When Black Lives Matter Meets Indian Country

Using the Cherokee and Chickasaw Nations as Case Studies for Understanding the Evolution of Public History and Interracial Coalition

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Abstract: In 2020 a social revolution to incite change around police violence against Black women and men became so much more. Spurred by the May 25, 2020, brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, monuments to enslavers and colonizers across the United States were toppled. Movements to remove statues commemorating the Confederacy and other symbols related to hatred and genocide have existed for more than one hundred years. But there was one place the movements revolving around Confederate commemoration had largely not touched: Indian Country. That changed when the Cherokee Nation removed Confederate monuments—installed by Cherokee members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy—from the nation's capitol square in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. In this article, the author examines the evolutions of anti-Blackness and anti-racism in Indian Country through case studies of the Cherokee and Chickasaw Nations' twentieth and twenty-first-century Confederate memorialization and 2020 statements on the Black Lives Matter movements. These two nations, as former slaveholding states, are important representations of the possibilities and limits of interracial coalition. The author argues that to fully understand the breadth of the struggle against the effects of settler colonialism in the United States, which include both anti-Blackness and anti-Native sentiment, we must interrogate the anti-Blackness of the Native past and present.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, Chickasaw, Chickasaw Nation, Cherokee, Cherokee Nation, monuments, Civil War monuments, memorialization, Civil War memorialization, public history, anti-Blackness, racism, Confederate monuments, Native American activism, American Indian activism, Black activism, African American activism, Confederate monuments in Indian Country

In the summer of 2020 a social revolution to incite change around police violence against Black women and men became so much more. Spurred by the May 25, 2020, brutal murder of an African American man by the name of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by a white police officer named Derek Chauvin as three other officers looked on, monuments to enslavers and colonizers across the United States and even the world were toppled, beheaded, or otherwise razed.[1] Movements to remove or replace statues commemorating the Confederacy and other symbols related to hatred and genocide have existed for over a hundred years, with varying degrees of success. But there was one place that the movements around Confederate commemoration had largely not touched: Indian Country. That changed on June 13, 2020.

On that Saturday the Cherokee Nation removed two Confederate monuments from the Cherokee Nation Capitol Square in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. As the crane lifted and carried away a fountain and stele, both dedicated by the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), it took with it the old Cherokee Nation—one that had long brushed its racial issues under the rug. In a press release about the removal, Cherokee Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said, "We've suffered for centuries with too many others telling our story for us as they see fit. It's difficult to tell our story when we have non-Indian-driven monuments talking about the Confederacy, when they greet people as they come into our Cherokee Nation museum. It was time for a change."[2] While, in fact, several members of the UDC chapter behind these monuments possessed Cherokee ancestry, Chief Hoskin's linkage of the need for the nation to tell its own stories with the broader context of summer 2020 presents a unique opportunity to connect the Native past and present.[3] How were these Confederate monuments representative of the Cherokees' part in past acts of and buy in to anti-Blackness and how does their removal signal the nation's willingness to chart a new course for the present and future? As a comparison, how does the Chickasaw Nation's public engagements with the past signal its historical and present stances on anti-Blackness and how did *its* tribal leaders greet the changes brought by the summer of 2020? I define anti-Blackness as sentiment, policies, and actions that render people of African descent unequal and undesirable under law and/or societal culture.[4]

In this article, I use public history, archival documentation, and current statements by tribal leaders to examine the ways in which the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations' memorialization of their involvement in the Civil War reflected their long-held anti-Black stances on tribal citizenship and Indian identity. Then I compare the changes they made, or did not make, to these stances when confronted with what the *New York Times* has suggested may be the "largest movement in U.S. history," the Black Lives Matter movement of summer 2020.[5] I have chosen the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations in particular as my case studies because they have well-documented disparate stances on their Civil War participation, which translated into disparate Civil War commemoration and, in the summer of 2020, manifest in vastly different responses to Black death and activism. Just as the American Civil War often serves as a litmus test for the political genealogies and modern-day political stances of American states, I use the Civil War and its commemoration as a litmus test for these two Indian nations, demonstrating that their public history, be it in the form of monuments or cultural centers, is an explicit communication of their national identities.

As such, the Cherokee Nation's removal of Confederate monuments and explicit acknowledgment of the legacies of anti-Blackness in the nation and in the broader United States, while the Chickasaw Nation retained a national narrative that celebrates the Confederacy in its flagship cultural center and issued only a vague statement that acknowledged neither of these issues, allows for a diametric comparison of contrasting Native pasts and presents. I see the Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations as two different poles on a spectrum of Native growth on the subject of anti-Blackness. Both nations sanctioned the ownership of enslaved Black women and men and both nations fought the permanent enfranchisement of the descendants of these enslaved people. But in 2020 their tribal leaders chose to walk two different paths, one acknowledging past mistakes and moving forward in growth, the other refusing both acknowledgment and change.

While most Cherokee and Chickasaw individuals did not own Black slaves, neither did most actively reject the anti-Blackness that permeates North America. Indeed, Chickasaw Nation leadership in the nineteenth century justified the antipathy or outright violence toward Black people in Chickasaw communities and tribal members with African ancestry on the grounds that they that they must do so in order to survive, and

few Chickasaw tribal members publicly disagreed.[6] The United States' general evasion of Black calls for rights and equity on the state and federal levels—save, perhaps, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s—allowed white Americans, Native Americans, and others to avert their gazes from the issues that existed right in front of them.[7] But in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement became so all-encompassing and widespread that Native nations' and peoples' reactions, or lack thereof, were statements in themselves. Modern-day groundwork for interracial coalition had been laid with the 2014 Black Lives Matter protests revolving around the murder of Black teenager, Michael Brown, killed by a white police officer, and the 2016–18 Standing Rock/No DAPL/Water Is Life movement, both of which saw Black Lives Matter and Native activists sharing information, tactics, and sentiment.[8]

In 2020, these activist relationships continued, but also spurred reflection across Indian Country regarding the ways in which Black and Native people related to each other socially and politically, and the ways Black Natives were included in (and excluded from) discussions about tribal membership. An analysis that uses the historiographies of Civil War memory and public history in Indian Territory (modern-day Oklahoma) to interrogate this moment in time can tell us much about how Native nations and people have seen themselves in the past and see themselves in the present and future in relation to those peoples who have shared so many of their colonialist horrors—people of African descent.

For the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations, the most prominent symbols of their anti-Blackness were their involvement in Black slave ownership, their Confederate alliances during the Civil War, and their commemorations of this alliance after the war. In 1861 the Indian nations present in Indian Territory found themselves in the midst of a war between two different factions of a foreign country, the United States. Situated among Texas and Arkansas, two Confederate states with soldiers anxious to plunder their nations and with leadership that sought protection for their land, people, and systems of slavery, the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations both saw men fight for the Union and the Confederacy.[9] Scholars have disagreed about tribal members' motivations. In the Cherokee Nation, two figures emerge that represent divergent impulses: Stand Watie and John Ross. Both Ross and Watie were slaveowners, which ostensibly gave them a shared cause with the

Confederacy. Yet Ross sought neutrality for his nation, advocating that it stay true to its treaty promises, while Watie became so inextricable from the Cherokee Confederate cause that it was, indeed, the stele dedicated to him that the Cherokees removed in 2020.[10] For Ross's part, after being approached by various Confederate representatives, he wrote to Confederate Commissioner of Indian Affairs David Hubbard that the Cherokees had signed multiple treaties with the United States and as part of these, from the eighteenth century on they had agreed that they "will not hold any treaty with any foreign power." As far as Ross was concerned, in June 1861 the "binding force" of these previous treaties was "as strong and imperative now as at any time since its adoption."[11] In exchange, Ross hoped the United States would stay true to its treaty promises. Motivated by sentiment and practicality respectively, Watie and Ross were both part of the system of enslavement that upheld anti-Blackness, but differed as to whether this system should lead their nation into a war that was not originally theirs to fight.

Unlike the Cherokees, the Chickasaws are often represented as undivided when it came to their choice in Civil War ally, the Confederates.[12] The majority of Chickasaw leaders were wealthy slaveowners, so their interest in safeguarding the institutions of slavery and anti-Blackness were influential when it came to Civil War alliances.[13] But there is evidence that there existed Chickasaws who disagreed with slavery, a Confederate alliance, and the postwar mistreatment of Black Chickasaws—they just did not seem to have had enough economic power or political influence to sway the tribe, and after the war they faced harassment and violence from Confederate Chickasaws.[14]

While there is an array of mixed opinion of the Cherokees' and Chickasaws' wartime decisions, there is far less scholarship on the two nations' public history related to the Civil War. In fact, Jeff Fortney's article, "Lest We Remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes" (published in 2012 in *AIQ*), is the only published research devoted solely to the subject.[15] In "Lest We Remember," Fortney establishes that the Civil War was a "watershed moment" for Native nations in Indian Territory, taking his reader through the difficult decisions made by Native people at the time of the war's onset and the devastation wrought by the conflict. Interestingly. this is where, in his mind, Native people's autonomy stops. Fortney argues that after the war they were largely content to focus on rebuilding their nations

and allow white Oklahomans to craft a narrative of the Civil War that sometimes included them strategically and other times completely erased their involvement. But, in fact, as Sarah Elliott shows, the "white" organizations Fortney cites that formed to commemorate the war and their chosen partisan narrative, namely, the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Grand Army of the Republic, included Native members.[16] The United Daughters of the Confederacy's decision to commemorate Stand Watie's status as the only Indian Civil War brigadier general and allegedly the last Confederate to surrender shows a purposeful decision to remember the Civil War in a specific way and to tie Oklahoma to the South and to Confederate ideals, which included blatant anti-Blackness.

Fortney's narrow definition of commemoration as monuments or parades and the like precludes him from seeing that Native nations also use their cultural centers, museums, and other sites of public history to create and distill narratives about their Civil War involvement. Fortney writes: "Native people generally choose not to include Civil War loyalty or Southern 'lost cause' mythology as part of their collective memory"; he describes Native peoples' memories of the Civil War as "bitter," in comparison to the "sentimentalized American version."[17] Visitors to the Chickasaw Cultural Center would beg to disagree.[18] Completed the summer of 2010, the center, which serves as the core of the Chickasaw Nation's multimillion-dollar cultural revitalization effort, utilizes state-of-the-art interactive technology to introduce visitors to Chickasaw language, culture, and history.[19] There are several components of the cultural center, including an exhibit center, theater, pavilion, and garden—all completely funded and operated by the tribal government.

The first thing one sees upon entrance to the exhibit center is a large Confederate flag. The flag hangs over a display case housing several pieces of memorabilia and a photo of a man. The case's display plaque reads:

> Gov. William Malcolm Guy: William Guy was barely sixteen when he enlisted as a private in the 17th Mississippi Infantry. He served for the duration of the war. . . . He would later serve as the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation between 1886 and 1888. Exhibited here is his regimental ribbon, listing the battles in which his unit saw action.[20]

The plaque does not explicitly mention that Guy's service was with the Confederate Army, but the regimental ribbon displays a Confederate flag. The plaque's message signifies pride in the military service of an influential Chickasaw figure. This is unsurprising, considering military skill has long been a primary Chickasaw source of identity.[21] What is more surprising is the focus on the Civil War as the first segment of Chickasaw history mentioned in the exhibit center. Many American citizens, including most historians, are not aware of Native Americans' involvement in the Civil War and do not see the Civil War as necessarily an important part of Indigenous history. The cultural center's narrative, and especially its opening exhibit, however, demonstrate that the Chickasaws view the Civil War as an integral part of their history and the Confederate flag—with all its anti-Black associations—as a venerable symbol of their participation in the event.[22]

Like many museums centered around Indigenous peoples, the cultural center emphasizes military savvy, strategic alliance formation with colonial powers, and resilience. Using active language, plaques throughout the exhibit center proclaim the Chickasaws' ability to retain aspects of their traditional culture, but also to evolve with the times, taking contact with Euro-American powers and new technological and cultural advances in stride. However, when it comes to less palatable actions taken by the Chickasaw government, the written text often resorts to passive voice. In particular, the exhibit plaques use passive voice and vague, evasive language in discussions of the Chickasaws' decision to ally with the Confederacy and in the minimal coverage of people of African descent.

A plaque titled "More Broken Promises: The American Civil War Marks a Turning Point" reads:

> While Chickasaws were split on the question of Union loyalty, neutrality, or Confederate secession, U.S. abandonment of our treaties and the Indian Territory precipitated our signing a treaty with the Confederate States of America.[23]

While it is true that the US failed to militarily protect the Chickasaws from the Confederate Army, the plaque's use of passive voice obscures the fact that when faced with the same decision regarding wartime allegiances, all of the Five Tribes *except* the Chickasaws heavily splintered. In fact, large sections of the Creeks, Seminoles, Cherokees, and to a lesser degree, the Choctaws, fought for the Union.

The center expunges Chickasaw Governor Cyrus Harris's remarks that the Confederate government would have "a constitution modeled after that of the old government, but greatly improved, with such checks and reassurance of permanency." This prefaced his decision, and subsequently the tribal government's approval, to make a formal alliance with the Confederacy. The Chickasaws made this agreement based on a desire to show themselves to be an independent nation, stemming from their history of interdependence with the Choctaw Nation, as well as from their motive to obtain better contracts with the Confederacy from everything to congressional representation to land annuities.[24] Harris made clear that while protection and a sense of betrayal at the US government's failure to pay the Chickasaws their annuities for their Mississippi homeland came into play in the nation's decision, the Confederates' notion of states' rights and lack of federal intervention, not to mention the desire to maintain slavery, were the Chickasaws' real shared causes with the rebels. While the modern-day Chickasaw Nation found it acceptable to claim pride in their military involvement with the Confederate Army, going so far as to tout the fact that they "were the last *okloshi*' (tribe) to surrender," they apparently drew the line at claiming pride in Confederate ideals.[25]

This disconnect is also evident in the exhibit center's treatment of people of African descent in Chickasaw history. Three exhibit boards represent the entirety of the exhibit center's mentions of Black people, though by the time of their emancipation a Black and mixed-race population had been a part of the Chickasaw Nation for at least one hundred years.[26] In the exhibit center, Black history in the Chickasaw Nation begins only after the Civil War, with the first board referencing sharecropping and freedpeoples' efforts to obtain education. The exhibit center passively addresses emancipation only by saying that "slavery came to a full and formal end . . . with the close of the American Civil War."[27] There is no mention of the fact that the Chickasaws fought the liberation of their enslaved peoples and, in effect, had to be blackmailed into doing so by the United States' threat not to distribute annuity payments.[28] This minimization of the Chickasaws' attempt to maintain Black enslavement is a noteworthy parallel to the postwar actions of Confederates. Additionally, only a small plaque near the bottom of one board mentions that Chickasaw freedpeople received land in the Chickasaw Nation. The exhibit center's expunging of the reality of the Chickasaw

Nation during Reconstruction serves two purposes: to distance the tribe from the aftermath of slavery—and therefore slavery itself—and to simplify the complex racial history of the nation.

While Chickasaw freedpeople, as noncitizens, had been unable to exercise any rights in the Chickasaw Nation, they persevered, building and funding their own churches, schools, and communities. But the Chickasaw Nation's fear of being outnumbered joined with their often-remarked-upon racism, creating an environment in which freedpeople battled violence and financial insolvency. Chickasaw freedpeoples' efforts to be recognized as fellow citizens, as mixed-race relatives, or simply as peoples who had shared a history and a homeland, were consistently rejected. The exhibit center's use of passive voice with regard to the Chickasaws' former enslaved peoples absolves the nation of historical wrongdoing and diminishes Black influence on tribal history.

The cultural center is not a lone issue; other venues of public history in the Chickasaw Nation reek of problematic revisionist history. Their "Hall of Fame," for example, houses questionable historical actors. Inductees have included men like Benson Pikey, a member of the Chickasaw House of Representatives and a Confederate Captain. Inducted into the hall in 2013, Pikey is described as "a man of integrity . . . [who] embodied what it means to be Chickasaw."[29] The Chickasaw Hall of Fame also includes members of one of the largest Chickasaw slave-owning families, the Colberts, though this information is omitted from their biographies.[30] While the Chickasaw Nation may not overtly celebrate slavery or anti-Blackness, the symbols and the people it chooses to celebrate are representative of an identity inclusive of the Confederacy, in the nineteenth century an anti-Black government that sought to maintain the enslavement and subjection of people of African descent in the nineteenth century and today a dog whistle that calls to supporters of white supremacy. How did a nation that has refused to reckon with its legacy of slaveholding and anti-Blackness choose to respond to Black Lives Matter protests that sought this very reckoning throughout the country?

On June 5, a Black Lives Matter protest took place in Ada, Oklahoma (part of the Chickasaw Nation), seeking justice not just for George Floyd but also for a local victim of police violence. Anthony Meely, an African American man, died in Ada after a police officer put him in handcuffs and stood on his head and legs.[31] There were also protests in Ardmore,

Sherman, and Denison, all part of the Chickasaw Nation, around the same time.[32] In response, Bill Anoatubby, governor of the Chickasaw Nation, released a statement that was put on the nation's Twitter page (this is the only place it can be found, not on the nation's press release webpage). The statement read:

> It is encouraging to see so many people of diverse cultures and backgrounds across the United States speaking out so eloquently on issues of such great importance. We support all those in our own community and around the world who are using their voices to peacefully encourage unity and respect for all people. History teaches us that freedom of expression is fundamental to the democratic process and to progress and growth in our society. We have also learned that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." It is vital to carefully consider how we have arrived at this point in our history to explore ways we can all work together to build a brighter future for our children and grandchildren. We are hopeful that events taking place in Ada, Oklahoma and around the world will lead to serious and productive discussions in months and years to come.[33]

Governor Anoatubby's statement does not mention the word "protests" or the murders of George Floyd and Anthony Meely that brought them about. Instead, his statement is a generic call for "unity" and "respect" that could be applied to any number of horrific events. More importantly, the governor does not take this as an opportunity for introspection. The Chickasaw Nation's involvement in slaveholding, restrictive citizenship practices, and general social exclusion of the descendants of their former slaves are not mentioned; the Chickasaw Nation is not examined as a site of the anti-Blackness that led to worldwide protests.

Meanwhile, approximately 190 miles from Sulphur, in the Cherokee Nation's capital of Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. issued a vastly different statement and took actions that made clear his desire for change—namely, advocating for the removal of two monuments. There, in the capital, the nation's most visible representations of its Confederate past are now gone. One, erected in 1913, is a two-sided stele, with one side honoring the First Cherokee Regiment (organized and commanded by Stand Watie) and the other honoring William Penn Adair (the Cherokee man who commanded the

First Indian Brigade). The second monument was a ten-foot-tall bronze relief of Stand Watie dedicated in 1921.[34] These two monuments were first envisioned by members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an all-female organization in its own words created to, among other things, "protect, preserve, and mark the places made historic by Confederate valor [and to] collect and preserve the material for a truthful history of the War Between the States."[35] According to a study conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center, as of 2019 there were approximately 780 monuments and statues honoring individual Confederates or the Confederacy as a whole, across the United States.[36] Only 7 of those appeared to be located in Indian Country, here defined as the land that encompasses the current borders of a sovereign Indian nation.[37]

The body of literature on Confederate monuments in the United States is large and spans analyses of the symbols and imagery used on the monuments themselves, the people (primarily white women) who made it their missions in life to erect these monuments, and the modern-day movement to remove said monuments.[38] In the past several years, various cities have removed more Confederate monuments than in the previous fifty, with Virginia leading the way, having removed or renamed over 71 in 2020 alone.[39] While 2020 was the first time current events had successfully brought down a Civil War monument in Indian Country, it was not the first time current events had prompted the Cherokee Nation to *consider* removing these monuments. In August 2017, a woman named Heather Heyer took part in a peaceful protest in Charlottesville aiming to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. She was murdered by a white supremacist who ran her over with his car.

At the time, a few people raised questions about the monument in front of the Cherokee Court House, but there was no sustained movement and little public attention. A Cherokee Nation spokesperson said of the prospect of removal that she "hope[d] the Cherokees will be given the time and respect to make their own decisions about the monuments."[40] It seems that decision took about three years, the well-publicized murder of a Black man, and a change in tribal leadership, as in 2020, the nation's response was quite different.[41]

In the *Muskogee Phoenix*'s "Chief Chats" section titled, "Why We Must Have Difficult Conversations about Race and Justice," Principal Chief Hoskin, elected in 2019, wrote,

> The Cherokee Nation First Lady and I recently watched with horror the footage of George Floyd, a black man, being killed by the vicious actions of Minneapolis police officers. We grieve for his family. We have watched with great interest as protestors across the country have spoken out against the injustice. We have watched with concern, as some of the protests have turned violent. More than anything, though, the events of the last two weeks have reminded us that the United States still has much work to do on the issue of justice for minorities in this country. We have watched all of this, and discussed this, with our daughter Jazzy. . . . This is a country of high ideals, though at times it falls short of those ideals. . . . Finally, this is a country that includes shining examples of some of the best, brightest and most dedicated public servants filling the ranks of many police departments across the country. Many such departments are in our region, but none is better in this country than the Cherokee Nation Marshal Service. . . . When I think about how Cherokee Nation might contribute to the national dialogue on police reform, my first instinct is to invite policymakers across the country to spend some time with the Cherokee Nation Marshal Service, a model for how law enforcement should be done.

As in his statement about the monument removal, Hoskin united the narrative of Cherokee autonomy and pride—reminding his listener that his nation has its own police force and positing that it is better run than that of the United States—with that of racial justice. Brilliantly, Hoskin couched his rejection of the racist actions of Minneapolis police in language that uplifted his nation and later in his statement quoted a Cherokee considered unimpeachable by many of her tribe to support his sentiments, former Cherokee Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller. Of course, to those familiar with Mankiller's actions toward Black tribal citizens—along with Chief Ross Swimmer she led the passage of two resolutions that effectively barred them from citizenship and only through many court cases and the intervention of the US Court of Appeals did they win it back—she is an imperfect messenger. While Mankiller may have said in 2000, "It is critical to build coalitions with African Americans to advance our issues and theirs," during her tenure as chief, her actions toward people of African descent in her own tribe

did not serve that goal. Cognizant of this disconnect, Hoskin noted in his same statement,

> No discussion of race and Cherokee Nation is complete, of course, without a frank acknowledgment of the status of the descendants of Freedmen. It took over 150 years for the descendants of black people enslaved under the laws of Cherokee Nation to secure citizenship promised them in the Treaty of 1866. They did so in 2017. Cherokee Nation has been a better nation for it ever since. Likewise, the United States will be a better nation with further racial healing. Cherokee Nation has a role in that healing process.[42]

Hoskin, then, demonstrated that he saw it as part of his role as chief to lead his nation in a new direction—one where "unity and inclusion" is valued, rather than "divisiveness."[43] Unlike that of Governor Anoatubby, Hoskin's statement names the crime that precipitated the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, includes personal details about how it affected him and his family, notes the systemic elements of racism in the United States, acknowledges his own tribes' past dealings in anti-Blackness, and calls for a more inclusive nation (indicating both the Cherokee Nation and the United States) going forward.

In a context where broader America is finally beginning to recognize, or at least acknowledge widespread police violence against African Americans and systemic inequality, what is the place of Native nations and individuals? Is it, as demonstrated by some in 2020, alongside African Americans in a battle against a system that long played nonwhite people against each other for its own gain? Do statements of solidarity, even those like Chief Hoskin's that are backed up by actions, demonstrate a real and lasting change in Indian nations' governance and sentiment toward their Black citizens and African Americans? Only time will tell.

I cannot portend what the future holds; I *can* say that this article is not only a work of history but also an active call for Native communities to address issues of anti-Blackness, just as Black and Native activists are calling for the United States to do. Monuments memorialize and celebrate who we were in the past while protests argue for what we want to be in the present and future. Native people's recognition of and involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement (or lack thereof) is an important indication of where Indian Country stands in relation to

anti-Blackness; we should commend the strides taken while pushing for further progress.

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NOTES

1. "George Floyd: What Happened in the Final Moments of His Life," BBC, May 30, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52861726, accessed June 28, 2020.

2. Cherokee Nation, "Cherokee Nation Removes Confederate Monuments from Historic Capitol Square," June 13, 2020, *Muskogee Phoenix*, https://www.muskogeephoenix.com/news/cherokee-nation-removes-confederate-monuments-from-historic-capitol-square/article_6ef2a734-ada1-11ea-812b-9fd4f0153e8f.html, accessed June 13, 2020.

3. Mabel Washbourne Anderson is the most prominent of these Cherokee members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Descended from the Ridges and the Washbournes, she had ancestry from two well-known Cherokee families, and dedicating these monuments to the Confederate heritage of her nation was one of her "life goals." In her biography of Stand Watie, Anderson tied the Cherokees' Confederate alliance to their southern provenance. Jeff Fortney, "Lest We Remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes," *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 538–39; Mabel Washbourne Anderson, *The Life of General Stand Watie: The Only Indian Brigadier General of the Confederate Army and the Last General to Surrender*, 2nd ed. (Pryor, OK: Mrs. Mabel W. Anderson, 1931); Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., "Anderson, Mabel Washbourne," in *Native American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Gretchen M. Bataille and Laurie Lisa, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 14. A number of Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks also participated in the UDC, as well as other heritage organizations, such as the Grand Army of the Republic. Sarah Elliott, "The Lost Cause in Indian Territory: The Intersection of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Memory of the Civil War in Oklahoma, 1877–1930," paper presented at American Society for Ethnohistory conference, September 26, 2019. A special thank you to Sarah for sharing her great work with me for this article.

4. While Black Americans' involvement in settler colonialism is an important, understudied, and related topic, I will not discuss it in this essay, as it warrants its own space. For my thoughts on this topic, see my book, *I've Been Here All the While: Black Freedom on Native Land* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

5. Larry Buchanan, Quoctrung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel, "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History," July 3, 2020, *New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html, accessed February 24, 2021. This claim is based on polls that surveyed the amount of people who took part in at least one BLM protest over the course of the summer, obtaining a figure of approximately 15 to 26 million participants.

6. For example, in 1876, Chickasaw Governor Overton Love claimed that if Chickasaw freedpeople were given citizenship, "the negroes will be the wedge with which our country will be rent asunder and opened up to the whites," despite the fact that the biggest step toward allotment and Oklahoma statehood had already taken place through the Treaty of 1866. Overton Love, *The Oklahoma Star*, September 28, 1876.

7. I want to acknowledge that Native and First Nations people, like Black people, disproportionately experience police violence and poverty. In fact, the numbers (per the Center for Disease Control) bear out that, percentagewise, more Native American men are killed by police than any other group. This is an issue that is often ignored by broader society—even more so than police violence against African Americans, and Jean Reith Schroedel and Roger J. Chin argue that this is because a lack of media attention creates a cycle, where attention (or here, lack thereof) signals importance. Yet, while many African American activists will often mention Native American genocide in the same breath as slavery and violence against Black bodies when listing the United States' ills, many Native people, when presented with Black issues, often deny that they are a problem, or argue, like many white Americans, that Black people have brought it upon themselves, reflecting the views of the settler state. Still, the murders of both Black and Native people, as well as other nonwhite groups, are driven—and allowed to continue, unpunished—by white supremacy. Elise Hansen, "The Forgotten Minority in Police Shootings," November 13, 2017, *CNN.com*, https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/10/us/native-lives-matter/index.html, accessed June 30, 2020; Stephanie Woodard, "The Police Killings No One is Talking About," October 17, 2016, *In These Times*, 2020, https://inthesetimes.com/features/native_american_police_killings_native_lives_matter.html, accessed June 30; Jean Reith Schroedel and Roger J. Chin, "Whose Lives Matter: The Media's Failure to Cover Police Use of Lethal Force Against Native Americans," *Race and Justice* 10, no. 2 (April 2020): 150–75. I believe that I can acknowledge that Native issues do not receive the attention they should while also addressing anti-Blackness in Native communities. My ultimate hope in writing this article is that it encourages Native people to continue to be part of Black movements and, even more, to build coalition

with people of African descent in the joint issues these two groups face as they also support each other in the issues they do not necessarily share.

8. Both movements are, of course, still active; these dates merely reference their various iterations. Ashoka Jegroo, "Why Black Lives Matter is Fighting Alongside Dakota Access Pipeline Protestors," September 13, 2016, *Splinter News*, https://splinternews.com/why-black-lives-matter-is-fighting-alongside-dakota-acc-1793861838, accessed March 8, 2021; Nakia Parker and Walter Sistrunk, "Citizen Kyrie: Kyrie Irving, The Standing Rock Sioux, and the Politics of Tribal Rolls," *Fourth Part of the World: A Journal of Black and Native History*, February 27, 2019, https://fourthpartoftheworld.wordpress.com/2019/02/27/citizen-kyrie-kyrie-irving-the-standing-rock-sioux-and-the-politics-of-tribal-rolls/, accessed March 8, 2021. While this second article is not directly related, Kyrie Irving emerged as a vocal Black (and Native) voice in support of Standing Rock and, I think, helped in opening up this conversation and movement to the Black Community.

9. Other men, women, and children left their nations and lived as refugees to escape the danger of the war. Census of the Southern Refugee Indians in Kansas and the Cherokee Nation, 1863, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, M234, Roll 835, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

10. Historian Jeff Fortney has argued that while Stand Watie may have been motivated by his desire to protect slavery and his wealth (tied to slavery), slavery by itself was not enough of a motivating force for most. Instead, the Cherokees instituted a de facto conscription into Confederate service, meaning that the average enlisted man was not necessarily passionate about the Confederate cause. Jeff Fortney, "Lest We Remember: Civil War Memory and Commemoration among the Five Tribes," *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 525–75; Jeffrey L. Fortney, "Slaves and Slaveholders in the Choctaw Nation: 1830–1866" (MA Thesis, UMI #1485538). In Mary Jane Warde's *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 43–44, Warde argues that the white Indian agents in each nation influenced Native peoples' decisions about the war, particularly with regard to the proslavery factions. She also posits that their southern origins combined with their location in the midst of Confederate states and the desire by some to maintain slavery "predisposed the Indian nations to favor the South more than the North."

11. John Ross, "Copy of Letter from Chief John Ross to Confederate Commissioner of Indian Affairs David Hubbard," June 17, 1861, Accession No. 4026.1303-.3, Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/40261303-3, accessed July 5, 2020.

12. Fortney described the Chickasaws as having "unified support of the Confederacy," unlike other Indian nations. While represented as "undivided" there is variation in the reasons given. Fortney, "Lest We Remember." Historian Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. said of the Chickasaws, their "extensive holdings in slaves and the geographical location of the Chickasaws made their sympathy for the Confederate

States of America almost inevitable," while historian and Chickasaw citizen Wendy St. Jean connects the Chickasaws' alliance with the Confederacy to their "combined fear of the Comanches and the Texans"; the Chickasaws had been left without arms or the troops promised to them by the US government. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., *The Chickasaw Freedmen: A People without a Country* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 18; Wendy St. Jean, *Remaining Chickasaw in Indian Territory, 1830s–1907* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011), 38, 43.

13. Chickasaw leadership also appreciated the Confederacy's promise of forever land ownership, as the Chickasaws could see that American attention was turning to the West and they feared for their treaty rights. Cyrus Harris, "Message of Gov. Harris, of the Chickasaw Nation, to the Legislature," *Nashville Union and American*, June 11, 1861, via Chronicling America, Library of Congress, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/lccn/sn85038518/1861-06-11/ed-1/seq-1/; Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 99–101, 121; Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1919), 39–40.

14. "Southern superintendency," *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, for the year 1862,* United States Office of Indian Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries Digital Collections, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.AnnRep62, 141; Statement of Indian Chiefs to Genl. Sanborn at Fort Gibson, M234, Roll 837; Robt B. Patton & others to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, No. 355 Document 1, M234, Roll 176.

15. Fortney, "Lest We Remember." Whit Edwards's chapter in an edited collection, "To Reach a Wide Audience: Public Commemoration of the Civil War in Indian Territory," examined historical reenactments of the war put on by white people because, as he claims, "most American Indians and African Americans traditionally have not embraced this part of their history, perhaps because it has been institutionalized as a white man's war." Quite the correlation. Whit Edwards, "To Reach a Wide Audience: Public Commemoration of the Civil War in Indian Territory," in *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory*, ed. Bradley Clampitt (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

There are a few important unpublished works on the subject that I'd like to bring attention to. Abby Gibson's (University of Southern California doctoral student) master's thesis (completed at the University of Oklahoma) examined Oklahoma's part in the nationwide Civil War centennial commemoration efforts and its use of this milestone to argue for its participation in the state-shaping event that was the war. She, like W. Fitzhugh Brundage in his *The Southern Past*, emphasized the "intentional effort to forge identity through collective memory." Abby Gibson, "A Usable Past: The Oklahoma Civil War Centennial Commission and Commemoration of the War in Indian Territory," December 11, 2017, course paper, University of Oklahoma. W. Fitzhugh Brundage's *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Thank you for sharing your work and your thoughts with me, Abby! Sarah Elliott (University of Mississippi doctoral student) is currently writing a dissertation on Civil War commemoration in Oklahoma and Elizabeth Anne Miller (Monash University, MA) wrote a master's thesis on three Civil War monuments across Indian Country, concluding that Native people "wished to commemorate their Civil War histories and sought to contribute to the growing commemorative impulse of the 1920s and 1930s." Elizabeth Anne Miller, "Memorialising Native American Civil War Involvement: Visibility, Geography, and Agency in 1920s and 1930s Civil War Monument Culture" (Monash University master's thesis, 2019), Semantic Scholar, DOI 10.26180/5D0F269A40918, Corpus ID 198033992, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Memorialising-Native-American-Civil-War-Visibility%2C-Miller/57b27d5ad50c0f9113de7675395b390e680e253c, accessed July 9, 2020. Joshua Gorman's book, *Building a Nation: Chickasaw Museums and the Construction of History and Heritage* (Tusacaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011) is the most prominent piece of public history scholarship on the Chickasaw Nation. Gorman, head of collections management and museum registrar at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, does not deal with Civil War memory per se, instead covering it (as well as Black chattel slavery) as part of a meticulous deconstruction of the creation of four sites within the nation. He argued that through these sites the Chickasaw Nation "created a history of itself as a nation and a national identity founded on history, heritage, and culture that is predominantly expressed through its museums and other heritage sites." Some might also point to Tiya Miles's *The House on Diamond Hill A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010) as a work that deals with Cherokee public history and slavery, but in my opinion it is more a work of archival history centered on a house that has become a site of public history. There is a difference.

16. Sarah Elliott argued in her paper, "The Lost Cause in Indian Territory: The Intersection of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Memory of the Civil War in Oklahoma, 1877–1930," first that Indian involvement in the war cannot be mapped "directly onto the Union cause versus the Confederate cause," representing instead a fight for varying definitions of sovereignty, and second, that, contrary to Jeff Fortney's assertion, Native women and men in Indian Territory memorialized their part in the Civil War through "constructions of memory," both in the form of monuments and in passed down narratives, though the influence of the UDC has created a skewed view of Indian Territory's participation in the war. Sarah Elliott, "The Lost Cause in Indian Territory: The Intersection of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Memory of the Civil War in Oklahoma, 1877–1930," paper presented at American Society for Ethnohistory conference, September 26, 2019. It is actually odd that Fortney does not note the Native identities of some of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, since he cited the biography of Stand Watie written by Mabel Anderson, a woman who was proudly Cherokee.

17. Fortney, "Lest We Remember," 526–27.

18. I share Joshua Gorman's opinion of the importance of Chickasaw public history to the dissemination of the nation's public-facing identity.

19. Associated Press, "After Two Decades, Chickasaw Cultural Center Opens," http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/08/09/decades-chickasaw-cultural-center-opens.html; Dara Downs, "Chickasaw Cultural Center opens in Sulphur," KX 12 News, http://www.kxii.com/news/headlines/98638914.html; "Chickasaw Cultural Center seeks to preserve tribe's heritage," NewsOK, *The Oklahoman,* http://newsok.com/chickasaw-cultural-center-seeks-to-preserve-tribes-heritage/article/3483613.

20. Author's personal photograph, June 8, 2015.

21. Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 6–8.

22. The Chickasaw Cultural Center serves as a symbol of the Chickasaw Nation and a forum for educating visitors on Chickasaw traditions, history, and contemporary culture. As such, the center's coverage of the Civil War and Reconstruction is representative of the Chickasaw Nation's stance on the events of these eras. As part of the cultural arm of the Chickasaw Nation, the cultural center functions as the tribal government's mouthpiece. It is important to note that the Chickasaw Nation, like all other nations, possesses a citizenry with diverse opinions on the history and culture of their nation. However, the government's narrative is selective, and this pointed selectivity is what is analyzed here.

23. Author's personal photograph, July 8, 2015. I acknowledge the limits and restrictions of museum and cultural center work, such as the word limits imposed on exhibit plaques, which may influence the message the plaques convey. However, I do believe it is still possible to infer what the plaques intend to transmit.

24. Cyrus Harris, "Message of Gov. Harris, of the Chickasaw Nation, to the Legislature," *Nashville Union and American*, June 11, 1861 via Chronicling America, Library of Congress, http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/lccn/sn85038518/1861-06-11/ed-1/seq-1/.

25. Author's personal photographs of the Chickasaw Cultural Center, Sulphur, Oklahoma, July 4, 2015.

26. Author photo of Chickasaw Cultural Center; Littlefield, *The Chickasaw Freedmen*, 6–7.

27. Author photo of Chickasaw Cultural Center.

28. John B. Sanborn to Secretary of the Interior, January 5, 1866, Head Quarters Commission for regulating relations between Freedmen in the Indian Territory and their Former Masters, M234, Roll 837, 34–35; "Treaty with the Choctaw and Chickasaw, 1866," Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties, Charles J. Kappler, Oklahoma State University, https://dc.library.okstate.edu/digital/collection/kapplers/id/26759, accessed May 5, 2016.

29. The Chickasaw Nation, "Benson Pikey," http://www.chickasaw.net/hof/inductees/798.htm.

30. The Chickasaw Nation, "Levi Colbert," http://www.chickasaw.net/hof/inductees/782.htm.

31. "Black Lives Matter protest in Ada honors Anthony Meely, George Floyd," News12, June 5, 2020, https://www.kxii.com/content/news/Black-Lives-Matter-protest-in-Ada-honors-Anthony-Meely-George-Floyd-571061981.html, accessed July 5, 2020.

32. "Ada Residents Rally for Justice," KTEN ABC, June 5, 2020, https://www.kten.com/story/42216524/ada-residents-rally-for-justice, accessed July 5, 2020.

33. Chickasaw Nation, tweet, June 5, 2020, https://twitter.com/ChickasawNation/status/1268994290555981825/photo/1, accessed July 3, 2020.

34. Sarah Elliott, "The Lost Cause in Indian Territory: The Intersection of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Memory of the Civil War in Oklahoma, 1877–1930," paper presented at American Society for Ethnohistory conference, September 26, 2019.

35. United Daughters of the Confederacy, "History of the UDC," https://hqudc.org/history-of-the-united-daughters-of-the-confederacy/, accessed June 25, 2020. These were not erected while this land was under Cherokee control. After Oklahoma statehood in 1907 the Cherokees lost their title to much of their land, but repurchased it after the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act allowed Indian nations to reestablish their governments and purchase land to reconstitute their previous holdings.

36. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage?: Public Symbols of the Confederacy," February 1, 2019, https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy#findings, accessed February 28, 2021.

37. The other Confederate monuments are located in York, South Carolina (four within the boundaries of the Catawba Nation), at the Robeson County courthouse (one within the borders of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina), and two within the Chickasaw Nation. Andrew Dys, "SC Heritage Act Means Fate of Fort Mill Park's 4 Confederate Monuments Won't Be Decided by Public Debate," *The Herald*, August 19, 2017, https://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article168205582.html, accessed March 8, 2021; "2015 Law Provides Path Forward on Confederate Monuments," *Robesonian*, September 2, 2017, https://www.robesonian.com/opinion/102405/2015-law-provides-path-forward-on-confederate-monuments, accessed February 28, 2021; Gail Meyer Kilgore, "A Monument to Wynnewood's Confederate Soldiers," OKGenWeb, https://okgenweb.net/~okgarvin/veterans/wynnewoodconfederate.html, accessed March 8, 2021; Oklahoma Historical Society, "Julia Jackson Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy," Oklahoma Historical Society Historical Marker Program, https://www.okhistory.org/about/markers?action=search&county=Bryan, accessed March 8, 2021. However, it is not known that members of these nations were involved in the erection of these monuments as were members of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma (as discussed here), nor have they been involved in discussions about how they do or do not represent their tribal histories and identities, as have the Cherokees.

38. Here I will not attempt to cite the entire body of literature. Rather, I include a few books that have shaped my thinking about monuments and the current movement to remove them. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*: *A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Patrick Slattery, "Deconstructing Racism One Statue at a Time: Visual Culture Wars at Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Austin," *Visual Arts Research* 32, no. 2 (2006): 28–31; Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: Ferris and Ferris Books, 2021).

39. WTVR CBS 6 Web Staff, "Virginia Leads Country with 71 Confederate Monuments, Symbols Removed in 2020," March 1, 2021, 6 News Richmond, https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/virginia-leads-country-with-71-confederate-monuments-symbols-removed-in-2020, accessed March 4, 2021.

40. Sean Rowley, "Confederate Monuments Erected When Courthouse Was County Building," August 18, 2017, *Tahlequah Daily Press*, https://www.tahlequahdailypress.com/news/confederate-monuments-erected-when-courthouse-was-county-building/article_199e412a-3e3c-5502-a7fd-b3f56e096cee.html?fref=gc&dti=1468939836739242, accessed June 28, 2020.

41. After his first statements made in the press release that accompanied the monument removal, Chief Hoskin wrote two additional statements in the Muskogee Phoenix's "Chief Chats" section—all of which are mentioned in this article. It is possible, of course, that Hoskin is aware of the fact that some of these UDC women were Cherokee but is embarrassed by it, omitting it to escape this blatant connection of Cherokee women with white supremacy.

42. Chuck Hoskin Jr., "Chief Chat: Why We Must Have Difficult Conversations about Race and Justice," *Muskogee Phoenix*, June 13, 2020, https://www.muskogeephoenix.com/news/chief-chat-why-we-must-have-difficult-conversations-about-race-and-justice/article_dbcc4273-8f88-57f7-91ab-9c05ee2d3db1.html, accessed June 13, 2020.

43. Chuck Hoskin Jr., "Chief Chat: Why I Removed Confederate Monuments from the Cherokee Capitol Grounds," *Muskogee Phoenix,* June 20, 2020, https://www.muskogeephoenix.com/news/chief-chat-why-i-removed-confederate-monuments-from-the-cherokee-capitol-grounds/article_1e798eb5-b197-5cc7-bbef-e129125160fa.html, accessed June 25, 2020.