

Get Involved!

Freedmen Futures is dedicated to education and community outreach. We're not looking to argue about which group has suffered the most or to blame present-day tribal citizens for the actions of their ancestors.

We want to connect tribal citizens and freedmen, restore knowledge that has been lost about our joint community, and work toward a shared, equitable future.



Visit **@FreedmenFutures** on Instagram to hear from Chickasaw and Choctaw tribal citizens and freedmen who support our cause.



Visit **www.FreedmenFutures.com** to find suggested additional reading and learn more about the work Freedmen Futures is doing to educate and bring together tribal citizens and freedmen in Oklahoma and around the country.

Our mission: Educate | Repair | Reconcile



You may have heard a few things about **Chickasaw & Choctaw Freedmen**, but give us a chance to set the record straight.

Educate | Repair | Reconcile

From the late 1600s on, Chickasaws and Choctaws were pressured by Europeans and Americans to change their culture. White people wanted them to dress differently, worship differently, speak differently, and think about their relationship to land and property differently.

This pressure resulted in some Chickasaw and Choctaw citizens choosing to become slaveholders in the late 1700s and early 1800s. While only a small percentage, these slaveholding leading men changed tribal laws to ensure they were able to harshly punish their Black slaves and restrict them from learning to read and write.

Both Native and Black women and men faced oppression from white settlers, but Native slaveholders benefitted from the labor of enslaved Black people.

When the Chickasaws and Choctaws were forced to leave their home and move hundreds of miles away to the West, Black slave women and men came along with them, enduring the same hardships on the Trail of Tears.

During slavery, some Chickasaws and Choctaws married or had sexual relationships with enslaved Black people. So, some—but not all—freedmen have Native ancestry.

However, to survive, ALL enslaved people had to learn how to speak at least some Chickasaw or Choctaw, how to cook Chickasaw or Choctaw foods, and how to plant medicinal crops and heal themselves and others using Chickasaw or Choctaw ways. For almost 100 years, they shared a culture with their Chickasaw and Choctaw enslavers and formed relationships with their non-slaveholder Chickasaw and Choctaw neighbors.

After the Civil War, the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations signed a treaty with the United States agreeing to consider granting freedmen citizenship. In 1885, the Choctaw Nation changed their constitution to allow freedmen citizenship. The Chickasaw Nation advised U.S. Congress that they wanted to make a similar decision, but for unknown reasons this did not proceed.

Many freedmen still live in Oklahoma, within the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations. They have last names that they share with tribal citizens, like Stephenson/Stevenson, Roberts, Colbert, Pitchlynn, Ligon, Love, and more. Freedmen are your neighbors and people you went to school with.

Freedmen want the history they shared with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations to be acknowledged, because it's important that we accept all our history, even when it's uncomfortable. Just as the United States must acknowledge its history of Native American dispossession, boarding schools, and dispossession, so, too, must the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations be honest about the reasons there were Black people who lived within their tribal borders for generations.

Blood quantum is a creation of colonizers. Before Europeans came, shared history and adoption were the way Native people created community.

Choctaw Freedmen were Choctaw citizens for almost 100 years before being kicked out of the nation in 1983, only around FORTY years ago. Nothing had changed to erase their shared past with the Choctaw people. They want their citizenship back.

Chickasaw Freedmen want the citizenship their ancestors filed multiple lawsuits trying to obtain in the late 1800s and early 1900s because this would validate their shared Chickasaw ancestry and their ancestors' labor that helped rebuild the nation after Removal.