal recognition for a very long time. I don't think I am one of those people that sees racism in everything that goes on in this country--I try to have a good mind about that, and be open-- but I believe that to some extent that part of their battle, their struggle to receive federal recognition, has to do with the fact that a lot of the Lumbee people are tribal people who intermarried with African Americans and other people, so this has made their struggle more difficult.

Dr. David Wilkins: Thank you Wilma. It is my pleasure to be on this august panel, really, and to see the left side of the room fill up! [laughter]--it is nice to have some folks on the left, and to have them be young people makes it all the better-- to discuss this long ignored, really stealth subject, if you will--the relation between African-Americans and American Indians. I didn't feel too bad when I heard that my name had been left off the program, when I discovered that some of the conference doings were taking place in an auditorium named for Roy Wilkins, no relation, but, he was a powerful and very important African American civil rights leader. I don't know whether it was a coincidence, or fate, or what. Either way, I think it is most appropriate that we are talking about Black and Indian relations, and that there are now two Wilkins on the formal agenda, one a noted civil rights leader, and the other a relatively unknown Lumbee professor.

In response to the first question, and the others as well, I can only speak from my own Nation's perspective, the Lumbee, and then only from an indirect impressionistic perspective, because I am no scholar on this field. My area is federal Indian policy and law and tribal government, and I have

only come to the subject indirectly as I have done my research on my tribe's quest for recognition.

But, here is where I think my tribe's historical relationship with African Americans, while not exactly comparable with the other Eastern tribes, can nevertheless teach us something about the larger dynamics of Black and Indian relations. And, it is this: one of the primary reasons the Lumbees have been denied federal recognition is that we are said, very quietly these days, to exhibit too much of an ad-mixture of non-Indian racial characteristics, with an emphasis being laced almost exclusively on our perceived, and real, mixtures with African-Americans. This is interesting, since the documentary and oral evidence of my people points to the Lumbees having intermarried actually more with whites than with African-Americans. But, as Wilma noted in her comments, Indian white intermarriage or "hanky-panky," if you will, has been acceptable historically while Indian black involvement, or "hanky-panky," was deemed to dilute or to corrupt the tribe's cultural and genetic identity. This is a perverse form of racism, folks, and I think we can all agree upon that!

I must say that this is an extremely touchy subject among the Lumbee as well as in other North and South Carolina and Virginia tribes and those in other Mid-Atlantic and Eastern states. Now, Oklahoma is a whole different world and we have to talk to Dr. Littlefield about that. No one, to my knowledge, has engaged in any sort of social scientific study about the Lumbee or other non-recognized mid-Atlantic tribes to ascertain, if it is even possible, what the actual level of Indian-black interaction has been across time. People just make these grand statements without ever having the research to support it.

All we have, in fact, are dangerous guesstimates of some "Anthros" and historians who tend to lump the Lumbee and other tribes into a “tri-racial-isolate” category. That's the major concept that filtered throughout the Southeast. I don't know if (that applies) in southern Oklahoma or not. How weird! People make generalized and unsubstantiated statements like: "the Lumbee have a long history of intermarrying with people of European and African origin. "How many tribes, I wonder, have not had a history of intermarrying with other people, regardless of race, ethnicity or national origin. The Southwest-- my wife is Navajo — is a tri-racial isolate of Spanish, Indian and white. Here in the Great Lakes -- French, English and Indian. And, you can mix that up depending on what region of the country you are in. Neither of these allegedly scholarly observations did the Lumbee or other quasi-recognized tribes much good, and they are not very good social science either, since they rarely are backed by empirical data. Such categorical statements tend rather to reinforce existing stereotypes about the Lumbee and other small eastern tribes who always struggled in a legal wonderland, as Indian people denied recognition as such because of existing federal and state policies that historically only recognized two races, black or white, or dealt only with certain tribes, like the Cherokee in North Carolina, because of their territorial location, military capability, and treaty position.

In short, the nature of the connection is that of a complicated beast, although it varies from tribe to tribe, region to region and people to people. Thank you.

Chief Mankiller: Thank you. I think I will go now to Dr. Patrick Minges. My Goodness, everybody is a "Dr. " except me! OK. He is a religious historian, the Director of Publications of the Human Rights Watch, a specialist on the Keetoowah Society and on Cherokee history.

Dr. Patrick Minges: I guess I am kind of lucky to be up here, but one reason why I am up here is that I was reading a book [by Chief Mankiller] called "The Chief and Her People" and as I was going through this book, it talked about Africans on the "Trail of Tears. " This peaked my interest, and so I went on to research it, and spent about ten years on that. One of the places where I ended up was called "The Slave Narratives. "In the late 1930s, as part of the [U. S. Federal Government's] Works Project Administration, they sent researchers to interview people who were formerly slaves, and a certain number of these ex-slaves came from what was called "Indian Territory. "As I got to studying these narratives, it opened a whole new world for me, and if I may, I would like to read sections from these Slave Narratives. It is going to be in the vernacular language, from the 19th century, so I'm asking you to forgive me on this.

The first is from Jane Gillespie, from the Arkansas rights project:

"My grandparents were Gillespie...my grandmother was an Indian woman. She was sold off the reservation, her and her daughter. The daughter was about twelve years old and big enough to wait tables. Both of them were full-blooded Cherokee Indians. My grandma married a slave, and when she grows up, my mother married a slave. But, my mother's parents were both Indians. And one of my parents from my father's side was white. So, you see I am about three-fourths of something else. But, when they were stolen, they were made slaves. And that's what I am. "

Here is another person, Richard Franklin, from the Oklahoma Writers Project:

"I was born into the Creek Nation, March first, 1856. My mother was named Seymour Franklin. She was one-forth Creek Indian, and was married to a Negro slave, Fred Franklin, who was the slave of James Yargee of the Creek Nation. I am one-eighth Creek Indian, and seven-eighths Negro. My father was born in the Creek Nation and he, with nine other slaves, worked on the farm of Yargee in the Creek Nation until 1867, when the Civil War was over. "

And, here is that of Patricia Harriman, taken by the Oklahoma Writers Project.

"My mother had always been Mistress Judy Taylor. She was the only mother my mama ever had. Likely, she is the only one she remembers, for her own mother died when she was three years old. She was raised by the Indians and could talk Cherokee. My brother Louis married a full-blooded Indian woman and they got lots of Indian children on their farm in the old Cherokee country around Caney Creek. He is just like an Indian, he has been with them so much. He talks the Cherokee language, and he don't even know that he is Negro. "

This last one is from Robert Soloman, another person from Arkansas.

"My mother (and once, again, remember these are slaves, and this story is from the slave narratives) was a pure-blood Indian. She was born near that Lookout Mountain in Tennessee, on a river in a log hut. They lives in houses, and her father was the Indian Chief. His name was Red Bird. They belonged to the Choctaw tribe. The white people was trying to drive them out, in uprising with the whites, and all my mother's folks were killed, but her. The white folks took her and gave her to Dr. Durney (?) She was big enough to know there was fighting and was trying to drive them out. Her mother's name was Marthy. She remembers they used to have Green Corn Dances. They cooked all their stuff together in a big pot, green corn, butter beans and rabbit and any other animal they killed. And they all eat, and they have a big dance around the pot and they call it the Green Corn Dance. "

I guess the point I am trying to make is that we have these ideas of this discrete group of "Indians," as you have the idea of "Africans," and there is the idea that Indians owned Africans. There is not the idea, that even into the nineteenth century, there were Native Americans who were enslaved, who lived their lives in these “slave communities. ” And one of the

things that I'm thinking of doing with these narratives is to (help us) realize the complex nature of these people that we call “Freedmen,” and with all its associations. I'm working on this, and I am not here to plug the website, but I have put up about a hundred and fifty of these on a website and it is searchable, and you can go to it and read them. I think that they are really important because they teach not only about what these “slaves’” lives were like, but what life was like in general in the Indian Territory in the nineteenth century. I think it is a very very valuable asset.

Chief Mankiller: what is the site?

Dr. Minges: The site is http://www. columbia. edu/~pm47/afram. And if you want to look for it by using keywords, use "aframerindian exslave narrative". If you search for that you will be able to find it. Once again, I think they are a very important resource

Chief Mankiller: Thank you, that was very moving. We go now to Ms Deborah Tucker, whom I met when Willard Johnson brought her to my home.

I probably should make another comment about Willard. What I found absolutely fascinating was that Willard found that there was a Lowrey in his background, a Cherokee family named Lowrey, through the research of his Institute. He came to Eastern Oklahoma, and not only did he find the Lowrey family in the [Freedmen] records, but there was a Lowrey community, and a Lowrey school that had a direct connection to his family. He is helping people involve family connections.

Anyway, Debbie came with him. She is the director of Community Outreach and Cultural Activities at the Adamany Library of Wayne State University, and is a Board Member of the KIAANAFH. She is a lecturer on cultural affinities and historic patterns of miscegenation between African American and Native American people. She is interested in this issue and has done a lot of research on it, so with that I will pass it on to her.

Ms. Deborah Tucker: Thank you. Good afternoon! When I was reviewing the tons of material that I have collected over the past twenty years or so, it was really overwhelming to find materials that weren't (just) about Blacks, and Blacks and Indians, as a mixture, but materials about blacks and slavery, materials about Native Americans and the government, in serious journals. But, yet all of them had some spot where they talked about the connection between the two groups. And it really reminded me that this is a perpetual parallel. Both groups had experienced forced removal, the Blacks from Africa, from their continent, and both had been enslaved by the settlers, early on. The Indian experienced social disorder, colonialism and the removal for more than five hundred years, while Blacks had endured (this) more than four hundred years. Both groups were called savages. Both groups were forced into a three-way racially and culturally denigrating situation, thereby forcing immense and intense cultural interaction, in order that the European might take the Red man's land, and used the Black man's labor to work that land.

Both groups had strong oral traditions for record keeping purposes, family ancestry, and for instructional purposes-- storytelling traditions that both entertain and inform, as well as oral traditions for the development of helping-, listening- skills (something we probably have forgotten a lot, of late) and

Both groups have powerful cultural traditions with a feeling for death and birth, very similarly. A lot of customs are shared. Both groups have strong spiritual traditions, with rituals and ceremonies that are an integral

part of daily life. Indians feel the "Great Spirit" as a spiritual theme, while Blacks' survival of slavery was really based around the church. The holy men, the Shaman, have the positions of highest esteem within the tribe. And they are the link between the people and the spirits. And most of them, Black and Indian, had healing powers and clairvoyant powers.

The musical component is a strong point in both groups' ceremonies. When the drum was taken away from the Black slaves, they resorted to tapping out their messages, and thereby developed tap dancing. Dance was a major part of the ceremonies and cultural expression in both groups.

Both the Red and the Black cultures include medicine men and use of natural medicinal herbs. That is a strong tradition among the enslaved Africans as well as among the indigenous people. Slaves transferred their medical skills into home-remedies based on North-American plants and herbs.

Both groups insisted on holding on to the culture and customs, resisting the white men's ways. The two groups were both forced to collaborate and practice "conflict resolution" before this was a buzz word. However, both had tribes amongst them who believed that warfare was a noble pursuit.

The parallels are just so many, I could go on and on, but an interesting fact that I think a lot of people are not aware of is that both groups were often educated together, as Wilma mentioned. At the Hampton Institute, in Virginia, between 1883 and 1902, over 1388 Indians from 55 different tribes attended the black school in Hampton Virginia.

M**an comments from the audience**: First, (regarding how people) view Africans mixed with Natives -- one of the reasons that Africans sort of deny that, is that "black" is a cultural mind set, not necessarily a group from the stand point of genetics. Oft-times as Dr. Minges pointed out, if someone steps outside of the parameters (of that mind set) they often are denying that they were black, or of that culture.

There was a book published in the 1920s by H. R. Blackmun, called Blacks on the _____(?) which basically dealt with African American service in the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. As the book pointed out, there is a diversity of Native American viewpoints on African soldiers that were allowed into the tribes, to serve on the Tribal War Council. Some were punished, and had their ears and nose cut off.

In fact, Ivan Van Sertima, in his book called "They Came Before Columbus" said that Africans...that Christopher Columbus himself had seen Africans either trading with Native peoples or at war with these peoples. There was one particular word [Guanin – gold from West Africa]...there were lots of [African?] things that were used throughout the Americas in trade.

Race has also played a powerful role in the Salem Witch Trials. The woman who was accused, and said to be an African (Tituba), actually turned out to be a Native American, and it wasn't until the 1900s that that fact changed her status.

The last point to talk about-- I feel that there is much that...there is still far to go. (we) have to set a standard. I was in a (project?) and working with schools, and right now, the view of blacks is based on "one drop" in the context of North America, but not in Central and South America. It never occurred to them to call them all "black" And there are tons of people (there) with this mark on them.

And, in Africa, they think that all African Americans are mixed. If you get a tattoo and the black shows on the skin, you get called "colored. "

And, in terms of warfare, the Caribs, for many years came and persecuted the Arawaks and Seminoles. Had it not been for their (black?) support they would have been (eliminated?)

Chief Mankiller: Does anyone want to respond to that comment, in general?. .

Dr. Johnson: I will just make a brief comment. There is no question but what the issue of claiming Indian connections among Blacks has been controversial in several ways. But one way, certainly, has been whether this was in an effort to get away from Africa. I'm an Africanist so I thought I could take on this quest, and the jury is still out, you know! There are those who think that in the U. S. , now, finally, there may be something positive from the "one drop" (of African blood) basis of our definition. They are thinking in of terms of political identity; if all those who have one drop were to act as if they have one cause, they could be very powerful. So they don't want to lose that possibility. And, as we are approaching the beginning of a serious grappling with the issue of reparations, that will become even more important. It can, obviously, once that happens, and I think it is happening, cut the other way as well. That is to say, IF it looks like there is finally going to be some kind of just recompense for the hundreds of years of alienation and degradation, who is going to benefit? and how? Well, part of that is perhaps what is driving the Seminole vote, as they look at mineral rights and Judgment Trust Fund allocations, so it could very well be that as you get closer to these definitions really being meaningful, there will be more debate and controversy, and animosity. But, I think it has been a healthy process of assessment, anyway, for people to think about what really is the basis of this challenged identity that we have confronted. The recent book that you may have seen, called "One Drop" what a reviewer called "America's worst idea" is a very good book; it deals with Black, Indian and White identity issues, and I think, basically, the “one drop” idea it is a bad idea. But, I have found so far that there are lots of Blacks who feel more free to embrace Africa as a choice, which is what I would like to see people do, when they HAVE a choice, and come to really understand what are the facts, you know, of who we are, really. I find this generation, from our work in the Kansas Institute. the KIAANAFH, for the most part-- people now really want to know who they are and that's why you find genealogy driving it, that's why you find so many people doing family histories. The National Council of Negro Women started a program for family reunions, and within the first decade they had more than 6 million people got involved in that program. It is the growth industry.

There are advantages I think, to both Blacks and to Indians in this. Blacks spend now 36 billion dollars a year in tourism. Ethno-tourism is the growth industry within that (sector) as they begin to discover who they are, how they relate. Blacks have been everywhere, and connect with everybody and every part of this country's experience, and that is increasingly appreciated to be true for the connection with Indians. And so, we will see that element of our quest also have tangible economic and political meaning. So, I think it is as complex as you imply.

Chief Mankiller: Does anyone else have a question to ask?

A woman in the audience: Good afternoon. First, I want to thank you for this panel. It is very interesting, and I am really learning from this. My name is Ginny Harris [?] and I am a member of the Oneida [?] Nation. My question to you is, as with Dr. Wilkins, have some of you started in colleges to try to get "Indian Studies" and if so, or if not, can you begin to collaborate, and involve the scholars with the communities in that work?

Dr. Minges: There is a book that is going to be published by Nebraska University Press called "Confronting the Color Line"-- it has a sophisticated sub-title that I don't remember, but it is talking about looking at African and Native American relations in a multi-disciplinary perspective. It should be out within the next year. I think that is the new addition to the foundation established by persons such as Daniel Littlefield. The point that you are making, I think, is the most important thing. I think we have had a tendency to rely on scholars perhaps too much and they have too prominent an influence in our community. But the real dialogue is still to go on in the community, people need to talk to each other.

I have to give a word of praise to Chief Mankiller. This is a very very difficult situation to discuss, a very controversial topic, a lot of people get upset about it. Now, a lot of African Americans don't want to talk about this too, and I speak from my background as a religious historian. The reality is that the Black Baptist Church and perhaps the black church as we know it, was formed in these multi-racial communities and it was formed in a community in which, at one point in South Carolina, a third of the slaves were Native Americans. People don't talk about this, people don't know about this. But, with respect to the Black Baptist Church-- two of the founders were Aframerindians-- David George spent many years in the Natchez and the Creek Nations, and another founder, Henry Francis, had no known African ancestry altogether, but his parents were slaves!. So it is a controversial topic, and for Chief Mankiller to have us up here to talk about this -- and I think that this dialogue -- this is the second conference I have attended this year -- it is important that we have these things. The real discussion, needs to go on in this community, for the real work to go on, for the real bridge building , and where the real kind of movement, can begin.

Chief Mankiller: This is an important question about research, now that we opened the dialogue, where do we begin to get the information. Does somebody else want to address that?.

Dr. Littlefield:

I'd like to say something about that. I'd like to respond directly to you. I would say probably that every third or forth email question I get, at my office at the Native American Press Archives, has to be with the very subject we have been talking about. And it is from students all over the country and elsewhere in the world. One of the difficulties doing what you are suggesting is that we have a habit in this country of leaving the history writing to academic scholars like me. I am in total agreement that the discussion of these issues has to begin in the local tribal communities. It is a difficult process because the mainstream American history has in many ways limited the level of dialogue that people can have. It has created all kinds of difficulties for that, but what we have to remember is that for this long cultural association, that acculturation went both ways. It was not just Indian to African, (but also) African to Indian.

I would like to follow up on what Patrick Minges says. If you look at the history of Christianity in these Five Civilized Tribes that I talked about earlier, most of the time the missionaries went after the slave population first because if they were acquired from the states, they were English speaking and then they became bilingual very quickly and therefore became instruments of carrying Christianity into the local native communities. As for the history of Christianity in Northeastern Oklahoma, I know, I grew up in Northeast Oklahoma and I know how important that Church is to tribal people of that state-- the very churches that they go to, in many ways, were shaped by African instruments, that is, by people who were facile

with the language. You know the history of translation in those tribes. Many times, with the Seminole and Creek Nations, particularly, the interpreters were Africans because the folk history tells us that the Seminoles and Creeks didn't trust the white interpreter. They preferred the Africans. And so many of those relationships like that cut right to the very heart of defining these tribal groups as they are today, and come out of those historical connections. And I would much prefer that a Cherokee write the history of the Cherokee Freedmen, than having done it by myself. {Willard adds: Thank God you did it though.]

Chief Mankiller: David, did you want to comment?

Dr. Wilkins: Yes, just a couple of points-- Wilma, in her opening comments spoke of "colonialism" and I think first of all, especially for young people and also for middle aged fogies, and some of the older ones that I saw in the audience out here -- the first thing we have to acknowledge is that racism is the ideology of colonialism. And until we acknowledge that and tackle that and throw off that yoke-- we had better take care of that first, you see. Then we can free our mind, free our spirit, and then we can look at ourselves as individuals, especially the young people that are here.

Because we hear all this talk about ourselves as sovereign nations. Well, first of all, you are a sovereign individual, huh?. Your sovereignty begins with you. And so, if you start with that notion "I am a sovereign person" -- I heard Phillip Deere mention this at a conference back in 1975 - it was the shortest speech I had heard, and one of the most powerful ones. He said: "I am a sovereign man!" And then he sat down. It just hit me like a ton of bricks, see, because I had been thinking about all these groups and all this collective stuff, but it starts with each individual. Because, if we acknowledge that we are sovereign individuals, then we are going to take responsibility and assume self determination, to find out who we are?

Do your family genealogy first because that begins to broaden the connections, because some of us are NOT getting the story handed down by our parents and grandparents! A lot of us come from homes that aren't as tight as they once were. So as individuals we have to take the first step ourselves and do that basic genealogy and see where those connections lead you. You want to rely on academics only when you have to, you see! Trust your own instincts and trust your own sense of identity and call upon people in your immediate family and on those in your extended family and begin to make these connections.

Ms. Tucker: I just wanted to say-- and first of all, I am not a doctor, not yet!-- but this is how I got started, doing my family genealogy. I kind of knew of the Native American connection on my mother's side and found out by asking my grandmother one question -- "were did my Dad get his red hair from? To this day, I really don't know what nation my family was. In a way, that is kind of good, because it is kind of all encompassing. But start with yourself and go from there. Actually, because of my research now I can't get back to my family genealogy, this has kind of taken over. But, I will come back to it.

Chief Mankiller: Willard, do you want to come back on the research question?

Dr. Johnson: Yes, drawing on my experience again in the Kansas Institute. What we have found is that often black families have a hard time doing this research because of "the slavery wall," the records sort of stop for us,

names are not given, there are just numbers, on the records of the slave owner. So we found a lot of Black families can break through that wall when they find the Indian connection in their background, because often the records, in fact, are more complete there, such records as there may be--are more complete.

And one of the issues that we are trying to raise and we hope that the native nations will help us, is to insist that all of the records that exist, in Fort Worth (Texas)particularly, but scattered throughout the archives, get copied on microfilm and spread to each of the regional offices so that we can pursue this kind of research without having to go to Fort Worth, or to Washington. Some of the records are not in Washington, they are only at Fort Worth. Some of the military records are only in Kansas City. And, it takes political pressure on the Congress to allocate the funds needed to duplicate them and make them available. That is beginning to happen for certain kinds of issues and it is clear that there is a responsiveness when the pressure is put. But for a lot of Black families, their ability to get into the slavery period and beyond it, is going to be helped a lot by being able to trace through the Indian rolls.

Chief Mankiller: Alan Parker

Mr. Alan Parker (from Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute at Evergreen):Thank you Wilma, for bringing this panel to NCAI. I think it is terribly important. And it is important to take this proposal, and carry it forward. It is long overdue.

I wanted to add a little bit. I am an individual who grew up on one of the western reservations, in Northern Montana [ed. note: the Rocky Boys Reservation] and we were isolated physically, socially and culturally. We never saw an African American, we never saw anybody who varied from the norm of that isolated community. So, I think part of this colonial mentality that David mentioned, which I think is a very important point that he made, that you have to understand the context of it. If we were isolated in areas where most of the reservations in the West are, and you are a white Indian, (you) buy into that white racism mentality--- So, that's why we have, I think, this unspoken racism that exists in Indian country, where it is considered more acceptable to be a mixture of white and Indian races, and it is not acceptable, in some ways, to be any other mixture, especially with African Americans. But, that's because you are dealing with populations that grew up in isolation, and I think that situation is certainly changing today. Then, I think we will no loner have that influence of inherent racism.

There is another consideration, which is that if you grew up in a tribal community, the dominant fact is tribal identity, as we grow into adulthood and we engage ourselves in fighting for human rights, the over-riding political fact is political sovereignty, self determination. And, as young people take on this struggle, they learn that we Native American, Indians Nation people have to preserve that. That is an imperative! If we don't preserve the fact of tribal sovereignty, tribal unity, then how are we going to preserve our ability to remain as a culturally distinct people? So that imperative is not often understood in the African American community. That is not a criticism, that is the reality. But, some of those things, we need to bring out into the front line, and look at them from different perspectives.

Personally, I really appreciate your bringing this here. I think that as you look into the future, you know, where we sit here today and find that a great national questions is, who is going to be, you know, the next President, or whatever direction that goes--well I have a lot to say-- all of

our lives, I think, are going to get a lot worse, for us people of color, in this society. So, as that happens, we need to find common bonds and to find a way of working together.

Mankiller: Does anybody want to respond to his comment? Well, I will -- you are not supposed to do that as the moderator-- but I think you are absolutely right. I think that having worked in both communities-- I have served on the Board for the South African Free Elections Fund, but I don't think we ever had a dialogue about the differences in what we are struggling for, and to try to get each other to understand that better. You are absolutely correct.

Dr. Littlefield: One thing, in relation to the Seminole issue that was raised earlier, and I hope that any Seminole here will correct me if I am historically inaccurate here, but the vote that was taken this summer really seems to me, as an observer, represents a coalition of two issues. One was in 1991, a vote by the Tribal Council to bypass the Bureau of Indian Affairs in approving Constitutional changes, and that, of course, was slapped down by the BIA. And, that process continues, a movement continues in the National Council. And also in the wake of the award by the Indian Claims Commission, there was a debate about how that was going to be shared-- and, of course, they were sued and cross sued-- with the Freedmen members of the Seminole Nation.

Those two issues came together. If you look at the numbers, the numbers broke down on all three of those critical votes around 40% versus 60%. And, since the vote, the National Council has voted to put those amendments into effect immediately, and not wait for the BIA approval. Of course, tribal administrators see a problem with that, because they are in violation, basically, of their own Constitution.

So, they are really in a difficult place with this issue. But, it is an issue of sovereignty. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling among some people that I talked to, about the moral obligation to the two tribal bands that participated in the tribal government since 1867, down to this summer! So, it is a difficult issue.

Chief Mankiller: I think that issue alone is worth a discussion in itself. Can we deal with it very calmly, just look at it with an historical perspective!

Mr. Ray Wahnitiio Cook (in the audience): I want to commend you for kind of opening up this can of worms. No doubt, what we are really talking about is-- you are really biting into the heart of the sovereignty issue, and the ability of the tribes to-- tribes that were at one time,(subject to? had the) the worse ...(record ?)(attack on?) ever to whatever was identified as Indian, traditionally. But, now the younger generation, Wilma, you are still part of that, they have brought the passion back to tribal governance, and try to refocus, in fact, on what ARE these groups.

So, that was one of the issues here, and it is the idea of people of color, you know, us working together. Yea! you know, my personal view is that I have more in common with The Nation of Islam, and the right to life people, and what I try to do! when I go out there, heh, you know, these folks are really hot(?), and I so I am working from there, and (that is)part of my ability to work there was well as any where else-- but getting tribes to gather back those traditions that were terminated or assimilated, it goes back to, like, the adoption ceremonies, because what we are talking about are blacks who, and Indians, who came together at one period of time.

And, on my reservation, I am Akwesasne(?) Lenape (?)/ Mohawk and my great great great grandfather was black! He was caught in a raiding party from the British, and was a slave, back when he was twelve years old, ..., and he became an interpreter of the (_____?) the tribe, and a representative from my tribe to New York State, in fact.

Now, we have some black Indian people (who have) married, you know, Jamaican families and so forth, coming back to the Rez and thinking that they can start a life together, and the dissimilarities- they are so dissimilar (?)-- they are being chased off, called "nigger" and so forth, they go back to the urban areas.

But the funny thing is, that whether it is Indian, or mixed marriages, if you bring that city culture into the reservations, forget it, it is not going to work. Once you are citified, you are going to have a hell of a time getting back into the reservation. Those are the issues!

So, whether you are adopting a Navajo from Four Corners area, or adopting a Navajo by mixed marriage, what is that cultural and political process that is going to be put into place, to make that OK again? It has been a hundred or so years since we have done that this in our community. Again, the adoption ceremony. We have to bring back that tradition, mixed with the governance, and that's really a question among the(for the?) folks up here (on the panel?) now that we have opened up Pandora's Box, and with these young people here, this is what it is all about, maybe even after them. How can we get back to the passion, after being brutally raped, beaten, killed, stole from, and so on, and bring back the passion for (our)governing system, and our culture, so that it is OK once again to rejuvenate our genetic base with other people, along with the social and spiritual (values??)

Dr. Wilkins: I just what to comment on that. Some recent research done by some Indian sociologists, and when I first read their figures I was just shocked, and it was actually reprinted in Clinton's Race Initiatives, that "X-File Report" --that produced some of that data, although I don't know whatever happened with it--the statistic was in terms of out- marriage of the various ethnic groups in the country --and the Blacks didn't marry that much to non-Blacks. Whites don't get married that much to others. But, the out-marriage rate for American Indians was 60 %! and so, if you note-- if that is a fact, I think we see that in evidence in the communities that we are from, I think that's going to cause us..., as Allen and the Chairman has mentioned here, and go back to the original concept that Willard started off with, the notion of kinship. Are we going to find some way to return to that concept in the broadness in what it meant, which originally included adoptions. Or, are we going to have to address this notion as citizenship, and we were talking about this over lunch, how these tribes have this constitutional democracy, and they had different categories of citizenship, or are we going to rely on this archaic concept of membership, and what that concept entails--that you belong to an association, not a nation, see. And I think, until we, in our own minds, get our hands around these three concepts, kinship, citizenship, and membership, and take into consideration the marriage rate among our young folks, and some of these old folks too-- this is all about how we are going to redefine ourselves as nations, because the nation concept will persist, so long as we have reserve lands, you see. But I think we will have to deal with that down the road, and now.

Mr. Gerald Watson, from Audience: My name is Gerald Watson and I live in Albuquerque. I was in a meeting about a month ago, and heard about this workshop today, and I am not a lawyer, or (?) I am just a regular guy. But in

Albuquerque, my wife, Geneva? We have a family owned business. We manufacture beaded and hand crafts, jewelry, and I just started it with my wife, and have run it for about thirteen years, and we finally can market our exhibit through the Pow Wow circuit around the country.

Going back about ten years on the Pow Wow Circuit, I really counted Black Americans I would see, and I really didn't see that many -- really, you could count them on one hand. I guess about five years ago, I began to notice more and more Blacks at the Pow Wows-- largely in search of their Native roots. Many were on a spiritual quest. And, they came from all over the country. Many of them came to Albuquerque not knowing anybody, just showing up, looking to get that spiritual piece that was missing for them. So, what we would do is, we began to talking to folks, sharing meals and sharing resources, and it got so intense, that it was just very clear that there was a spiritual calling. So, what we did was, back in April, we formed an organization called The Black Indian Society--it is a not for profit organization, it is a 501c3, -- our whole mission was education, research, communion, it is really clear that we need to get out in the community, where people are, because of all the things we understand, we have been hearing from the militants (?), people with Natives in their family who don't know how do you connect. I meet people whose mother or father may be Native people, who don't know how to connect with their tribe, how to register. And we decided back in April that we would get something going. So we made our debut at a gathering in April. And the response was really, really strong. In fact, an interesting response that we had not anticipated was that we had a lot of Native folks who were coming to us, who have...who are black Indians, living on the Rez, who were totally disconnected with their Black heritage. And so that was a whole other piece that we began to put discover. We went on down the road, and this past September, at a Chicago Pow Wow, we set up a Black Indian Day, that we felt was grass roots, we did it with chewing gum, but we set up, like, a photo exhibit and that was very well received. We did a viewing all day of the film, an excellent film called Black Indians, hosted by James Earl Jones -- it is an enriching film. It is sixty minutes (long) and we had many people, it was a cold day...This is just a comment. And the comment that this brother here made, about a cultural mind set was very clear, because even though, for many of us, we cannot go back and be directly connected because of the lack of records, it is what is in your minds, what is in your spirit, what is in your heart, that really makes the difference. What we are doing is sharing. I have really enjoyed this session.

Chief Mankiller: (to one of the persons in the audience (Mr. Allen?) since you have already spoken, let me go to this other person. You have to speak loudly because there is the competition from the other session!
Another young person in the audience: I will try to respond. I just want to express my thanks that we have this dialogue. To me it is really exciting, because...my mother is ___?and my father is (Powhatan?) I don't know, I kind of felt alienated from both groups. I felt different from both groups. It makes me feel good that this dialogue is called the relationship between African Americans and Native Americans. I just wanted to express my thanks that this is happening. That is all I can say. Thank you.

Mr. Daryll G. Davis (U. S. Department of Justice, and Law Enforcement Officers Alliance, from the audience): I came to this session, in part, in connection with my new position. I just got assigned to a committee of the Minority Law Enforcement Officers Alliance, policemen, ...it has expert type groups . . branches around the country, there are two black, organizations including ones with a focus on civil rights, there are a couple that are Asian, Latino organizations, so

there is work going on, which would be much like the themes we are discussing today. I need a little help in research on this, this alliance does do this type of analysis. . One of the bi-lingual groups has just started...a survey or study of homicides and suspicious deaths, is there a disparity between these groups and non-minorities? I am trying to research this...I do not know if there is much research on (it?)What I need is some numbers.... I hate to go to the FBI for statistics on this.
Chief Mankiller: Again, we hope to ask people together. . to make lists of(sources) they have used and put together a list of films and research material, and articles, and other materials, and then we will post it on the NCAI website for the people who are interested in these issues, so they can do further research.
Dr. Minges: Could I comment. I have two hats, I have worked on certain aspects of this. I have worked for human rights organizations for about fifteen years. I worked for Amnesty International for about twelve years. And for the last three years I have worked for an organizations called the Human Rights Watch. When I first came to Human Rights Watch, we were working or a report called “Police Brutality in the United States” and I have asked the person who is doing the research, “what percentage of Native Americans figured into the writing of this book?” And I will be honest with you, very little if any. And in twenty-five years, Human Rights Watch, as an organization has published one twenty page book on human rights abuses against Native Americans. From my experience at Amnesty International. As a rule, Amnesty is better about it. In 1992, they published a couple of books, and these books largely dealt with,...they didn't really deal with a lot of issues that Native Americans are facing with respect to human rights. I would be interested in any comments that you have.

I would like to encourage you, if you can, reach out to these organizations, and write them letters, and say “how come you are not dealing with this issue! How come you can talk about human rights in Kosovo, or in Chechnya, but ignore these issues at home?” And, I will tell you why, basically, they are scared. They don’t know anything about this, and they are scared to write about something they don’t know anything about, so that is why it is important for Native Americans in the US to step forward and try to contact these organizations.

You ask about statistics and demographics that don’t really exist, and the only way that they are going to exist is to put a face on who these people are. And, the only way that you can do that is to reach out to these organizations, write them letters, and say “look, we are here! It would be very nice if you would (write about us) once in a awhile”

Chief Mankiller: Let me just reiterate just how important I think what he said is! Because, I am on the board of a couple of organizations that do international work, and about human rights abuses, internationally, and it is staggering to see what goes on in Indian country is ignored, and, people want to go all over the world and deal with human rights abuses there, but they don’t want to deal with them in this country.

Mr. Richard Allen (Researcher for the Cherokee Nation, from the audience): This is just an observation, regarding American Indians, blacks and whites, (who claim it) you know, based on (high cheek bones?) brown hair, you know. Being what I consider a full blood Cherokee, I have had to deal with this over the years, because of tribal …dogs, who come from some other tribe, you know, become Cherokee dogs. Those of us who don’t move away from home and try to stay in the territory that we know as Cherokee country --looking from the outside at that, knowing that I probably have this much White Indian (holding up two fingers very close together) you know my family, well I have never

fond a need to search for those white roots. And, it appears that it is always the mixed bloods, whether they be white, black, or Asian--and Indian, you know, they come looking for the “Indian-ness” in them, and I am not sure what that all entails, what kinds of dimensions that means in terms of the original inhabitants here. I feel that sometimes, they are looking for something, like this gentleman here said, “spirituality,” but we don’t have spirituality to give them!

I have heard so much, over and over again --“well I know I am Cherokee, its right there in my heart” And I am saying, “No! its not!” (laughter in audience) Maybe you think you are, but finding out that you have this much [again holding up two fingers very close together] Cherokee blood doesn't make you Cherokee!

And, I think that’s probably what is going on with the Seminoles, they just voted in an eighth, a cut off at an eighth, in blood quantum.

We find so many of our Cherokee people, who are mixed, who come back to us, not you (nodding at Chief Mankiller) I deal with this at Pine Bluff?, because I worked for Chief Mankiller at one time, we respond to those types of things. And, to us – it is almost ludicrous, that people protest, with this much [holding two fingers up] about one two-thousandths, I think it is now, of Cherokee blood. And, for those of us who were raised in the Cherokee community, if you weren't raised in that community, you don’t really know who you are as a Cherokee.

It almost becomes ludicrous at a point – people will argue that they want to become traditional, they want to become spiritual, and they want me to teach them how to do that? I had an email like that today. I can’t do that. I think it is good that this is being discussed, but I don’t think that it is going to do anything more than provide a genealogy dimension to those particular tribes. That is just an observation.

Mr. Darius Lee Smith (Director of the Native Peoples Initiative, Habitat for Humanity International, from the audience):I want to make a quick observation as a black Navajo. I appreciate this whole forum. I think that it comes down to privilege. I am a privileged black Navajo, because I grew up in an all black community in Denver, nine months of the year, and then every summer I spent on the Navajo Dine Nation. I am Hashk’aahadzohi (which in Navajo means “yucca-fruit-strung-out-in-a-line”) on my mom's side. On my black Father’s side I am considered by Navajos to be a “Nakaic Lizh inic” (meaning black Mexican.) So in terms of a personal experience, every summer I was a "zhini"in Navajo country (slang word for Black person) and I was a Mexican in Denver(laughter.) It was difficult.

One of the things we are talking about too is privilege, because I was --my Grandmother doesn't speak English--and so I understand the Dine’e and so (I am privileged to be able to) have this connection, in terms of the language. And I think that the number one language for Black folk is English.

It was very frustrating to be in Denver, when the President’s Initiative on Race came through Denver, and the Indian Community really got upset, and we talked about why were Indian people left off, and Dr. John Hope Franklin said “I am Indian” But his Indian experience was like this (holding up fingers with virtually no gap between them) so there are different degrees of Indian experience that needs to be played into this.

And so, I think that, it is just important to realize that some of us are privileged to be on the reservation – I look at is as a privilege, and have the Indian experience. But, there are a lot of our Indian people that have been adopted out, and stolen, and those people (need to find ways)-- and there are ways, to connect. I think that one of those ways is through the Tribal Colleges. I wish some of these Tribal Colleges would build dormitories and a lot of our urban Indians could go back to their communities and

reconnect. I think that is important, in terms of building this alliance. We need to start doing bridge-building activities. I want to see this continue to happen. There was a symposium at Dartmouth recently, I would like to see some of that information pulled into this as well.

And, I challenge a lot of these young people here too, you have to be proud of who you are! In 1991 I moved back to Denver (after graduating from college in California) and I was proud to be a black Indian. And, I remember, I first introduced myself to the Denver Indian community at a meeting of about two hundred people at the Indian Center, and I said "I am a black Indian. "I learned later that I offended some Indian people, they wanted to know why I said that – they said, "well, you kind of look black" -- they looked at my hair – (laughter).

I think that they have to realize that I am heavily influenced by black music, by the black church, by the black community. And, this applies to white kids, and Indian kids, who are influenced by the white community, and our Indian kids who are influenced by the Chicano community. There is this absolute that has been created, absolutism, and we (make a mistake to) buy into it. No one is pure anything. And, as for the blood quantum issue, we need to challenge this for the artificial construct it is. We need to break those barriers.

I think that this Forum is a good thing; I know out time is wrapping up, so I just feel that I am personally connected to this issue, and I would like to see more black Indians talk about it. I am glad you spoke about it. And I think, I think we have to look at those four issues, of privilege, if you are an Indian and you speak your indigenous language, you are privileged, and we have to look at it like that, but at the same time we have to be compassionate, that we have Indian people that never had that opportunity.

I work for a Christian organization – Habitat for Humanity. When they hired me, I said in the interview: "the demise of Indian people happened because of Christianity." This went over their heads – they didn't know what the hell I was talking about. I challenged them, and I went a little bit further, and I said: "we have to realize that as a Christian society, this country is based on conquest, we have been conquered. "

And, again, I think about the experience with Dr. John Hope Franklin, in 1998, when I got up and I said some things, I pissed off the black church in Denver. I did! The Black Church Coalition called me the next day and said "you Indians ruined a perfectly good opportunity to dialogue with the President, you have ruined it," and I went to them and I said "well, I'm sorry, but I have been heavily influenced by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and I just used a tactic that black folks have used back in the '60s and the '70s -- being assertive. Those are my role models. And by the way, my Grandfather, on my black side, belongs to your AME church." And his mouth fell, because he just looked at me as an Indian person.

And so I think that this Forum is a good thing, and we need to continue this type of dialogue [in order to overcome the conditioned silence about the multiplicity of who we are, to understand that there is no one definition of what it means to be Indian, just as there is no one definition of what it means to be Black. By examining who we are and the diversity among us, we will be strengthened in our ability to be strong and dynamic human beings. Editor's note: Mr. Lee added this later.] And I want to get that material from the Dartmouth Symposium? Is that going to be published?

Dr. Minges: I wish they would publish it. It would be costly. When they were first putting it on, I said "you need to get this recorded, and get it into words, and even take the essays and put it together in a compilation. " But it never happened.

Mr. Lee: could this panel, with your influence Ms Mankiller, try to get that to be part of the Congress next year?

Chief Mankiller: I think it will—I think it is always going to be part of the Congress, because the issues are important to everybody. And so, if it is not me bringing it to the Congress, obviously it is important to the NCAI leadership or we wouldn't be having this panel taking up time on their agenda.
A question in the back?

(**lady in far back,** – too faint for the recorder to pick up well): I don't have a question, just a statement also. I guess it is true that nationality can be based on (oral?) tradition. I grew up on my mother's reservation (?)I don't know where I would have ended up if I had been adopted out?).... as the comments made by the gentleman that was (just) talking...
I was thirty-eight years old when I finally found my father. I used to be raised in Christianity (?) I didn't really ...I didn't care if he was black as coal. I just wanted to know who he was! He might have been a black Indian, for all I cared. When I found him, a new world was opened up, a new culture was opened up. …. (words missing) and, that is how I grew up. I didn't know anything about him ... because there was this thing that was kept from me–the other side of me, of my heritage...I feel that that if is wasn't for my Grandmother, which, you know, I value grandmothers, totally, because, in fact, they were the ones that kept the tradition alive, that kept traditional families together. Every time, it was grandmothers. It wasn't the mother, it was the grandmother. And that was where I was coming from. I agree, you know, I think it opens up other doors, many many other doors, and that there are probably people sitting here, that have never talked about anything of their past, that now, you know, are been allowed to open up -- where there are probably a lot of children out there, I know that in our nation there are children who have been kidnapped or, as the gentleman mentioned, you know, that are not with us because of those adoptions, or what have you. These are things that they never thought about. I know that there are a lot of children who are trying (to find) their way back. They might not be children, they might be adults. But, I thank you for this session. You know, I'm a tribal leader, and I was thinking when you were asking, well, what session (should I go to?) I guess I have the most experience for this workshop, so here I am! I thank you very much.

Chief Mankiller: thank you very much for that.

Dr. Johnson: I just wanted to make one comment with regard to the relationship between the issue of sovereignty and making the Black's claims of kinship – we have had a number of discussions in our organization among families that essentially define themselves as African Americans, this organization is mostly that, about the question of sovereignty, and there has never been any difficulty really understanding why Native peoples would want to determine who Native peoples are. In other words, the issue of self definition is at the heart also of African American concerns, so just as they would understand that Native Americans wouldn't want someone else defining who they were, African Americans do not want someone else defining who they are, and who they are is a complex mixture of lots of different streams, cultures, peoples. Now the difficulty for African Americans would be, with regard to whites, is that they have been so forced into the cauldron of blackness, by whites, as a totally deprived cauldron, that there is resistance to it. But, much of the mixture, at least mythologically, for black-white, came through rape. And so, there has been no great willingness

to even acknowledge the white, for the shame and the sense of the origin of that mixture.

But, there has not been among black Americans, and the groups that I have dealt with, any sense that the mixture with Indians could have come the same way. And even when you have blacks as slaves to Indians, and I found that in my own family my connection is as a Freedman, we don't really know any basis for saying that Charley Davis, my great great grand father, had any Indian blood, but we also see no evidence whatsoever, that if he did, it came through rape.

So there is a much greater willingness to accept that connection than it would be with whites, for most black Americans.

So the question, "do Native Peoples have a right to define themselves?" is almost instinctually understood and accepted in the dialogues we have had, by black Americans. But the turn around for it, and this is why the Seminole case is so crucial, because unlike the other nations, there is at least the perception that the Seminoles arose as a people, as a new people, precisely in "comrade in arms" collaboration between blacks and run-away (Creek) refugees, out of the U. S. into Florida. And their survival in the end depended on that collaboration. So, in a way, for it to be repudiated is itself to turn the sovereignty question upside down. It is a way of refusing to allow blacks to define themselves as connected, when in that case, both politically and genetically, most of them are!

And, for blacks looking for the genealogical card--some of the blacks, no doubt, are motivated by the desire to get a scholarship, maybe some Bingo money, some casino money, as are the whites! We certainly have seen that in Connecticut, and the Northeast, the Pequots have been a magnate.

But, the quest to know who they are, now, and the capacity to find out, is greater than it has been among black Americans, in generations, maybe ever [especially with the Indian records, which are more complete for the slavery period than other sources] And, so you confront a special problem if somebody says, "no you must not include the Native connection in that mix"

So we have to find a way to be political allies, cultural kin, and respect the quest now among young and old to answer some of the questions our grandmothers and grandfathers never wanted to talk about. And we have a chance to do that -- so I wouldn't downplay the genealogical side of this driving force, at all. I think it is a great source of social health!

In the end I hope it will lead us, when we actually do have common interests — and nothing ought to show that more than this Presidential election — that we hang together.

Chief Mankiller: that is a wonderful conclusion, actually. No more to be said, when you said that! Are there any more questions?

A young woman in the audience: I just wanted to say before we went out, that, as Jerry had said, and he can correct me, about how Indians and black persons' relations are viewed in the community, when you think about it. Let's face it, as someone said earlier, and pointed out how African Americans are setting the trends, in terms of style, in terms of shorthair, music, in everything that we do. And if you don't look any further, then you have the gangs, that are going around in the community.

This is what I would like to see us, what I would want us to deal with more, and, get down to the nitty gritty issues, you know. Look at these things, you know, look at what the Indian communities are trying to deal with, their, you know, "quote unquote" identity, what they are trying to be, to try to emulate.... (??)

That is where a lot these influences are coming in. They usually are not finding that identity within their own culture, and it seems like that they have to go outside.

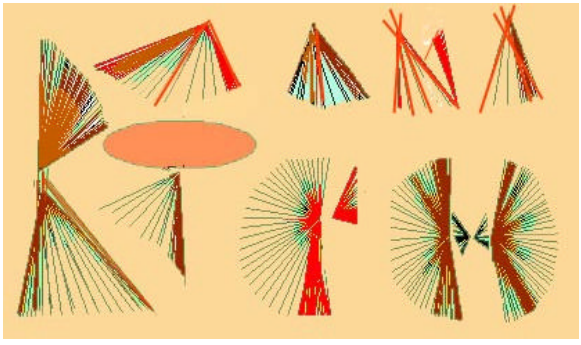
Chief Mankiller: Deborah will start with a final comment:

Ms. Tucker: First of all I think that most of us realize, actually I am shocked how sometimes we don't think about it, as African Americans, but very very few of us in this country are full blooded Africans, whose ancestors are only Africans. Like, someone else mentioned, if we were in South Africa, almost all blacks in this country would be considered "colored" which is a mixture. I think that by knowing our history, right here in Minnesota, there is a county in Northwest of here, Bonga county. And, I am just shocked at how many people don't know who George Bonga was. He was a black Indian, who had two or three trade posts, and was very influential in the area, not far from the White Earth Reservation. And, do people know who Bonga was when they go through Bonga County or do they realize the role he played in the state's development.

Even out that far, even as remote as Northwestern Minnesota is, blacks were there. And in Michigan, Chief Pontiac was what we call "ace boon coon" with De Sable, the founder of Chicago. They hung out together and Pontiac convinced DeSable to run away from slavery. So the mixture – when you find out these things, and that is how the British got Mackinaw Island, by using DeSable, saying "well, we want Mackinaw Island. " Pontiac said "no!" They came back about a year later and said "we want Mackinaw Island" "No" and they said "well, we have got your man DeSable, if you don't give it up, we are putting him back into slavery."

So, knowing our history, we would really be surprised. In every state, it doesn't matter how remote, as we moved West, we are all affected by this mixture.

Chief Mankiller: thank you for attending and being so attentive. Thank you so much for your wonderful questions. I hope we can keep this going. Come to the reception.



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ABOUT THE KIAANAFH

The KIAANAFH is an independent, non-profit, tax exempt, membership organization founded in 1991 to promote the preservation, documentation and appreciation of family identity, traditions, and achievements of the members of the African American and Native American communities of the Mid-West. The KIAANAFH aims to assist families with a regional base of ancestral roots and widely scattered branches, to know, preserve, strengthen and celebrate their own achievements.

The KIAANAFH was founded by persons whose parents or grandparents were/are still resident in Kansas, or whose current work is associated with the study and preservation of historical material relating to Kansas. Many of them represent mixtures of African American and Native American descent, freedman, or comrade in arms connections. Many of them are academicians, in a variety of fields, who believe that resources can be mobilized to assist families to document themselves more fully and to preserve their important memorabilia. In particular, they aim to improve the resource base for revealing and commemorating the neglected and difficult to document aspects of African American and Native American genealogical and historical relationships.

KIAANAFH ACHIEVEMENTS include:

* **Commemorating the 1861/2 "Great Escape" into Kansas** led by the Muskogee leader Opothleyahola – this historic epic involved "**comrade in arms collaboration"** between thousands of Native Americans and hundreds of African Americans to escape slavery and/or the Confederacy. The website for this ceremony is located at **http://web. mit. edu/wjohnson/www/HHD/HHD_web/flyerstationerywebpage. htm**
* **Seminars/exhibitions** on pioneer African American families in the Southeast Kansas area. Three such programs have been held in Humboldt Kansas, in 1992, 1994 and 1995, the latter two with principal funding support from the Kansas Humanities Council.
* **Round-Table discussions** within the Kansas based African American communities to document the connections the various episodes of forced removal of Native American nations from the South Eastern United States during the 1830s "Trail of Tears. "Two such programs were held in July of 1998, one in Wichita and one in Kansas City.
* A **workshop** among families that participated in the round-table programs together with experts and officials from the National Archives and Records Administration (of Washington DC and Ft. Worth TX) devoted to documentation for connections between the African- and Native- American peoples.

* A **CD- (Excel format database, and graphic copy of the original pages) transcription of a Cherokee pension roll** lost in the National Archives since 1871. This document covers all the households resident in the Cherokee Nation territory (of Indian Territory/Oklahoma) in 1870, including colored persons and whites. Also available in print out. (costs: CD $35; Alphabetized print $25; non alphabetized printout $22. 50 Checks should be made to KIAANAFH)

* **Participation in the planning process** of the Cherokee National Historical Society of Tahlequah, OK, for a major U. S. Park Service funded exhibit on "The Trail of Tears," and in planning for Underground Railroad exhibit at Cincinnati's Freedom Museum.
