



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2016 Volume I: Contemporary American Indian History

Relationships of African Americans and Creeks in Oklahoma to 1936

Curriculum Unit 16.01.06, published September 2016

by Patricia Hodge

Introduction

Having been born and raised in Oklahoma, a state home to many American Indian tribes, I have always identified as Native American. My family tells stories of the ancestors from North Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama who escaped the Dawes commission and refused to be registered as Indians. My family is not the only one that identifies with “Native America” and “Native Oklahoma,” both very apt slogans of the Department of Tourism in the state of Oklahoma. Most Oklahomans would say they have Native American heritage. Last year, I asked my students how many had Native ancestors. Close to 70 percent said they did. However, when I asked how many have a CDIB card (proof of Indian blood) or a tribal membership card, less than 10 percent said yes. Why then do we self-identify? Is identification the same as having blood quantum and how does that work with the few that have actual citizenship in an American Indian tribe?

As a teacher in a Title 1 school from an urban district in Tulsa Oklahoma, I see generational poverty, poor education, lack of motivation and a crisis of identity. I am not sure of the exact percentage, but anecdotally about half my students come from families involved with drugs, gangs, welfare, unemployment, and the criminal justice system. My kids are looking for a something to believe in and a way out. Therefore, my question becomes what can I teach them about Native American Indians in the United States that will connect to their lives? Seventy-five percent of my students are either African American or mixed race with only 5 percent statistically identified as American Indian. So why did almost 70 percent say they were Indian? This seeming disparity has to do with the long history of the relationships between American Indians, European Americans and African Americans and the unique history of Oklahoma.

In order for my students to understand current issues with American Indians, we really have to explore the history of the African Americans and American Indians. With the high percentage of mixed Native and Afro-American blood, the historical relationships between Natives and African Americans are not only interesting to my students but are also helpful in understanding some of the current controversies American Indians are facing today. I wanted to look at all of the Five “Civilized” Tribes (hereafter referred to as the Five Tribes). However, there is so much information that it is almost impossible to cover it all. I have narrowed my focus onto one tribe, the Muscogee (Creeks). The relationship of the Creeks with African Americans is a long and intricate one, but I think it is a good window into understanding a lot of the relationships seen across the country. The complications of tribal citizenship, blood quantum, ethnic identity and tribal self-determination

are a microcosm of what happened in the larger history of the United States, including the larger issues of slavery, removal, reservations, allotment, termination, citizenship, Jim Crow laws, civil rights and Native identity.

This unit will encompass several parts of United States history that will spread over the course of the school year. Each period of US historical development will include a part of the unit. The mapping of each part of the unit and Oklahoma state standards will be discussed later. I will also include a sample of a lesson plan and activities from the period of allotment that will eventually be a part of a student's exploration of assimilation vs. Jim Crow, forced integration vs forced segregation. The unit is also a perfect fit for Oklahoma history classes, as it will touch on topics and standards from Colonization to the New Deal. Please see the appendix on State Standards for more information.

It is worth taking a moment to explain names and the use of labels. There are times in the unit that I use the terms Blacks, Whites, Natives and Indians. Much of the scholarly work and primary sources I use in the unit also use these terms. These terms are still in wide use in Oklahoma, and for my students, will be clearer than the terminology of African American, European American, and American Indian. Therefore, it is probably necessary to define the limits of each term and explain the changing definitions according to the historical context.

The Creeks, including the largest band, Muscogee, have at different times in their history included those who are Full-blood Native, Mixed Blood, Afro-Creek, and Freedmen. I will use the term Native or Indian to refer to people who have some level of blood quantum even though in the most common usage it would include all those who identify as American Indian. I use the term white interchangeably with European American. The terms black and Negro will sometimes be used in the primary sources, but I will use the term African American or Afro-Creek. I will also use the historical categories of social status used by the Creeks. The original categories placed those who were Whites mixed with Native as higher social status as full-blood Creeks. From the Civil War until the 20th Century, Afro-Creeks (mixed African American and Native, regardless if mixed with White also) had a higher social status to Freedmen who were strictly former slaves who had no Native blood. Once the Dawes Commission and Oklahoma statehood forced the issue, the Afro-Creek and Freedmen distinction almost disappears.

Background

Most US History books give a basic overview of the systematic mistreatment of American Indians from the times of colonization until "winning" of the American west. But, history books tend to stop there. My school's history textbook and state standards only mention Native Americans 3 times for the entire course US History 1877 - Present. They have a shared standard with "treatment of immigrants and Natives" during both the Victorian era and early 20th Century and a shared standard with Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. There is no standard that explores the relationship between American Indians and African Americans, no explanation of how allotment and Jim Crow influenced the Native treatment of the Afro-Creeks and Freedmen, and no glimpse of the history behind the current standards of tribal citizenship that sometimes excludes those Freedmen. My students have no connection to how that textbook history applies to them. So, while teaching the standards is a goal, it is not the main goal of this unit. The main goal of this unit is to explore the relationship between African Americans and Creeks both historically and today so my students

can connect with history and use those connections to further literacy and historical thinking skills.

Early Contact through the Civil War

A traditional Creek story tells of an early contact between the Creeks and Africans. The story is that a ship, filled with Africans, landed in the Gulf, near what is now Alabama. The Africans remained there and intermarried. This contact pre-dated Columbus and other explorers and is thus not verified.¹ However, mainstream US history has verified that during Hernando De Soto's exploration of the South, several Africans ended up staying with the Natives that were in the area and that the Africans were adopted into the tribe.² Gary Zellar, in his work on African Creeks, says that the Africans had the potential to be accepted easier than whites because of two things. First, they were slaves and therefore mistreated by the same people, which could have created a bond. Second, as slaves taken from their homelands, they were without kin, meant that if adopted into the tribe they would have greater loyalty to the tribe. Unfortunately, the bonds were not as strong as they could have been because like the White conquistadores and later colonists, the Africans brought with them diseases and war, which probably undid any early goodwill.³

The next major step in the relation of the Creeks and African American came with the spread of slavery across the south. The influx of White settlers and their farms brought a lot of slaves to Indian Country. Up to this point, most American Indian tribes only used captives from battles as slaves in a limited capacity for short periods of time before returning some to their homeland or adopting them into their kin. Once a kinship clan adopted a slave into the bands, the slaves became that a full member of the clan. Chattel slavery was almost unknown until the English and Spanish brought enslaved Africans to the Americas.

The Creek and the whole Mississippian culture, which includes the Five Tribes, practiced an agricultural based society with crops providing the majority of the food for the people. Agriculture expanded with the introduction of plantation style farming from the new colonists. The Cherokees became the first and by far the most involved with plantation farming, but all the Five Tribes eventually began to keep slaves. The first Creek slaveholders were those who came with Scottish and English traders who stayed and married into the Creek kinship clans. The traders brought more and more slaves as they expanded their commercial farming and as generations of White-Creek owners kept slaves including Afro-Creek slaves.⁴ Like their White neighbors, some Creeks kept strict boundaries and separation between classes and enforced the rules with a heavy hand. Most, however, fell into the second class of slave owner who was less formal about separation, often lived in the same household, shared the household burdens of raising the children and did the work together.

In the early 1820s, a band of Creeks, often called the Lower-Creeks, moved from their homelands in Georgia and Alabama into Indian Territory. When the Creeks moved, they took not only everything they could carry, but also their slaves. Later, with the forced removal of the Creeks, the trails were filled with all the races and mixtures of people. Most of the Creeks had only a few slaves, but that changed when they arrived in Indian Territory. With plenty of land, and little other ways of making money, many Creeks, especially those families led by Mixed (White and Indian) blood found large scale farming and even plantations as the way to survive and thrive. Interestingly enough, some families ended up enslaving African-Creeks to whom they were related. Claudio Saunt speaks of this complexity with his work *Black, White an Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*. The Grayson family exemplifies the origins and resulting tensions of the mixing of the three races: European Whites, African American Blacks and Native American Indians.

Sometime in the late 1700s, Robert Grierson (later Grayson) had children with a Creek woman named Sinnugee. They had seven children. It was the youngest daughter who surprised the whole family by marrying

an unnamed man of African descent. After having two children with him, Katy then left that marriage and married a second time to another Mixed-blood Creek, Tulwa Tustanagee. Tulwa and Katy's children and grandchildren became leaders in the Creek Nation, both before and after removal to Indian Territory. William Grayson, Katy's older brother also married an African American, Judah who was a former slave of his father's. However, unlike Katy, William did not abandon his wife. Their children would have a hard life as mixed Black Creeks, even though they shared a common ancestor with White Creek leaders. The contrast between the children of William and Katy became more pronounced once they moved to Indian Territory. Saunt says "This is an American Indian story, but it is an American story too. They lived in areas ... that are rarely included in American histories. They took extraordinary actions - rejecting their children, enslaving their relatives, and marrying their masters."⁵ Katy's older children married African Americans, and their children became slaves of their cousins.

The Civil War is famous for pitting brother against brother and splitting families. It was no different in Indian Territory, especially with the Creek Indians. With a few exceptions, the Full-blood Creeks in the northern part of the Territory sided with the Union, and the southern, mostly Mixed-blood Creeks, signed loyalty agreements with the Confederacy early in the secession and war. Many slaves from the Southern Creeks escaped and headed north to Kansas where they joined Northern Creeks under Opothleyahola. The majority also joined either the First Kansas Colored Infantry or the Indian Home Guards. The history of the Indian Home Guards is very interesting in particular because of it was made up of Whites, Blacks and Natives. The Southern Creeks, in contrast, joined Confederate forces based around the Red River, mostly Texan. Like Northern Creeks, Afro-Creeks, both slave and free, served as interpreters on both sides. The pivotal battle in Indian Territory, the Battle of Honey Springs, had Black, White, and Native against Black, White and Native. When I teach a US History survey class or Oklahoma History, I will use the Indian Home Guards and the First Kansas Colored Infantry as glimpses of integration and the African American contributions to American history.

Reconstruction and Allotment

During Reconstruction, Afro-Creek relations changed again. The 1866 treaty with the Creeks required former slaves or Freedmen to be admitted to tribal citizenship regardless of any blood quantum. The result was that in several tribes, including the Creeks, the former slaves either came close or completely out-numbered those who were Full-blood or Mixed-blood. G.W. Stidham, a Creek leader in in the 1860s asserted that the African Creeks would hold the balance of power within 10 years because of increasing population.⁶ He also claimed that the African Creeks caused the Green Peach War "saying that their insistent demands were the center of the controversy."⁷ To the Creeks, it became a matter of Creek sovereignty as well as racial differentiation.

The same matter of sovereignty verses racial discrimination is at the heart the current debates that all the Five Tribes being held even today.⁸ The differences between Freedmen, Afro-Creeks, White Creeks and White intermarried started with reconstruction and the Dunn Roll.

In 1867, Indian Agent James Dunn took a roll of Creek citizens in order to distribute a \$200,000 treaty stipulation. At the time, he did not include Freedmen, but it did include Black Creeks such as Judah Grayson (William's wife who was his father's slave before they were married) and her children⁹. The Freedmen protested and with the help of Northern (Full-blood) Creeks appealed to the US Congress. Southern Creeks pushed back on Congress saying that the Creek Council had to approve this order by Congress.¹⁰ Congress responded to this defiance by suspending all annuities until the ex-slaves received their share. Dunn quickly finished the Freedman's Roll and payments were made to almost 1800 former slaves.¹¹ The arbitrary nature of

the Dunn roll set the tone for the later allotment process and the subsequent citizenship processes.

Allotment in severalty is when lands (tribal lands) are taken from the community, and plots are given to individual members. In most cases allotment caused the dissolution of the tribal governments. Basically, under the traditional tribal community laws, everyone owned the land, but it belonged to the one who worked it. If you farmed or ranched on the land, it was yours. Once you stopped working it, the land reverted back to the tribe. Tribes owned vast tracts of land, a great deal of which natives allowed to sit unfarmed. To White and Black immigrants to the area, this was probably seen as wasteful. As in other parts of the nation, settlers demanded land. Allotment became the policy by which the government broke former treaties and took the land. Taking all the land, and then giving portions, even a generous portion, to individual citizens would mean only a part of the land would be allotted. The government could take the rest of the land and give it to settlers in land runs or open settlement. Allotment was authorized for Creek land in by Congress in 1887.

Allotment became a defining event for Afro-Creek relations especially because allotment directly affected sovereignty. Sovereignty has a lot of definitions, but for practical purposes in this unit, it is the ability of the tribe to control itself. Many of the historians of the allotment process in Oklahoma use the concept of tribal sovereignty at the turn of the century interchangeably with the idea of self-determination as it is used for tribal governments starting in the 1970s.¹² Many Creeks knew that allotment represented a threat to tribal sovereignty and resisted for as long as they could.¹³

In order to allot lands, the government had to develop a definitive list of tribal members. This list was to be put together not by the tribes themselves but by a commission, the Dawes Commission. The first Dawes Commission formed by the General Allotment Act did not apply to any of the Five Tribes in Indian Territory. Congress corrected that with the Curtis Act of 1891 and 1898 that amended the Dawes Act to apply allotment to Indian Territory plus abolished tribal governments and dissolved tribal courts. The Dawes Commission (1891) was supposed to use lists from the tribes, but after a couple of years resistance, especially from the Creeks, they sought government approval to override tribal lists and input. They were granted this approval with the Second Curtis Act, 1898. Despite all the tribal resistance, in July 1898, the first day enrollment was open, more than 500 Creeks showed up in Okmulgee to enroll. Why would the Creeks do this? The answer comes from the other part of the Dawes focus; the individual members picked their 160 acres, and registered the land. While most stayed near to their traditional homesteads, a few sought better lands.¹⁴ This system favored those who could afford to travel, afford to miss time away from work to stand in line and those who had large families. Each individual received the 160 acres, so a larger family meant more land. Some felt that this favored the large Afro-Creek families over the smaller White Mixed-blood. But in truth, most of the Mixed-blood families found ways around this by taking charge of the lands their former slaves were allotted or by other means.¹⁵

The Creeks also protested the Dawes rolls because it did seem to have clear established guidelines, depended on word of mouth and was probably subject to corruption. Over the years between the Reconstruction Treaties and the Dawes Commission, Black and White immigrants flooded Indian Territory. Many married into the tribes and claimed inheritance. Also, the Black non-natives either squatted or worked as tenant farmers to the landholding tribal members and would try to claim membership for their children.

New Black immigrants, (called Statehood blacks by the African Creeks) were at first very culturally distinct from the African Creeks. Afro-Creeks and Statehood Blacks did not get along together and often made complaints to the Territorial government against each other.¹⁶ Later, as the Dawes Commission enforced strict categories, the Afro-Creek, Creek Freedmen and Statehood Blacks grouped together, and formed towns as

economic associations designed to help them progress in both land-ownership and political power. Some Freedmen from other tribes also came to live in all black towns such as Boley, Grayson, and Clearview. Any lingering distinctions quickly went away with the spread of Jim Crow. The very first law passed after Oklahoma became a state was a segregation bill for all forms of public transportation. The government was not hesitant to pass more and more Jim Crow laws that quickly disenfranchised all blacks in the states, including African Natives. The state divided races into “White or Negro” – with Native Americans without African blood being put in the White category and anyone with even a drop of African-American blood being listed as Negro.

Scholars such as David Chang, Gary Zellar, and Claudio Saunt agree that the death knell to the recognized status of Afro-Creeks came from the Dawes Roll.¹⁷ To the Dawes Commission it did not matter if they were African Creeks (mixed blood) or Freedmen with no Creek blood. Many families were divided by the strict categories of “Creek Freedmen” or “Creek by Blood”. One only has to search the Dawes Roll by the last name of certain families to see this. The Grayson surname returns more than 400 names, at least 275 of which are listed as Creek Freedmen. The 275 includes direct descendants of William Grayson and Judah, and his younger sister Katy Grayson (the two who had children with African Americans).¹⁸ The Dawes Commission followed the prevailing custom that a “drop of African blood made that person a Negro,”¹⁹ no matter what the Creek definition was.

The Creeks, no longer a sovereign nation because of the Dawes Act, followed the strict categories of the Dunn and Dawes Rolls. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, especially for those who had money or influence or who could hide their ancestors behind false family histories. The arbitrary imposition of “White or Black” to Creeks conflicted with tribal customs or rules, but it became and still is important to Creek sovereignty and their ability to decide citizenship rights. Many people across the United States, especially in Oklahoma, who claim to be Native American, do not understand that the combination of the Dawes Rolls and early statehood restrictions on race established racial and enrollment practices that remain in place today.

Rebuilding and Oklahoma’s “All-Black” Towns

The tensions between the Creek Nation and its Freedmen continued to grow especially as Native Americans across the country continued to fight for sovereignty. For the Creeks, this sovereignty question was decidedly housed in the question of who were members of the tribe and therefore who had rights to receive any benefits given. Understanding the historical developments of US and Indian relations during this time period helps us further explore this topic.

In 1926, Hubert Work, the Secretary of the Interior of the U.S., requested a report of the true situation of the American Indian. The Rockefeller Foundation sponsored the report, officially called *The Problem with Indian Administration*. Because the investigating group was led by Lewis Meriam, most historians refer to it as the Meriam report. The commission spent 7 months interviewing Indians in 23 states, including a large percentage in Oklahoma. They looked at the health, education, economic and social situations of Native Americans. The resulting 847 pages detailed the Indian problem and squarely laid blame on the process of allotment especially for the breakdown in government and economy. The report said that high infant mortality, poor nutrition, and even high crime were directly tied to those breakdowns in governance and economic opportunities.²⁰

The US Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The act gave reservation tribes the ability to reorganize and begin to regain reservation lands. However, Oklahoma tribes, including the Creeks were not reservation Indians, and therefore the act did not cover them. Newly elected Oklahoma Senator Elmer Thomas

and his House counterpart Representative Will Rogers (not the comedian) co-sponsored bills in the House and Senate to address this oversight. The resulting bill passed by Congress became known as the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936. The act gave “tribal associations” the ability to reform, gave tribes impetus to regain land lost in allotment and through business deals, and gave encouragement in the promotion of Native culture. Oddly enough, the Creek Nation did not formally apply to reorganize as a nation, but rather small bands and townships applied for Federal recognition. Several groups applied based on tribal standing, but the Muscogee Creeks did not.

The all-Black towns, full of Freedmen and Afro-Creeks, also did not apply for federal recognition perhaps thinking that they would not be granted rights based on race and secondary social status. Nonetheless, at their high point in the 1920s, 50 all-black towns spread out across Oklahoma, almost all of which started as Afro-Indian, or Freedmen towns. Currently only 13 are still incorporated in Oklahoma, all but one of which (Langston) was originally Indian. Ironically, Langston is the most successful town of those 13 still in existence mostly because it became home to a traditional all-Black college. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl spelled the end of most of the all-Black towns. With limited resources being reserved to Whites and Indians (considered White by the state government), many African Americans, whether Afro-Indian or not, did not have a chance to succeed.

The Indian Reorganization Act and the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act helped to launch the “Indian New Deal”. While Oklahoma benefited from the actions of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, it did little to help African American communities. It also had little to do with the state of Native Americans. “The New Deal left the conditions of the tribes of Oklahoma basically unchanged.²¹” The WPA did, however, play an important role in the documentation of the history of the tribes that formed Indian Territory and the state of Oklahoma. Much of this history is written in the summaries of the interviews that make up the *Indian Pioneer Papers*.

Current Controversies

I wanted to take time to continue the history of the Muscogee Creek Nation, but time and space limits prohibit it. However, in the school year, I will continue on with a history of the Termination Policies (Public Law 280, 1953) of the Cold War era, and with the general reluctance of the Governor of Oklahoma, William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray to officially disband the Five Tribes and assume full jurisdiction. Because termination was not applicable to the Five Tribes in general and to the Creeks in particular (see *Harjo vs Kleppe*, 1976), the nations did not have to seek federal reorganization. This meant that in 1979, when the Creeks rewrote their constitution, the federal government accepted it.

The Muscogee Constitution clearly sets citizenship rights on the Dawes Roll. A person must show direct descent line from a person listed on the Dawes Roll as “Creek by Blood” and not as Freedmen. This means that the flawed roll, which assigned oversimplified categories of Creek by Blood or Freedmen, carries that flawed categorization to modern times. The Cherokee Nation passed similar citizenship bylaws to their constitution. Both tribes are still being sued by people excluded by these rules, in particular by Freedmen who had blood quantum and were treated as members of the tribes before the federal government appeared imposed new racial practices.

Understanding the history of African American and Indian affairs should help my students see why so many who identify as Native, or have Native family stories do not have CDIB or tribal membership. Hopefully, this understanding will help foster connections between my students and the history that is still being decided

today.

Strategies and Activities

My students are like many with generational poverty from urban school districts. Many are children of parents who did not finish high school, or if they did, they did not seek higher education. The family passes on survival skills for the urban streets and not the value of education. My students often lack basic literacy skills, including being able to identify main points, summarize, and connect information to outside sources or even personal knowledge. The nature of the strategies used to develop literacy skills are very dependent on the activities used. Therefore, I will present the strategies and activities together. The main strategy of the unit will be developing these historical literacy skills to understand both historical events and provide context and connections to those events. The more I have used primary and some secondary sources with the students the more I have seen growth not only in understanding history, but also in logic, thought processes and oddly enough personal connection and enthusiasm. It would seem that dry tertiary textbooks can be replaced with success. This actually surprised me, as I thought that the students would need all the traditional background information and overviews and then if we had time we could do some pictures or reading. It turns out that using the reading or picture as the hook invites them to find out the story on their own, and in a much better way.

As stated previously, the topic of the American Indian should be approached many times in the U.S. History curriculum in our standards. While this unit deals directly with the topic of relations of African Americans and Creek Indians in Oklahoma especially after the Civil War, I feel that it will be necessary to give some background information from before the Civil War. Therefore, the first time the theme of the unit will be introduced will be through quick glimpses in an overview of colonization and the American Revolution, like those mentioned above in the section on Early Contact. In order to introduce the students to the beginning interactions of African Americans, Whites and Native Americans, I would like to use the story of Ketch, the “Indian Negro” who, as a slave of Irishman George Galphin, became a trusted broker, interpreter and trader between the Creeks and the colonists. Ketch stayed with the Creeks after Galphin’s death and returned again after serving as a bodyguard to General Twiggs during the American Revolutionary War. When the Creeks were removed from Alabama to Indian Territory, Ketch went to live out his life with Thomas Woodard, a man who traded extensively with the new American government. Woodard mentions Ketch briefly in *Woodward’s Reminiscences*.²² I want my students to explore the idea of Ketch as an archetype: his roles, life and successes. We will read an excerpt from the *Reminiscences* and will use some type of group work to answer questions. Ketch’s story is a way for students to see someone who looks like them as an integral part of our developing nation through the story of one man who by all accounts was a strong, smart, and successful black man despite the label of slave. For those teaching Oklahoma History or African American History, this and other sections of Woodward’s letters would be an excellent primary source for students to understand the daily life of early America.

To introduce the concept of the changing treatment of race in the American Indian tribes of Oklahoma, I want my students and me to look closely at the work of author Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*. In the beginning of the book, he gives a small family tree. As discussed in the Background section above, the Grayson family is one that is well documented because one line of descendants became tribal leaders who were around at the critical times of allotment, Jim Crow, and the

Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. Using short excerpts, or even lecture to introduce my students to the family, I will set up a background and exemplar family for them to follow all through the progress of the unit.

Perhaps one of the hardest things for my students to understand is the idea that history is not clean. There is not one right answer to anything except dates, and sometimes they are debatable. Maybe the messiness is why history dealt in dates and lists of places and people for so long. When we start looking at history, the students want to insist “is that right?” or “just tell me the answer to write down”. It takes a lot of work to get them to the point that they can come up with answers and justifications for those answers on their own. When the school year starts, I have to spend a lot of time encouraging the students to think out loud, to guess at reasons, to connect past to present, and understand the gray areas. The Grayson family history is very “messy”. I plan to present the first and second generation of the children of Robert Grierson and Sinnugee to my students, then use them to challenge the students by asking them to “imagine if.. ” or “what do you think happened when they moved to Oklahoma?”

In the next topic, the Dawes Roll and how it was formulated, I will use the continuing history of the Grayson family. And, I will also use the Dawes Roll for the students to begin making connections to themselves. The students will use the database of the Dawes Roll found on the Oklahoma Historical Society’s website.²³ First as a class we will look up the surname Grayson. Hopefully, the results will engender an organic exploration of the topic. Nonetheless, I will still be prepared to ask them about the different categories listed, how they think individuals fit in those categories and the limits of the categories. Then, I will challenge the students to search for their own family names. I will also have some suggested names, for those who are reluctant. My suggestion will be the surnames of their favorite or least favorite teachers. The students will be asked to write down and turn in those names perhaps as an exit ticket. My purpose in this is twofold. One, I hope that students will take the results and questions home to family and have family discussions about the Dawes Roll and family history. The second purpose is to prepare them for the second database search which we will do later in the academic year with the *Indian Pioneer Papers*.

Since allotment is chronologically near the beginning of the curriculum school year, the part of the unit dealing with it will be an introduction to analyzing documents, sources, and putting evidence and personal evaluations together. My intention is to take a series of quotes, pictures and lists and have the students look at them. Appendix 1 contains some of documents and the questions that will be used for student analysis. There are several strategies that can be used to encourage this type of analysis. I will use a gradual release strategy. At first, I am going to be doing a lot of modeling. Therefore, in Appendix 1, I have questions in place, and will be having the students work as a class with me on the first several. I will gradually release them to work on the final few documents on their own. Higher level students or students who are accomplished at document analysis should be encouraged to draw their own conclusions with little to no guidance by questions. At the end of the analysis, I will have the students answer the basic question “Was allotment fair to Indians?” Then, I will ask the students to explain how allotment affected relationships between Native Americans and African Americans, especially in the Five Tribes.

If I teach Oklahoma History in the future, I will also use this unit to discuss the formation and history of the All-Black towns of Oklahoma. The number of towns and how they impacted African Americans across the nation is unique to this time period of Oklahoma. I will definitely bring in the work of Oklahoman Ralph Ellison and his essay “Going to the Territory”. The Oklahoma state standards for All-Black towns and Jim Crow are more in-depth than the standards for U.S. History. (See Appendix 2) As part of teaching U.S. History, I will probably revisit the topic of All-Black towns, especially as they relate to Jim Crow, the Great Depression and migration movements of African Americans.

Another strategy that I would like to discuss here in the unit is tied to the last section about Rebuilding. It also serves as a way to reteach some of the basic facts of the history of Native Americans to this point. As I mentioned earlier in connection to the Dawes Rolls, students will have written down a name that they have found on the Dawes Commission Rolls. When I introduce the New Deal and the Works Progress Administration, I will talk about the Indian Pioneer Papers. Students will search for the surname of the person they found before and will research any papers associated with that name. As an end product, I will have them create either a short summary or a short presentation of the stories that they find. For those who did not have success for one reason or another with the Dawes Rolls assignment, I will have pre-researched some names and have suggestions for stories that should interest the students. The *Indian Pioneer Papers* offer a glimpse into the lives of Oklahomans especially right before and around the time of statehood. Therefore, they would make an excellent resource for both US and Oklahoma history teachers. In Appendix 1 I will list some suggestions for stories with which to start as there are thousands of pages of interviews.

Finally, the last activity that we will do as a class for US history will relate to the Civil Rights movement and the American Indian movement. While this standard does not seem to relate to my unit topic, it does a lot to further the understanding of American Indian and African American relations. (See Appendix 2 for state standards) The two movements are intertwined, yet very separate. The Civil Rights movement starting in the 1950s took to the courts and shifts in society to begin to see changes in the treatment of African Americans. The movement continued and flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s. The American Indian Movement, just a small part of the American Indian's push for equal rights did not begin to take off until the late 1960s and did not bear fruit until the 1970s and 1980s. A big part of this has to do with the termination policies of the 1950s. The US government decided that Indian policy should be to "terminate" or completely disband the Indian Nations across the country. Since none of the Five Tribes were the original targets for the early termination policies, I have not discussed this in any detail in this unit. However, I need to mention that it will be part of my teaching of the Cold War, Civil Rights and Indian Rights. I will use various resources for this, especially the chapter called "The Red and The Black" in Vine Deloria Jr's work *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Students will read and analyze this chapter in an effort to close the circle on understanding African American and Indian relationships.

Conclusion

The relationship between Native American Indians and African Americans is a long and complex topic. In the days of early contact when Africans represented their white masters and brought the same diseases, bonds that could have been easily developed due to common mistreatment by Whites, did not come easily. While most Native Americans did not follow the wholesale practice of chattel slavery, there were slaves kept by Mixed and Full Blood Natives. The individual search for their own identity continues to set the two against each other. American Indians are still fighting for sovereignty and national standing and against discrimination. African Americans are still fighting racial profiling, targeting and discrimination. My intention for this unit is to help foster the bond between African American and Native American students and their common struggle. I hope the next time a student hears someone say that one of the Five Tribes will not let them be a member; they will say "there is a reason for that." And lastly, I am hoping for those of us who are Native American, but not recognized members of any tribe, will feel empowered to take pride in our part in history and use that common history of struggle to help overcome lingering racism in our daily interactions.

Bibliography

Chang, David A. *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Excellent work on pre-Civil War to Early Oklahoma statehood that focuses on allotment, and how the division of land divided the people.

Dawes, Henry L. *Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioner, 1897*, (Washington DC: Government Printing office, 1898). This report includes an introduction given to the members of the commission on their task. I will use a quote from this report in the document based analysis project that the students will do.

Deloria, Vine. *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. New York, NY: Macmillan Company, 1969. I will use the beginning of the chapter called "The Red and The Black" as an introduction to the American Indian Movement and its relationship to the Civil Rights movement.

Department of the Interior of the United States. *Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma: Reports of the Department of the Interior and Evidentiary Papers in Support of Senate Bill 7625*. Washington D.C. April 22, 1912. This report gives the history of both the Dunn Roll and the Dawes Roll and how it impacted the Five Tribes in Oklahoma.

Indian-Pioneer Papers Collection. 1939 <https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer> (accessed July 17, 2016). An extensive searchable collection of interviews done as part of a Works Progress Administration project. The interviews are not transcribed as taken; they are summaries based on the interviews.

Meriam, Lewis. *The Problem with Indian Administration*. 1928. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED087573.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2016). The report can be a source for primary quotes or readings. However, since it is almost 900 pages, it might be best to use a search engine to find excerpts.

Miles, Tiya, and Sharon Patricia Holland. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. A collection of essays about African and Indians in Oklahoma. It came about after the "Eating Out of the Same Pot" Dartmouth Conference of 2004.

Muscogee Creek Nation. *Muscogee (Creek) Nation*. n.d. <http://www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/> (accessed July 17, 2016). The Muscogee Nation's website has a short basic history and links to events and activities of the Nation. It also explains the requirements for citizenship and the process to seek citizenship.

Muscogee Nation. "Constitution of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation." *Native American Constitution and Law Digitization Project*. 1979. <http://thorpe.ou.edu/constitution/muscogee/> (accessed July 17, 2016). The Supreme Court case *Harjo v Kleppe* said that the Muscogee Nation was never actually disbanded by the termination policies and therefore was free to rewrite their constitution, which they did in 1979.

O'Dell, Larry. "All-Black Towns." *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. 2009. <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entryname=ALL-BLACK%20TOWNS> (accessed July 17, 2016). This is a good article about the history of All-Black Towns in Oklahoma and introduces the idea that Oklahoma played a unique part in US history because many African Americans were able to find refuge there.

Oklahoma Historical Society. *Dawes Rolls*. 1906. <http://www.okhistory.org/research/dawes> (accessed July 17, 2016). This is an online searchable index of names of the Dawes Roll.

Oklahoma History Center. "All-Black Towns of Oklahoma - Town Map." *All-Black Towns of Oklahoma - Town Map*. 2011. <http://www.okhistory.org/historycenter/blacktowns/allblacktownsmap.php> (accessed July 17, 2016). Since only 13 of these towns still exist today, this historical map of the All-Black towns will be important for students to understand how the Black Belt was formed and what role it played in US history.

Rader, Brian F. "Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act." *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. 2009. <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=OK059>. (accessed July 17, 2016). Rader's explanation of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act does a good job of differentiating it from the larger Indian Organization Act. But it does not explain that it actually protected Oklahoma Indians from Public Law 280 and termination policies.

Saunt, Claudio. *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. The book is one of the foundational texts of the unit and will be cited to the students. It tells the story of the Grayson family from its origins to modern day interviews with members across Oklahoma.

Strickland, Rennard. *The Indians in Oklahoma*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. The book is part of a series produced by the University of Oklahoma Press to explore the contributions of different minority groups to Oklahoma history. Even though it is dated, it provides insight to the Native American communities in the 1970s when they were undergoing reorganization and renewal.

Wilkinson, Charles F. *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*. New York: Norton, 2006. Wilkinson's work does not pertain directly to my unit, but it does cover the later years of the American Indian's resurgence.

Woodward, Thomas Simpson. *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians : Contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama*. Montgomery, Alabama: Barrett & Wimbish, book and general job printers, 1859. Woodward was an Indian agent and trader in the Alabama area around the time of Indian removal. His work is the source of information about a lot of "life on the frontier" stories, including the story of Ketch.

Zellar, Gary. *African Creeks: Estelveste and the Creek Nation*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. One of the foundational texts of the unit, Zellar's work in the history of African Creeks is the source of many of the quotes for student analysis and introduced so much more than I could cover in this unit.

Endnotes

1. Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelveste and the Creek Nation*, 2007, 3
2. *ibid*
3. *ibid*
4. Claudio Saunt, *Black, White and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family*, 2005, 25.
5. Saunt, *Black, White and Indian* 2005
6. Zellar, *African Creeks*, 162
7. *ibid*
8. Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland, *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds*, 2006, 5
9. Saunt, *Black, White and Indian*, 130
10. Dept. of Interior, *Five Civilized Tribes*; 132
11. *Ibid*, 133
12. Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 90 and Saunt, *Black, White and Indian*, 152
13. Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 90 - 92

14. ibid
15. Ibid, 92
16. Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 159
17. Chang, *The Color of Land*, 3; Saunt, *Black, White and Indian*, 152, Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma*, 34, and Zellar, *African Creeks*, 183
18. Saunt, *Black, White and Indian*, 154 - 155
19. Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 94
20. Zellar, *African Creeks*, 174
21. Rennard Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma*, 1980, 73
22. Thomas Woodward, *Reminiscences*, 105-106
23. Oklahoma Historical Society, *Dawes Rolls*, www.okhistory.org/research/dawes

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use