

Cherokee chief Smith continues to Mislead Cherokee people to drive out Freedmen tribal members at Jay Oklahoma

Cherokee nation officials, led by principal Chief Chad Smith continue their assaults, through misinformation to tribal citizens, on the rights of the Cherokee freedmen citizens of the tribe who they believe will not support them in the next tribal election. The Chief and his supporters were successful in getting the tribal council to put the freedmen people's citizenship rights on the June 2007 ballot to be voted on by Cherokee citizens. The Chief and certain members of the Cherokee council continue to demand removal of the Cherokee freedmen citizens through acts of the tribal council and through an initiative petition in an expedited election, with the hope that the freedmen can be voted out prior to the 2007 elections.

On June 22, 2006 in Jay Oklahoma at the local community building, inflammatory and misleading documents were provided to the local Cherokee people. The people present were told by Principal Chief Smith (an attorney and member of the Oklahoma Bar association – and a board member of Bacone College)) that the Freedmen people did not possess Cherokee blood and that their ancestors were only black slaves– a statement he knows to be incorrect since the JAT tribal court in the Bernice Riggs case in 2001 held that although Bernice Riggs ancestors on the Dawes listed as Freedmen, they did possess Cherokee blood. (The ruling can be read on the descendants of freedmen website www.freedmen5tribes.com and is also available at the Cherokee nation website www.cherokee.org). Smith also told the attendants that no treaties would be broken by removing the freedmen from tribal membership – and that the treaty of 1866 did not have anything to do with the freedmen people. (Note – The Cherokee treaty of 1866 can be read at the Oklahoma State University website at: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/che0942.htm> and clearly has Cherokee nation leaders agreeing to citizenship rights including voting for the former slaves (who were actually freed in 1863 through acts of the Cherokee council as well as those free blacks of the Cherokee nation who were not already citizens of the tribe). The meeting attendants were also given handouts prepared by the Principal Chief Smith referring to the treaty of 1866 as the “retribution treaty”.

John Ketcher, former Deputy Chief under Chief Mankiller (who told the Baltimore Sun in July 1984 that the freedmen should not have Cherokee citizenship because they had no Cherokee blood) told the people that they needed to keep the Cherokee nation Cherokee – that they didn't need blacks, or white spouses and needed to keep the tribe as a Cherokee by blood tribe. (Ketcher did not explain why if he believes this way why the constitutional amendments he proposes on his petition continues to keep Delaware, Shawnee, Creeks, and adopted whites in the tribe and only remove freedmen citizens (and descendants of approximately 200 intermarried whites separately listed on the Dawes Rolls if their descendants were not descended from the deceased Indian spouse) . His proposed constitutional amendment if passed will remove tribal membership from those freedmen with and without Cherokee blood. Information on the www.freedmen5tribes.com website shows some of the adopted whites who were listed on the Cherokee by blood roll and who will retain their citizenship if the freedmen people are removed from the tribe by proposed constitutional amendments in upcoming elections).

Cara Cowan Watts, an engineer, and a council woman from District 7 who also is a board member of INdn's list – a political action committee which was formed to increase the number of Democrats in public office (<http://www.indnlist.org/>) also stated that the Cherokee nation should be kept as a Cherokee by blood tribe. (She also did not explain why she supports legislation to amend the tribal constitution which will retain creeks, Shawnees, Delawares, and adopted whites on the Cherokee by blood roll in the tribe but wishes to remove Freedmen citizens with Cherokee blood. As a tribal councilman, Mrs Cowan Watts has repeatedly voted for legislation to stop Cherokee Freedmen from being able to use the courts to uphold their rights). Cowan Watts told the Cherokee voters of Jay that retaining Cherokee freedmen in the tribe would cost much more than the cost of a special election. She said that she had computed the cost of a special election as \$110,000 dollars which would cost less than the cost of treating 5 freedmen with heart attacks at the Indian hospitals at a treatment cost of \$33,000 per freedmen. She said that there were 800 freedmen in the tribe

right now but there eventually could be 40,000 freedmen “taking your dollars and your jobs”. (Note – the tribal registrar Mrs Umertestee had reported the maximum potential number of freedmen enrolling in the tribe in the near future as 25,000 people based on the percentages of freedmen who received Dawes enrollment and election commissioner Jim Briggs had estimated a greater cost figure for a special election than Cowan Watts at a subcommittee meeting of the rules committee on May 11, 2006 at the council house). These words of Cowan were present on an informational handout given to the meeting attendants. (See handout). The handout clearly gives the people the impression that the Cherokee nation might have to give the Federal government back money used by freedmen tribal members if and when the freedmen are removed from the tribe and implies to the uninformed that the freedmen should be removed from the tribe asap in order to avoid problems with the federal government regarding the use of federal funds by Freedmen tribal members. However, a visit to the Indian health services website makes it clear that Indian health services are available to any tribal member and even to non tribal members under certain circumstances. <http://www.ihs.gov/GeneralWeb/HelpCenter/CustomServices/elig.asp> (We also point out that descendants of Caucasian “captive” tribal members of the Comanche and Kiowa nations have used Indian health services with no problems from the federal government).

Cowan told the attendants that it only took 10 council members to call for a special election and that the people should demand that the council put the freedmen rights on the ballot prior to the next election, but if not, it would only take 2088 peoples signatures on the petition for the chief to call a special election on the freedmen citizenship this year.

At the Jay meeting, the Caucasian husband of a freedmen citizen who is completely Caucasian looking challenged the chief’s statements that freedmen have “no Cherokee blood” and identified his own wife as a freedmen citizen. He also questioned the chief and other speakers regarding their own blood quantum’s. Other members of the audience then challenged Smith and other speakers as to their statements that freedmen were “just descended from black slaves” and were “just blacks” when it was clear from their own eyes that at least some of the freedmen people did have Indian blood. Another citizen asked why Mexicans were using the clinics, and Smith thought that the Mexicans were pregnant mothers of Cherokee children and any Mexican men at the clinic were visiting these women. Another person asked why the freedmen were getting registered so quickly and someone said that they heard that David Cornsilk was assisting with genealogy assistance. (The chief did not explain to these attendants that the freedmen were being registered under the same rules as everyone else (such as people over 65 years of age receiving expedited membership processing) and that these 800 freedmen in question for the most part had already provided all information to the registration department that proved that they had a Dawes enrolled freedmen ancestor and did not need further genealogical research).

Attending the meeting were freedmen citizens of District 4 and District 7 and Mrs Ruckman of the Tulsa World.

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