

Joseph Brese  
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Composition II

“What Does It Mean to Be a Native Person?”

Choctaws are honorable people and extremely loyal to members of the tribe. The Nation is dedicated to helping its people with housing, education, and many other programs that are specifically designed to give the Choctaw people a step forward toward a successful life.

I was raised by old school Choctaws, but the type of tribal member that they were and the type that I am is completely different. We came from two completely different worlds, and even though I grew up listening to their stories, I still never had to experience the things that they did. Even though I grew fairly poor, it wasn't even comparable to my grandparents, and they never had the benefits that I have today. Unlike them I benefit from being Native American, being a veteran, and of course being white. It sounds terrible when put that way, but the Native American people are, arguably, the most mistreated people by any government in the world.

When you look back on this nation's history, it is dark and bloody. The Native American genocide cost the lives of over 100 million people that are native to this country. Out of the thousands of treaties between Native tribes and the United States government, every single one of them was broken, by the United States government.

I have never been put in a position where I have had to defend my heritage because I am not enough Choctaw to be discriminated against, but I would absolutely defend my heritage no matter what the cost. I have, however, had the opportunity to be on several platforms, such as CNN, and represented my Tribe as a Choctaw warrior during the war in Iraq. I am greatly honored to be a part of the Choctaw Nation.

So what exactly does it mean to be Native American? To me it means that you need to know the history of your people. When white men came to this land they came on ships bringing with them weapons of war. They wielded guns and black powder against a race of people that had only sticks and stones with the intention to destroy them. They were driven from their lands and forced take on the ways of their oppressors, and now five hundred years later they are still not broken. So being Native American to me is accepting your heritage and being honored to be a part of something so powerful.