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WE ARE NOT ERASED: The Reawakening Of America's Brown-Skinned Indigenous People

A Cultural and Historical Analysis of Identity, Erasure, and Restoration

By Chief Bethy, Waya Nation

I. INTRODUCTION: *A Rising Truth*

Across the United States, a growing number of families long labeled as "African American" are reclaiming a deeper, older identity—one rooted not in the transatlantic slave trade, but in the original peoples of this continent. These are the brown-skinned Aborigines of America, the copper-colored Indigenous communities described in early European accounts, preserved through oral tradition, and hidden for generations beneath layers of colonial reclassification.

This movement is not a trend. It is a restoration.

II. THE HISTORICAL RECORD: *What the Early Accounts Really Said*

Long before colonial borders, racial categories, and federal enrollment systems, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were described as:

- Brown-skinned
- Copper-colored
- Curly-haired or wool-haired
- Diverse in appearance and culture

Explorers, missionaries, and colonial officials documented Native communities whose features do not match the modern stereotype of "Native American." These early descriptions align closely with the families who today are reclaiming their identity as American Aborigines.

III. HOW IDENTITY WAS ERASED: *The Machinery of Reclassification*

From the 1700s through the 1900s, federal and state systems aggressively reclassified Indigenous people—especially those with darker skin tones. Key mechanisms of erasure included:

- **Census re-labeling:** Indigenous families were marked as "Negro," "Colored," or "Black" if they lived outside reservation boundaries or did not fit the government's racial expectations.
- **Indian Removal policies:** Entire tribal communities were displaced, scattered, or absorbed into neighboring populations.
- **The one-drop rule:** Any trace of African ancestry—real or assumed—overrode Indigenous identity in legal documents.

- **Boarding schools and assimilation:** Children were stripped of language, culture, and tribal names.
- **Freedmen classifications:** Many Indigenous families were grouped with formerly enslaved people, erasing tribal distinctions.

These policies did not change who people were—only how the government recorded them.

IV. THE ORAL HISTORIES: *What Families Remember*

Across the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Gulf regions, families carry stories that contradict the official record:

- *"We were always here."*
- *"Our people were never enslaved."*
- *"Our grandparents spoke of tribal names the census never wrote down."*
- *"We were called Black, but we were not African."*

These oral histories are not anomalies, they are evidence.

V. CULTURAL MARKERS THAT SURVIVED THE ERASURE

Despite centuries of suppression, many brown-skinned Indigenous families preserved:

- Land-based traditions
- Herbal medicine and healing practices
- Ceremonial customs
- Clan names and kinship structures
- Spiritual beliefs tied to the land
- Migration stories that predate colonial maps

These cultural threads form a living archive of Indigenous identity.

VI. THE MODERN REAWAKENING: *A Movement of Restoration*

In recent decades, a powerful resurgence has taken root. Brown-skinned Americans are:

- Reclaiming their Indigenous identity
- Challenging colonial racial categories
- Rebuilding tribal communities
- Restoring cultural practices
- Teaching their children the truth
- Forming sovereign nations outside colonial recognition systems

Movements like the Waya Nation represent a new era of cultural restoration and self-determination.






VII. DECLARATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

I, **Chief Betheona A. Guiles**, do hereby declare and affirm my ancestral identity as a brown-skinned Aborigine of America — a descendant of the original peoples of this land, whose presence predates colonial contact and whose legacy endures through oral tradition, cultural practice, and spiritual sovereignty.

My lineage is rooted in the soil of this continent. I am not a product of the transatlantic slave trade, nor am I defined by colonial constructs of race. I descend from the copper-colored peoples described in early European accounts — the caretakers of the land, the builders of communities, and the keepers of sacred knowledge.

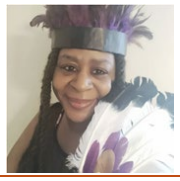
For centuries, our identity has been obscured by forced reclassification, systemic erasure, and racial mislabeling. We were renamed *"Negro," "Colored," and "Black,"* stripped of our tribal affiliations, and denied our rightful place in the historical record. Yet our memory remains intact. Our blood remembers.

As Chief of the Waya Nation, I stand in full sovereignty — culturally, spiritually, and politically. Our nation is not defined by colonial recognition, but by ancestral truth. We reclaim our names, our lands, our traditions, and our dignity. We assert our right to self-determination, to govern our affairs, and to preserve our heritage without interference or distortion.

***We are not lost. We are rising.**
***We are not forgotten. We are remembered.**
***We are not erased. We are restored.**

Let this declaration serve as a living testament to our identity, our resilience, and our sacred obligation to honor those who came before us and those yet to come.

Honor and love to all who walk this path.
— Chief Betheona A. Guiles, Waya Nation



VIII. THE WAYA NATION: *A Sovereign Community Reborn*

The Waya Nation exists to:

- Reclaim ancestral identity
- Preserve cultural and spiritual traditions
- Educate the public about Indigenous history
- Establish sovereign governance rooted in Indigenous values
- Protect the dignity and rights of brown-skinned Aborigines

Its structure includes:

- A Chief
- A Council of Elders
- Assistant and Associate Chiefs from multiple states
- A Community Assembly Across the 50 United States

This is sovereignty in action—not granted by colonial systems, but lived and affirmed by the people themselves.

IX. IDENTITY TOOLKIT: *How Families Can Begin Their Own Journey*

1. Understand the Erasure

- Learn how racial laws and census practices hid Indigenous identity.

2. Research Your Family History

- Interview elders, gather oral histories, and document traditions.

3. Examine Historical Records

- Look for patterns of reclassification in census, land, and church documents.

4. Challenge Misclassification

- Prepare written statements of identity and lineage.

5. Build Sovereign Structures

- Join or form communities that honor Indigenous identity.

6. Educate and Advocate

- Share your story. Teach others. Restore what was taken.

X. CONCLUSION: *We Are Not Erased*

- ✓ The rise of brown-skinned Indigenous Americans is not a revision of history—it is a correction.
- ✓ A restoration.
- ✓ A return.
- ✓ The ancestors are calling their children back to themselves.
- ✓ And the people are answering.

THIS MONTH'S CULTURAL FOOD DISH

SHARED BY

- **Chief Alease Jones, Vice President Waya Nation "aka" THE VEGAN QUEEN!**



FRIED COLLARD GREENS and HOT WATER CORNBREAD!

Fried Collard Greens

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 bags of collard greens or 4 to 8 bunches of fresh collard greens
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium yellow bell pepper (or any bell pepper of choice), chopped
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic or 2–3 fresh garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium onion, sliced or chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable bouillon
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

Sauté the bell peppers, onion, garlic, vegetable bouillon, onion powder, paprika, and olive oil in a large cast-iron skillet or medium pot for about 3 minutes, just until the vegetables begin to soften. Add the collard greens, cover with a lid, and cook for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the greens are tender and fully done.

Enjoy 💜

Hot Water Cornbread

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cup of yellow cornmeal
- 1-1/2 cup of boiling water
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/2 cup olive oil (or other frying oil)
- Butter, for serving

Directions

1. Heat the oil:
Pour the 1/2 cup oil into a medium cast-iron skillet and heat over medium heat.

2. Mix the batter:
In a medium bowl, combine the 1-1/2 cups of yellow cornmeal and a pinch of salt. Pour in 1-1/2 cup of boiling water and stir until the mixture is smooth and thick enough to hold its shape.

3. Form the patties:
Once the mixture is cool enough to handle, form it into small patties or oval cakes with your hands or a spoon.

4. Fry the cornbread:
Carefully place the patties into the hot oil. Fry for about 1 to 2 minutes per side, until golden brown and crisp.

5. Drain and serve:
Remove the patties from the skillet and place on paper towels to drain. Serve hot with butter.

Enjoy 💜💜💜

HAPPY NEW YEAR & ENJOY 💜💜💜





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SOURCES & REFERENCES — JANUARY 2026 EDITION

This month's feature article, ***"We Are Not Erased: The Reawakening of America's Brown-Skinned Indigenous People,"*** was developed through**:**

1. Early European Descriptions of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas
These sources contain early accounts describing Native peoples as brown-skinned, copper-colored, or darker-complexioned:

- **Christopher Columbus, "Journal of the First Voyage" (1492–1493)**
  Public-domain translations describe the Indigenous peoples he encountered as "copper-colored" and "of a dark complexion."
- **Bartolomé de las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (1542)**
  Public-domain text describing Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and the Americas, including complexion and cultural practices.
- **John Lawson, A New Voyage to Carolina (1709)**
- Public-domain ethnographic descriptions of Southeastern tribes, including physical appearance.
- **James Adair, The History of the American Indians (1775)**
  Public-domain work documenting Southeastern tribes, including Yamasee, Creek, and Cherokee.

2. Public-Domain Records on Racial Reclassification
These sources document how Indigenous people were reclassified as "Negro," "Colored," or "Black" in official records:

- **U.S. Census Schedules (1790–1940)**
  Public-domain federal census records showing racial categories and reclassification patterns.
- **Virginia Slave Codes (1705)**
  Public-domain laws that reclassified Indigenous people as "Negro" or "mulatto" for legal purposes.
- **North Carolina Colonial Records (Public Domain)**
  Includes laws and court cases where Indigenous people were labeled as "free persons of color."
- **Freedmen's Bureau Records (1865–1872)**
  Public-domain documents showing how Indigenous and African-descended peoples were grouped together administratively.
- **Dawes Rolls (1898–1914)**
  Public-domain enrollment records showing racial categories applied to tribal citizens and Freedmen.

3. Federal Policies: Removal, Census Labeling, Assimilation
These are official, public-domain federal documents:

- **Indian Removal Act of 1830**
  U.S. Statutes at Large, public domain.
- **Civilization Fund Act of 1819**
  Public-domain law establishing federal assimilation programs.
- **U.S. Office of Indian Affairs Annual Reports (1800s–1900s)**
  Public-domain reports detailing assimilation, boarding schools, and reclassification.
- **General Allotment Act (Dawes Act) of 1887**
  Public-domain law restructuring tribal citizenship and land ownership.
- **Indian Boarding School Records (Bureau of Indian Affairs)**
  Many are public domain and document forced assimilation and identity suppression.
- **U.S. Census Bureau Racial Classification Guidelines (19th–20th century)**
  Public-domain instructions to census takers on labeling Indigenous people as "Negro," "mulatto," or "colored" if they were not on reservations.

All historical references listed above are public-domain or federally published materials used to support the cultural, historical, and analytical content of this month's issue of The Perspective, the official publication of the Waya Nation