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5. Uncle Tom Was an Indian

Tracing the Red in Black Slavery

TIYA MILES

The story of Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's nineteenth-century best-selling novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been read and reread, told and retold, on stages and in classrooms. In it, Uncle Tom, a steadfast and guileless African American slave, remains kindhearted to the end toward the White people who sell and persecute him. As his final and harshest owner, Simon Legree, leans over Tom intending to kill him, Tom whispers: "I'd give ye my heart's blood; and, taking every drop of blood in this poor old body would save your precious soul, I'd give 'em freely, as the Lord gave his for me. Oh, Mas'r! don't bring this great sin on your soul! It will hurt you more than 't will me."[1] The Christ-like character of Uncle Tom was so compelling for nineteenth-century readers, who, as literary critic Jane Tompkins has argued, were steeped in a culture of Christian sentimentalism, that the book launched a wave of popular antislavery feeling.[2] In the years since the abolition of slavery in the United States, the image of Uncle Tom continues to resonate, though with negative connotations. His character has become symbolic of the institution of American slavery, so that to call a contemporary African American person an "Uncle Tom" is to brand that person with the insult of servile and accommodationist behavior.

Yet Cora Gillam, a former slave who was interviewed in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers' Project, offers a very different picture of a man she refers to as "Uncle Tom." In a lengthy statement, Gillam informs her interviewer: "Now I want to tell you about my uncle Tom. Like I said, he was half-Indian. But the Negro part didn't show hardly any. There was something about uncle Tom that made both White and Black people be afraid of him."[3] Though Cora Gillam is speaking of an actual person and Harriet Beecher Stowe of a fictional character, I am quoting Gillam here to introduce another image –

a competing image – of a slave called Uncle Tom. In Stowe's imagination, Tom is Black and benevolent, "full glossy Black" with "truly African features."[4] In contrast, Gillam's Tom is more Indian than Black and is decidedly strong. Considering these Toms side-by-side, we see not only two persons but also two versions of the model American slave: one kind, the other fierce; one Black, the other part-Indian. Gillam's remembrance of a man who was of Black and Native ancestry challenges the familiar version of slavery in which everyone is either Black or White. Her narrative is a window into a complex understanding of American slavery, an understanding that includes Native Americans in this critical national drama.

The association between Black people and enslavement in American culture has become instinctive, natural. Consider recent films on the subject, such as *Amistad* and *Beloved*, that have won large audiences or critical acclaim. These stories offer no surprises about slavery's main characters: the slaves are Black or of Black and White ancestry, and the slave owners are White. But as historian James Walvin has argued in his book *Questioning Slavery*, this second-nature correlation of enslavement with Black people is a correlation that rewrites history. It was not always the case in the United States, and the British colonies that preceded it, that enslavement applied only to African Americans and that slavery involved only Blacks and Whites. As Walvin observes: "Looking back, the association between black slavery and the Americas seems so natural, so much a part of the historical and economic development of the region, that the two seemed obvious partners. Quite the contrary, it was no such thing."[5]

Walvin goes on to explain that American slavery was birthed out of an intimate triangular relationship between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Necessarily, Europeans, Africans, and people indigenous to the Americas became enmeshed in the developing phenomenon. The transatlantic slave trade was indiscriminate, catching up anyone and everyone in its net. Still, the popular story of slavery in America, the one told in novels, films, and even high school and college classrooms, is a story without American Indians in it.[6] Worse yet, it is a story that has been reproduced by respected scholars in African American and Native American histories who have painted slavery with a narrow brush. In *Race and History*, John Hope Franklin writes Native people out of the South, ignoring the many Native nations that occupy that region and have contributed to shaping its history. Franklin states: "My field of concentration has been the South, where I have studied intensively the two great racial groups, black and white, the principal actors in the drama of Southern history. (Even before most of them were expelled from the South by Andrew Jackson, Native Americans played only a limited role in the region.)"[7] And in his classic *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Vine Deloria Jr. says about Native Americans: "It is fortunate that we were never slaves. We gave up land instead of life and labor."[8] The misperceptions in these statements by otherwise erudite scholars are reflective of many Americans' views. As historian Jack Forbes has urged: "The existence of a large group of 'Red-Black People,' part-American and part-African, has been largely overlooked. . . . Still further, the former existence of comparatively large numbers of Native American slaves has also been ignored generally, with great consequence for both early Native and Afroamerican history."[9] These exclusions and inaccuracies must be addressed if we are ever to stretch ourselves toward a richer understanding of American slavery. Perhaps what we need to move toward this goal is what historian Ronald Takaki has called "a fresh angle, a study of the American past from a comparative perspective."[10] If we look at African American history and Native American history side-by-side rather than in isolation, we will see the edges where those histories meet and begin to comprehend a fuller and more fascinating picture. At the intersections of Black and Native experiences, we gain greater understanding of the histories of both groups.

This essay is an exploratory contemplation of the multiple and varying experiences as well as the legacy of Native Americans in slavery. I begin with a brief historical overview of Indians as slaves and slave owners, followed by a discussion of Black and Native kinship ties grounded in this past. Next, through an account of Black Indian women's experiences in slavery, I consider the potential for slave history to impact scholarship on Native American women. Finally, I delve into the vagaries and contradictions of Black Indian identities that emerge out of the history of Native enslavement.

BACKTRACKING: INDIANS AND SLAVERY

> In the New World, Native Americans and imported Africans were the planters' laborers of choice.
>
> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*

If the association between Black people and slavery is by now a natural one, how do we disrupt it to grasp a different reality? One method is to backtrack and revisit the beginnings of slavery in North America. A number of scholars have taken on this task, tracing out the slow and cumber-

some development of institutionalized slavery as an economic, cultural, racial, and gendered system that grew out of the European quest for empire. Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant have argued that race as we understand it, with all of its concomitant categories, hierarchies, and meanings, began with the European project to colonize the Americas. As European explorers encountered Native American peoples who were unlike themselves, they sought to assess and categorize them. Defining Native people as different, heathen, and inferior meant it was possible for European settlers to treat them poorly, to value territory and wealth over the dignity and rights of the people who occupied the land. Omi and Winant write:

> The conquest, therefore, was the first – and given the dramatic nature of the case, perhaps the greatest – racial formation project. Its significance was by no means limited to the Western Hemisphere, for it began the work of constituting Europe as the metropole, the center, of a group of empires which could take, as Marx would later write, "the globe for a theater." It represented this new imperial structure as a struggle between civilization and barbarism, and implicated in this representation all the great European philosophies, literary traditions, and social theories of the modern age.[11]

As momentous as this movement proved to be, it was also far-reaching, stretching into Africa to pluck free laborers and pillage natural resources. What followed was a complex and high-stakes system: the movement of capital, products, and persons across continents for national and personal gain.

The single-minded vision of "empire as a way of life" did not discriminate between Black and Red people. Both groups, representing multiple nations and tribes, were seen as ripe for the picking. Indigenous Americans in South America, Central America, North America, and the Caribbean, as well as Africans, were coerced and pressed into labor by the British, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Omi and Winant argue that "the seizure of territories and goods, the introduction of slavery through the *encomienda* and other forms of coerced native labor, and then through the organization of the African slave trade – not to mention the practice of outright extermination – all presupposed a worldview which distinguished Europeans, as the children of God, full-fledged human beings, etc., from 'Others.'"[12] As this statement intimates, Native Americans were the first slaves in the Americas. With the majority of the indigenous population in Central and South America decimated by European diseases, the remaining population was weakened and vulnerable. In the Portuguese colony of Brazil, which would become a shining success in its production of sugar and wealth, indigenous people were the original slaves. In the Spanish-controlled North American Southwest, Native people were also forced into servile labor, carrying Spanish supplies and even Spaniards on their backs like packhorses. In Jamestown, Virginia, the first successful British colony in what would become the United States, Native people were likewise pressed into laboring for European interlopers.

In order to persevere, Jamestown required more agricultural workers than it had, and this demand only increased with the eventual success of the colony's tobacco crop on the British market. In response to this need, Virginia gentlemen and colonial leaders used White indentured servants, transplanted Africans, and American Indians as a captive and inferior labor force.[13] By 1660, Virginians were so well pleased with the enterprise of African slave labor that they solicited Dutch captains to sell them shiploads of Africans. Soon after, in 1676, Virginia colonists legalized the enslavement of Native people by enacting that "soldiers who had captured Indians should 'reteyne and keepe all such Indian slaves or other Indian goods as they either have taken or hereafter shall take.'"[14] As Africans' and Indians' role as slaves solidified, White indentured servants, who had comprised the first work gangs on Virginia plantations, appeared in the fields less and less.[15] This was in part because fewer White servants were choosing to move to the colony and also, importantly, because a rigid color line had begun to emerge. Whiteness became synonymous with freedom and nonwhiteness with slavery. From this point onward, Virginians did not take care to distinguish between Africans and Indians. Indeed, as historian Edmund Morgan notes: "Indians and Negroes were henceforth lumped together in Virginia legislation, and white Virginians treated black, red, and intermediate shades of brown as interchangeable . . . as Virginians began to expand their slaveholdings, they seem to have had Indians as much in view as Africans."[16] Non-White people of any variety were seen as suitable for enslavement because their color was the mark of their difference and, in the view of Whites, their inferiority. The British saw Blacks and Indians as equally debased, equally defunct of moral virtue. By the mid–seventeenth century, the project to colonize the Americas had developed into a pervasive ideology and system of White supremacy in which all people of color were viewed as subordinate and suspect.

This system of White supremacy was nourished by an ideology of White superiority that pervaded the rhetoric and writing of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English. Historian Winthrop Jordan has

written extensively on the image of Africans and Indians in the British mind, arguing that the English saw Africans as "black," a descriptor that, for them, connoted evil, bestiality, and filth. Upon encountering Native Americans in North America, people with brown skin who exhibited "savage" behavior and were known to be enslaved in the West Indies, English colonists associated them with the dark and "uncivilized" Africans. Jordan asserts that "it is easy to see why: whether considered in terms of religion, nationality, savagery, or geographical location, Indians seemed more like Negroes than like Englishmen."[17] Seeming "more like Negroes" meant that Native people were located "on the losing side of a crucial dividing line," which, along with Africans, "set them apart for drastic exploitation, oppression, and degradation."[18]

Though European colonists in North America heartily adopted the enslavement of Indians in the late 1600s and early 1700s, they decreased this practice over time. The poor logic of enslaving people in their own homeland soon became clear to Euro-Americans as runaway Indian slaves continually found their way back home. In addition, Native Americans proved highly susceptible to the foreign diseases that had already decimated hundreds of African slaves in the Middle Passage. And Indian slaves, the colonists claimed, were just poor workers. Increasingly, colonists favored and sought African slaves over Native American ones, and the relative value placed on African slaves was evident in their high purchasing price.[19] At the same time, Indian people who found themselves displaced from Native communities or who chose to remain close to Black relatives continued to be swept up by slavery. Their presence within slave communities was rarely documented, however. As blackness became synonymous with bondage, it seemed like commonsense for planters to define enslaved persons as Black, regardless of their possibly complicated racial backgrounds. Ira Berlin explains that "the massive influx [of African slaves] overwhelmed the Native-American population, and Indian slaves were swallowed in the tide. . . . Native-American slaves soon vanished from the census enumerations and plantation daybooks, as planters simply categorized their Indian slaves as Africans."[20]

Though absent from the written record, Native American slaves are remembered in the oral testimony of their relatives. Mary Allen Darrows, a former slave from Arkansas, explained that her grandmother was "a little full-blooded Indian girl" who was captured and enslaved by White men in the "Indian Nation (Alabama)."[21] In another example, Sweetie Ivery Wagoner, a former slave from Oklahoma, reported: "My father was a slave, but he wasn't a Negro. He was a Creek Indian whom the Cherokee Indians stole long years ago and put in slavery just like he was a Negro, and he married with a slave woman and raised a big family."[22] To some historians, Indian enslavement has seemed incidental and unimportant in comparison to more than two centuries of institutionalized Black enslavement in the United States. However, as historian J. Leitch Wright has argued, no experience of slavery is insignificant, especially to those who were enslaved. Wright contends: "Readers usually get the impression that this [Indian slavery] was a transitory and not particularly significant phenomenon. The aboriginal perspective was quite different."[23] Slavery as an aspect of Native American history is meaningful, both in what it tells us about the range of Native experiences and in what it signifies for the status of Native people in early America.

Equally important to the story of Native Americans and slavery is the fact that Indians owned slaves in the Southeast and in the western Indian Territory. Native American acceptance of slavery was slow to develop and continually contested by the majority of Native people. Still, some Indians bought, sold, and worked Black slaves – in several cases, hundreds of them. Practices of slaveholding differed from tribe to tribe, with some tribes (like the Seminoles and Creeks) maintaining relatively loose and lenient systems and others (like the Cherokees and Choctaws) developing harsh and controlled systems over time. Native slaveholders hoped and believed that by owning land and Black slaves they could demonstrate their level of "civilization" to American federal and local powers and thus gain a measure of protection from impending displacement. Despite this and other concessions, however, the Native nations collectively known as the Five Civilized Tribes, were forced west in the 1830s to make way for White settlement.[24] Slaveholding in Indian country persisted until the American Civil War.

BLOOD TELLS: THE REVELATIONS OF KINSHIP

> If you'll believe it, this [bed]spread took first prize. Look, here's the blue ribbon pinned on yet. What they thought was so wonderful was that I knit every stitch of it without glasses. But that is not so funny, because I have never worn glasses in my life. I guess that is some more of my Indian blood telling.
>
> Cora Gillam, WPA Interview

In her interview with a Federal Writers' Project employee, former slave Cora Gillam claims that "blood tells." By this she means that "blood," or

Indian ancestry, explains something about her that is otherwise inexplicable. Her prizewinning bedspread appeared to the judges to have been sewn by an African American woman, but Gillam complicates this initial impression by highlighting her Native American heritage and connecting that heritage with the quality of good eyesight. It is, she reveals, her Native "blood," present but unseen, that has facilitated the creation of the beautiful textile. Though clearly essentialist in its attribution of good health to Native ancestry, Gillam's statement points to fruitful directions for inquiry. Following Gillam's lead, what can "blood" tell us? What can we learn by looking at family lineage that would not otherwise be obvious in a study of Native Americans and slavery?

In the Southeast, where most Native Americans and Africans encountered one another, the intricate constellations of Native kinship systems shaped social interactions, political agendas, and crime and punishment within Native communities. For southeastern tribes, kinship was a primary determinant of social and ceremonial relations.[25] A person without kinship ties was hardly a person at all, and a person with kinship ties was an integral part of an extended family, or clan. Information about clan membership determined the trajectory that any encounter or relationship would follow.[26] A person could expect to be received hospitably by a clan member even if that clan member was a personal stranger or lived in a distant town, and a person could be punished or killed for a crime committed by a clan member whom he or she had never met.[27] Kinship was the web that knit Native people together as tribes, and Native people viewed the world through the intricate netting of that web. Given the centrality of kinship to Native definitions of peoplehood, tracing bloodlines across Black and Indian communities seems both a fitting and effective means of locating further dimensions of Native Americans' experience with slavery. In the absence of reliable historical records, cartographies of kinship can serve as guides to the complex ways that Native people were drawn into slavery's matrix.

Anthropologist Melville Herskovits of Howard University found in studies conducted between 1926 and 1928 that over 25 percent of the African American population reported having Native American ancestry.[28] Even allowing for misrepresentation or imprecise memory, this figure suggests that significant numbers of Black Americans have one or more Native American forebears. Jack Forbes has argued that "by the nineteenth century it seems quite certain that Afroamericans, whether living in Latin America, the Caribbean or in North America, had absorbed considerable amounts of Native American ancestry."[29] In the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s, when many of these interracial links were forged, the descendants of a Native American and African American would have been defined as Indian by other Indians of their tribe. Native nations in the Southeast tended toward matrilineality and reckoned clan membership through the mother's family line. Within the framework of a matrilineal kinship system, a person was Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, and so on if the person's mother was Cherokee, Creek, or Seminole. Race as we understand it now was not the determining factor in a person's tribal identity or tribal membership. Instead, lineage determined belonging. A person who appeared "Black" and had a Native American mother would have been defined and accepted as Indian. Later, in the early 1800s, as southeastern tribes began to incorporate aspects of the Euro-American patrilineal kinship system, mixed-race descendants of Native mothers or Native fathers could be considered Indian by their Native relatives and associates. The prevailing understanding was consistent: if your relatives were Indian, so were you.[30]

The children and grandchildren of Indian and Black families were considered Native by their Native relatives and Black by their Black relatives. They belonged to dual and overlapping tribal/racial communities and were most likely fluent in the values and cultural practices of both. Because of phenotypical characteristics that marked them as "Black" and because of their location in Black families, children of Native and Black couples were especially vulnerable to enslavement. Whether by birth, trade, or capture, they could easily fall prey to slave dealers and slave owners. Even as Native Americans were enslaved outright in early America, Black Indians, or people of both Black and Native descent, were enslaved in large numbers along with African Americans into the nineteenth century.

Interracial marriage in the slave quarters and in free communities of color meant that the Black population and Indian population were overlapping and expanding and that the slave population included more and more persons of Black and Native descent. Advertisements for runaway slaves in eighteenth-century newspapers indicate the mixed-race heritage of many slaves and also show the ambivalence of White slave owners in describing slaves of Black and Native ancestry. Repeatedly in these advertisements, slaves are defined as "Negro" or "Mulatto" with "claims" of Indianness or the ability to "pass" as Indian, but rarely are slaves designated as "Indian" or both Black and Indian.[31] A survey of advertisements for escaped Black Indian slaves from several newspapers follows:

a Mulatto slave named David, about twenty two years of age, five Feet eight or nine Inches high, a cunning artful Fellow with a sly Look, slim made, a little knock-kneed, says he is of the Indian breed[32]

a mulatto servant man, named John Newton, about 20 years of age, an Indian by birth, about 5 feet 6 inches high, slender made, has a thin visage, sour look, remarkable projected lips, and wears his own black hair tied behind[33]

a tall thin Mulatto slave, looks very much like an Indian, and will endeavour to pass as such when it suits him[34]

a Mulatto slave named Dan, much the Colour of an Indian, is a lusty Fellow about 25 Years of Age[35]

a negro man of the name Tom, about 5 feet 6 inches tall, of a yellowish complexion, much the appearance of an Indian. . . . His hair is of a different kind from that of a Negro's, rather more of the Indian's, but partaking of both[36]

a Mulatto man named Jim who is a slave, but pretends to have a right to his freedom. His father was an Indian . . . he is a short well fed fellow, about Twenty seven Years of Age, with long black Hair resembling an Indian's.[37]

In these examples, slave owners deflect the right of Black Indians to be Indian by reducing Indianness to a list of "traits" such as hair, attitude, skin color, and known relatives. The authenticity of Black Indians' Indianness is called into question by the circumlocutory language of many of these advertisements.[38] In some cases, slave owners misclassified Black Indians because they were sloppy, in other cases because it made no difference exactly what racial background a colored, enslaved person claimed. In still other cases, persons who were both Black and Indian were misidentified because Whites stood to gain at the reduction of the Native American population. "Black" people did not have the rightful claim to American land that Native people had. To define Indians as Black meant there would be fewer "real" Indians with whom land deals and treaties had to be negotiated.[39]

The intricate and even paradoxical means of defining racial categories in the United States has meant that enslaved Black Indians have not been defined as Indian but instead as solely Black. The simplification of mixed-race ancestry and resulting misclassification of people have contributed to the fiction that Native Americans did not play a role in slavery past the eighteenth century. Given the prevailing understanding of racial categories, many of us find the notion of Indians who are also Black difficult to accept. The logic within which we operate when defining Blacks and Indians is governed by the dialectic of the "one-drop rule" and blood quantum ratio. The "one-drop rule," which holds that a person who has one drop of Black blood is Black, was devised by Euro-American slave owners. It ensured an ever-growing slave population fattened by the children of Black slaves and White masters, even as it protected White people from legitimizing "mulattoes," "quadroons," and "octoroons" as White. Likewise, the blood quantum ratio method of defining Native Americans was developed by White policy-makers in the late nineteenth century. It holds that a person can only be Indian if he or she demonstrates a particular ratio of Native forebears to non-Native forbears.[40] Because it was difficult for some Native people to meet this criterion due to intermarriage in their families, there were fewer Indians whom federal and state officials had to recognize as having rightful claims to their homelands and to political sovereignty as tribal nations. The "one-drop rule" ensured that there would be more Black laborers for slavery's human machine, while the blood quantum ratio ensured that there would be more available land for White settlement and development.

For people of both Black and Native descent, these two rules interface in a way that makes it difficult for Black Indians to be considered Indian. Anthropologist Circe Sturm confronts this dilemma in this volume, arguing that "the rules of hypodescent played out in such a way that people with any degree of African American blood were usually classified exclusively as Black. . . . multiracial individuals with Black ancestry were always 'Black.'"[41] Sturm notes that, given this logic, it has been much easier for Indians with White ancestry to be defined as "Indian" than it has been for Indians with Black ancestry. What is important to recognize here is that these means of defining group membership for Blacks and Native Americans originated outside of Black and Native communities. Though many African American and Native American people subscribe to these definitions today, during the antebellum period Blacks and Indians regularly defined the members of their families and tribes in accordance with their own values. Black Indian people were viewed as Indian by Native community members. And just as important, many Black Indian people constructed biracial identities for themselves.

The WPA interviews with Black Indians who were former slaves include self-descriptions that suggest a biracial and bicultural consciousness. In the next two essays in this volume, Celia Naylor-Ojurongbe and Laura Lovett look closely at these interviews to assess the specific aspects and meanings of biracial Black Indian cultures, with particular attention to material culture and language.[42] Here I will simply offer examples of

Black Indian slaves' self-descriptions as a means of indicating their self-conceptualizations as Black Indian people. Former slave Sweetie Ivery Wagoner states that her father was an enslaved Creek man who married a Black woman. She also describes her parents' dress as an indicator of their Indian identity: "My folks was part Indian alright; they wore blankets and breeches with fur around the bottoms. My father's own daddy was Randolph Get-a-bout."[43] R. C. Smith, like many Black Indians who were interviewed, traces out his Native lineage: "My father was half Cherokee Indian. His father was bought by an Indian woman and she took him for her husband. . . . My father played with Cornelius Boudinot when he was a child. Cherokee Bill was my second cousin."[44] This gesture of naming Native relatives, common in interviews with Black Indians, might be understood as a habit grounded in Native kinship customs. Alternately, or simultaneously, the gesture could be read as an attempt to authenticate the speaker's Indianness in the face of skepticism, a bicultural characteristic grounded in the particular experience of Black Indians.

Cornelius Neely Nave, a Black-Cherokee man who was the slave of Cherokees, described himself as follows: "I wasn't scared of them Indians for pappa always told me his master, Henry Nave, was his own father; that makes me part Indian and the reason my hair is long, straight and black like a horse mane."[45] As Nave's statement implies, Black Indian slaves owned by Native people experienced their Indianness in complex and contradictory ways, as their relationship to Native cultures would have been filtered through and constrained by the fact that their enslavers were Indians. In a final example, a Black-Creek healer explains his talent as bicultural in nature: "Cross blood means extra knowledge. I can take my cane and blow it twice and do the same thing a Creek full blood doctor does in four times. Two bloods makes two talents. Two bloods has more swifter solid good sense. I is one of them."[46]

Defined on the most literal level of blood ties, Black Indians were Indians as well as Blacks. Additionally, beyond this literal interpretation, Black people could become Indian through adoption. The experience of Molly, a Black slave adopted into a Cherokee clan, points to the ways that racial categories were malleable in Native communities. Molly was purchased in the late 1700s by a White man named Sam Dent who had been an Indian trader in Cherokee territory. Dent gave Molly to the Deer clan as retribution for having beaten to death his Cherokee wife, a Deer clan member. The Deer clan accepted Molly as a family member in place of the deceased woman and gave her the name Chickaua.[47]

Molly lived with her new family as a free woman until her liberty was challenged in 1833 by the White daughter of Sam Dent's associate, who claimed ownership of Molly and her son, Cunestuta (or Isaac Tucker). The Deer clan refused to give Molly and Isaac up to the agents who had been sent to retrieve them. Instead, clan members challenged the White claimant, whose name was Molly Hightower, before the Cherokee Supreme Court. They urged the "Council and authorities of the Cherokee nation" to protect Molly and her son, insisting: "[We] ask and require of our Council and headmen for assistance and for Council to resist this oppression and legal wrong attempted to be practiced on our Brother and Sister by the Hightower in leasing into slavery two of whom have ever been considered native cherokee [*sic*]. We feel that the attempt is one of cruel greavance [*sic*]."[48] In this document, the petitioners refer to Molly and Cunestuta as "brother and sister" and "native Cherokees" and argue that as adoptees into the Deer clan, the former Black slaves were now Cherokee citizens. The Cherokee Supreme Court agreed and protected the mother and son's status as Cherokees. In the words of historian William McLoughlin, the court concluded that "the slave, Molly, had become a Cherokee, had always been treated as a Cherokee, and still retained the rights of Cherokee citizenship by virtue of her adoption into the Deer clan, regardless of her race, complexion, or ancestry. By this same right, her son was also a Cherokee citizen."[49]

THE WAY IT IS: BLACK INDIAN WOMEN IN SLAVERY

> I was a Cherokee slave and now I am a Cherokee freedwoman, and besides that I am a quarter Cherokee my own self. And this is the way it is.
>
> Sarah Wilson, WPA Interview

As evidenced by the customs of Native kinship systems, the accounts of Black Indian slaves, and the outcome of a representative Native court case, Black Indians were Indians. When taken as a presupposition, this conclusion opens up new questions in the study of Native American history. Take, for instance, the history of Native women in the United States – a topic that has been neglected within the broader field of Native American studies. Scholars like Bea Medicine, Patricia Albers, Theda Perdue, and Nancy Shoemaker have addressed this absence in their own work on Native women. Anthropologist Patricia Albers points out that attention to the Native American past has focused on men, particularly chiefs and warriors. She argues that "native women rarely appear" in historical writings and are "conspicuous by their absence."[50] Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman make a similar case, asserting that the textures and meanings of

Indian women's lives are left unexplored in ethnographic works: "Silence surrounds the lives of Native North American Women. . . . The wives, sisters, and mothers of Native nations do appear in traditional ethnographies but only where they are expected, and the meanings of their lives are left to the readers' imagination."[51]

In addition to the lack of attention to Native women, there is the equally problematic issue of sparse and compromised sources for research. Historian Nancy Shoemaker explicates the problem of locating reliable sources for Native women's history. Particularly in colonial and early America, records were kept by White men who, if they noticed Native women at all, viewed them through a Eurocentric and masculinist lens that did not allow for clear vision of Native women's experience. Shoemaker explains: "From Columbus's initial descriptions of 'India' up through the twentieth century, most of the available written records have been produced by Euro-American men – explorers, traders, missionaries, and government policymakers. . . . Historical accounts of Indian women usually depict them as 'squaw drudges,' beasts of burden bowed down with overwork and spousal oppression, or as 'Indian princesses,' voluptuous and promiscuous objects of white and Indian men's sexual desire."[52] As Theda Perdue argues, even when White men were intimate and careful observers, they could not accurately describe Native women's lives. Perdue notes that "male European observers had virtually no access to the private lives of women or to women's culture. Even those who married Native women usually had only scant insight into the most basic matters."[53]

The historical experience of Native women has been difficult to unearth, even for scholars who are versed in and committed to the subject. Presupposing that Black Indians are Indians has the potential to reveal new sources of information for this crucial work. A number of Black Indian women lived as slaves in the American colonies and the United States. Thus themes and arguments that scholars of Black women's history have explored in their studies of slave women can now be read as intersecting with Native women's history. Topics like sexual abuse, breeding, and physical brutality, key in the experience of Black slave women, now become meaningful and illuminating in the study of Indian women's lives. More, the firsthand experience of Black Indian women as recorded in slave interviews and narratives is an untapped source of primary material for Native women's history. As personal accounts that delve into the everyday happenings and key issues in the lives of a specific set of Native women, these narratives are valuable and rare.

For instance, slave interviews reveal that the threat of rape clouded the lives of Black Indian women, as it did for all enslaved Black women. As scholars of Native women's history address the misrepresentation of Native women's sexuality and the particularities of culturally specific understandings of sex, they might broaden their studies by attending to the issue of sexual abuse in Black Indian women's experience. In one interview, former slave Hannah Travis painfully recounts her mother's abuse. The daughter of a "full blooded Indian" woman and a Black French man, Travis's mother worked in the kitchen of her master and mistress.[54] The inhumane treatment she endured is apparent in the punishment she received if she missed a spot while washing the dishes. Her master would "make her drink the old dirty dishwater [and] whip her if she didn't drink it."[55] In addition, Hannah Travis's mother was raped by her master, Hannah's father. Hannah Travis says of this incident: "I hate my father. He was white. I never did have no use for him. . . . He was my mother's master. My mother was just forced. I hate him."[56]

Ellen Cragin, the daughter of a Black woman and Indian man, explains that her father was conceived during a period when her enslaved grandmother had run away: "My father was an Indian. Way back in the dark days, his mother ran away, and when she came up, that's what she come with – a little Indian boy. They called him 'Waw-hoo'che.'" Cragin continues: "They used to call me 'Waw-hoo'che' and 'the Red-Headed Indian Brat.' I got into a fight once with my mistress' daughter on account of that."[57] The "dark days" of slavery were riddled with violence in the experience of this young Black Indian girl. She saw her mother forced to breed for the master and repeatedly witnessed her mother being whipped. While a child, Cragin watched as her pregnant mother was beaten with a technique that was developed to protect the valuable offspring of slave women while brutally punishing the women themselves. The master or overseer would dig a hole for the protection of the woman's extended belly, while leaving her back and hips exposed.[58] Cragin recounts: "One day, Tom Polk [her master] hit my mother. That was before she ran away. He hit her because she didn't pick the required amount of cotton. . . . I don't know how many times he hit her. I was small. . . . I went to see. And they had her down. She was stout, and they had dug a hole in the ground to put her belly in. I never did get over that."[59] Cragin says further of her master: "He would have children by a nigger woman and then have them by her daughter." In an effort to protect her mother, Cragin once took up arms: "I went out one day and got a gun. I don't know whose gun it was. I said to myself 'If you whip my mother today, I am going to shoot you.' I didn't know where the gun belonged. My oldest sister told me to take it and set it by the door, and I did it."[60]

Mamie Thompson, born after emancipation, described the life of her

enslaved mother. Thompson's mother was "mixed with Cherokee Indian and Negro," resulting from her father's status as "a full blood Indian."[61] When she resisted the sexual advances of a White overseer, she was placed on the auction block: "Master Redman had her in the field working. The overseer was a white man. He tried to take her down and carry on with her . . . He was mad cause he couldn't overpower her. Master Redman got her in the kitchen to whoop her with a cowhide; she told him she would kill him; she got a stick. He let her out and they came to buy her – a Negro trader."[62] Thompson's mother was later recovered and brought home by her mistress.

Sarah Wilson, the woman whose words begin this section of the essay, was a Black-Cherokee slave owned by a White-Cherokee family. Her story is both illuminating and compelling in the ways that it details the experience of one Black Indian girl and indicts that girl's own Cherokee relatives for their cruelty. Sarah Wilson's master, whom she describes as "a devil on this earth," was a White man married to a Cherokee woman.[63] The couple's son was Wilson's father. Though Wilson does not describe the sexual encounter between her African American mother and the master's son, it is probable that her mother was forced. Wilson says of her father, "Young Master Ned was a devil too."[64] She also reports that her master practiced breeding and sold female slaves who did not have babies. Wilson describes her mistress, who was also her grandmother, as being equally harsh: "Old Master wasn't the only hellion either. Old Mistress just as bad, and she took most of her wrath out hitting us children all the time."[65] Wilson reveals that she learned from her Black grandmother the reason for the mistress's venom: "When I was eight years old, Old Mistress died, and Grandmammy told me why Old Mistress picked on me so. She told me about me being half Mister Ned's blood."[66] Clearly, Sarah Wilson's experience adds another dimension to the meaning of blood ties for Black Indians. The depravities and ideologies of slavery, when adopted by Native people, had the potential to warp kinship ties between Indians and Black Indian relatives. Being part Cherokee made Sarah Wilson a threat to her Cherokee grandmother. And Wilson only received minimal protection from her father. In much the same way as White owners who fathered Black babies, he casually defended her against her grandmother's beatings. Wilson reports that on these occasions her father would say, with a laugh, "Let her alone, she got big blood in her."[67]

These accounts and others of sexual abuse and violence reveal the ways that Black Indian women experienced slavery. They were raped, beaten, and threatened, and their children witnessed their vulnerability and violation. Whole families were affected, and sometimes implicated, by the abuse of their relatives and the inhumanity of enslavement. As the experiences of women who were Indian as well as Black, these happenings have a place in the history of Native American women. In the early 1980s, pathbreaking slavery studies began to ask how the particularities of an interrelated gendered and raced experience shaped Black women's lives.[68] With attention to the untapped sources of slave women's interviews and narratives, scholars of Native women's history might now ask: How did Black Indian women experience slavery *as Native women*? What new issues if any arose out of the complex configuration of this specific slave experience? Did Black Indian women understand their enslavement and resistance in ways that were culturally specific? Did they locate their experience within broader tribal and Native group histories? Did they develop biracial identities and bicultural communities? Historian Nell Irvin Painter has observed in her essay "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully-Loaded Cost Accounting" that the prevalence of violence and sexual abuse during slavery indelibly stained Black women's lives.[69] Certainly, this history has shaped Black women's ideas about themselves and their sexuality, even in the present day. As historian Paula Giddings has argued, "The issues of gender and sexuality have been made so painful to us in our history that we have largely hidden them from ourselves. . . . Consequently, they remain largely unresolved."[70] Might similar arguments about sexual abuse and the persistence of historical memory be made for Native women, once this aspect of Black Indian women's experience is taken into account? Or does the distinctive historical shape of Native women's experience, when complicated by Black Indian women's voices, offer fresh paradigms for understanding both Black and Native women's history? These questions and more emerge when we tell a story of slavery with Indians in it and recognize Black Indians as Indians.

BLACK INDIAN IDENTITIES: CONTRADICTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Constructing a history of slavery that includes Native people contributes to a richer picture of the American, Native American, and African American pasts. But a richer picture is at the same time more complicated, characterized by contradictions and contestations of the familiar and comfortable. The narrative of Cora Gillam, the former slave from Mississippi whose description of "Uncle Tom" introduces this essay, exemplifies some

of the contradictions inherent in this endeavor. I presented Gillam's words at two junctures in this chapter – at the start to illustrate dual images of "Uncle Tom" and in the body to demonstrate the importance of attending to Black and Native kinship networks. However, I deferred until now a discussion of the ways that Gillam's representation of her uncle raises intriguing and challenging questions about her representation of a Black Indian identity.

As Laura Lovett has demonstrated, African Americans' invocation of Native ancestry is a motif in the WPA narratives. Lovett defines these recurring rhetorical moments as attempts on the part of interviewees to resist the hierarchies of segregation by muddying the waters of racial categorization. In other words, interviewees challenged fixed notions of biological blackness and Black inferiority by highlighting Native American family legacies. Lovett posits that in referencing Native kin, interviewees enacted "genealogical performances" that operated as ideological and political disruptions of the racial status quo.[71] Gillam's "genealogical performance" traces Native heritage to contextualize her own personal strengths. But even as Gillam's narrative challenges fixed racial categories, it privileges Indianness over Blackness, imbuing Indian "blood" with an essentialized array of special qualities. Gillam's account lends specificity to the history of Black Indians in slavery. At the same time, it reveals the contested issues of racial hierarchy and racial prestige with which Black Indian slaves and their descendants have wrestled.

Cora Gillam is a confident and purposeful interviewee. She aims to shape her own story and informs the interviewer of this intent when she interrupts the framework the interviewer has imposed by exclaiming: "Wait a minute lady." Gillam explains that she is the child of a Black-Cherokee woman and White man. The mixed-race aspect of her identity, particularly her Indianness, is central to the story she tells about herself. She explains early in the interview when asked if her father was a slave: "No ma'am, oh no indeedy, my father was not a slave. Can't you tell by me that he was white?" She goes on to explain her racial identity further:

> My grandmother – on mother's side, was full blooded Cherokee. She came from North Carolina. In early days my mother and her brothers and sisters were stolen from their home in North Carolina and taken to Mississippi and sold for slaves. You know the Indians could follow trails better than other kind of folks, and she tracked her children down and stayed in the south. My mother was only part-Negro; so was her brother, uncle Tom. He seemed all Indian. You know, the Cherokees were peaceable Indians, until you got them mad. Then they was the fiercest fighters of any tribes.[72]

At this point in the narrative, Gillam directs her attention to the valiant story of her uncle Tom, devoting considerable time to chronicling his accomplishments:

> Now I want to tell you about my uncle Tom. Like I said, he was half-Indian. But the Negro part didn't show hardly any. There was something about uncle Tom that made both white and black be afraid of him. They say uncle Tom was the best reader, white or black, for miles. That was what got him in trouble. Slaves was not allowed to read. They didn't want them to know that freedom was coming. No ma'am! . . . That Indian in uncle Tom made him not scared of anybody. He had a newspaper with latest war news and gathered a crowd of slaves to read them when peace was coming. White men say it done to get uprising among slaves. A crowd of white gather and take uncle Tom to jail. Twenty of them said they would beat him, each man, till they so tired they can't lay on one more lick. If he still alive, then they hang him. . . . The Indian in uncle Tom rose. Strength – big extra strength seemed to come to him. First man what opened that door, he leaped on him and laid him out. No white man could stand against him in that Indian fighting spirit. They was scared of him. He almost tore that jailhouse down, lady. Yes he did.[73]

Gillam's account of her uncle's bravery is certainly moving. But what does it mean that her uncle "seemed all Indian" and that "the Negro part didn't show hardly any"? Gillam does not describe Tom physically, and it seems that these references reflect Tom's character rather than his phenotype. Gillam's description of the Indian "rising" in Tom when he is forced to defend himself against a lynch mob suggests that she sees her uncle's Indianness as the source and encapsulation of his strength. Like a genie in the bottle of embodied Blackness, Tom's Indianness is invested with a power and magnificence that can be conjured in times of need. More, the strength that Tom derives from his Indianness stands in implicit opposition to his Black heritage, which Gillam never designates as the source of positive or special qualities. Laura Lovett has argued insightfully that WPA interviewees invoked (often stereotyped) Indian characteristics to demonstrate a legacy of resistance in their families. In the case of Gillam and others, however, this rhetorical act of protest can simultaneously be read as an act of negation, coding Black Indian resistance as solely Indian and thereby rendering invisible an accompanying tradition of Black resistance.

This reading of Cora Gillam's narrative challenges more celebratory views of Black Indian historical identities and Black and Native relations. However, the project of reimagining the history of slavery in America, of weaving Native experiences into that history, brings with it the responsibility of complicating our findings. Just as the popular version of slavery

is incomplete, a version in which Indians and Black Indians appear is likewise unfinished unless we continually push the boundaries of our knowledge and expectations. Constructing a complex story of American slavery, and of Black and Native relations, means exploring what is disconcerting and contradictory, even as we seek what is liberatory and luminous.

NOTES

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852; reprint, New York: Signet, 1966), 440.

2. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

3. Interview with Cora Gillam in Works Progress Administration: Oklahoma Writers Project, *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1932 [microfilm]), 28. I am grateful to Patrick Minges for compiling and sharing many of the WPA interviews used in this essay. The WPA interviews, structured by specific questions, reveal details of everyday slave life such as diet, housing, work, childbirth and childrearing, methods of punishment, and degree of mobility. While rich as source material, these interviews must be read closely and critically, as many of them were conducted by White workers, creating a dynamic that led some interviewees to mask their actual feelings about slavery. Perhaps the most reliable approach to reconstructing a picture of slave women's experience from these interviews is a comparative analysis that teases out common themes and shared experiences across a range of interviews. This type of reading can glean major aspects of slave women's experience without wholly depending upon the complete veracity and forthrightness of single interviewees. For more on the use of the WPA materials, see Melvina Johnson Young, "Exploring the WPA Narratives: Finding the Voices of Black Women and Men," in *Theorizing Black Feminisms*, ed. Stanlie James and Abena Busia (New York: Routledge, 1993), 55–74.

4. Stowe, *Uncle Tom*, 32.

5. James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

6. I borrow this phrasing from Colin Calloway, who commonly describes his historical work as "writing American history with Indians in it."

7. John Hope Franklin, *Race and History: Selected Essays 1938–1988* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 71.

8. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins, an Indian Manifesto* (1969; reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 7.

9. Jack Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 190.

10. Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 7.

11. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 62.

12. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*.

13. Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974).

14. Quoted in Morgan, *American Slavery*, 329.

15. Morgan, *American Slavery*, 308.

16. Morgan, *American Slavery*, 329.

17. Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 48. See also Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550–1812* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

18. Jordan, *White Man's Burden*, 46; Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, 75.

19. Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, 4–5, 10.

20. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 145.

21. Interview with Mary Allen Darrows in Works Progress Administration, *Slave Narratives*, 95.

22. Interview with Sweetie Ivery Wagoner in T. Lindsay Baker and Julie Baker, eds. *The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 442.

23. J. Leitch Wright, *The Only Land They Knew: American Indians in the Old South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 126.

24. The "Five Civilized Tribes" was a label assigned to the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles by White officials and reformers in the nineteenth century.

25. Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 193; Duane Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order in Early Cherokee Society: A Sociological Interpretation," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 15 (1990): 3–26, 12.

26. William Gilbert, "Eastern Cherokee Social Organization," in *Social Anthropology of North American Tribes*, ed. Fred Eggan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 296.

27. Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order," 11; Hudson, *Southeastern Indians*, 192.

28. Melville Herskovits, *The American Negro: A Study in Race Crossing* (New York: Knopf, 1928).

29. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans*, 270.

30. Slaveholding and a related acceptance of racial hierarchy among tribes of

the Southeast meant that this rule of thumb concerning kinship was sometimes challenged. Mixed-race Black-Native people could be legally defined as belonging outside of the tribal group. However, the majority of Native people ignored exclusionary laws against Blacks and continued to view Black Indian relatives as kin.

31. In *Africans and Native Americans*, Jack Forbes details the terminology that was developed for racial classification.

32. *Virginia Gazette*, 15 July 1773, 3. I am grateful to Alex Bontemps for compiling and sharing his collection of newspaper advertisements describing Black Indian slaves.

33. *Virginia Gazette*, 19 July 1776, 4.

34. *Maryland Gazette*, 21 May 1752, 3.

35. *Maryland Gazette*, 1 February 1749, 3.

36. *Virginia Gazette*, 11 November 1773, 2.

37. *Virginia Gazette*, 26 November 1772, 3.

38. There are examples in which slave owners describe runaway slaves as "half Indian" or "mustee," a term used to designate people of Black and Indian descent; however, the majority of the ads I reviewed did not clearly designate Black Indians. In an example of an advertisement that is clear, the subscriber seeks "a half Indian fellow who calls himself Jack Brown." *Virginia Gazette*, 10 March 1774, 3.

39. Ira Berlin concludes that the danger of recognizing a Black Indian person's Indianness became apparent in the 1790s, when a new Spanish governor of Louisiana showed a measure of support for free people of color. In response to this chink in the institutionalized armor of state oppression of colored people, mixed-race Black Indians sued the colony for their freedom on the grounds that they were descended from legally free Indians. Louisiana planters responded venomously, forcing the governor to abandon his alliance with free people of color. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 352–53.

40. The Bureau of Indian Affairs generally defines this ratio as one full-blood Native grandparent out of four, though individual tribes have varying ways of determining citizenship.

41. Circe Sturm, "Blood Politics, Racial Classification, and Cherokee National Identity: The Trials and Tribulations of the Cherokee Freedmen," this volume.

42. See also Celia Naylor-Ojurongbe, "Contested Common Ground: African American Slaves and Freedpeople in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, 1838–1907" (Ph.D. diss. in progress, Duke University).

43. Interview with Sweetie Ivery Wagoner in Baker and Baker, *WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, 443.

44. Interview with R. C. Smith in Baker and Baker, *WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, 398.

45. Interview with Cornelius Neely Nave in Baker and Baker, *WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives*, 301.

46. Quoted in Sigmund Sameth, "Creek Negroes: A Study of Race Relations" (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1940), 62.

47. Cherokee Supreme Court Docket, 1833, Tennessee State Library and Archives. For additional accounts of Molly's case, see William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 347; and Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 54.

48. Cherokee Supreme Court, 1833.

49. McLoughlin, *Renascence*, 347.

50. Patricia Albers and Bea Medicine, eds., *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women* (New York: University Press of America, 1983), 4.

51. Laura Klein and Lillian Ackerman, eds., *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 3.

52. Nancy Shoemaker ed., *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2–3.

53. Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 4.

54. Interview with Hannah Travis in Works Progress Administration, *Slave Narratives*, 350.

55. Interview with Hannah Travis, 351.

56. Interview with Hannah Travis, 352.

57. Interview with Ellen Cragin in Works Progress Administration, *Slave Narratives*, 42, 43.

58. Historian Angela Davis discusses this method of punishment in the first chapter of her book, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

59. Interview with Ellen Cragin, 44–45.

60. Interview with Ellen Cragin, 44–45.

61. Interview with Mamie Thompson in Works Progress Administration, *Slave Narratives*, 319.

62. Interview with Mamie Thompson, 319.

63. Interview with Sarah Wilson, 493.

64. Interview with Sarah Wilson, 495.

65. Interview with Sarah Wilson, 494.

66. Interview with Sarah Wilson, 495.

67. Interview with Sarah Wilson, 495.

68. Studies in the 1980s by Deborah Gray White, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Paula Giddings, Jacqueline Jones, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Catherine Clinton, and others were the first to explore major themes that apply widely to the experiences of Black slave women. See Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985); Davis, *Women, Race and Class*; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (New York: Vintage, 1986); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston:

South End Press, 1981); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Strategies and Forms of Resistance: Focus on Slave Women in the United States," in *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean and Afro-American History*, ed. Gary Okihiro, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

69. Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, ed. Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Sklar (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 125–46.

70. Paula Giddings, "The Last Taboo," in *Race-ing Justice, Engendering Power*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Pantheon, 1992), 441–70, 442.

71. Lovett, "'African and Cherokee by Choice': Race and Resistance under Legalized Segregation," this volume.

72. Interview with Cora Gillam, 27–28.

73. Interview with Cora Gillam, 28.

6. "Born and Raised among These People, I Don't Want to Know Any Other"

Slaves' Acculturation in Nineteenth-Century Indian Territory

CELIA E. NAYLOR-OJURONGBE

Questions concerning interactions between African Americans and Native Americans emerge in the pages of many articles and books on slavery within Native American nations. For the most part, though, scholars who have described Native American owners and their slaves in nineteenth-century Indian Territory have presented a limited analysis of slaves' views of themselves, outside of the usual descriptions regarding the conditions of servitude. One vital issue that is often ignored or scarcely addressed by historians concerns what could be described as acculturation or transculturation between African American slaves and Native American owners.[1] In their Works Progress Administration (WPA) Oklahoma interviews, ex-slaves explicate their processes of acculturation within nineteenth-century Native American communities based on their racial, cultural, and national identities. Ex-slaves of combined African and Native American descent portrayed their "mixed-blood" racial identity as a way of emphasizing their cultural connection to Native Americans.[2] Slaves of African descent, who did and did not identify themselves as "mixed-blood," also presented their cultural ties to Native American nations in terms of specific cultural markers – namely clothing, language, food, and knowledge of herbal remedies. Moreover, after emancipation, recently freed slaves in Indian Territory reconstructed their identities as freedpeople by creating and exhibiting a national identity and nationalism in connection with specific Native American nations.

BLOOD AS A BODY OF EVIDENCE

Recent research has generated an intensive discussion centering on self-identification and self-consciousness and complementary notions of group