

The “Identified Full-Bloods” in Mississippi: Race and Choctaw Identity, 1898–1918

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Abstract. Federal Indian policy during the allotment era intersected with the segregated society of the Jim Crow South to create a market for Indian identity; the discourse of Indian blood was the currency of this realm. For the Mississippi Choctaws, heirs to the failed promises of allotments for Choctaws remaining in Mississippi granted by the 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, a policy known as the “full-blood rule of evidence” legitimized their enrollment with the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory following the Dawes Act. This paper analyzes how the Mississippi Choctaws negotiated ideologies of “Indian blood” during their campaign for inclusion on the Choctaw Nation rolls. Appropriating the racial language of “full-blood” as defined by the Dawes Commission, they claimed citizenship in the Choctaw Nation by virtue of their “unadulterated” ancestry, their ethnicity, their historic role as military allies of the United States, and their treaty rights. Moreover, as thousands of people clamored for enrollment, the Mississippi Choctaws asserted their status as full-bloods to distinguish themselves from those claimants whom they viewed as pretenders. The Choctaws’ use of racial language thus reflected multifaceted meanings that obscured the boundaries between racial and cultural delineations of ethnic identity. It was strategic to the political moment and did not reflect significant changes in the Choctaws’ cultural practices; moreover, it did not become the basis for future political divisions based on “blood.” Rather, Choctaws’ racial identity as full-blood Indians was a form of political capital in their drive for tribal resurgence in the early twentieth century.

In 1901, Mississippi Congressman John Sharp Williams complained to Dawes Commissioner Tams Bixby about the enrollment procedures for determining which Choctaws residing in Mississippi were eligible for inclusion on the rolls of the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory. The Indians in question were the descendants of Choctaws who had refused removal hoping to

claim allotments in Mississippi under Article 14 of the 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. The federal government, however, had failed to keep this promise, and the Choctaws were dispossessed.¹ After 1898, the allotment of tribal lands in Indian Territory appeared to be a means to redeem this broken pledge. The Dawes Commission wanted applicants to produce evidence of descent from Article 14 claimants, but Choctaws in Mississippi lacked the paperwork to do so. An exasperated Williams had written, “ordinary eyesight is the very best testimony possible. A man must be a fool who cannot tell a full blood, a half blood, or even a quarter blood Indian.”² Williams’s remark perfectly captures the thinking of many government officials for whom racial phenotypes were proof of the ancestry necessary to claim allotments. The enrollment process proved far more complex, however, as multitudes of people sought inclusion on tribal rolls, and the government had to determine who had the requisite “Indian blood.”

Federal Indian policy during the allotment era intersected with the segregated society of the Jim Crow South to create a market for Indian identity; the discourse of Indian blood was the currency of this realm. For the Mississippi Choctaws, a policy known as the “full-blood rule of evidence” legitimized their enrollment with the Choctaw Nation of Indian Territory. Examination of the implementation of the full-blood rule of evidence reveals how the Mississippi Choctaws negotiated the notion of “Indian blood” during their campaign for enrollment with the Choctaw Nation. These Choctaws appropriated the racial language of “full-blood,” shaping it as uniquely Choctaw by emphasizing their cultural characteristics and treaty rights and using these markers to support their recognition as Indians entitled to government resources. Moreover, as thousands of people clamored for enrollment, the Mississippi Choctaws asserted their status as full-bloods to distinguish themselves from those claimants whom they viewed as pretenders. During this campaign, the Mississippi Choctaws made a number of requests, including allotments in Indian Territory, access to resources of the Choctaw Nation to benefit their communities in Mississippi, and, finally, federal recognition as Indians with full government services purchased by funds drawn from the Choctaw Nation. Choctaws’ racial identity as full-blood Indians was a form of political capital in their drive for tribal resurgence.

Recent studies of race and American Indians have explored the ways in which Indian peoples embraced concepts of race in defining their social and political boundaries and in their interactions with African Americans in their midst. This line of inquiry has produced a rich body of scholarship and a lively debate over the degree to which ideas of racial inferiority infiltrated Indian thinking and behavior. Scholars question how racialist think-

ing shaped formal political categories of tribal inclusion, interpersonal and labor relations, gendered experiences, and Indian identity. The research on race and Indians suggests that questions of Indian blood are entangled with a group's cultural characteristics and historical accounts of their identity.³ Native peoples frequently use terms of blood in defining themselves in relation to one another or to those outside their communities, but rarely are these categories based solely on phenotypes. In the early twentieth century, for example, White Earth Anishinaabes devised blood classifications that included cultural and economic indicators of the extent to which individuals were assimilated. Cherokees and Choctaws in Oklahoma have likewise designed categories of belonging predicated on indices of phenotypes, residence, and culture. In each of these examples, such markers of race are flexible and contingent upon the perceptions of specific individuals under particular circumstances.⁴ Similarly, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Mississippi Choctaws articulated a political racial identity, referencing their Indian blood, their culture, and their history, especially their treaty rights. This engagement with racial politics was relatively recent, for Choctaws had never before invoked Indian "blood" in political discourse with policy makers.

Prior to Removal, kinship determined membership in the Choctaw polity, and non-Choctaws who joined the tribe either through marriage, adoption, or captivity were generally regarded as Choctaw regardless of their racial or ethnic background. On the eve of Removal, the federal government classified an estimated 20 percent of the Choctaw Nation as "mixed-blood" (sometimes applying the more derogatory label "half-breed"). These people generally referred to themselves as Choctaws regardless of their parents' bloodlines. Because the Choctaws were matrilineal, individuals with cross-cultural heritage were full members of the tribe as long as their mothers were Choctaw. Moreover, living among the Choctaws and participating in the culture and life of the tribe could also be sufficient to identify an individual as Choctaw.⁵ These privileges were evident in racial mixtures of Indian and white; a detailed analysis of Choctaws' attitudes toward their slaves and those descendants of master-slave relationships has yet to be written.⁶

In the decades immediately following removal, race did not enter into the Choctaws' political discourse. In 1836, Choctaw leaders remaining in Mississippi sent a "memorial" of protest to Congress complaining about the government's failure to uphold Article 14. This petition documented their dispossession by William Ward, the agent in charge of allotment, and called on the government to honor its treaty promises. While Ward's incomplete allotment ledger noted whether an applicant was Indian, white, or

“half-breed,” the Choctaw memorial mentioned only treaty rights, never asserting them by reference to Indian blood.⁷ In subsequent meetings with federal officials in 1836 through 1838, and then again in 1843, the Choctaws continued to press their treaty claims, sometimes supplementing their pleas with reminders of their former service to the United States as military allies, but never claiming an Indian identity based on racial categories.⁸ When their attempts to get their allotments failed, the Choctaws withdrew from their neighbors, either forming their own communities or, in the years following the Civil War, dispersing onto cotton farms as sharecroppers.

Choctaws were scattered across Mississippi from the Gulf of Mexico to the Tennessee border, but the majority of them lived in the sand-clay hills in the east-central portion of the state—a desperately poor region.⁹ In this area especially, they maintained distinct cultural boundaries around their communities with their continued use of Choctaw language, dress, and customs. Preferring to keep to themselves, Choctaws rarely intermarried with either whites or blacks. These ethnic enclaves preserved Choctaw culture and allowed them to support an identity as a third racial group in the biracial South.¹⁰ Article 14 had promised them the position of free whites if they lived on their allotments, but since they had lost these, their legal standing was unclear. The passage of Jim Crow laws in the late nineteenth century did not clarify their status. Legally, the Choctaws were not classified as “colored,” and their neighbors certainly regarded them as Indians rather than black. By the late nineteenth century, the poverty of the Choctaw communities had drawn the attention of missionaries and educators who subsequently engaged Mississippi politicians to help the Choctaws.¹¹ Nonetheless, Choctaws still faced customary discrimination as nonwhite people and were disenfranchised by poll taxes and literacy requirements.¹² They never forgot the promise of Article 14, and when Congress imposed the General Allotment Act on Indian Territory in 1898, they saw an opportunity to act. At this juncture, the Choctaws began declaring a “racial” identity.

In 1898, under legislation known as the Curtis Act, Congress finally forced the Nations of Indian Territory to accept the General Allotment Act of 1887—also known as the Dawes Act, after its chief sponsor Henry Dawes. That same year, the Choctaw Nation accepted allotment under the Atoka Agreement. Mississippi Representative John Sharp Williams, who represented the fifth district, where the majority of Choctaw communities were located, joined with the Choctaw Nation in urging the Office of Indian Affairs to offer allotments in Indian Territory to Choctaws living in Mississippi.¹³ The Curtis Act authorized the Dawes Commission to enroll Mississippi Choctaws who could prove descent from persons entitled to

land under Article 14. Qualified Choctaws then had six months to move to Indian Territory or lose their land.¹⁴ Offering to register the Mississippi Choctaws on the Choctaw Nation rolls raised questions of how to identify legitimate enrollees, and, in the hyper-racial atmosphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, race signified eligibility.

The Dawes Act made no specific mention of race as a criterion for allotment, but references to “Indian blood” abounded in documents pertaining to tribal membership, beginning with the practice of segregated rolls. Any portion of African American blood rendered one ineligible for the Indians by Blood Roll, where enrollees were listed by blood quantum; the operative measurement for inclusion on this roll was “one-half Indian blood.”¹⁵ Scholars have argued that the federal government devised this system in part to gradually diminish the enrolled population of Indians, assuming that intermarriage would eventually reduce a group’s “bloodline” until they no longer qualified for enrollment, thus releasing the government from its treaty obligations.¹⁶

While eventual assimilation was certainly the goal of policy makers, this type of classification was also part of a wider perspective on race in this period. Government at all levels regulated access to status and resources according to race. This was true of governments in Indian Territory as well. For example, when numerous people appeared in the Choctaw Nation claiming to be Choctaw during the 1870s and 1880s, the Council voted in 1886 to require one-eighth blood quantum to qualify for citizenship. The law stipulated that the applicants prove their blood “by competent testimony” and that the only acceptable racial mixture was Indian and white—Indian and African American applicants were not welcomed.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, then, allotment policy reflected the nationwide obsession with racial “purity” and ancestry that proliferated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁸

Enrolling Mississippi claimants according to their “blood” proved troublesome, as thousands of individuals across the South sought to escape poverty and discrimination by inclusion on Indian rolls. Since blood was a matter of descent, family genealogies were a logical starting place. Yet few people had documented genealogies, and Choctaw family names had changed over time. This meant that Choctaws consulting early-nineteenth-century census rolls could not always identify the names of their ancestors who had applied for allotments.¹⁹ This ambiguity opened a wide door for fraud. Without documentation who could say whose claims were justifiable? Dawes Commissioner Archibald McKennon, who oversaw the enrollment hearings for the Choctaws, finally decided that persons who showed a “predominance of Choctaw blood and characteristics” should not have

to produce evidence of descent from an Article 14 claimant, but those who displayed a “half or anything less” did.²⁰ Attorneys for the Department of the Interior objected that “eyeballing” was not adequate proof of race, but failed to provide an alternative; consequently, the Dawes Commission decided on the full-blood rule of evidence.²¹

The full-blood rule of evidence began with racial phenotypes—one had to “look” Indian—but it did not end there; it also included cultural indicators, which government officials linked to assumptions about how Indian blood had affected the historical outcome of Article 14. The full-blood rule stated that most full-blood Choctaws who had remained in Mississippi were presumed to be successors of Article 14 claimants because the “more progressive mixed-blood Indians” had supposedly removed.²² Policy makers also assumed that Choctaws who marked their ethnicity through clothing, adornment, customs, and language had a lower rate of intermarriage with whites or blacks, and thus a greater degree of Indian blood, than their brethren who had adopted more of the mainstream culture. Although this was certainly not always the case throughout Choctaw history, this conjecture was generally correct by the late nineteenth century. McKennon also insisted that authentic aspirants could be distinguished from false ones by their demeanor. He wrote: “Negro applicants, always insistent and voluble, are in striking contrast with the stolid full-bloods who could be induced to testify only after the most persistent questioning.”²³ The fear of removal explained this reticence, McKennon explained, and that dread was a reliable guide to ascertaining true claimants. Under the full-blood rule of evidence, therefore, if a candidate for enrollment in Mississippi spoke the Choctaw language (albeit reluctantly) and “appeared” to be a “full-blooded” Choctaw (as judged by phenotypes, clothing and decoration, and deportment), he or she would be enrolled as the rightful progeny of an Article 14 claimant.²⁴

Using these criteria, the Dawes Commission created the McKennon Roll of Identified Mississippi Choctaws in 1899. The list included 1,961 “full-bloods” and 279 “mixed-bloods.”²⁵ It is not clear if Choctaws coming before McKennon openly stated their blood quantum, for the Records of Testimony rarely recorded the full affidavits of the claimants. Rather, these documents suggest that Commissioner McKennon issued verdicts on people’s blood quantum according to their appearance and use of the Choctaw language.²⁶ Whatever his methodology, the McKennon census was incomplete. Understandably suspicious of government agents, roughly five hundred Choctaws had refused to interact with the commission. Others were prevented from doing so by poor weather and lack of transportation to the hearings, and some local planters who relied on the Choctaws for

labor also deterred them from enrolling. Additionally, attorneys hoping for half of the allotment in return for getting individuals registered sometimes discouraged Choctaws from coming forward on their own.²⁷ Those who had been left off the rolls got another chance to apply for enrollment when lawyers for some rejected applicants effectively challenged the roll, leading the Office of Indian Affairs to shelve it and rehear the claims in 1900, 1901, and 1902.²⁸ This left Choctaws whose names had been recorded on the McKennon roll in limbo—they had been identified as Mississippi Choctaws but not accepted as such by the government and enrolled with the Nation.

Choctaw leaders in the east-central communities challenged the enrollment process in Congress and so engaged the issue of Indian blood and juridical status. In 1900, Congressman Williams introduced to Congress a “Petition of the Mississippi Choctaws” calling for citizenship rights in the Choctaw Nation. This document began, “Your humble petitioners are full-blood Choctaw Indians, speaking the Choctaw language, citizens of the Choctaw Nation, residing in Mississippi. We are entitled to every privilege of a Choctaw citizen, except the Choctaw annuity, under the treaty of 1830.”²⁹ This and subsequent documents filed with Congress asserted the Mississippi Choctaws’ political claims on the basis of their “full-blood.” As a political identity, however, this designation was more than a statement of race. Like the full-blood rule of evidence, it included references to Indian culture and a statement of the Choctaws’ historical status as beneficiaries of rights guaranteed by the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. Was the convergence of the Choctaws’ self-definition of their political identity with the requirements of the full-blood rule of evidence coincidental? Probably not.

It is likely that this terminology reflected the Choctaws’ recognition of the legal importance of race in determining membership in Indian tribes.³⁰ As their allies had no doubt informed them of the enrollment criteria, their use of this language may well have been a strategic tactic to win recognition of their claims. That Choctaw leaders had ignored racial references in earlier petitions, even though they were speaking to policy makers who certainly thought in such terms, supports this idea. It may also have been, however, that they were simply more sensitive to racial identity after decades of interaction with Jim Crow laws. Choctaws had responded to Mississippi’s biracial system by maintaining their distance from African Americans to avoid being classified as anything other than Indian.³¹ As noted, being an Indian in Mississippi did not shield one from discrimination, but by the late nineteenth century, it conveyed a slightly higher social status than being African American. Affluent Mississippians were sometimes quite enamored

of their “colorful” Indian neighbors and were often sadly nostalgic over the tragic “vanishing Indian,” making them more inclined to come to the aid of Choctaws than African Americans.³² Identifying themselves as “full-blood Choctaws speaking the Choctaw language” was a way of carving out a niche in the racial hierarchy—one that had the potential for certain benefits due to Indians.

While they consistently cited their status as full-blood Indians in the documents they brought before Congress, the Mississippi Choctaws’ demands shifted over the course of the early twentieth century. In their first petition in 1900, they claimed citizenship rights in the Choctaw Nation while remaining in Mississippi. They based this request on Article 14, which stated that, “persons who claim [allotments in Mississippi] under this article shall not lose the privilege of a Choctaw citizen.” As Choctaw citizens, they wanted to collect funds from the profits on coal and asphalt leases to improve their communities in Mississippi.³³ The following year, the “full-blood Mississippi Choctaws, speaking the Choctaw language” filed a bill to allow them to make this case in the Court of Claims, writing, “The Mississippi Choctaws contend that citizenship in the Choctaw Nation exists by virtue of blood, and not because of locality of residence.”³⁴ The government had already debated the citizenship provision of Article 14 and decided that it referred to Choctaws who relocated to Indian Territory—that it was meant to assure that Choctaws who moved to the Nation after Removal would be welcomed as equals.³⁵ The Mississippi Choctaws, however, refused to accept this reasoning. They declared that ancestry trumped all other considerations. Whether they lived with the Nation or not, they were Choctaws by blood entitled to share in the resources of the Nation. Congress disagreed, however, and the bill failed.

Shortly thereafter, Congress drafted the 1902 Choctaw-Chickasaw Supplemental Agreement, which was to settle various disagreements that had arisen over the course of the Dawes proceedings. Section 41 of the Supplemental Agreement allowed Choctaws “heretofore identified by the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes” to obtain allotments, provided they relocated to the west within six months of their identification and, after settling in the Nation, were to be enrolled within one year and receive patents for their land after three years. The agreement did not contain the full-blood rule of evidence, however, and this prompted another deluge of applicants.³⁶ Indeed, the sheer numbers of Choctaw claimants—some 24,634 people in total—threatened to overwhelm the Nation’s assets and crowd out the Mississippi Choctaws’ requests.³⁷

In response, the “full-blood Mississippi Choctaws, speaking the Choctaw language” again memorialized Congress, requesting amendment

of Section 41 to specify that qualified Choctaws were those identified by the McKennon roll and to include the term “full-blood” in designating eligibility for enrollment. Without these provisions, they argued, it would be “impossible for the full-blood Mississippi Choctaws to secure their rights.” The memorialists proclaimed that “many thousand persons have set up claims pretending they were Mississippi Choctaws and have put in jeopardy the rights of the real Mississippi Choctaws”—those who were “full-blood Mississippi Choctaws who have been identified.”³⁸ In making this claim, the Mississippi Choctaws invoked their status as full-blood Indians to distinguish themselves from the multitudes of ersatz claimants.

The government heeded this memorial and reinstated the full-blood rule of evidence, while continuing its efforts to identify eligible Choctaws in Mississippi and get them to Indian Territory.³⁹ This process was slow and inefficient, however, and when the Choctaw Nation rolls were finally closed in 1907, only 1,634 Choctaws had gone west, leaving several thousand in Mississippi.⁴⁰ These Choctaws had been dispossessed by the failure of the federal government to provide for their transportation to Indian Territory or to inform them of various deadlines for claiming allotments.⁴¹ Therefore, closing the rolls did not end the political wrangling over the rights of the Mississippi Choctaws. Indeed, attorneys employed by the firm of Cantwell and Crews in St. Louis traveled throughout the South seeking people with pretensions to Indian ancestry willing to petition to resurrect the enrollment hearings.⁴² In 1912, Harry J. Cantwell persuaded Congressman Pat Harrison—whose district included persons claiming to be Choctaws living along the Gulf Coast—to introduce a bill to reopen the Choctaw rolls, HR 4536.⁴³ Now that the question of enrollment had again been raised before Congress, two organizations of Choctaws in Mississippi came forward to lobby for passage of legislation to settle the Mississippi Choctaw claims once and for all. The Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana Choctaw Council hailed from the eastern-central counties and represented the “full-blood identified Choctaws” who had been petitioning Congress. The other spoke for people alleging Choctaw descent in Hancock and Harrison counties along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and around the nation—the Society of Mississippi Choctaws. The issue of Indian blood, broadly defined, became a major point of differentiation between these two groups.

The Society of Mississippi Choctaws is the perfect example of marginalized citizens seeking to traffic in Indian identity in the South.⁴⁴ They claimed Indian ancestry no doubt to escape poverty and discrimination, but they did not have the currency to purchase those benefits—they could not meet the government’s established criteria of legitimacy either by language, for no members of the Society spoke Choctaw, or by blood.⁴⁵ The Society

submitted a membership roll to the Office of Indian Affairs in 1914, but it did not record blood quantum, perhaps because, as founding member Luke Connerly remarked, “there are no full-bloods where I live.”⁴⁶ Membership in the Society was based on one’s ability to prove lineal descent from “the Choctaw Tribe of Indians as it existed” in 1830.⁴⁷ The group’s constitution did not specify how one established this descent, but it denied the presence of “Negro blood” in the organization, noting that “No person tainted with Negro blood shall be received into membership of this Society.”⁴⁸ This provision addressed charges that the more dark-skinned members of this group were African Americans attempting to “pass” as Indians. The *Gulf Coast Progress* had made such allegations by editorializing that the members of the Society represented “all shades and color, running from the real Indians to the coal-black, thick-lipped, flat-nosed, kinky-headed Negro.”⁴⁹ These were not the individuals whom the Dawes commissioners had identified as acceptable enrollees in their travels in Mississippi. Rather, the majority of them appeared to be the type of people whom Choctaw leaders condemned in their 1902 memorial.

The Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) had similar concerns about these people. Testimony during the hearings for the Harrison bill exposed Connerly’s links to a firm called the Texas-Oklahoma Investment Company, which funded lobbying efforts to reopen the Choctaw Nation rolls. The firm had paid for the printing of the constitution and office expenses for the Society of Mississippi Choctaws, although Connerly insisted that the money had come out of his own salary.⁵⁰ The OIA sent Inspector John Reeves to the Gulf Coast to investigate the Society in 1916. Reeves reported that the majority of its members had no Choctaw blood. He based this in part on visual cues, but he also remarked that the 1910 census of Harrison County had listed only two Indians, but fifty-five people were now claiming to be Choctaws. Other skeptics included the sheriff at Gulfport, who scoffed, “I don’t believe there is a real Indian in the county.” He did not offer specific evidence for this claim, but the implication was that those professing to be Choctaws simply did not look like Indians.⁵¹ Some genuine Choctaws lived along the Gulf Coast in Bay Saint Louis in Hancock County, but there were no Indians from that area on the rolls of the Society. Rather, those Mississippi citizens registered with the Society lived in Gulfport or Biloxi, in Harrison County.⁵² The majority of Choctaws in Mississippi lived further north, and they rejected Harrison’s bill, instead introducing a competing bill—HR 8007—prepared by a rival organization, the Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana Choctaw Council.⁵³

In May 1913, while the Harrison bill was still pending before Congress, the Choctaws in the sand-clay hills—those who had filed the previous bills

asking for enrollment with the Nation as full-blood identified Choctaws—gathered in Meridian, Mississippi. Each of the Choctaw communities elected delegates to attend. In defiance of Mississippi law forbidding tribal councils (passed in 1830 to ensure removal) the assembled Choctaws established the Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana Choctaw Council.⁵⁴ This organization first met in the Carthage courthouse and then in Meridian. Choctaw Methodist minister Simpson Tubby chaired the meetings and was elected assistant secretary and treasurer. The Choctaws selected Wesley Johnson of Leake County to be chief, Peter Ben to be assistant chief, and William Morris as secretary.⁵⁵ A Baptist minister named James E. Arnold helped to organize this meeting and signed their documents as “Attorney-in-fact.”⁵⁶ Testifying to the House Committee on Indian Affairs during the hearings on the Harrison bill, Arnold explained the Choctaws’ collective action by noting that, “in view of the fact that these claims called for the rendition of services to them as a class,” they were resurrecting the Choctaw tribe in Mississippi.⁵⁷ The Council pushed beyond land claims and enrollment with Choctaws in the West; their “Proposed Legislation for the Full-Blood and Identified Choctaws of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama” called for the reestablishment of juridical status for Choctaws in Mississippi.

The Council’s bill called for a supplemental roll of Mississippi Choctaws that included those whose names had been on the McKennon roll of 1898 but who had failed to make the later rolls, those who had been granted allotments in Indian Territory but had lost them by fault of the federal government or fraud, and “all full-blood Mississippi Choctaw Indians who may claim identification” under the Curtis Act.⁵⁸ The Council urged the creation of a trust fund taken from monies of the Choctaw-Chickasaw nations, indicating their continued insistence that, as Choctaws, they were entitled to Choctaw resources. This account would pay for an Indian agent, housed at an official agency in Carthage, Mississippi, and for a school operated by the agency superintendent under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. They requested a commission that included representatives of the Council to select and purchase lands in Mississippi to be held for them in trust, and asked for stock, household items, farming implements, and per capita payments.⁵⁹ By insisting on the same recognition and treatment as other Indian tribes, the Council had upped the ante. No longer content to be members of the Choctaw Nation in absentia, the Mississippi Choctaws asked for their own agency and trust lands, the first steps toward a tribal rebirth in Mississippi. Choctaw leaders Wesley Johnson, Culbertson Davis, and Emil John signed HR 8007 as representatives of the Council.⁶⁰

The Council based these requests on their status as heirs to the promises of Article 14 and “the fact that they are full-blood Choctaws.”⁶¹ Again they

cited cultural factors to bolster their affirmation of full-blood. Unlike the Society, which celebrated Choctaw ancestors who “chose civilization,” the Council avowed a historical identity marked by their unique ethnicity: their residence in discrete communities that upheld Indian culture. They were, “for the most part speaking only the Choctaw language, living in their own communities in the state of Mississippi, and following the habits and customs of Indian life [as] shown by the records of the Interior Department.”⁶² The Council also observed that they had retained their connections to their ancestral homelands by remaining in Mississippi, as had their forbearers, something the documents of the Society did not mention. Nowhere did the Council make any reference to “Negro blood” in anyone’s ancestry. This implies that these Choctaws probably had not been accused of “passing”—that they conformed to the appropriate phenotypes.⁶³

In January of the following year, 1914, the Council drafted a memorial—*The Mississippi Choctaw Claim*—in support of their proposed legislation, and Choctaw delegates, led by Chief Johnson, traveled to Washington to present it to Congress. This memorial clearly outlined the themes they had been stressing throughout their campaign. They reiterated that they were still treaty partners affirming “the continuing force of their agreement expressed in article 14 of the treaty of 1830, to the termination of which they have never assented.”⁶⁴ The memorial further underscored their group’s authenticity as “the full-blood Choctaws” whose names had been listed on the McKennon roll and on subsequent rolls according to provisions “to enroll all full-bloods.”⁶⁵ The memorialists admitted, however, that some of the full-blooded Choctaws now petitioning the government were not on any rolls; these were “identified” because they self-identified. The implications of the memorial are that association with those Choctaws whose names had made it onto the rolls legitimated the claims of those who did not. In this, the Choctaws professed their right to name who was “identified” as Choctaw—a right that is fundamental to a sovereign Indian nation.⁶⁶

The memorial also contained a clear statement of how these Choctaws used the designation of full-blood to authenticate their identity in opposition to other claimants. Noting that there were several other bills before Congress that attempted to settle Choctaw claims, the memorial contrasted the “identified full-bloods” with those people whose legitimacy was in question—“persons [who were] seeking a forum for the determination of their identity” through the Harrison bill.⁶⁷ Unlike these other bills, which failed to address the specific “rights of the identified Mississippi Choctaws and provide necessary protection for the estate secured to the full-bloods,” their bill—HR 8007—“embodies the provisions desired by the Council,

and we urge it as the measure best calculated to protect the interests of the identified full-bloods.”⁶⁸ By referencing the desires of the Council, the Choctaws were demonstrating that they had organized politically, choosing representatives to speak for the entire group, and they were requesting recognition as an indisputable juridical entity. Finally, the memorial concluded that the government should recognize the Council’s attorneys as the only lawful representatives of the “identified full-blood Choctaws” in order to deter the other attorneys, “who have done and are doing nothing to advance our claims,” from preying on anyone.⁶⁹

In the end, both the Society and the Council failed to win passage of their legislation. The Council’s bill never made it out of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, and, after two more years of debate, the Harrison bill failed.⁷⁰ The Choctaws and their allies in the Mississippi congressional delegation then gave up their quest to tap the resources of the Choctaw Nation and shifted strategies, calling for their own appropriation from the Office of Indian Affairs. In response, the government investigated their circumstances, sending special investigator John Reeves in 1916 and holding congressional hearings in Mississippi in 1917. At these hearings, Simpson Tubby informed the committee: “As a tribe, we see what the government has done for all the tribes, the different tribes of Indians, but the Mississippi Choctaw has not had anything at all, as I notice, since the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.”⁷¹ The appalling poverty of the Choctaw communities underscored this point. The following year, Congress appropriated funds to open an agency in Mississippi; the Mississippi Choctaws had finally won government recognition and action.⁷²

What did the struggle for inclusion on the Choctaw Nation rolls reveal about the politics of Indian blood in the allotment process? First, it suggests that the limitations imposed by racist systems inadvertently provided opportunities for the Choctaws. In order to protect themselves from racism, Choctaws in Mississippi had established ethnically distinct, closed communities, whose cultural boundaries were maintained through endogamous marriage practices. Federal policy makers reified this survival strategy by naming these “full-blooded” and less assimilated Indians as the lawful heirs of Article 14 claimants. Choctaws were quick to take advantage of this convergence of official recognition and self-identification and assert their political identity in the racial terms that the government had established. These similarities of credentialing do not necessarily imply analogous goals, of course. Policy makers had hoped to assign allotments as an instrument of assimilation. The Mississippi Choctaws, on the other hand, demanded land as a means to claim their treaty rights and reassert a tribal identity; for them it was a “progressive” means to a “traditional” end.

While the Choctaws wielded racial terminology in their communications with government officials, understanding how they internalized race is problematic. Numerous scholars have debated how Indians have deployed doctrines of race and what those ideas have meant for their identity and tribal sovereignty.⁷³ As race was not an indigenous concept, some detractors of blood quantum policies have argued that such regulations are just another example of the federal government forcing destructive practices on native peoples.⁷⁴ Other researchers, however, have suggested that the issue is more convoluted. Historian Alexandra Harmon argues that, while the U.S. government introduced ideas of tribal enrollments based on race, they did not impose racism unilaterally on Indians, nor did Indians' acceptance of such categories suggest they had necessarily become racists in the generally recognized sense of the term. Rather, the politics of blood quantum enrollment represented a protracted dialogue in which both sides attempted to educate and accommodate one another.⁷⁵ Additionally, several studies have analyzed ways in which Indians have engaged notions of race, including phenotypes, degrees of blood, and color. This research indicates that Indians employed these ideas in ways consistent with various cultural symbols, indigenous conceptions of ancestry, and native categories of inclusion and connection.⁷⁶ Indeed, the terms *full-blood* and *mixed-blood* can be deployed literally or they may act as metaphors for cultural or behavioral attributes.⁷⁷ The Mississippi Choctaw example tells a similar story.

Analysis of the Choctaws' campaign reveals multifaceted meanings in the proclamations of full-blood identity. What is easiest to document is that the Choctaws' use of racial language was strategic to the political moment. References to full-blood did not reflect significant changes in the Choctaws' cultural practices, for their commitment to racial separatism predated these documents. Rather, racial ideology modified Choctaw political rhetoric. The Choctaws did not reference blood in their appeals to the federal government until the late nineteenth century; when they did, their remarks suggest an understanding of the legal importance of race in determining membership in Indian tribes and the need to distinguish themselves from the throngs of pretenders. Was their appropriation of the language of full-blood cynical—a catchphrase to manipulate government officials? To some degree, probably yes, but the full-blood designation was also a term of Choctaw identity rooted in the culture that had sustained them through their dispossession and subsequent disempowerment; it represented their complex sense of who was Choctaw and what that entailed.

In this campaign, Choctaws obscured the boundaries between racial and cultural delineations of ethnic identity.⁷⁸ Their characterizations of themselves as full-blood Choctaws were not linked to race in one sense of

the term—nowhere in these texts are there the allusions to skin tones or phenotypes that appear in the government documents. This suggests that either the Choctaws were not thinking of full-blood as a racial category in this most narrow meaning of the word, or they simply did not see an advantage to noting physical characteristics. Yet the Choctaws articulated a historical and cultural definition of their ethnic identity in terms intimating a lack of “race-mixing”—full-blood. Their declaration of full-blood accurately represented their preservation of ethnicity through closed communities; to be Choctaw was to be set apart from both blacks and whites by virtue of both kinship and culture. Indeed, the full-blood designation is a term distinguishing Choctaws from outsiders; it does not appear to have resonance beyond a political tactic for recognition. The use of this term did not establish a social or political hierarchy in Choctaw communities. Well into the twentieth century, there is no evidence of conflict between factions identified by blood quantum.⁷⁹

Finally, the Mississippi Choctaws attempted to use the ideology of full-blood to reconcile two sometimes competing conceptions of Indian identity—ethnicity and tribal citizenship. In this strategy, however, they clashed with the Choctaw Nation. By “preserving” their bloodlines through endogamy, Choctaws in Mississippi had maintained an “unadulterated” ancestry, which, according to the Nation’s own laws of inclusion, allowed them membership in the Choctaw Nation.⁸⁰ Undeniably, Choctaw Nation leaders recognized that those who remained in Mississippi were still Choctaws by blood, but the two groups diverged as to how that affected tribal citizenship. Choctaws in Indian Territory had argued that citizenship was contingent upon residence in the Nation. Consequently, they had, on several occasions, called for funding to move their separated brethren to Indian Territory. When Article 14 promised that “persons who claim [allotments in Mississippi] under this article shall not lose the privilege of a Choctaw citizen,” Choctaw Nation leaders agreed with the federal government that this clause meant Choctaws who moved west would be accepted as equals.⁸¹ Choctaws remaining in Mississippi, however, interpreted Article 14 literally, holding that it did not grant them “the privilege of acquiring the privilege of a Choctaw citizen by removal.” Rather, they had “bought and paid for the right of residence in Mississippi as well as the privilege of Choctaw citizenship, reserved to us in that Treaty.”⁸² When the Mississippi Choctaws failed to make the case for absentee citizenship in the Nation, their identification as the full-blood Mississippi Choctaws prompted the Office of Indian Affairs to provide the government services to which they were entitled as Indians. Their deployment of an identity of full-blood was one means to that end.

Notes

For their helpful comments on this paper, I thank Malinda Maynor Lowery, Daniel H. Usner Jr., Claudio Saunt, Arris Oakley, Troy D. Smith, Clara Sue Kidwell, Martha Foster, and the anonymous reviewer for *Ethnohistory*. Special thanks to Fred Hoxie, whose detailed critique for *Ethnohistory* provided the direction I needed to transform a conference paper into a journal article.

- 1 Article 14 of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek allowed individual Choctaws who chose to remain in Mississippi to apply for an allotment of land. The head of a family could receive 640 acres of land, an additional 320 acres for every unmarried child over age ten, and 160 acres for children under the age of ten. If the families resided on these lands for five years, they would acquire title in fee simple and hold the political status of free white Mississippi citizens. See Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC, 1892), 222. For a historical account of the treaty process see Henry S. Halbert, "Story of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 6 (1902): 373-402. Halbert argues that Article 14 was crucial to getting Choctaw signatures on the treaty.
- 2 John Sharp Williams to Tams Bixby, 23 August 1901, Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS), microfilm roll 61, National Archives and Records Administration, Southwest Center, Fort Worth, Texas (NARA-SW).
- 3 The literature on race and American Indians is voluminous. An excellent overview is found in James F. Brooks, ed., *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln, NE, 2002) and Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley, CA, 2003). The most recent works exploring race among Native Americans are Karen Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (Lincoln, NE, 1980); Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens, GA, and London, 2003); Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York and Oxford, 2005); Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*, American Crossroads Series (Berkeley, CA, 2005); and Celia E. Naylor, *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008). This topic has not been fully analyzed for the Choctaws. Promising starts are Valerie Lambert, *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence* (Lincoln, NE, 2007) and Clara Sue Kidwell, *The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970* (Norman, OK, 2007). Theda Perdue's work *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville, TN, 1979) remains the standard treatment of slavery among the Cherokees.
- 4 See Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* (Lincoln, NE, 1994); Sturm, *Blood Politics*; and Lambert, *Choctaw Nation*.
- 5 Samuel J. Wells, "The Role of Mixed-Bloods in Mississippi Choctaw History," in *After Removal: The Choctaw in Mississippi*, ed. Samuel J. Wells and Roseanna Tubby (Jackson, MS, 1986), 47-49. Children of white mothers who had not been adopted into a clan could pose a problem for the Choctaws, but their inde-

- terminate status was not because of race but because they lacked clan membership. See Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians*, 90–95. For an insightful analysis of the alleged role of “blood” in the political history of the Choctaws, see James Taylor Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path: The Mississippi Choctaws from Pre-history to Removal* (Lincoln, NE, 1999).
- 6 Carson’s book discusses pre-Removal slavery briefly as does Greg O’Brien in *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750–1830* (Lincoln, NE, 2002). Kidwell has a chapter on slavery and missionaries in the Nation in Indian Territory in *The Choctaws in Oklahoma*. Troy D. Smith, a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is writing a dissertation analyzing the role race played in Choctaw nationalism.
 - 7 “Application for Indemnity, for Being Deprived by Settlers of Reservations of the Choctaw Indians,” 1 February 1836, House Document no. 1415, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess. Ward’s register is found in “Land Claims, &c. Under 14th Article Choctaw Treaty,” 11 May 1836, House Report no. 663, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., 32–33.
 - 8 “Records of the Proceedings of the Choctaw Commission,” Choctaw Removal Records, Journal, 1837–1838, vol. 1, Atkinson/Elliott Indian Agency, box 4, folder 268, record group 75, entry 268, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; “Dispositions,” Records of Commissioners Publius Pray, P. D. Vroom, and James R. Murray, Choctaw Removal Records, Evidence, 1837–1838, vol. 1, Atkinson/Elliott Indian Agency, box 4, folder 270, record group 75, entry 270, Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University; “Speech of Samuel Cobb before the 1843 Commission on Choctaw Claims,” *Niles Weekly Register*, 64 (29 April 1843), 131–32.
 - 9 Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1819–1919* (Norman, OK, and London, 1995); John H. Peterson Jr., “The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians: Their Recent History and Current Relations,” PhD diss., University of Georgia, 1970, 42–45. Special agent Douglas Cooper’s 1853 census of the Choctaws remaining in Mississippi is available online at: www.accessgenealogy.com/native/cooper/index.htm.
 - 10 Frances E. Leupp to President Theodore Roosevelt, 16 March 1908, in “Hearings on Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes,” House Committee on Indian Affairs, 63rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1, 2, 14, 16 April; 14 May; 2, 4, 9, 11, 13 June; and 4–7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24–27 August 1913, microfiche group 1A, SUDOC: Y4.In2/1:F58/3, 118. (Hereafter cited as “Hearings on Enrollment.”) Kidwell discusses the construction of these communities in detail in *Choctaws and Missionaries*.
 - 11 The reasons why white Mississippians allied themselves with the Choctaws during this period are complex but may be briefly summarized by noting that the Choctaws had political value both practically and symbolically. Pragmatically, Office of Indian Affairs services for the Mississippi Choctaws meant federal funds for poor rural counties. Symbolically, the Choctaws represented the region’s most revered values. By the late nineteenth century, Choctaw allies admired the Indians’ ardent attachment to their ancestral lands, which paralleled the Southern experience with invasion. Choctaw military prowess, as represented by the actions of the warrior Pushmataha and by Choctaw hero-

- ism during the Civil War, reflected the martial tradition and the Lost Cause. By living in segregated communities and upholding racial “purity” as “full-blood Indians,” the Choctaws served as symbols of Southern racial attitudes. Moreover, the Choctaws’ dispossession gave Mississippi politicians an opportunity to condemn the federal government, which always played well in the states’ rights South. For a fuller analysis of this topic see Katherine Osburn, “Mississippi Choctaws and Racial Politics,” *Southern Cultures* Winter 2008: 32–54.
- 12 James P. Coleman, “The Mississippi Constitution of 1890 and the Final Decade of the Nineteenth Century,” in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. Richard Aubrey McLemore (Hattiesburg, MS, 1973), 3–38. For information on racial disenfranchisement see pages 12–14. Customary discrimination is noted all throughout the government documents and secondary literature.
 - 13 For more on the Dawes Act, see Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln, NE, and London, 1984). Numerous persons outside of the Choctaw Nation filed petitions with the Dawes Commission claiming to have “Choctaw blood.” These pretenders drained scarce resources until Congress passed a law in 1900 forbidding the acceptance of applications for anyone who was not an official member of the Nation. Congress did, however, allow an exception for those who had remained in Mississippi and who could claim descent from anyone entitled to lands under Article 14. See Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK, 1961), chaps. 11 and 12. For information on the role of Representative Williams in the decision to include the Mississippi Choctaws on the Oklahoma rolls, see Edward Davis, “The Mississippi Choctaws,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10, no. 11 (June 1932): 257–66.
 - 14 Enrollment of the Mississippi Choctaws is partially analyzed in Ronald N. Satz, “From the Removal Treaty Onward,” in Wells and Tubby, *After Removal*, 7–10 and Clara Sue Kidwell, “The Choctaw Struggle for Land and Identity in Mississippi, 1830–1918,” in Wells and Tubby, *After Removal*, 65. See also Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries*; Kent Carter, *The Dawes Commission and the Allotment of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893–1914* (Orem, UT, 1999), 69–103; and William Sidney Coker, “Pat Harrison’s Efforts to Reopen the Choctaw Citizenship Rolls,” *Southern Quarterly* 3 (October 1965): 36–61. For an early-twentieth-century analysis of removal policy, see John William Wade, “The Removal of the Mississippi Choctaws,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 8 (1904): 397–426.
 - 15 For an overview of race and allotment policy, see Hoxie, *A Final Promise* and Carter, *The Dawes Commission*, 69–103. More recent studies of racial categories in allotment include Strum, *Blood Politics*, especially chap. 3, and Garrouette, *Real Indians*, chap. 2. Intermarried whites also had a separate listing.
 - 16 M. Annette Jaimes, “Federal Indian Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston, 1992), 116; Strum, *Blood Politics*, 78–81; Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 57–58.
 - 17 “Appendix no. 11: Decision of U.S. Courts in Indian Territory in Citizenship Cases,” in “Sixth Annual Report of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes,” in *Annual Reports of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes in the Indian Territory to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, DC, 1899), 99. There were, however, persons of African American descent who were citizens of the Nation.

In 1866, the federal government had demanded that the Nation free its slaves and grant them full rights of citizenship and forty acres of land as a condition for restoring relations with the United States following the Civil War. Political wrangling had delayed the implementation of this provision until 1883, when the Nation granted its former slaves and their descendants citizenship, including the franchise. At the same time, they barred them from receiving payments from annuities, limited their landholdings to forty acres, and ruled that noncitizen African Americans who married freedmen could not become citizens. In 1885, they drafted a roll of freedmen, which they sent to Washington. Kidwell, *Choctaws in Oklahoma*, 80–81; Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall*, 101–7.

- 18 There is a vast literature on racial thinking in this period. A wonderfully succinct summary and analysis of national trends is found in Rebecca Edwards's perceptive synthesis, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865–1905* (New York, 2006), 213–24, 239–42. The most infamous expression of obsession with racial purity was the eugenics movement. The scholarly Web site www.h-net.org/~eugenics is rich with resources for understanding this phenomenon. An intriguing new interpretation of this movement may be found in Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, American Crossroads Series (Berkeley, CA, 2005). See also Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York, 1984). For the history of racial thinking in anthropology, see George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York, 1968, reprinted in 1982 with a new preface). A debate over the role of scientific racism in Indian policy may be found in Reginald Horsman, "Racial Destiny and the Indians," in *Major Problems in the History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (Lexington, MA, 1989), 226–38 and Francis Paul Prucha, "Scientific Racism and Indian Policy," in Milner, *Major Problems in the History of the American West*, 238–50. Whiteness studies have given historians a stimulating new paradigm for considering race. See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, 1st ed. (London, 1991) and Peter Kolchin's historiographical essay "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89 (June 2002), 154–73. Finally, obsession with racial purity manifested itself in popular culture in the formation of several organizations that traced racial pedigrees—the Daughters of the American Revolution (1890; www.dar.org) and the American Kennel Club (1884; www.akc.org/about/history.cfm) were two examples. Thanks to Claudio Saunt for pointing these out to me.
- 19 The 1899 report of the Dawes Commission stated that the majority of Choctaws in the late nineteenth century had English names while their ancestors had Indian names. This made it impossible to trace Article 14 claims with any certainty. "Sixth Annual Report of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes," 17. In 1916, Office of Indian Affairs inspector John T. Reeves described the Choctaws' habit of switching Christian and surnames over generations. "For instance, the eldest son of Jim Willis is apt to be known as Willis Jim. . . . Where several generations have transpired it is almost impossible to determine if whether a given Indian's name is Bill William or William Bill." He also remarked that Choctaws sometimes named their children "in toto after some white man." Report of John T. Reeves, Special Superintendent of the Indian Service, "On Need of Additional Land and School Facilities for the Indians Living in the State of Missis-

- ssippi,” presented to the Committee on Indian Affairs, 7 December 1916, House Document no. 1464, 64th Cong., 2nd Sess., vol. 114, 25. (Hereafter cited as “Reeves Report.”)
- 20 Archibald McKennon, “Mississippi Choctaws, Report of the Problems of Identifying Them, 1900,” OHS, DC, roll 11, vol. 24, 305, NARA-SW.
 - 21 Assistant Attorney General Willis Van Devanter to the Secretary of the Interior, 3 December 1901, OHS, roll 61, NARA-SW. There is, of course, a great deal of variability in so-called racial characteristics. As Theda Perdue points out, missionary records from the early nineteenth century often noted that both “full” and “mixed” blood Indians had a range of complexions: “full Choctaw, light complexion . . . mixed blood, rather dark complexion.” Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians*, 91.
 - 22 “The Sixth Annual Report to the Five Civilized Tribes,” 77–80. This assumption represented a shift in thinking about race and removal. The men who originally drafted Article 14 had supposed that the more traditional Choctaws, whom they presumed were the “full-bloods,” would chose relocation in order to maintain their cultural and political autonomy, while the most assimilated Choctaws, whom they assumed to be “half-bloods,” would remain in Mississippi to enjoy their cotton farms and plantations. For assumptions on which Choctaws would remain in Mississippi, see “Journal of the Proceedings at the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek,” Senate Document 512, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., 256–61. Blood, however, was not a determinant in the decision to emigrate or remain in Mississippi. Choctaws of all degrees of Indian blood followed both courses of action. For a listing of mixed-descent Choctaws who signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek and received land in Mississippi, see Wells, “The Role of Mixed-Bloods in Mississippi Choctaw History,” 50–52.
 - 23 McKennon, “Mississippi Choctaws,” 303–31. How a given individual presented him- or herself to others was a common method of determining their social capital and thus their place in the racial hierarchy. See Walter Johnson, “The Slave Trade, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s,” *The Journal of American History* 87: 13–38.
 - 24 “The Sixth Annual Report to the Five Civilized Tribes,” 77–80; the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Winton v. Amos*, 255 U.S. 373 (1921), found in “Case Findings on the McKennon Roll,” Access Genealogy, www.accessgenealogy.com/native/mckennon/casefindingsmckennonroll.htm.
 - 25 “Sixth Annual Report of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes,” 92.
 - 26 “Testimony before the Dawes Commission in Carthage, Philadelphia, and Decatur,” Entry 105, Records of Testimony (006), NARA-SW.
 - 27 McKennon, “Mississippi Choctaws,” 303–30; Charles H. Sawyer, “The Choctaw Indians of MS,” *Twin Territories* 4, no. 6 (June 1902): Part I, 163. See also Harry J. Cantwell and William E. Richardson, attorneys for the Mississippi Choctaw, “Supplemental Brief,” in “Hearings on Enrollment,” 132–34. For information on the attorneys see “Testimony before the Dawes Commission,” 96–99.
 - 28 Coker, “Pat Harrison’s Efforts,” 36–61.
 - 29 “Petition of the Mississippi Choctaws,” House Document no. 426, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 13 February 1900, 1.
 - 30 Although lawyers drafted the petitions and memorials Choctaws sent to Congress, I believe that these documents represented the viewpoint of Choctaw

- leaders, at least to the extent that they articulated a public political persona. Over the centuries, the Choctaws proved adept at presenting to outsiders an image that served them politically. I explore this concept more fully in my manuscript tracing the tribal resurgence of the Mississippi Choctaws from 1830 to 1964 to be published by the University of Nebraska Press.
- 31 Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries* and Peterson, “The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians” both document this position with respect to African Americans. My own research in the tribal council minutes in the 1950s and 1960s has uncovered numerous statements of Choctaw leaders drawing sharp racial lines for purposes of avoiding discrimination. Councilman Emmett York put it most succinctly during a council strategy session with OIA officials about integration: “When will the people living around here and the government ever find out that we are not negroes [*sic*]. We know that this segregation is for negroes. Are we taken as [the] negro race of people by the United States?” Minutes of the Choctaw Tribal Council, 9 July 1963, 1, Tribal Archives, Pearl River High School, Choctaw, Mississippi.
 - 32 My manuscript analyzes how Mississippi’s elites who interacted with Choctaws constructed a hierarchy based both on race and class that shifted according to the needs of the moment. For an analysis of race and class in Mississippi state politics, see Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1985) and *Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics: 1876–1925*, reprint (Gloucester, MA, 1964).
 - 33 While Article 14 barred the Mississippi Choctaws from accessing the Choctaw annuity, attorneys for those remaining in Mississippi indicated that profits from tribal leases fell into a different category. “The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, Article 14,” in *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2, ed. Charles J. Kappler (Washington, DC, 1892), 222; “Petition of the Mississippi Choctaws,” 13 February 1900, House Document no. 426, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 1.
 - 34 “Treaty Rights of Mississippi Choctaws,” 29 January 1901, House Report no. 2522, 59th Cong., 2nd Sess. On the mineral assets of the Nation, see Kidwell, *Oklahoma Choctaws*.
 - 35 “Report to the Five Civilized Tribes Upon the Question, Whether the Mississippi Choctaws Are Not Entitled to All the Rights of Choctaw Citizenship Except an Interest in the Annuities, Required by Act of Congress, Approved June 7, 1897,” Exhibit 2 in House Document no. 426, 56th Cong., 1st Sess.
 - 36 “An Agreement with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Tribes of Indians, 27 March 1902,” House Document 512, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., Section 41. This issue is discussed at length in “Ruling of the Supreme Court in *Winton v. Amos*.”
 - 37 Carter, *Dawes Commission*, 85. These numbers were not surprising given that P. J. Hurley, national attorney for the Choctaw Nation in the early twentieth century, estimated that Choctaw citizenship was worth “from \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00.” “Report of P. J. Hurley to the Honorable Cato Sells for 1915,” P. J. Hurley Collection, box 12, folder 7, 4, Manuscripts Division, William Bennett Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma.
 - 38 “Rights of the Mississippi Choctaws in the Choctaw Nation, Memorial of the Full-Blood Mississippi Choctaws Relative to their Rights in the Choctaw Nation,” 21 April 1902, Senate Document 319, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., 2, 34.
 - 39 For disposition of the memorial, see *Case Findings on the McKennon Roll*, www.accessgenealogy.com/native/mckennon/casefindingsmckennonroll.htm.

- 40 "Report of P. J. Hurley to the Honorable Cato Sells for 1915," 4-5.
- 41 "The Mississippi Choctaw Claim, 21 January 1914" (Judd and Dettweiler, Inc., 1914), Mississippi State Records and Archives, Jackson, MS. (Hereafter cited as "The Mississippi Choctaw Claim.")
- 42 "Report of Inspector James McLaughlin in RE Contracts with Mississippi Choctaws," in "Hearings on Enrollment," 831-61. (Hereafter cited as "McLaughlin Report.")
- 43 "Testimony of Pat Harrison," in "Hearings on Enrollment," 827-29.
- 44 One of the attorneys for Cantwell and Crews, Luke Connerly—who was an unsuccessful applicant for enrollment—joined with others claiming to be Choctaws and formed the Society of Mississippi Choctaws, whose purpose was to "recover the rights to which we are justly entitled in law and in equity under the 14th article of the Treaty of 1830." "Preamble," *Constitution of the Society of the Mississippi Choctaws*, Hurley Collection, box 5, folder 1.
- 45 Connerly documented the poverty of the group when he described them by saying, "We are all poor people with very limited means. Our aged president works in the railroad shops for a support and our secretary is a carpenter." Members of the Society paid one dollar to join and ten cents monthly dues. Luke Connerly to P. J. Hurley, undated, Hurley Collection, box 5, folder 1. Comments regarding the lack of Choctaw language speakers among the Society are found in "Testimony of Luke Connerly," in "Hearings on Enrollment," 426.
- 46 Connerly explained that he could distinguish full-blooded Indians by their straight black hair and their black eyes, but he also noted that some "real" Mississippi Choctaws had gray eyes and lighter hair, which rendered them "half or quarter blood." He attributed this to intermarriage with white people over the centuries. "Testimony of Luke Connerly," "Hearings on Enrollment," 415-17; quotation on page 417.
- 47 Applicants had to convince fourth-fifths of the membership committee of the Chief Council or any local council of their ancestry. Article 3, *Constitution of the Society of the Mississippi Choctaws*, Hurley Collection, box 5, folder 1.
- 48 References to "Negro blood" are found in *Amendment to the Constitution of the Society of the Mississippi Choctaws*, Hurley Collection, box 5, folder 1.
- 49 McLaughlin Report, 858.
- 50 "Testimony of Luke Connerly," in "Hearings on Enrollment," 396-97, 406.
- 51 Unlike the editorial in the *Gulf Coast Progress*, Reeves noted that "many of these 'claimants' are fair haired, with blue eyes, and bear no more physical resemblance to real Indians than do the present descendants of Pocahontas." Reeves Report, 25-26. My own perusal of the Harrison County census failed to discern any Indians, but I may have missed the two that Reeves located due to difficulties reading the handwriting.
- 52 "Society of Mississippi Choctaw 1914" and "Society of Mississippi Choctaw 1916," Native American Nations, www.nanations.com/mschoctaw/index.htm (accessed February 2009). The 1853 census taken by special agent Douglas Cooper listed some Choctaws along the coast. Cooper's final numbers must be taken with caution, however, as he noted that Indians in several locations refused to talk to him. See "Cooper Roll," Access Genealogy, www.accessgenealogy.com/native/cooper/index.htm. Choctaw educator Henry S. Halbert also noted the presence of Choctaws along the Gulf Coast in *Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the Legislature of Mississippi for Scholas-*

- tic Years 1893–1894 and 1894–1895* (Jacksonville, FL, 1896), 535–36, and “Okla Hannali, or the Six Towns District of the Choctaws,” *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal* 15, no. 3 (1893): 146–49. Some of these Choctaws may have descended from the Six Towns Clan who fled to the region in the years surrounding Removal, or from Indians who had settled in coastal Hancock County after they were driven out of Kemper County in the 1880s. The 1900 census for Hancock County listed 158 Choctaws, and the 1910 census listed 111. Census data for Hancock County for 1900 and 1910 was retrieved from Ancestry.com. Kidwell notes the exodus to Hancock County in *Choctaws and Missionaries*, 169. I thank Dan Usner for urging me to recognize that there were indeed Choctaws along the Mississippi coast regardless of the legitimacy of the Society.
- 53 Oddly, Representative William Webb Venable, who represented the fifth district, did not carry the Council’s bill, but rather joined the rest of the Mississippi congressional delegation in support of Harrison’s. Instead, Caleb Powers of Kentucky filed HR 8007; the reasons for this have not survived in the public record. HR 8007 was filed with the Committee on Indian Affairs in the 63rd Congress, 1st session. *Congressional Record—House*, 63rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1913 (Washington, DC, 1913), 4633. For Powers’s biography see “Powers, Caleb, (1869–1932),” *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=P000487>.
- 54 Because an 1830 law forbade the Choctaws from holding councils, this was an act of defiance and a declaration of a juridical identity that was not bound by state law. See Peterson, “The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians,” 13–14 and Carson, *Searching for the Bright Path*, 115. For the actions of the Council and their bill, see “Proposed Legislation for the Full-Blood and Identified Choctaws of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, with Memorial, Evidence, and Brief,” in “Hearings on Enrollment,” 122–23 (hereafter cited as “Proposed Legislation”) and “Testimony of James Arnold,” in “Hearings on Enrollment,” 119.
- 55 “Proposed Legislation,” 122–23.
- 56 Arnold had claimed Choctaw ancestry but failed to win enrollment; he was one of the Choctaws’ staunchest allies. His story is told in three boxes of documents found in the papers of Mississippi Representative Ross Collins. Papers of Ross Collins, boxes 2–4, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
- 57 “Testimony of James Arnold,” in “Hearings on Enrollment,” 119.
- 58 “Proposed Legislation,” 120.
- 59 “Proposed Legislation,” 120–21.
- 60 “Proposed Legislation,” 125.
- 61 “Proposed Legislation,” 122–24.
- 62 “Proposed Legislation,” 122. For statements on the historical identity of the Society, see Article 2, *Constitution of the Society of the Mississippi Choctaws*, Hurley Collection, box 5, folder 1.
- 63 “Proposed Legislation,” 125.
- 64 “The Mississippi Choctaw Claim,” 7.
- 65 “The Mississippi Choctaw Claim,” 3–5.
- 66 “The Mississippi Choctaw Claim,” 1–7. The right of the tribe to determine its own membership is proclaimed in virtually every piece of literature upholding tribal sovereignty. For an insightful review of views on how this determination should be undertaken, see Kim TallBear, “DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe,” *Wicazo Sa Review* Spring 2003: 81–107. See also Garrouette, *Real Indi-*

- ans, for a model that places indigenous paradigms at the center of the enrollment process.
- 67 "The Mississippi Choctaw Claim," 2–3.
 - 68 "The Mississippi Choctaw Claim," 1, 9.
 - 69 "The Mississippi Choctaw Claim," 12.
 - 70 Coker, "Pat Harrison's Efforts," 59.
 - 71 "Hearings Before the Committee on Investigation of the Indian Service, March 12, 13, 14, 1917," *Condition of the Mississippi Choctaws*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC, 1917), 125.
 - 72 Cato Sells, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to Mrs. J. E. Arnold, 10 September 1917, Central Classified Files, Choctaw (CCF), 806–81856, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (NARA-DC).
 - 73 For an insightful analysis of a range of these discussions see TallBear, "DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe."
 - 74 Ward Churchill, "The Crucible of American Indian Identity: Native Tradition versus Colonial Imposition in Postcolonial North America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 23 (1999): 29–67; M. Annette Jaimes, "Federal Indian Policy," 123–38; R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895–1995," *American Historical Review* 100 (June 1995): 733–34.
 - 75 Alexandra Harmon, "Tribal Enrollment Councils: Lessons on Law and Indian Identity," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Summer 2001): 179. Harmon advocates more historical studies of how specific tribes handled issues of enrollment according to blood, framing our understanding in the context of the demands of U.S. hegemony.
 - 76 For ideas concerning how American Indians viewed skin color, see Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford, 2004). For analysis of indigenous ideologies of blood, see Melissa L. Meyer, "American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements: Blood Is Thicker Than Family," in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, eds. Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 231–51 and Pauline Turner Strong and Barrick Van Winkle, "'Indian Blood': Reflections on the Reckoning and Refiguring of Native North American Identity," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 4 (November 1996): 547–76.
 - 77 Strum, *Blood Politics*, 136–41.
 - 78 Such conflations are as common among American Indians as they are among many groups of Americans. For a cogent analysis of the difficulties in sorting out competing variables of identity in historical studies of race and ethnicity, see Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* June 2002: 154–73.
 - 79 Although there is political disagreement among the Choctaw, my study of Choctaw leadership over the twentieth century has not uncovered any divisions based on degrees of Choctaw blood. For discussion of conflicts in tribal leadership that employ these divisions, see Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy*; Lambert, *Choctaw Nation*; and Paul C. Rosier, *Rebirth of the Blackfoot Nation, 1912–1954* (Lincoln, NE, 2001). It is important to note that in each of these examples, designations of blood are not predicated solely on phenotypes.
 - 80 Given the movement between Mississippi and Indian Territory, it is not unreasonable to assume that Mississippi Choctaws were aware that the Choctaw

Nation had established blood quantum for enrollment. Connections between Choctaws in the east and west are visible in many documents, but most especially in the correspondence of the Board of Catholic Indian Missions. Bureau of Catholic Missions, records, general correspondence, 1853–ongoing, series 1–1, reel 61, “Mississippi, General Correspondence,” 1912; reel 66, 1913; reel 80, 1916; reel 84, 1917; reel 88, 1918; and reel 92, 1919.

- 81 The Nation’s position regarding the Mississippi Choctaws is carefully laid out in “Memorial of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations Relative to the Rights of the Mississippi Choctaws,” 1913, Hurley Collection, box 17, folder 3.
- 82 “Petition of the Mississippi Choctaws,” House Document no. 426, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 13 February 1900, 1.

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