

"It is the sole right and responsibility of the Cherokee people to define Cherokee citizenship, which is no different from the United States having the right to determine who its citizens shall be. This is not racism it is called self-governance."

--Sara Hoklotubbe, letter to Washington Times, 3/10/07

Complete text of letter:

Cherokee facts
Washington Times
Washington, DC
03/10/2007

Bruce Fein writes in Resurgent Racism (Commentary, Tuesday) that racism is resurgent and as an example cites a recent election held by the Cherokee Nation. The article not only lacks objectivity, but is full of misinformation.

As a constitutional lawyer, Mr. Fein should know that the Cherokee Nation is a sovereign nation and neither the 110th Congress nor any future Congress can direct the Cherokee people in how to define their citizens. It is the sole right and responsibility of the Cherokee people to define Cherokee citizenship, which is no different from the United States having the right to determine who its citizens shall be. This is not racism it is called self-governance.

The election Mr. Fein is upset about was on a Cherokee constitution amendment to require Cherokee citizens show proof of Cherokee ancestry by having a CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood) and tracing their lineage to an ancestor on the Dawes Rolls. The amendment passed by more than 76 percent. Simply put You have to be able to prove you have Cherokee blood to be a Cherokee citizen.

Mr. Fein wrote The revocation vote expelled Freedmen with a full-blooded Cherokee grandfather, but permitted membership to blond people of European ancestry who are 1/1000th Cherokee. This is false.

Cherokee Nation citizenry is made up of full-blood and mixed-blood Cherokees. Mixed-blood Cherokees may have other tribal blood, African-American blood, blond people of European ancestry blood, Hispanic blood, English blood, Irish blood, German blood and as many other kinds of blood you can think of including a mixture of all of the above. But Cherokee citizens must have one thing in common a Cherokee ancestor who is listed on the Dawes Rolls.

Anyone who can prove they are descendants of a Cherokee ancestor has always been and will always remain a Cherokee citizen. The Freedmen, who Mr. Fein referred to as having a full-blooded Cherokee grandfather, will not be expelled from the tribe because their Cherokee grandfather will be listed on the Dawes Rolls. If not, then their grandfather's mother and father will be listed. All they have to do is choose to prove lineage.

Money makes the world go 'round, and that is the bottom line in this controversy not race. Now that the Cherokee Nation is successful in its business ventures, non-Indians want a piece of the pie and they realize the only way they can get it is by trying to become a Cherokee citizen.

I hope Mr. Fein gets his facts straight for the next piece about the Cherokee Nation he submits for publication. The Cherokee Nation's Web site is www.cherokee.org and that's a great place to start.

SARA HOKLOTUBBE
Wailuku, Hawaii