

“...while thousands of individuals claim Cherokee heritage, only those who are able to get a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and who can prove they are a direct descendent of an original enrollee on the Cherokee Indian Dawes Rolls are eligible for citizenship in the Cherokee Nation.”

“...the Cherokee people have voted (3) times over the last (3) decades regarding citizenship criteria. They have voted consistently that you must be 'Indian' to be a citizen of our Indian tribe.”

“...any Cherokee Freedmen who can get a CDIB card from the BIA and prove direct descendancy from an ancestor of the Cherokee Indian Dawes Commission Roll can be a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. This was true before Cherokee citizens voted on March 3 to clarify citizenship issues and it is true now.”

---Chris Russo

Complete text of letter:

**Letter to Editor response to Cherokee Freedman comments
Native American Times
Tulsa, OK
03/21/2007**

Letter to Editor response to Cherokee Freedman comments
3/21/2007

Marilyn Vann's letter to the editor regarding the March 3 vote by Cherokee people misleads readers and is filled with falsehoods through omission of facts. She continues to spout a self-serving legal argument that seeks to undermine and abrogate the Cherokee Nation's sovereignty which is something no Native American citizen would ever do. Ms. Vann failed to let the readers know that while thousands of individuals claim Cherokee heritage only those who are able to get a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and who can prove they are a direct descendent of an original enrollee on the Cherokee Indian Dawes Rolls are eligible for citizenship in the Cherokee Nation.

Secondly, she fails to tell readers that the Cherokee people have voted (3) times over the last (3) decades regarding citizenship criteria. They have voted consistently that you must be 'Indian' to be a citizen of our Indian tribe.

Third, she fails to tell readers that she has only been able to claim citizenship for the past 12 months or so because our tribal court required a clarification regarding specifically 'who' is excluded as citizens. A constitutional amendment regarding that question was put to vote on March 3. Again the Cherokee people voted you must be 'Indian' to be a citizen of our Indian tribe and that citizenship criteria excludes non-Indians, including non-Indian Freedmen and non-Indian Inter-married Whites. Marilyn Vann and her allies in African American lobby groups keep beating up on the Cherokee people and our leadership demanding the U.S. government withhold funding that goes to Cherokee Indian children, elders and families.

For the record, and again, any Cherokee Freedmen who can get a CDIB card from the BIA and prove direct descendancy from an ancestor of the Cherokee Indian Dawes Commission Roll can be a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. This was true before Cherokee citizens voted on March 3 to clarify citizenship issues and it is true now.

Sadly it appears anyone can yell 'racist' from a bloody pulpit and get headlines creating a bunch of unwarranted criticism attacking the character of a lot of very good people. The facts prove that the Cherokee people are not racists no matter how loudly wannabees unjustly scream such an obscenity.

One of the groups that Marilyn Vann has aligned with is The National Congress of Black Women who compete and lobby for funding from U.S. federal agencies on behalf of African Americans. Could it be that beating up on the Cherokee people may have more to do with greed than racism. This does not speak well for good African Americans they claim to represent. Shame on them and shame on Marilyn Vann for attempting to usurp and put in harms way the sovereign rights of the Cherokee Nation. Enough is enough!

C. Russo
Cherokee Citizen