indiVisible

African-Native American Lives in the Americas

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FOREWORD

Since the early days of U.S. history, Native Americans and African Americans have been linked by fate, by choice, and by blood. Terrible and remarkable things have passed over and between our communities, as well as the communities we have created together. This book—and the exhibition it complements—tells some of those stories.

Many museums see it as their primary role to serve as a repository for beautiful objects. This is important work. We are also proud stewards of very important collections. But that is only a part of the work of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. We represent hundreds of dynamic contemporary communities, and as such we serve as forums for conversations of all kinds. The topic of African-Native Americans is one that touches an enormous number of us through our family histories, tribal histories, and personal identities, and a conversation with and about them is long overdue. With this in mind, we have assembled *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*—a multivoice project that acknowledges and honors the histories and contemporary lives of our African-Native American brothers and sisters.

Radmilla Cody, Miss Navajo Nation, and her grandmother, 2006. Radmilla Cody became Miss Navajo in 1997. Although she proved her cultural knowledge, her selection was controversial in the Navajo community because she has mixed-race heritage.

This volume explores how Native and African American lives have been inextricably linked by the binds of systematic oppression, the freedom offered in the expression of creativity, and the displays of bravery by countless individuals who chose to define family, love, or simply *themselves* differently than those around them dared. It affirms how blacks and Indians see one another in our shared histories of genocide and our alienation from our ancestral homelands, and it acknowledges the strength and resilience we recognize in one another today.

We believe this book is both timely and vastly important, not only in terms of illuminating our past and present, but also in terms of what our communities intend to become. We also have no doubt that the project as a whole will be questioned and debated in multiple circles, and we welcome that. *IndiVisible* is not so linear in its approach, nor does it offer tidy solutions. Material drawn from so near the heart seldom is tidy. But it begins to plumb great depths, examining the complicated and very human concept of identity: who we are and where—and to whom—we belong. We are very pleased that the National Museum of the American Indian, in partnership with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, has engaged in a conversation that will help lead to a greater appreciation of African-Native American peoples. And we emphasize that this is the beginning of that conversation. Additional research and programming, together with the multi-city tour organized by our project partner, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), will lead to an increased understanding of these members of our community and the most excellent vitality that they bring to our national cultural fabric.

As Mwalim (Morgan James Peters [Barbados/Mashpee Wampanoag]) points out, "The big myth of the United States is that the races are kept separate." Looking at the face of Native America today, we know that this is, indeed, a "myth." There is a multitude of perspectives to be shared in any conversation about being Indian, about being black, and about being both, and we realize that *IndiVisible* can only hope to scratch this surface. But from a place of respect and gratitude, we say: This is a beginning.

Kevin Gover (Pawnee), Director
National Museum of the American Indian

Lonnie G. Bunch, III, Director
National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crow Nation's Black Eagle family adopted Barack Obama in May 2008 while he campaigned for the presidency. A Crow leader wondered, "We have called the president The Great White Father, so we are not sure what to call you." Photo by James Woodcock.

Jimi Hendrix, The Royal Albert Hall, London, February 18, 1969. Hendrix, who spoke proudly of his Cherokee grandmother, was one of many famous African Americans in the 1960s who cited family traditions linking them to Native ancestry. Photo by Graham F. Page.

GABRIELLE TAYAC

INTRODUCTION

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

—Jimi Hendrix

Jimi Hendrix, virtuoso guitar artist: Cherokee grandmother. Crispus Attucks, sailor and martyr of the American Revolution: Natick mother. Paul Cuffee, a founder of the American Colonization Society, which settled African Americans in Africa: Wampanoag mother. Edmonia Lewis, renowned sculptress: Ojibwe mother. The full stories of their identities cannot be separated from the story of the Americas.

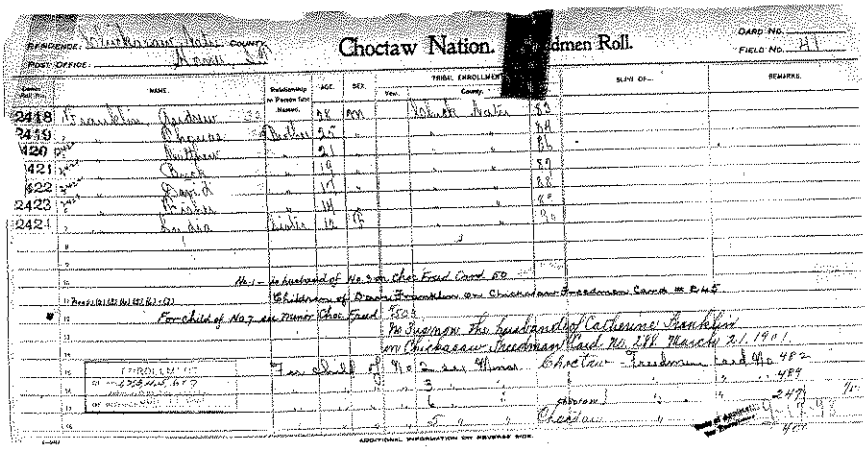
And that story is vast—its full telling just starting to be heard. At the foundation of societies that came to be the Western Hemisphere's modern nations, three major ethnic strands came together in the early colonial period across the Atlantic—Europeans, Natives, and Africans. European colonization of the Americas occurred through the devastating cataclysm of chattel slavery and largely violent dispossession of Native peoples from land, life, and culture. For centuries, history was written by the victors, and the perspectives of African Americans and Native Americans told in their own voices were nearly non-existent. While contemporary attention has been focused more closely on the separate experiences of African Americans and Native Americans, and educational efforts have taught about Indian-white relations and black-white relations, there has been a missing side. An invisible experience with an indivisible reality found in the illumination of centuries-long relationships between African Americans and Native Americans.

In many indigenous conceptions, creation emerges from the ground—the underworld—through the log tunnel from blindness to sight, from being unseen to being visible. Such was the case with this project, as it blossomed after many heroes banded together to bring truth to light. Our work here is not the first step on the path; there has been critical work done by scholars, artists, and family culture bearers to bring us great distances. Quite notably, Jack Forbes, Tiya Miles, Sharon Holland, and Loren Katz are among the groundbreaking scholars who fully embraced the inquiry into, as Dr. Forbes describes, "the language of race and the evolution of red-black peoples." The term African-Native American, after extensive thought and debate among our curatorial team, was determined to be the most accurate term to represent the lived realities of individuals and communities in the intersections of African American and Native American worlds. The signifier "Black Indian" certainly resonated with some of mixed heritage, but many felt that it obscured the complexities of tribal affiliation and African American identity as well as the historic ties to aboriginal landbases.

IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas emerged from the deepest grassroots of our museum's host city, Washington, D.C. Soon after the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) opened in 2004, a visitor closely scrutinized a wall of faces in the exhibit *Our Lives: Contemporary Native Identity*. These faces of contemporary Native people show the incredible diversity of current indigenous peoples and demonstrate, after centuries of intermarriage and cultural dynamism, that there are many ways to look like a "real Indian." This visitor, Louise Thundercloud, noted that there were several individuals on the wall who appeared African American. She most closely zeroed in on the photo of my longtime friend Penny Gamble-Williams, a striking woman with long dreadlocks clearly showing her African American heritage while her wampum shell earrings represent her membership in the Chappaquiddick Wampanoag tribe. Louise quite rightfully wondered: the museum shows that mixed African American and Native American heritage exists, but where is the story behind the picture?

Armed with the question and determined to move NMAI to action, Louise located Penny, an artist, and her husband, Thunder, an Afro-Carib lawyer now retired from the Justice Department. The couple had been a powerhouse of activism on behalf of Native causes in the D.C. area for decades. Starting in the office of the American Indian Movement's Longest Walk in 1978, Penny and Thunder eventually focused their work on the revelation of the Black Indian

Buck Colbert Franklin (right) **and his older brother Matthew**, ca. 1899. Buck Colbert Franklin, the father of renowned African American historian John Hope Franklin, was named after his grandfather, who had been a slave of a Chickasaw family in Oklahoma. Buck Franklin became a lawyer, notably defending survivors of the Tulsa Riots in 1921 which had resulted in the murder of 300 African Americans. Courtesy John W. Franklin



Choctaw Freedmen roll, ca. 1907–08. Buck Colbert Franklin's father was a Chickasaw Freedman and his mother was one-quarter Choctaw. His family is listed on the roll shown here.

experience and they frequently probe the topic on their radio show, *The Talking Feather*. Of particular concern was the healing from historic trauma as well as the building of awareness, spiritual strength, and pride. In the D.C. area, there had been various organizations over a number of years formed specifically to bring African-Native American people together. So when Penny and Thûnder put together the proposal for NMAI to formally engage a project to address the history and contemporary cultures of mixed heritage people, with the input of Louise and others galvanized by common cause, there was simply no other response but for the museum to say yes. NMAI was not alone in answering the call—the newly chartered National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) joined the project as well.

This was not work to be done by an "expert" alone. Traversing the hundreds of years of racism, fear, and denial which has left communities, families, and individuals deeply scarred at many levels requires collective courage to bring a hidden history to light. Thus, it was fortunate that the intrepid Fred Nahwooksy, who has extensive experience in community museum work as well as in curating exhibitions, fully launched the project at NMAI. Using a collaborative approach learned from his work in the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Fred cast a wide net which quickly caught me in it. When he first asked me to serve as the coordinating curator for the exhibit, I was hesitant. The topic can be excruciatingly controversial in both Native and African American communities. Coming from a small Chesapeake regional tribe with mixed European and African American heritage, I was intrigued by the fact that only the latter had been submerged for centuries; I was not so sure I was ready to face what could become a racialized storm. Previous meetings on the topic at other institutions had degenerated into divisive and emotional shouting matches about who was a "real Indian," who "did not want to be black," and who won the vote for most oppressed. Later academic sessions, such as those at Haskell Indian Nations University in 2006 and at the first meeting of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association in 2007, had pushed beyond the initial explosive engagements, demonstrating perhaps how those dealing with these issues were processing historic grief. So, on a more lucid second thought, I knew that this was the moment for an advancement of truth and reconciliation. Much solid scholarship and clear thinking had been done in the past years, and by providing opportunities for constructive dialogue through an internationally

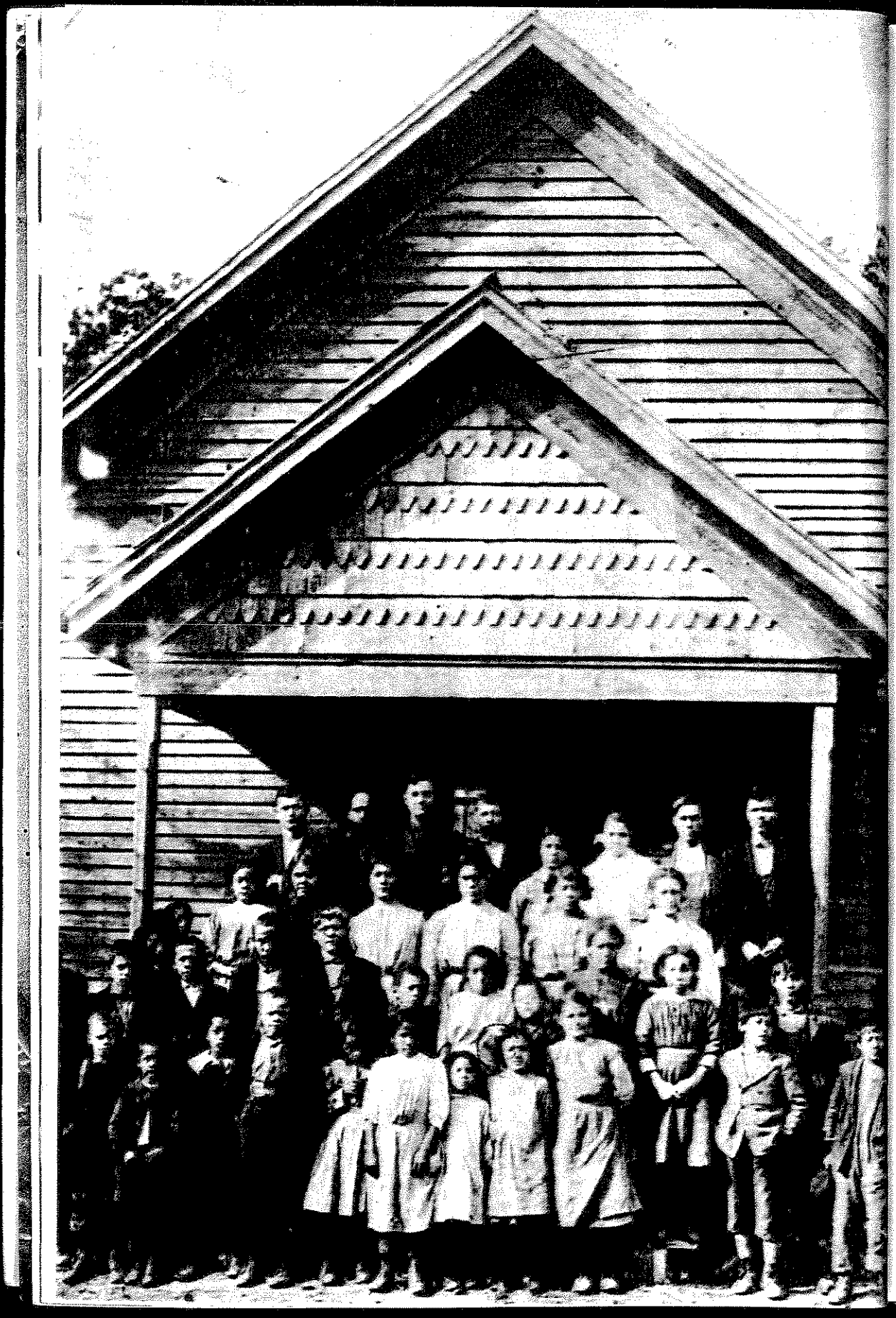
positioned venue, the Smithsonian had made it clear that *IndiVisible* was ready for primetime.

Five great thinkers who center their life's work on understanding identity at the crossroads of race and tribal sovereignty honorably took up the challenge. Penny Gamble-Williams and Thunder Williams have keen insight into the emotional, spiritual, and political ways that African-Native American lives are lived. Judy Kertész, a doctoral student at Harvard University, had demonstrated profound understandings of the intersections of power, racism, and representation. Angela Gonzales, a Hopi sociologist on the faculty at Cornell University, has deeply analyzed the impact of identity policy on American Indians at the macro-level. Robert Keith Collins, a Choctaw/African American anthropologist at San Francisco State, has worked on more fully describing how personal identities can be categorized among race, tribal status, culture, and sovereignty. Rob came up with the insightful title *IndiVisible*.

We realized that neither a small traveling exhibit nor another book on African-Native American experiences could ever completely fill out the history and contemporary situations of African-Native people. By not limiting ourselves to case studies, we were able to provide a series of cornerstone themes so that those who want to pursue further understanding could process new information and findings in an organized way. Readers will find four main lenses through which to consider African-Native American lives: racial policy, community, creative resistance (both peaceful and militant), and lifeways. These four themes framed the publication and provided the outline for identifying contributors.

This book brings together twenty-seven scholars who formed for us a brain trust from which to develop the content of the exhibit. They crafted a solid academic foundation for both the exhibition and the publication. We also valued community culture bearers as much as academically trained writers in the formation of the project. The book and exhibit complement, rather than replicate, one another.

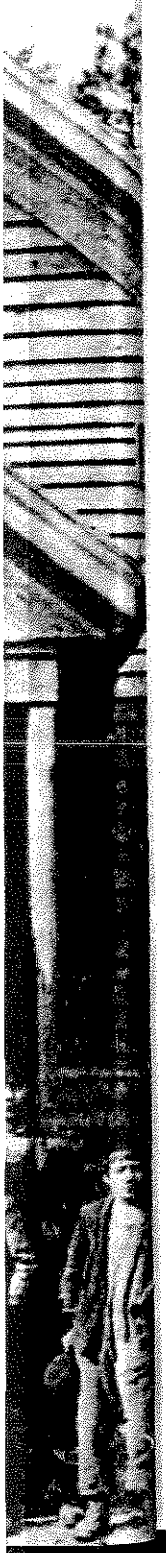
Ultimately, *IndiVisible* goes beyond its subject matter. All human beings express the basic desire for being and belonging. Revealing a particular aspect of this fact through the examination of African-Native American lives can help everyone to more deeply look into their own identities, origins, and the forces that make us who we are. May we all overcome with the power of love, not the love of power.



THEDA PERDUE

NATIVE AMERICANS, AFRICAN AMERICANS, AND JIM CROW

Generalizations about relationships between American Indians and African Americans are difficult to make. Time, place, and circumstance shaped specific interactions, but European imperialism and colonization set the overall parameters. The nature of relations was neither inevitable nor uniform, and interactions ran the gamut from amity to enmity. European power in the South rested initially on African labor and Indian land, so from the very beginning colonizers had a vested interest in regulating the races. By the time the United States emancipated its slaves, a pattern of interaction had developed that pitted the two peoples against each other. Southern whites then tried to classify them as "colored," a category in which African Americans overwhelmingly outnumbered the surviving remnants of southern Indians. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, legislatures passed Jim Crow laws that mandated separate transport, public accommodations, schools, hospital wards, prison cells, and so on for white and colored. These laws usually did not distinguish between African Americans and Native Americans, and in the face of biracial segregation, southern Indians struggled to maintain their identities and establish institutions that expressed that identity.



New Bethel Indian School, New Bethel Township, Sampson County, North Carolina, early twentieth century.

Alexander de Batz (1685–1737), *Desseins de Sauvages de Plusieurs Nations*, 1735. PM 41-72-10/2. The caption reads, "Indians of several nations bound for New Orleans." The artist labeled each *esclave* (slave) by tribe; an African boy is also noted.

Except in Louisiana, race relations in the South grew out of the English colonial experience.[1] Commerce formed the basis of early English relations with Indians, and the production of tobacco, rice, and other agricultural commodities soon eclipsed the deerskin trade in profitability. Native people unwillingly contributed both land and labor to this enterprise. Until the 1720s, Indians comprised a significant proportion of the enslaved labor force on southern plantations. Captured by enemy warriors or colonial militias, many Indian slaves were deported to the Caribbean, but others worked alongside African slaves on mainland plantations. Even as their proportion relative to African slaves declined, their identifiable presence remained until the end of the eighteenth century.[2] The imbalance in the sex ratio—a higher proportion of African men and Indian women—encouraged marriage, and both the people and the culture that slaves produced on colonial plantations, especially in the South Carolina Low Country, owed much to Native America.[3]

Outside slavery, relations between Indians and Africans were more complicated and more varied. Southern Indians had no inherent antipathy for Africans

and initially regarded Africans, like Europeans, merely as outsiders. The nature of encounters depended on specific circumstances, and Indians fought Africans, traded with them, married them, captured them, adopted them, and enslaved them. Colonists, however, feared collusion, and they worked to divide Indians and Africans—especially in South Carolina, where the two groups dramatically outnumbered the colonists—by employing Indians as slave catchers and terrifying African slaves with tales of Indian savagery.[4]

Indians were astute observers and quick learners. By the late eighteenth century, southern Indians increasingly adopted the views of the colonists: Africans were the last human link in the great chain of being, decidedly inferior to both Europeans and Indians. By the nineteenth century, intermarriage with African Americans had declined in most southern Indian communities, and some Indians were acquiring African American slaves as part of a more general cultural reorientation. Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks had the most formal, legalistic, and clearly articulated racial codes, and they not only legalized slavery but also restricted the rights of free African Americans and Indians of African descent. Cultural values changed slowly, however, and Indians continued to forge bonds with African Americans beyond the master-slave relationship.[5] Unlike the other large southern Indian nations, the Seminoles developed a tributary system in which African Americans lived in their own villages but paid rent to the tribe and joined them in armed struggle against removal.[6]

Removal of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole nations in the 1830s to what is today eastern Oklahoma eliminated most Indian slaveholders from the Southeast. Those who remained, such as Greenwood Leflore (Choctaw), tended to identify with white southern planters, and their descendants often became ethnically white. Like their relatives in Oklahoma, most of them supported the Confederacy in the Civil War (Leflore, however, flew the United States flag over his Mississippi mansion throughout the war). Perhaps more surprising, southern Indians who were not planters and owned few slaves also joined the Confederacy. Today, a monument in the central plaza of the Alabama-Coushatta reservation in east Texas commemorates their service to the Confederacy, as does a memorial in Fort Mill, South Carolina, which celebrates the twenty Catawbas who wore the gray. Landless and impoverished Mississippi Choctaws and Cherokees from the mountains of western North Carolina also served in the Confederate army.[7] Other Indians declined. Regarded as "free people of color" by North Carolina, Lumbees in the eastern part of the state

resisted forced labor on coastal fortifications. Instead, they fought a guerilla war against the Confederacy, and joined by African Americans and poor whites, the conservative Democratic regime that arose during Reconstruction.[8]

At the end of the Civil War, only the Alabama-Coushattas in Texas, the Chitimachas and Tunica-Biloxies in Louisiana, the Catawbas in South Carolina, the Cherokees in North Carolina, and the Pamunkeys and Mattaponis in Virginia had tribal land, and no Indian tribe in the old Confederacy enjoyed any sort of federal protection. Congress recognized the Eastern Band of Cherokees in 1868 in order to file suit on their behalf to clear land titles, but no other southern tribe gained federal recognition until after World War I. In the absence of a federal status, all southern Indians—with the possible exception of the Cherokees, whose status was contested until 1930—were subject to state laws.

The brief period of Reconstruction offered some hope for a racially equitable society, but the opportunity ended with the "redemption" of state governments by Democrats. In the absence of slavery, they imposed their racial order through Jim Crow laws. Because these politicians sought to protect whiteness, they rarely distinguished between Indians and African Americans, lumping all non-whites together as "colored." Only Florida included Indians specifically in a Reconstruction constitution by providing them with one representative in each house of the legislature, but the constitutional convention of 1885 omitted this provision.[9] Florida also recognized the Seminoles' presence by prohibiting the sale of alcohol to Indians—a demeaning concession to stereotype.[10]

Most laws concerned miscegenation.[11] In 1873, North Carolina prohibited unions between whites and African Americans or Indians, and in 1879, South Carolina declared, "Marriage between a white person and an Indian, Negro, mulatto, mestizo, or half-breed shall be null and void."[12] Subsequent laws, including one that prohibited marriage between African Americans and the Lumbees of North Carolina, augmented these early antimiscegenation statutes.[13] Virginia prohibited intermarriage between Indians and whites, but to enforce the law, the state had to delineate race very carefully. The legislature defined as white a person who had no African American ancestry and was one-sixteenth or less Indian, thereby affirming the whiteness of prominent citizens who claimed descent from the state's most famous Indian—Pocahontas. In the 1920s the state decided that it had no Indians at all except the few who lived on two tiny reservations established by the colonial government in the seventeenth century. Everyone else was black or white.[14] In addition to these three states, Louisiana

outlawed "concubinage" between Indians and African Americans in 1920, but in 1942 dropped this provision from its code because it "had little social utility."[15] Few states established separate schools or other institutions legislatively. Mississippi and North Carolina passed laws in the 1880s to provide separate schools for Indians, but only North Carolina consistently offered segregated state facilities for Indians.[16] Otherwise, Jim Crow law codes were silent on the subject of Indians.

Southern states enforced Jim Crow laws with violence and intimidation rather than judicial action. African Americans bore the brunt of such treatment, but Indians suffered as well. The most brutal assault on Indians took place in 1901 in Charenton, Louisiana, where a white mob attacked a Chitimacha family living on tribal land and murdered a woman and two men. The assailants apparently intended to kill all the Indians in the small community, but local priests stopped them.[17] The NAACP log of lynchings in the New South included no Indian victims, but the danger was both omnipresent and real.[18] Thwarted attempts to lynch a Cherokee man accused of rape and murder in North Carolina and three Lumbee men under indictment for robbery and murder in Georgia suggest that Indians were, like African Americans, victims of vigilantism.[19]

Most Indians, however, did not make common cause with African Americans in their struggle against Jim Crow. Clearly defined Indian communities began to police their own racial boundaries, discouraging unions with African Americans but generally not whites. Native people also usually refused to patronize institutions established by and for African Americans. As southern states established public school systems, enacted compulsory school-attendance laws, and created public services such as mental hospitals and schools for the deaf and blind, they declined to provide separate institutions for Indians. Although the United States furnished schools and medical care for the Cherokees before World War I and the Seminoles, Chitimachas, Coushattas, Alabama-Coushattas, and Mississippi Choctaws between the world wars, most southern Indians had neither the treaties nor trust land that required such services. When the Office of Indian Affairs tried to pressure states to assume responsibility for Indians, the states replied that "colored" institutions were open to them.[20]

Indians, however, refused to attend schools with African Americans or avail themselves of other "colored" services. In many cases, they set up their own subscription schools by collecting funds to hire a teacher who held classes in

their churches. In the early twentieth century, for example, Coharie people in the Shiloh community of North Carolina paid two or three dollars each a month to hire a teacher for their school.[21] Missionary societies also set up segregated schools strictly for Indians. Episcopalians, for example, established missions among the Seminoles, Monacans, and Poarch Creeks; Baptists supported schools among the Houmas and MOWA Choctaws; Catholics operated a church, school, and farming program among the Mississippi Choctaws; and Mormons provided most teachers for the Catawba school.

Despite official commitment to a biracial system, some southern states provided schools for Indians. In the 1890s, Mississippi established an Indian school system for Mississippi Choctaws, who had sustained literacy in their own language through instruction in Choctaw Baptist churches. Texas supported a separate school for the Alabama-Coushattas, and South Carolina contributed to the support of the Catawba school. Alabama offered some funding to Indian schools, but as was the case in most southern states, mission societies and parents bore much of the burden of educating Indian children in Indian schools.[22] Virginia provided a school for the Pamunkeys and Mattaponis who lived on small reservations and also contributed to some other Indian schools, although the 1924 Racial Integrity Law denied the existence of nonreservation Indians.[23] Further belying this law, Virginia paid North Carolina to permit members of the tribe now known as Sappony, who lived across the state line, to attend the High Plains Indian School in Person County. The only state to consistently provide Indian schools was North Carolina, which established a school system for the Lumbees in Robeson County in 1885 and a normal school to provide teachers in 1887. Subsequently, other Indian communities in the state managed to open segregated schools with state or county support.[24]

In their own schools, Indians carefully monitored the color line and resisted any link to African Americans. The Pamunkeys, ethnologist John Pollard observed in the late nineteenth century, "probably acknowledge the whites as their equals, [but] they consider the blacks far beneath their social level. Their feeling toward the negro is well illustrated by their recent indignant refusal to accept a colored teacher, who was sent them by the superintendent of public instruction to conduct the free school which the State furnishes them."[25] In the 1920s the Waccamaw community in Horry County, South Carolina, objected to the school board's attempt to classify their school as "colored" but accepted a "white" classification, the only alternative in the state's biracial system.[26]

The absence of institutions for the higher education of Indians severely limited their educational opportunities. Admission to Croatan Normal School, established for the people now known as Lumbees, was open only to them. For tribes whom the United States had recognized, some opportunities existed in federally supported schools. The superintendent of the Cherokee reservation for example wrote in 1916 that Moses Owl, who wanted to learn a trade, needed admission to Carlisle because he was "by reason of his blood barred from attending such a school in North Carolina outside of a Negro institution."[27] Hampton Institute, founded for African American Freedmen, had an Indian department, but it was separate from the program for African American students and therefore carried none of the shame associated with attending a strictly "colored" institution.[28] A few students risked opprobrium by attending African American schools. A young MOWA Choctaw man concealed his whereabouts from his people when he enrolled in an African American school because he recognized that "there is much race prejudice even among themselves. . . . [H]e knows how they will feel toward him should they know he is going to a Negro school."[29]

Indians and whites carefully scrutinized the ancestry of those who attended Indian schools. Indeed, public funding of separate schools rested on the Indians' willingness to discriminate against people with African ancestry. The North Carolina legislature established a school for the Coharies in Sampson County in 1911 but repealed the legislation two years later when the Coharies admitted the children of an Indian man who had married a woman of known African ancestry. Subsequently, Coharie parents had to convert their public school to a subscription school.[30] In 1921, the North Carolina legislature created a "blood" committee, composed of tribal members, to determine whom to admit to their Indian schools.[31] In the 1920s, the Cherokees demanded that the children of an African-Cherokee family be excluded from the federal boarding school on their reservation. "Some of the more self-respecting Indians among the full bloods have told me," their superintendent wrote, "that the minute the Colemans were enrolled in the Cherokee Boarding School they would withdraw their children from the school." Furthermore, he anticipated the reaction of local whites: "If we take into our school a bunch of to all appearances Negroes we will have lost the respect of the whites and our school will be classed little better than a Negro school."[32] Among the Mississippi Choctaws, the federal government withheld a school from the Choctaw community in Union County out of fear

A Seminole Indian elder and historian (Billy Bowlegs III, 1862-1965), said to be a descendant of an African American intermarriage with a Seminole, adopted the name of the legendary resistance fighter Billy Bowlegs II (1810–1864). The "patchwork" pattern covering his turban expresses the influence of African *oupispisi* (bits and pieces)—sewing typical of the Suriname Maroons and Ashanti who married into the tribe.

that it might become associated with a local minister who was "believed to be a Negro by great many of the people of that community."[33] As late as 1954 the Poarch Creeks in Alabama insisted that an Indian woman whose children had an African American father withdraw the youngsters from their state-funded Indian school.[34]

The negative reaction of southern Indians to African Americans has several sources. First of all, Indians took pride in being the original inhabitants of the continent. Philip Martin, a long-time Mississippi Choctaw chief, explained: "The Choctaws were here in Mississippi before anybody. When the white people came they brought with them the Negroes as their slaves."[35] Indians also had always been free, many believed, another factor that distinguished them from people

of African descent. In their appeal for reinstatement of their public school, the Coharies emphasized their status: "These people were never slaves and from the memory of the oldest white inhabitants have always been free men. There is no record that they ever purchased their freedom from former white men. They were never born nor sold into slavery; they were found living in this country as free and separate people as long ago as we have any record of them."[36] The acceptance of the same status as the descendants of slaves would have challenged the foundation of Indian identity.

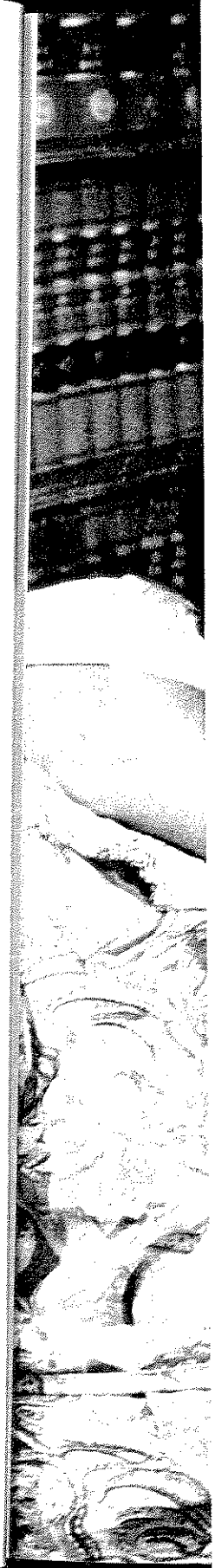
The European intellectual legacy distinguished between Indians and Africans. The institution of slavery, for example, gradually eschewed the enslavement of Indians (except under fictions that defined them as African), and the acquisition of African slaves by many southern Indians simply reiterated the message that Africans were suitable for slavery and Indians were not. The attempt of the New South to simplify its racial hierarchy ran counter to that longstanding conception of the races. Indians had learned from Europeans to despise Africans, and Indians dashed white expectations that they would accept assignment to the category of "colored" along with African Americans. Indeed, the lesson grew more compelling in the postbellum world, where race rather than status—slave or free—shaped the contours of individual lives. The Seminoles in Florida, for example, had been more likely to accept African Americans into their society before the Civil War than afterward, when they outlawed intermarriage with people of African descent—even those of Seminole ancestry who had always lived among them.[37]

Recognition of a distinct Indian identity also rested on the survival of cultural traditions. In the late nineteenth century, a host of Native languages were still spoken in the Southeast. These included nearly extinct languages such as Ofo, Biloxi, and Atakapa; threatened languages such as Chitimacha and Catawba; and perfectly healthy languages such as Alabama, Coushatta, Miccosukee, Muskogee (Seminole), Choctaw, and Cherokee, which are still spoken today. Southern Indians continued Native craft traditions that ranged from the basketry of the Cherokees and Chitimachas to the pottery of the Pamunkeys and Catwabas to the house construction of the Seminoles and St. Tammany Parish Choctaws. Southern Indians hunted with traditional tools such as rabbit sticks, blowguns, and clay lanterns, and they ate traditional foods such as *coontie*, *sofkee*, bean bread, and *sochani*. Native religious beliefs and practices remained strong in some Indian communities, especially among the Seminoles, who com-

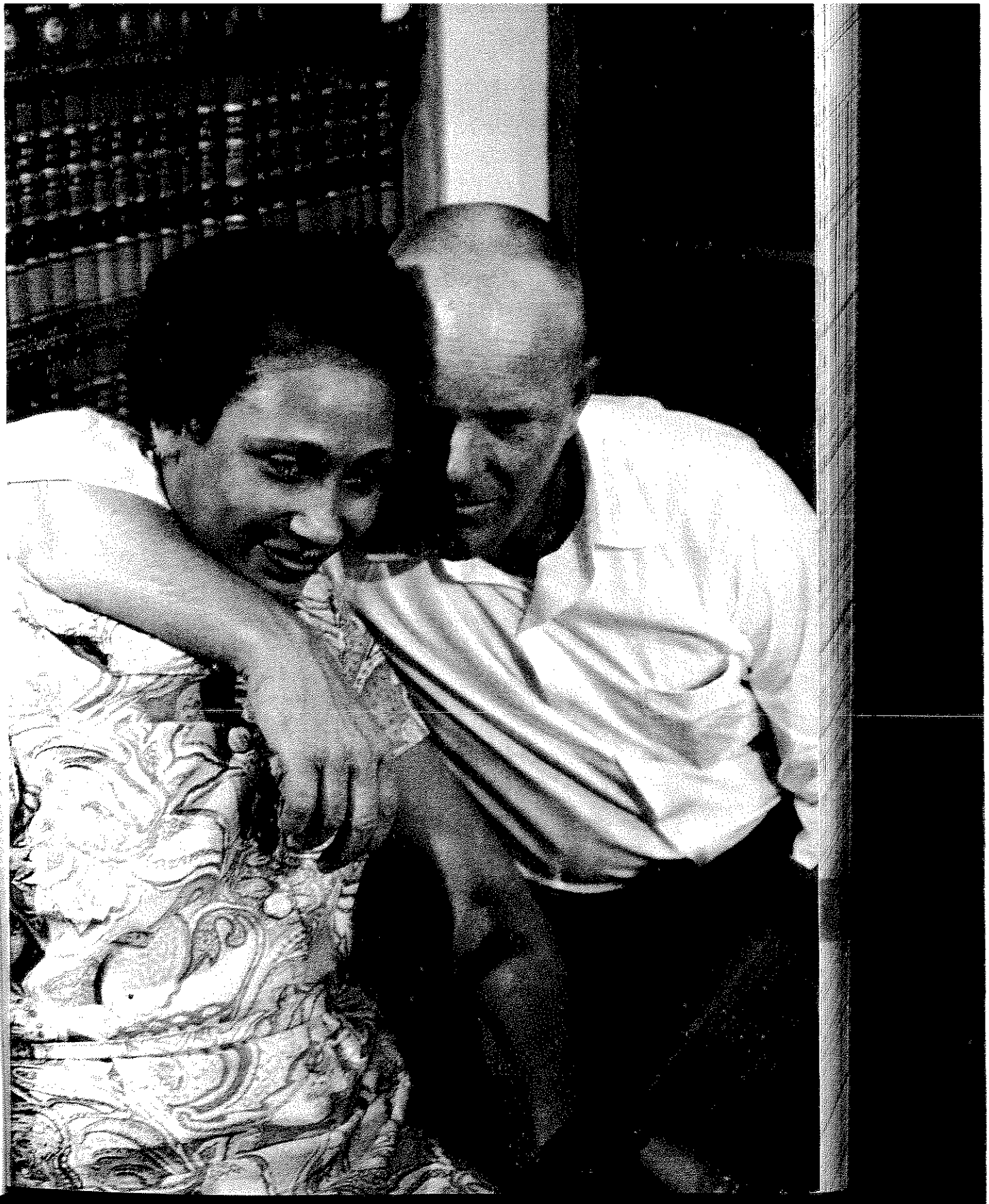
pletely rejected Christianity until the 1930s and even today are sharply divided between Christians and non-Christians. Some Choctaws and Seminoles even wore distinctive clothing into the last half of the twentieth century, perhaps so that whites could readily distinguish them from African Americans.[38]

Native people also realized that they constituted an extremely small minority among the "colored" population of the New South.[39] Their identities and whatever cultural traditions expressed those identities were at risk if southern Natives were redefined as African American. Therefore, southern Indians scrupulously guarded their racial boundaries. One of the patrons of the Chitimacha basketmakers recognized the danger of racial reclassification when she wrote in 1916 that they "refuse to send their children to the schools for negro children, holding themselves as a superior race, and realizing that intermarriage with negroes would mean their extermination."[40] This was not a baseless fear. In 1969, a lawyer in Marksville, Louisiana, home of a community of Tunica-Biloxi Indians, told a representative of the National Congress of American Indians that "all the Indians have gone. They've either married white or black, and that's what they are now—either white or black."[41]

The African American response to Indian insistence on separateness is not clear. A survey of the *Richmond Planet* (1883–1938) reveals few articles on Indians, no doubt because other issues loomed far larger for the African American community. At least two prominent late-nineteenth-century African American writers seem to have regarded the Lumbees not as Indians but as mulattoes. African American journalist Jack Thorne labeled the Lumbee hero Henry Berry Lowry (who resisted the Confederacy, Republicans, and Redeemers) an "octoroon" and named his people descendants of "free negroes." Thorne conceded that Lumbee ancestry was "Saxon, Indian and negro" and that they had an "aversion for social mingling or intermarriage with blacks," but he clearly considered their racial category to be "Negro."[42] The African American characters in novelist Charles Chesnutt's *Mandy Oxendine*, a novel about passing for white in eastern North Carolina, have surnames characteristic of the Lumbee community.[43] Chesnutt, who recognized that Lumbees had Native ancestry, which he described as



Husband and wife Richard (1933–1975) and Mildred Loving (1939–2008) embracing at a press conference the day after the Supreme Court ruled in their favor in *Loving v. Virginia*, June 13, 1967. The court, in a unanimous verdict, overturned Virginia's antimiscegenation statute, which had resulted in the Loving's arrest shortly after they married in 1958. Widely recognized as African American, Loving also asserted her Rappahannock Indian ancestry.



Tuscarora "blood," nevertheless regarded them as descendants of "free colored people."[44] Whoever their ancestors might have been, the members of this community are generally considered African American in his writings.

The belief that eastern North Carolina Indians were really mulattoes survived into the twentieth century and endures even today. A particularly bizarre expression of this conviction came from Clyde Pulley, an African American man who tried legally to force his estranged Haliwa-Saponi wife to renounce her Indian identity in favor of an African American one. In the 1970s, he peppered North Carolina officials and the Bureau of Indian Affairs with demands that they respond to the fraud he believed tribal leaders had committed in 1965 when they obtained a court order to change the birth certificates of tribal members from "colored" to "Indian." During the era of segregation, the county registrar had refused to register Indians as such, and when attitudes changed, leaders of the Indian community succeeded in having the error corrected. When Pulley married his wife, Ella Richardson, she was legally "colored," but unknown to her husband, she had changed her official race, just as the rest of her family had. Pulley was outraged: "I am very proud of my own race, yet found out after we were married that my wife's race had been changed from Colored to Indian." He was quite certain that her family's objective was "to pass from the black world into the white world and for other reasons to suit their personal desires."[45]

Other African Americans reacted differently to their Indian neighbors. Sociologist Brewton Berry examined the attitudes of African Americans toward Indians in South Carolina in the mid-twentieth century. He found that African Americans were quite willing for Indians to attend their schools, but they were wary of social interaction with them. People he interviewed regarded Indians as clannish, lazy, and mean. Berry's informants also resented the "attitude" of local Indians: "They think they are too good." Several informants thought that the Indians were trying to be white and that they avoided interaction with African Americans to curry favor with whites: "If there are any white people around they tend to snub Negroes, because they like to pretend they are white." Some felt sorry about the fact that the South's biracial system had no place for Indians, but one person expressed disgust that Indians would not enlist in the common struggle against racial discrimination: "They think they can solve their problem with feathers. . . . They ought to forget all that foolishness and join with us. We could do more for them than anybody else."[46]

With a few exceptions, antagonism between Indians and African Americans largely obviated cooperation in the civil rights movement. In Robeson County, North Carolina, Lumbees and African Americans cooperated on voting rights, and Tunica-Biloxis secured the right to vote in Louisiana's Avoyelles Parish as a result of the broader civil rights movement.[47] But generally, Indians thought that their interests did not coincide with those of the movement. Choctaw chief Philip Martin expressed the views of many: "In a nutshell, the white and Negro problem is one of their own making. In my opinion, the basis of the Indian problem is entirely different. History can prove that the Indians once were the owners of these lands. The white people came here as intruders."[48] As Vine Deloria, Jr., pointed out in *Custer Died for Your Sins*, the civil rights movement sought to incorporate African Americans into the American mainstream, while Indians wanted recognition of the sovereign rights of Native nations.[49] For that reason, many Indian people actually advocated segregation. The Lumbees protested the integration of their schools, and the Poarch Creeks supported the campaigns of George Wallace because, as their chief phrased it, "We believe in voluntary segregation. We believe people should be allowed to associate with others on a voluntary basis that is mutual."[50]

The failure of Indians and African Americans to join together to battle Jim Crow was a legacy of European imperialism. Europeans had fostered and exploited divisions between Africans and Indians in the colonial period. With the removal of most southern Indians in the 1830s, southerners no longer needed to promote hostility. After the Civil War, when slavery had ceased to regulate race relations, elite white southerners turned instead to the segregation of white and "colored." Classifying Indians and African Americans together as members of a "colored" underclass provoked Indian resistance, which they expressed not so much by assailing Jim Crow as by demanding their own separate institutions. In doing so, Indians transformed the racism they had learned under European tutelage into a nationalist struggle for sovereignty.

Through the concepts of policy, community, creative resistance, and lifeways, *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* examines the long overlooked history of Native American and African American intersections.

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—Gabrielle Tayac (Piscataway)

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