Contemporary Native American Rhetoric:
A Narrative Criticism of the Cherokee Rally

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In July of 1997, in Talequa Oklahoma, the Cherokee people organized a protest rally in response to an internal conflict with their Chief, Joe Byrd. Chief Byrd violated constitutional and tribunal laws, which lead to a crisis of identity and representation within the Cherokee Nation. What this paper offers is a narrative criticism of how the rally and the story of Joe Byrd functioned in reflecting the wider social, cultural, political and historical contexts for understanding the Cherokee Nation, more specifically asking: What interpretation of reality is being described through the narratives? How does the narrative of Joe Byrd embedded within the rally invoke experiences of the Cherokee Nation? How do the speeches, speakers, and singers at the rally invoke the political and cultural history of the Cherokees? How do the intertwined narratives function in the resolution of the internal crisis of the Nation?

Victor Turner (1982) and Dwight Conquergood (1992) are pivotal figures whose research has inspired an ideological turn, in which scholars began to “rethink the construction of culture and identity in terms of performance” (Conquergood, p. 84). A community’s performance becomes the means by which scholars can know a culture and understand how natives create their identities. In particular, the social drama, characterized by a *breach; crisis; redressive machinery*; and *reconciliation* is offered as a way of explicating how a community ‘makes, not fakes’ its identities through conflict. Such a description provides not only an understanding for how a culture creates and recreates its identity, but reveals the way in which a community resolves conflict. Additionally, social dramas can uncover the symbols of communication—myths, metaphors, words, gestures—that people share.

In the Cherokee nation, a social drama unfolded on July 12, 1997 in Talequa, Oklahoma, in response to an ongoing internal conflict between the Nation, Chief Joe Byrd, the judicial courts, and the marshal services. This social drama evolved as Chief Joe Byrd was issued a search warrant by the marshals on February 25, 1997 and was accused of misappropriation of tribal money. The marshals seized evidence that supported the search warrant, but Byrd fired the marshals, the prosecutor, the clerks, and the three members of the tribal Supreme Court. Byrd was asked to reinstate the marshals; however, he refused and invited the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) police—a U.S. governmental body historically accepted by Native Americans as unfriendly to native interests—to take over tribal law enforcement. A federal lawsuit was filed by the justices, requesting that the BIA be withdrawn and refrained from interfering because the BIA refused to carry out tribunal laws which included arresting the Chief.

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Additionally, when Joe Byrd seized the courthouse in a pre-dawn raid on June 20, 1997, the BIA manhandled and attacked Cherokee citizens that were attempting to stop Byrd. One of the assaulted citizens, Chad Smith, an attorney, claims that the siege was illegal, and “was in direct violation of the orders of the Cherokee Nation’s Supreme Court, and it was in direct violation of tribal law” (Cherokee Attorney pleads innocent, p. 29).

These breaches of constitutional and tribal law led to a crisis within the Cherokee Nation. As Melot states, “Indian tribes hold a unique place in American government. Under the concept of “sovereignty,” federally recognized tribes are separate from the United States. This gives tribes the ability to levy their own taxes, organize their own police forces and act independently of the state” (Melot, p. A9). However with the actions of Joe Byrd and the interference of the BIA, the Cherokee Nation became dependent upon the U.S. government for assistance with the lawsuits and with resolution of the conflict—actions which are counter to its sovereign culture. Wilma Mankiller, former Cherokee Chief, poignantly explained that without involvement of the BIA, the Cherokee Nation would have resolved its own conflict (Jones, July 12, p. A7). In addition to a crisis of identity, a crisis of representation occurred. The courthouse and the constitution, which represent the freedom and life lifeblood of the Nation, were seized and the current Chief reinterpreted the tribal laws designed to protect the Cherokees.

To redress Byrd’s breach, a rally was organized to strengthen the Cherokee people’s faith in its constitution. Participants joined hands and formed a circle around the courthouse, tied ribbons to trees, distributed postcards for people to sign and send to President Clinton, and recited oaths of office. Based on ethnographic field notes and transcriptions from recorded events, approximately 15 members of the community narrated, sang, performed, and pleaded their concerns to the audience. One of the organizers and a distinguished member of the Cherokee Nation—Dana Tiger—claimed that the rally was organized “to symbolize that it’s still our courthouse, and to support the document that was written by our people” (Gerard, p. A1, emphasis added).

Employing Fisher’s narrative paradigm, this paper offers a narrative interpretation of rally. More specifically, this interpretation focuses on the (1) symbols invoked by participants to make sense of the social drama and to redefine/remake Cherokee culture; (2) good reasons for participating in the rally as a way of resolving the internal conflict; and lastly, (3) narrative probability and fidelity by which the “truth” expressed within the rally can be assessed.

Symbolic Invocations

“I am who I am, what I am, and what I can do or cannot do. I am Cherokee and I am proud of it. There is no one who can take that away from me” - Charlie Soap in Mankiller (emphasis added)

Fisher (1984) describes an alternative way of conceptualizing communication. According to his paradigm, humans (or homo narrans) are naturally storytellers and through narratives we come to understand the actions, decisions, and performances of others. A narration then is a set of shared symbols that is created as a story to establish communal ways of living and give order to human experience. Symbols also “have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (p. 2). Crites (1971) further articulates that narratives are sacred stories “because man’s sense of self and world is created through them” (p. 295). What set symbols, then, did the participants in the rally invoke? And what meanings and interpretations were assigned to these symbols?

The most important symbol in the Cherokee Nation is the word Cherokee itself. The actual word, pronounced Ani-Yunwiya, means ‘real people’ and embodies the different historical and political experiences of the Cherokees. Historically, the Cherokees are a displaced liminal people that were forced from their land on two occasions. In 1838, under the Treaty of New Echota, the Cherokee people were forcibly removed from their homes and stripped of all their
belongings. The long journey from the southern states west to Oklahoma became known as the Trail of Tears and it is estimated that the Cherokee Nation suffered the loss of 4,000 members. When the Trail of Tears ended in Talaquah, Oklahoma, the Cherokees accepted the challenge of their new environment and began rebuilding their community. Little did they know that 120 years later in 1956, the Cherokees would once again be removed from their homes as part of the BIA governmental relocation program designed to “abolish the native people’s ties to their homeland and cultures” (Mankiller & Wallis, p. 270). However, this time the program failed as more than one-third of those who relocated returned to their homes.

The word Cherokee was symbolically invoked in the rally in 1997 to reaffirm and remind the community of their tenacity to overcome struggles and their right to be respected as a democratic people:

Speaker #1 [female, non-Cherokee]: ... the Cherokee people, I’m just honored to be involved with these people, because you are the strength and you all work so hard for every event. And you deserve to feel good about yourself. ’Cause what you do is great. And you’re the reason, that when this, this thing will finally come to an end.

Speaker #3 [female]: I’ll bet the rules that we have that govern the Cherokee people are the same rules that govern every entity in our great Nation. We are a democracy people. We are not subject to somebody coming in and running us over, without rules, without law, without justice ... Now this court and the ability to understand law is what has brought the Cherokee Nation through 140 years and up to where we are now.

Politically, the Trail of Tears is the second most important symbol and represents the tenuous relationship that developed (and still exists today) between the United States government and the Nation. After the civil war, in the late 1700’s, the government sought new peaceful ways to conduct relations with the natives in general and the Cherokees in particular. This civilization or “expansion with honor” movement began under the leadership of Henry Knox1, and was premised on four provisions: 1) sovereignty and protection of Indian’s rights within their borders, 2) negotiations with the Tribes through ratified treaties, 3) Indians surrender their lands as the U.S. population grew, and 4) supplies to become civilized “herdsman and cultivators” would be provided by the United States (Perdue & Green, p. 11). As the livelihood of deerskin trading declined rapidly, the civilization movement was embraced in the Cherokee community and constituted the means by which the Cherokees became a nation and gained political freedom and protection of their land in the form of a constitution.

However, becoming civilized was inadequate protection against racist ideologies that developed in the late 1820’s. Andrew Jackson, with his presidential victory in 1828, rebuked the sovereignty of the tribes, called the negotiation treaties ‘absurd’, and proposed the Indian Removal Act which Congress ratified in 1830. The Cherokee Nation mounted a strong defense in support of its sovereignty and property ownership, but remained powerless not only due to betrayal and broken treaties from the United States government, but also due to an internal conflict. Major John Ridge, a respected Creek War veteran, formed the Treaty Party, which “concluded that the Cherokees had no alternative but to negotiate with the United States to exchange their land in the east for a new homeland west of the Mississippi” (Perdue & Green, p. 19). This defection angered Principal Chief John Ross and defied the Cherokee belief that leaders should represent the consensus of the community.

Marvin Summerfield, a reporter for the Cherokee Observer newspaper, symbolically invoked the Trail of Tears at the rally in a similar vain—to reaffirm and remind the audience of the historical struggles—but for the purpose of demonstrating how past and present struggles have created unity amongst the Cherokees:

1Knox was the Secretary of War for George Washington.
We’ve been here for many generations . . . the events that’s happened, that has occurred, has not only brought a lot of people together . . . So the best thing that’s happened probably out of this whole sad event in our Nation, we Cherokees are getting together. You know I think that is the thing that has kept our nation strong. [cheers from the crowd] You know our people, we have a big vested interest in the United States government, you know. Our nation was one of the first ones to help the fledgling nation years and years ago. Unfortunately, the things we got was being removed to Oklahoma . . . we are a displaced people. If anybody has been back to the old homelands like I have, you stand on the mountains . . . and realize that our ancestors lay there is an amazing thing. But also believe that getting together like we do now, since these events have happened . . . most of us have been getting together, protesting, eating together and basically having some fellowship.

June, a singer/songwriter and flute player, wrote a song in 1993 about the trail of tears and performed it at the rally, claiming: “it’s a song about re-uniting the Cherokee people back into one nation again . . . it’s a song about the Cherokee having new strength and hope at a time when we really need new strength and hope . . . it’s a song about where we came from and where we’re going”.

The third symbol that reflects the different experiences of the Cherokees is the Courthouse. Built in Talequah, Oklahoma after the Trail of Tears, this building has become a politically symbolic site in that it is the only physical and tangible property that the Cherokee’s can claim ownership to as their ancestral land was forcibly taken from them. The building also represents the rebuilding of the Cherokee Nation by the establishment of its own constitutional form of government. Pat Ragsdale, director of the Cherokee Nationwide Service, articulates the political symbolism of the seizure of the courthouse:

The one distinction between those that are loyal to the Cherokee Nation that other people don’t understand or don’t get or just don’t want to admit to, is, when we take an oath of office, we take an oath of office to the Cherokee Nation. It is true that the Chief is the Chief Executive and the nominal head of the tribal government pursuant to our constitution . . . [however] when the people put together our constitution and the people voted on it, nobody ever dreamed that we would ever have any leader of the Cherokee Nation that would fragrantly disregard the law of the Cherokee Nation.

This courthouse also represents the crisis that currently grips the Nation. As Chad Smith, one of the speakers, recounted in his story of how he was attacked by the BIA during the siege of the courthouse, “this sacred, this our capital building, for 200 years, is now not under the jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation, but under the jurisdiction of the state of Oklahoma. Joe Byrd has gave [sic] our most sacred property back to the jurisdiction of the state of Oklahoma”.

Throughout the rally, the speakers invoked a set of symbols—Cherokee, the Trail of Tears, and the courthouse—to voice the Nation’s past and its tenacity to overcome the hardships and to renew the Nation’s ability to address the current adversities. These symbols also conjured feelings of internal betrayal and distrust in the government of the United States, which constitute good reasons and moral inducements for participating in the rally.

**Good Reasons**

The logic of good reasons by which individuals make sense of rhetorical communication was first articulated by Fisher in 1978 as “those elements that provide warrants for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical” (p. 378). The supposition here, and eventually the cornerstone for his narrative paradigm developed in 1984, implies that the ability for humans to reason “need not be bound to argumentative prose or be expressed in clear cut inferential or implicational structures: Reasoning

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2 The lyrics of the song can be seen in Appendix A
may be discovered in all sorts of symbolic action”, narratives especially (Fisher p. 1). Good reasons are the “stuff of stories, the means by which humans realize their nature as reasoning-valuing animals” (p. 8). Individuals as ‘valuing animals’ make choices about the truth, coherency, effectiveness of narratives, and whether or not one should adhere to the story, based not on the arguments advanced, but by the values that the individual holds. These values determine the truth or verisimilitude of a particular story/narrative and influence whether a narrative has probabilityand fidelity (both of which will be described in the next section). Warnick (1989) further explains that the logic of good reasons “can be best understood if we consider the critical questions that it asks about a text” (p. 178), as articulated in Fisher’s original article:

1. What are the implicit and explicit values embedded in a message?
2. Are the values appropriate to the nature of the decision that the message bears upon?
3. What would be the effects of adhering to the values in regard to one’s concept of self, to one’s behavior, to one’s relationships with others and society, and to the process of rhetorical transaction?
4. Are the values confirmed or validated in one’s personal experience, in the lives or statements of others whom one admires and respects, and/or in a conception of the best audience that one can conceive?
5. Even if a prima facie case exists or a burden of proof has been established, are the values the message offers those that, in the estimation of the critic, constitute the ideal basis for human conduct? (Fisher, 1978, 379-80)

The questions raised in terms of the rally are: What constitute good reasons for participating in this rally? What values are embedded within the speaker’s messages at the rally? What would be the effects of adhering to the values in regard to the Cherokee’s concept of self, to their behavior, and their relationships with others and society?

The first good reason offered for participating in the rally is the promotion of harmony and balance. According to Fisher (1985), “balance theory predicts that a person will manifest balance restoring behavior when he or she experiences psychological disequilibrium . . . to restore balance, the person searches for a story that will justify his or her effort” (p. 349). The rally itself is the story that will justify the participant’s efforts to restore balance and harmony that was taken away by the actions of Chief Joe Bryd. Speaker # 2, a female succinctly describes how the rally promotes balance and harmony:

. . . for almost a month our court system has been totally broken down . . . as a result there are a lot of people who are suffering hardship . . . So, I hope that what could happen is that eventually we can have back a working functional system of judgment . . . the constitution also says that everyone including the chief, tribal counsel, and the cabinet men, all take an oath to support the constitution of the Cherokee Nation and uphold the laws and regulations . . . that ultimately maybe we can overcome the problem. I think that what we are doing here today, letting people know that we are affected by what is taking place, that it’s just not a symbolic thing to have a court, that it’s a real functioning court, with justice for real people.

A second good reason to participate in the rally is to be politically active, not passive, in shaping the future of the Cherokee Nation. As Marvin Summerfield, the reporter for the newspaper Cherokee Observer remarked in his speech, “you know, in the final analysis, when this is all said and done, history is going to judge all of us that’s been involved in this thing. And it won’t be just what ah, our actions- it’s going to be our inactions that we are going to be judged by” (emphasis added). Being passive in times of crises silences the voices of Cherokees and weakens their ability to exercise their sovereign rights. As one of the female speakers pleaded, the Cherokee people must be active in raising political consciousness of what is currently happening:
If you have a name on a post card and it goes to one of these people, they will pay more attention to
it. I know. I have lobbied in congress. They think very highly of hearing from you . . . They must
hear from you . . . The people in power have to hear from us.

There was also an invocation for the people to vote Joe Byrd out of office and in the future vote
for someone who has the qualities of good leadership. Being politically active in raising the
consciousness of House of Representatives and Senators in the United States government about
what is happening in the nation offered a way for the Cherokee community to resolve their internal
crisis.

One of the most prolific values embedded in the messages of the rally was to be of good
mind and think positively. Mankiller in her autobiography (1993) poignantly explains that during
the process of healing after having been in a severe car accident, she “fell back on [her] Cherokee
ways and adopted what our elders call “a Cherokee approach” to life. They say it is ‘being of good
mind’. That means one has to think positively, to take what is handed out and turn it into a better
path” (Mankiller & Wallis, p. 226). Being of good mind is also the moral foundation for how the
leader of the Cherokee Nation should be “defined and treated”. One speaker outlined and detailed
the criteria by which a leader should be defined:

And folks, ladies and gentlemen, we are not being represented. We are not being represented. WE
need someone who is an example, someone, who- to pattern our lives afterwards. A good leadership
has these qualities. Number 1- someone to inspire, someone to enable us, someone to encourage us,
and someone to be a model for us. That’s what we need today. So, when you go to the polls, look for
someone with these qualities. If you’re not registered, do so.

There is this incitement of good leadership because Joe Byrd represents everything that the leader
of the Cherokee Nation should not be. He has upset the balance and harmony with his actions and
has not been of good mind for he has discouraged rather than encouraged his people. The
individuals at the rally need to continue to think positively and be of good mind in order to get
through this crisis. What would be the effects of adhering to this value in regard to the Cherokee’s
concept of self, to their behavior, and their relationships with others and society? Pat Ragsdale
poignantly articulates the answer to this question:

On this particular day . . . I feel a sense of optimism after all these months. That the momentum is
with the movement to restore out constitutional form of government. I truly believe that. It’s been
said by some that the Cherokee Nation will never be the same again. I believe that is true also. I
think that we will eventually come out of this crisis a stronger nation than we ever have been . . . So
don’t lose faith. We haven’t lost faith.

**Narrative Fidelity and Probability**

“Their struggle is infused with temporal concerns: thoroughly (and painfully) cognizant of the
history of Native/Euroamerican relations on this continent, activists seek the meaning of this past,
construe its relevance to their current condition, find it in their purpose and tactics, and presage
the final victory to come”- Lake, (1991) p. 124

One of the presuppositions that structure the narrative paradigm is that “rationality is
determined by the nature of persons as human beings—their inherent awareness of narrative
probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity,
whether the stories ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (p. 8). In
subsequent articles, Fisher elaborates on these terms, claiming that narrative probability “concerns
the questions of whether or not a story coheres or ‘hangs’ together, whether or not the story is free
of contradictions”, and the term fidelity concerns the “degree to which it accords with the logic of
good reasons: the soundness of its reasoning and the value of its values” (pp. 349-350).
The notions of narrative fidelity and probability described above are culturally acquired through experience, according to Fisher (1984, p. 15). Although Fisher (1984) has been beneficial in understanding the deeper structures of the narratives, his paradigm can be faulted for advocating a “superiority of narrative rationality”, based on a Western, linear interpretation of how events in a narrative unfold in a particular ordered chronological sequence (Rowland, 1987). This temporal logic denies other forms of rationality that are non-Western and non-linear (Warnick, 1987). A significant feature of Cherokee orientation to time is revealed in the belief that “we are one with the universe, with all living things, a link in the circle which has no end. It means we were here long before the white man came, we are here now, we will still be here at the end of time- Indian Time” (Lame Deer cited in Lake (1991), p. 133). This circle of life which has no beginning or end represents the unbroken connections between the past, the present and the future. In Native American time, the circle completes itself as birth leads to death, as the past becomes part of the present, the present becomes part of the future, and as history repeats itself. This flowing temporality directly contradicts “Western”, linear notions of time where the past is the past, the present the present and the future is unknown.

This subversion of western notions of time occurs on many levels in the rally. First, according to a participant, there was no specific temporal organization of the rally. Speakers came to the podium whenever they wanted to and spoke about whatever they wanted to, for however long they wished. No imposed structure existed, so people were free to do whatever they wished. The rally was supposed to start at 10 am but actually began around noon. The meal was supposed to start at noon but actually happened at 2 pm. Even taking into consideration that the breach actually occurred in February and the rally was organized in July shows the different temporal orientation that the Cherokees have.

Secondly, as Lake notes, “narrative[s] grounded in time’s cycle seek to renew the ties between the past and the present and thereby to enact a future” (Lake, p.129). The past, present and the future of the Nation were all enacted and invoked through the speakers. The Trail of Tears served to remind the Cherokee people of their history and the internal conflict that lead to the forced migration of the Nation and the broken promises of the United States government. History is repeating itself again as Joe Byrd is embroiled in this internal conflict and the BIA has turned its back against the Nation yet again. The future that is enacted and invoked throughout the speeches is one in which the Cherokee Nation will survive and Byrd will recognize his wrong doings and correct himself.

Even though this conflict between Byrd and the Cherokee Nation has not yet been resolved and this future not yet enacted, the Cherokee believe that time itself will resolve the crisis. This is the third way that time is subverted in the Cherokee culture and in the rally. As Lake comments “this conviction is grounded in the belief that time decides” (emphasis added, Lake, p.134). At some point in time in the future, whether it is in this people’s lifetime now or not, balance between the forces of good and evil will be restored and the current conflict resolved. Two speakers at the rally embodied this conviction when they proclaimed:

**Male speaker # 1**: I think we will eventually come out of this crisis a stronger nation that we have ever been, having gone through the fire and having our constitution tested... eventually it will stop. It will eventually stop... And we will get there. We will get there. This will be a black mark in our history, but we’ll come out of it stronger, because we’ve been tested...

**Male speaker # 2**: I know not when the crisis and the controversy will be over with. But I do foresee in the near future, in the very near future, there’s going to be peace amongst our people. Peace and tranquility is going to prevail amongst our people.

Symbolically, the idea of restoring balance was also evident when the organizers of the rally asked everyone to hold hands and circle the building, denouncing that “this is the impact that we have to take home for our own energy and for continuing energy to be able to do this”. This circle
reinforces the belief in balance and harmony as the Cherokee are profoundly religious “believing that the world [exists] in a precarious balance and that only right or correct actions kept it from tumbling. Wrong actions could disturb the balance” (Mankiller & Wallis, p. 20). Misappropriating funds and firing the marshals were the wrong actions that disturbed the balance and harmony between the Nation and the Chief. The correct actions of signing the postcards and circling the courthouse are ways to close the circle, to restore the balance and harmony within the Nation.

The Cherokee Nation’s temporal orientation can create confusion and a legitimation crisis for someone like myself of white, dominant culture analyzing the fidelity and probability of narratives within the rally, thus begging the question of whether Fisher’s notion of narrative rationality can be employed to judge the coherency and truth of Cherokee narratives that are non-linear and grounded in time’s cycle? How then can one evaluate the probability and fidelity of the narratives? How does a Native American narrative “hang” the past, present, and future together?

Given these temporal orientations, the narratives can be evaluated from three criteria: whether the speaker completes the circle of life, whether the speaker’s choice of symbols best reflects his/her experience, and whether the symbols have continuity in meaning. According to Morris & Wander, in moments of crisis, ordinary ways of talking break down, are no longer adequate to articulate what is and what ought to be. Speech called for in the present, speech heard in the context of felt need, speech that speaks in the here and now of personal and collective crisis provides a common ground on which a people may once again reason and plan courses of action (emphasis added, 1990, p. 191).

Once again, narratives that are ‘grounded in time’s cycle’, that seek to bridge the past, present and future are important elements in Cherokee (and Native American) rhetoric. In renewing the ties between past, present and future, the circle of life is complete and balance and harmony is restored. Several of the speakers have met this rhetorical requirement in their invocation of Trail of Tears, the current situation with Joe Byrd and the sense of optimism for the future.

Secondly, a speaker’s choice of words must adequately reflect his or her experience. In Native American languages, “the meaning is in the sound, it is in the word; the word is not a symbol for a meaning which has been abstracted out.; word and meaning are together in one experience” (Morris & Wander, p. 167). Thus, a particular experience and its meaning can be enacted with one word or symbol. Aside from invoking symbols like Cherokee, Trail of Tears, and the courthouse, the speakers communicated in their native tongue. Using familiar symbols and the Cherokee language presumes the third criteria—continuity in meaning of symbols—across temporalities, in which the speaker’s audience shares the experience invoked in particular words. As Lake (1983) elucidates, “without some conventions requiring continuity in the meaning of the words over time and fidelity to the fact (i.e. truth telling), communication would be impossible” (Lake, p. 134).

Thus, judged from a Native American perspective, the narratives have high fidelity and probability. The individuals through their performance as speakers, as singers, and as organizers narrated the past, present and future of the Cherokee Nation and used familiar symbols and language to express the continuity of experience among the members. Additionally, the clapping and cheering among the audience was testament to the speaker’s coherency and adherence to a truth that everyone at the rally understood.

**Conclusion**

Treating the story of Joe Byrd and the rally as intertwined narratives has illuminated how the performance of the speakers invoked the Cherokee culture—past, present and future and how the narratives functioned to help the community “remake and negotiate their sense of communal life” and their moral foundation (Phillipsen, p. 252). The rally as a staged performance on the
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sacred ground of the courthouse represented a safe space in which the speakers could narrate what has happened within the Nation, the political and social situation that the Cherokees are facing now, and how the Cherokee people will resolve the conflict and reclaim their courthouse in the future. The speakers invoked various symbols to express the concerns of the nation and to lead the people toward a better path. This path was one of restoring balance and harmony and the right actions to complete this circle and resolve the conflict were to sign postcards and express and voice opinions to the United States government.

Joe Byrd and the rally served to remind the Cherokee people of their ability to overcome many personal and collective crises as a united nation. As Wilma Mankiller (1993) states “we are a revitalized tribe. After every major upheaval, we have been able to gather together as a people and rebuild a community and government. Individually and collectively, Cherokee people possess an extraordinary ability to face down adversity and continue moving forward.” (Mankiller & Wallis, p. xix).

References


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**Additional Readings and Resources**


Appendix A

Lyrics from the song recorded at the rally in Tahlequah OK, 1997

The trail of tears that lead us here.
Our hopes and dreams were lost and those we love so dear, so dear.
The trail of tears that lead us here.
As broken [unclear]
The road of was long and we had gone so far and we will journey on to horizons in the future in our hearts and souls.
Oh, Great Spirit, let your Cherokee children in the light they dwell and reunite us one nation with new strength and hope.
[she then sings in Cherokee for 40 seconds]
The road was long and we have come so far and we will journey on to horizons in the future in our hearts and souls.
Oh, Great Spirit, let your Cherokee children in the light they dwell and reunite us one nation with new strength and hope.
[audience claps—the flute is played with a similar melody and feeling ~1.12 minutes; the audience claps]
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Duane Slick is a Native American painter and storyteller of the Meswaki Nation. His photo-realist paintings on glass and linen have a dream-like, spiritual quality, using subtle shadows, light studies, and layering. His series Disagreeable Coyotes (2015-2016) consists of nine acrylic-on-panel minimal paintings of coyote heads, layered in bright reds, blues, and yellows, reminiscent of a full color 3D film watched without the glasses. His narrative series I-Witness Culture explores life as a Native American in the digital age. Hyde’s work addresses contemporary America’s fear of the “other” and the tendency to homogenize indigenous cultures to counter this fear (which ultimately materializes as racist mascots and costumes).