

MUSCOGEE  
CREEK INDIAN  
FREEDMEN BAND  
P.O. BOX 6366  
MOORE, OK, 73153

# THE TREATY



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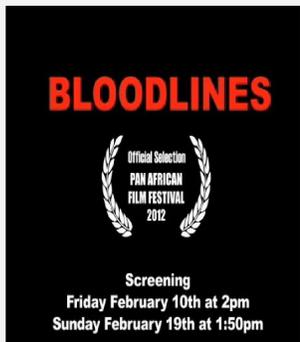
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## *Pan African Film Festival*

The Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band Association is proud to announce the World premiere of “Bloodlines”.

Bloodlines was featured at the prestigious Pan African Film Festival (PAFF) in Los Angeles CA, the week of February 9-20, 2012.

PAFF was established in 1992 by award winning Actor Danny Glover. PAFF is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the promotion of cultural and racial tolerance and understanding through the exhibition of film, art and creative expression.

Director

Camara Rose, Get Focused Films

Synopsis

In 1979, the Muscogee Creek Nation took a vote to exclude African American descendants (known as Creek Freedmen) from the tribe even though they were adopted as tribal citizens with full rights by a treaty signed in 1866 between the United States and the Creek Nation. BLOODLINES examines the struggle that the African American descendants of the Creek Tribe have had in claiming tribal citizenship despite history showing many African Americans and Native Americans cohabitating, intermarrying, and forming communities in Indian territory circa the mid-1800s. Q&A Featured in the Film ..... Dr. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr, Bruce Fisher, Mary Cunningham, Brenda Golden, Hutke Fields, the Sells brothers, Ron Graham, Jeffrey D. Kennedy, Rhonda K. Grayson, and State Representative Jabar Shumate.

## Meet Gail M. Jackson

Gail was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma on Greenwood Avenue. She graduated from Phillips University in Enid, OK. She also received a Master's degree program at the University of Kansas. She supervised a state governmental agency in Tulsa. Later returned to state employment and retired in 2004. Her research began by a newspaper search for a family member interested in Oklahoma and Indian history in 1974.

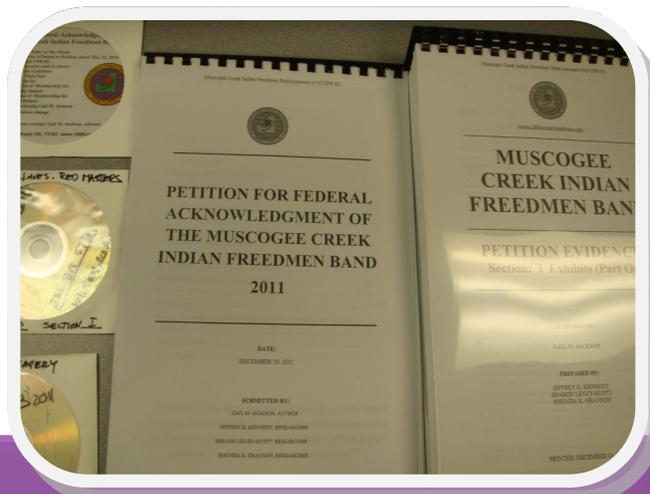
*"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots"*

*Marcus Garvey*

Gail has served in an advocacy role for many years for the Indian people of African descent, and was a natural choice to Co-spearhead the petition campaign for Federal Recognition. Gail embraced the challenge and embarked on a laborious journey along with other volunteers that researched and prepared a documented petition of the history of the MCIF to file for federal recognition as an American Indian tribe. Words cannot express our gratitude to Gail and the Petition committee for the many tireless hours of research and dedicated service to the Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen.



Freedmen store near Fort Gibson



# Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band (MCIFB) files Federal Recognition as an American Indian Tribe.

Twenty thousand pages of documented evidence were mailed on January 20, 2012 to the Office of Federal Recognition. This filing sets a precedent. It was prepared and submitted by Black Indians. Black Indian Citizens of the Muscogee Creek Nation have been referred to as, "just our slaves". Read the history and decide for yourself what it means to be a Black Indian from the Creek Nation of Oklahoma.

For information regarding the criteria and the process for submitting a Petition for Federal Recognition, please visit the BIA's website at [www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA](http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA). Photos: The Petition (3) sets as required, being boxed and packaged!



## Ms. Tammy Steele, Executive Director

Tammy Gray-Steele, Executive Director for the National Women In Ag. Association was the MCIFB's guest speaker on March 31, 2012. Ms. Steele's primary goal is developing good character in children and in women. Ms. Steele feels and sees the urgency of rural and urban socially disadvantaged women, in particular women of color. She feels that a child cannot be developed if the parent (s) is not developed. Land retention and keeping youth active in agricultural sciences and sustainable rural development issues is one the primary focuses for National Women in Ag. Association, assisting more college graduates to come to the forefront to help save minority farmers will also be a primary focus. For more information about Women in Ag. Visit their website at [www/www.nationalwomeninag.com](http://www.nationalwomeninag.com).



### Little Known History

**"Yamasee Indians were Negroes, what were known afterwards as the fiercest of the Indians tribes of the South- the well known Yamasee Indians were Africans"**

**Quote cited from the Congressional serial set United States Government Printing Office 57th Congress 1st Session. House of Representatives Document 179 Report of the Industrial Commission on Agriculture and Agricultural labor Washington Government printing Office Year 1901, page 824.**



## Gary Fife

*MNN Editorial Assistant*

OKMULGEE —The descendants of African-American slaves formerly on the rolls of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation who lost that status in a tribal referendum 33 years ago have launched an effort to become their own tribe. Members of the Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band have formally filed a petition with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The group filed its request more than two years ago. According to Band President Ron Graham, their history and family connections with Creek people and culture give them the background for such tribal status. Their legal case, Graham said, rests on the basis of the Treaty of 1866 which granted them citizenship in the Muscogee tribe, “That established our citizenship within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. We voted, we had Freedmen on the National Council, we spoke the language.”

The 1866 treaty says in part, “...their descendants and such others of the same race as may be permitted by the laws of the said nation to settle within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Creek Nation as citizens thereof, shall have and enjoy all the rights and privileges of native citizens, including an equal interest in the soil and national funds.” Their goal, Graham said, is to have the terms of that treaty enforced, “We’d like to achieve with this tribal status, an opportunity to be who we are. We’d like our tribal sovereignty we understand sovereignty. If it’s land in trust, benefits, whatever the case may be. Most importantly, we know exactly who we are, and what we are. That is what gives us the right to apply for and seek out federal recognition for our own nation.” That’s in spite of any differences in racial features or customs,

he maintained, “We may look different, our ways may be different, but we are Muscogee Creek Indians.” The 1979 Muscogee (Creek) constitutional removed the citizenship status for freedmen. That was a convention, Graham noted, where the freedmen were prevented from voting. Graham attempted to enroll as a tribal member in 1983, but was turned down. The requirement for a blood quantum disqualified him, he said. Graham cited a lack of blood quantum information on the Dawes Roll, leaving Freedmen without required information for enrollment. Graham went to tribal court in pursuit of citizenship status in 2005. The first case was decided in their favor, but was appealed by the Citizenship Board. When the case went to the Muscogee Supreme Court, the case was dismissed. Their case is similar to those of Cherokee and Seminole freedmen he said. They are all being disenfranchised, a case Graham described as being in a “coma.” The situation has left the freedmen ineligible for tribal and federal programs such as educational assistance, health care benefits and other rights for participation as tribal citizens. Currently the Freedmen’s Association requests a modest membership fee. Those funds are used for the Association to function and keep its business office open. Once tribal status is achieved, Graham predicted, that fee would be discontinued when any federal funds become available to them. Requirements for their Freedmen’s tribal membership would be to have proof of their family listed on both the Dawes

Rolls and the Dunn Roll of 1867. One of the challenges faced by the Freedmen is the question of race. Many people would not see them as Native Americans but as African-American. Those people would probably never change their minds, he thinks, but Graham feels that education is their best response, “We can’t do anything about that. We just educate people. That is our best tool we can use about prejudice. Once we educate someone, we hope they change their views, but if they don’t, it’s up to them. We know exactly who we are and what we are.” The Freedmen’s Association

has solicited support from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP passed a resolution last fall in support of the Freedmen’s case. They said, it would work for an ‘equitable’ solution “...by means of education and fact-finding to address the history and current impact of the Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band and promote understanding of tribal sovereignty.” In mid-February, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Chief of Staff Edwin Marshall said the Nation wasn’t making any comment because the freedmen didn’t have any tribal relationship. Graham has not made any formal overtures to the Muscogee tribal government and is still waiting for the U.S. government to respond.

## *Little Known History*

### James Coody Johnson (1864 - February 1927)

James Coody Johnson was an African Creek lawyer, politician and entrepreneur, and a leading voice for inclusion of African Americans both before and after Oklahoma statehood. Johnson was the son of Robert Johnson, the African Creek interpreter for the Seminole nation and Elizabeth Davis (Johnson), daughter of Sarah Davis. He was born in 1864 at Ft. Gibson, where his mother had gone for protection as a refugee during the Civil War. He received his early education at the Presbyterian Mission north of Wewoka. Later, the Seminole nation sponsored his education at Lincoln University in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Johnson returned to the Indian Territory in 1884 after his graduation and hired on as a cowboy with a cattle company, and for the next year and a half he rode the range in New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas as one of the many black cowboys in the West. After the death of his father in 1886 James Coody returned to the Creek country. He used his bi-lingual abilities and education to secure a job as interpreter for Judge Isaac Parker, who presided over the Federal District Court for Western Arkansas, which at the time had jurisdiction over the Indian Territory.

After studying law under Judge Parker and being admitted to practice in the federal courts, Johnson was one of the few freedmen accorded dual citizenship in both the Creek and Seminole nations and acted as the official interpreter for the Seminole nation, as well as an advisor to Seminole Chief Halputta Micco. He also became a leading figure in Creek politics, serving in the House of Warriors for several terms and serving on many official delegations to Washington during the allotment period. Johnson was also a tireless advocate of full citizenship rights for African Americans after Oklahoma entered the Union as a "Jim Crow" state in 1907. James Coody Johnson died at his home in Wewoka, Oklahoma in February 1927.

#### **Sources:**

Gary Zellar, *African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

James Coody Johnson



Photo of grave stone taken by Emmit Grayson Jr.



## Bishop Otis G. Clark

### Survivor of 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Dies at 109



#### Most of the businesses were owned by prosperous Creek Freedmen

SEATTLE, WA – For years, few people dared to speak about what happened on the night of May 31, 1921, during one of the most deadly and devastating race riots in the nation’s history. Otis G. Clark, who was 18 at the time, had grown up in Greenwood, a thriving African American section of Tulsa. During a night that history almost forgot, Mr. Clark dodged bullets, raced through alleys to escape armed mobs and saw his family’s home burned to the ground. He fled Tulsa on a freight train headed north. He would eventually move to Los Angeles, where he was the butler in the home of movie star Joan Crawford. He later turned to preaching and was known as the “world’s oldest evangelist.” Greenwood had 15,000 residents, a 65-room hotel, several banks and two newspapers. It also faced, on its border, growing racial resentment from an emboldened presence of the Ku Klux Klan. But for nine decades, he remained a living witness to a night of horror, when Greenwood died.

Mr. Clark died May 21 in Seattle at age 109, family members told the Tulsa World newspaper. The cause of death was not disclosed. “Oh, child, we had what you might say a little city, like New York or Chicago,” Mr. Clark told author Tim Madigan, recalling the life of Greenwood for the 2001 book “The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.” “We had two theaters, two pool halls, hotels, and cafes, and stuff. We had an amazing little city.” On the final day of May 1921, white mobs were sparked into action by rumors that a young black man had improperly touched a white female elevator operator. Armed vigilantes were deputized by the local police, giving them the legal standing of a militia, as they gathered on the edge of Greenwood. Mr. Clark had to flee his house. “Gunfire and the blaze from the fire was

getting closer,” he told the Tulsa World in 2000, “and all we had on our minds was getting out of the house before the war got there.” He went to a mortuary, where another man was planning to get an ambulance out of the garage to help victims of the violence. “The man was just then about to open the door when a bullet shattered his hand into pieces, blood flying everywhere,” Mr. Clark recalled. He ran through streets and alleys until he saw a cousin: “I jumped in the car and we hadn’t gone two blocks before we turned this corner and ran right into a crowd of white men coming toward us with guns.” Running for his life, Mr. Clark eventually reached some train tracks, where he hopped on a freight car. He didn’t get off until he was in Milwaukee.

When the smoke cleared over Greenwood, 35 square blocks had been burned to the ground. More than 1,200 houses were destroyed, along with dozens of office buildings, restaurants, churches and schools. “It looked like a war had hit the area,” Mr. Clark recalled in 2000. “Not a single house or building stood untouched. Greenwood was a huge wall of fire, the heat so strong I felt it down the block.” The death toll was first placed at about 35, but residents recalled seeing bodies stacked in the streets or loaded on wagons.

In the 1990s, when historians reexamined what is now known as the Tulsa Race Riot, they estimated that about 300 people, 90 percent of them African American were killed. “My home was burned down,” Mr.

Clark recalled. “My bulldog, Bob was killed. My stepfather was killed. We never did find him, never had a funeral.” The property of black landowners was seized, and their claims for insurance or other reparations

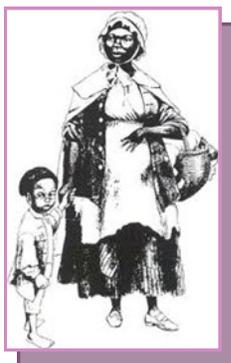
were generally denied. For years, the only new structures in Greenwood were tents and small wooden shacks. Moreover, there was a climate of fear that enforced a code of silence on perpetrators and victims. No one spoke of the pillaging of Greenwood for fear of retribution. *Continue on page 9.*

## Freedmen thank MNN for

March 1, 2012 article

MOORE — Thank you for the recent article published on freedmen in the *Muscogee Nation News* on March 1, 2012. The descendants of former Muscogee (Creek) citizens placed on the Muscogee (Creek) Freedmen roll have filed a Petition for Federal recognition as an American Indian Tribe. This Band of Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen welcomes inquiries from Muscogee citizens wanting to truly learn the history of Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen.

Efforts to present evidence in support of documented Muscogee Creek Indian blood before the tribal court system were unanswered. Muscogee (Creek) Indian Freedmen were loyal and in service (not slavery) to the Muscogee Nation for over 100 years. Service included holding office in the Supreme Court as Judges; the Senate as Senators; delegates to Congress (House of Kings and House of Warriors) and Creek Language Interpreters. Learn about the events which have shaped Indian Freedmen history in the Creek Nation. On behalf of the Muscogee Creek Indian Freedmen Band: Gail M. Jackson, Advisor; Ron Graham, President; Jeffrey D. Kennedy, Vice President; Sharon Lenzy- Scott, Secretary and Rhonda K. Grayson, Treasurer



### *OLD HOME REMEDIES*

- \*Sage was used by the slaves as a mouthwash and a sore throat remedy it was also used as a colic remedy for infants.
- \*Pennyroyal (Herb) was used for headaches, reduce fever, relieving pain from toothaches and fighting colds.
- \*Cow chip tea and Broom Wheat tea for colds, flu, and whooping coughs
- \*Smoke, blow over babies head for colic
- \*Rollie Pollie, tied around the neck for nose bleeds.
- \*Sweet oil, for ear ache
- \*Sardines for mumps
- \*Egg whites and potatoes to draw out boils

Continued from page 7.

Mr. Clark recalled. "My bulldog, Bob was killed. My stepfather was killed. We never did find him, never had a funeral." The property of black landowners was seized, and their claims for insurance or other reparations

were generally denied. For years, the only new structures in Greenwood were tents and small wooden shacks. Moreover, there was a climate of fear that enforced a code of silence on perpetrators and victims. No one spoke of the pillaging of Greenwood for fear of retribution.

As late as the 1970s, when Ed Wheeler, a Tulsa radio host and officer in the Oklahoma National Guard, tried to uncover the truth of Greenwood, no white-owned publication in Tulsa would touch the story. He received threatening phone calls, and someone wrote in soap on the windshield of his car: "Best look under your hood from now on." A state commission finally issued a report on the riot in 2001. Otis Granville Clark was born Feb. 13, 1903, in Meridian, Okla., four years before Oklahoma became a state. His father worked for the railroad. In a 2009 interview for a Tulsa oral history project, Mr. Clark said one of his jobs as a boy was selling vegetables and groceries to a house occupied by what he called "sportin' women." After settling in California, he worked as a limousine driver and later worked on the fringes of Hollywood. He lived in Joan

Crawford's house, where he served as butler and his wife was a cook. He knew Clark Gable and Charlie Chaplin, and was a good friend of actor Stepin Fetchit. "Step picked me to buddy with him," he said, according to a 2005 biography of Fetchit, whose real name was Lincoln Perry. "We was on the wild side." Mr. Clark said he had a religious conversion while serving a jail sentence for selling bootleg liquor during Prohibition.

He began preaching in the 1930s and, over time, would carry his message all over the world. He was 103 when he made his first trip to Africa. He returned a year later, and in 2010, he led an evangelistic mission to

Jamaica. He was married four times and had one daughter, who predeceased him. In recent years, he and a goddaughter ran a ministry in Seattle. Throughout his exceptionally long life, he remained in excellent health, took no medicines and did not use a walker or a cane. Yet Mr. Clark could never expunge the memory of what he had witnessed in 1921. "Family and friends, missing," Mr. Clark said in 2000. "Jobs gone. The city

took my grandmother's land and didn't give us nothing in return. "We suffered. But Tulsa has given us

nothing, even to this day nothing." Rev. Michael Carter, Sr., Black Wall Street USA National President said, "This is a great loss to those of us in the movement to restore economic & self sustaining methods going forward. Bishop Clark however leaves us with the blueprint and proven Spirit of Tulsa...we now have no

excuse but to build as Bishop Clark taught us." Carter, Sr. went on to say, "The world has lost a universal Man of Spiritual fortitude and a paragon of rich virtues. The Bishop will be missed." The spirit of Black Wall Street was shown in the foundation of our ancestors of Tulsa Oklahoma using their own consumer spending power and talents to create a self contained successful Black community with hundreds of Black owned

and operated businesses within 35 city blocks. In that historic spirit.

Article courtesy of Indian Voices [www.indianvoices.net](http://www.indianvoices.net)