

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

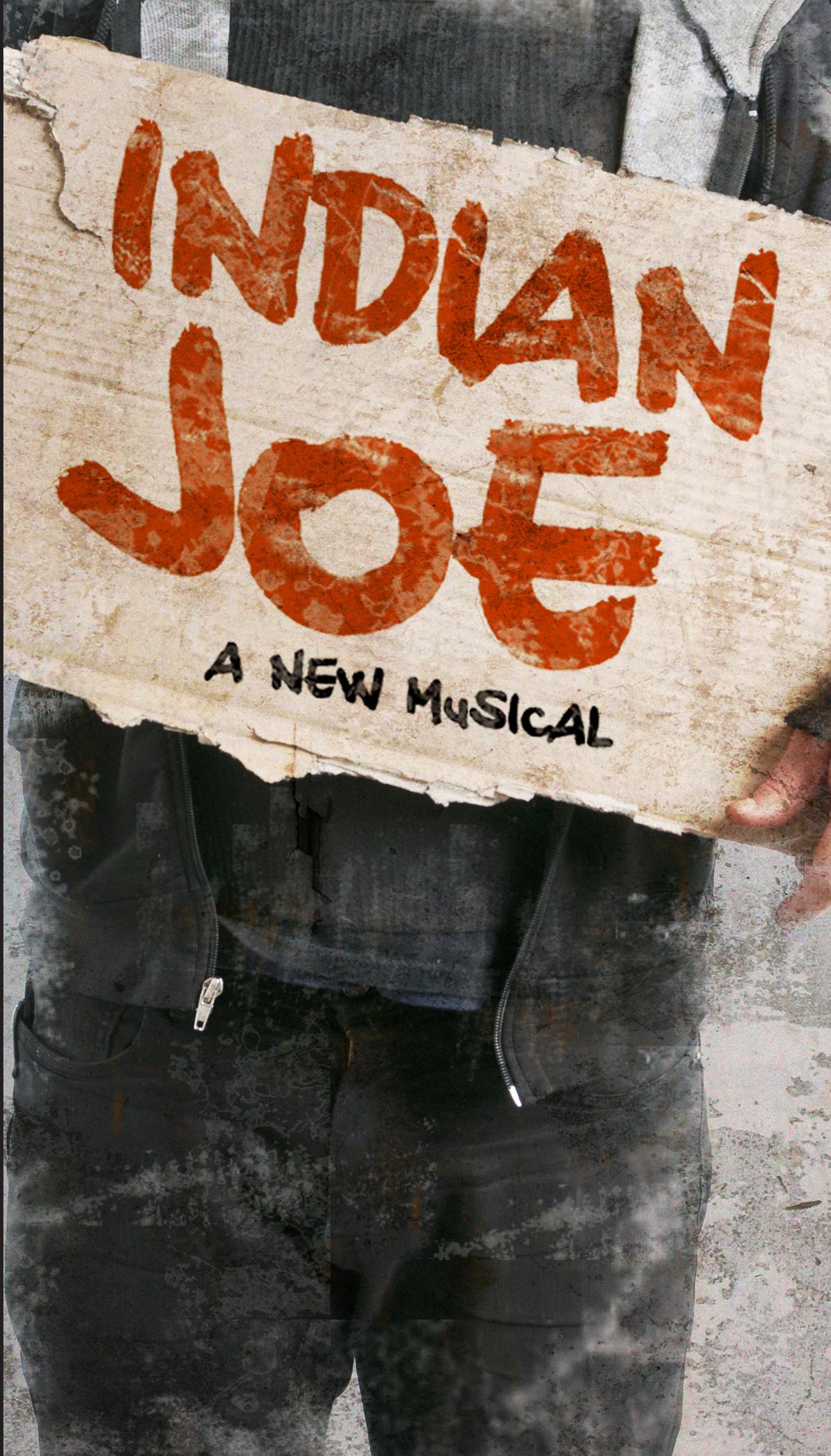


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INDIAN JOE

INDIAN JOE
The Norma Terris Theatre
Oct 22 - Nov 15, 2015

Lyrics by
ELIZABETH A. DAVIS

Music by
**ELIZABETH A. DAVIS,
LUKE HOLLOWAY &
JASON MICHAEL WEBB**

Book by
**ELIZABETH A. DAVIS
&
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Audience Insights for *Indian Joe* was prepared by:
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CHARACTER SUMMARY

LIZ: A naïve and idealistic young woman who tries to make a difference. She befriends a prickly homeless man named Indian Joe and attempts to help him improve his life. She is also an aspiring musician and longs to be accepted into a music conservatory after she finishes college.

JOE: An elderly homeless man who lives under a bridge in Waco, Texas. He is abrasive, often drunk and tries to alienate anyone with whom he comes into contact.

JORDAN: A schoolmate of Liz's and her songwriting partner. He and Liz are in a tenuous romantic relationship that is challenged by her friendship with Joe.

MAMA: Liz's proper Southern mother.

FATHER AND BROTHER: Liz's immediate family.

DARRELL, YOLANDA: Patrons at the local soup kitchen.

SHOW SYNOPSIS

As Liz, an idealistic college student in Waco, Texas, is entertaining the patrons at a local soup kitchen, a boorish homeless man named Indian Joe interrupts her song. Liz responds to his churlish comments, yet continues to play and sing. Despite the older man's blunt manner, Liz tries to strike up a friendship by visiting him at the bridge where he sleeps. Joe is unimpressed with Liz's effort to befriend him; however, he begins to tell her about his life. Liz and Joe form an unlikely friendship much to the chagrin of her family and Jordan, her songwriting partner.

The unexpected connection distracts Liz from the difficulties in her own life and leads her into the world of beauty pageants. Liz decides to compete for the title of Miss Texas and use homelessness as her pageant platform in order to earn money for tuition to a music conservatory. Despite performing an original song and bringing Joe to the pageant as part of her platform, Liz loses the competition. Fueled by disappointment, Liz announces that she will be moving to New York City to pursue music. Joe is devastated by her announcement and causes a massive public spectacle at the pageant venue. Embarrassed and angry, Liz accuses Joe of blaming his problems on the world rather than accepting responsibility for his own actions and ends their friendship. Shortly after the pageant Liz moves to New York City; however, once there, she discovers how difficult it can be to earn a living.

New York City is not the adventure that Liz expects and she must apply for food stamps and work temporary jobs to survive. While Liz is coming to terms with life in the city, Jordan reaches out to Joe and the two men bond over the loss of Liz in their lives. Jordan eventually goes to New York City, reconciles with Liz and brings her home to see Joe.

Joe, with Jordan's help, has gotten off the streets, is living in an apartment and has been sober for a year. He explains that Jordan brought him down to the Social Security Office and that they located his Social Security number and real name, Narisco Allalha. Now he receives regular checks from Social Security and can live comfortably. Unfortunately, Joe also has bad news to share with Liz. He has cancer and, though he is in remission, his prognosis is not favorable. Joe requests that Liz cremate his body, take a small amount of his ashes with her to New York and spread the rest over her family's farm when the time comes. Liz agrees and begins to sing to Joe. Jordan, Liz's mother, father and brother begin to sing with her and together they spread Joe's ashes and wish him peace.



Gary Farmer as Joe and Elizabeth A. Davis as Liz in Goodspeed's Indian Joe. ©Diane Sobolewski.



Luke Holloway, Elizabeth A. Davis and Jason Michael Webb

ELIZABETH A. DAVIS (*Book, Music & Lyrics*) was born on October 19, 1980 in Dumas, Texas to Melody and Frank Davis. She attended Channing High School in Channing, Texas, before obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance from Baylor University. Davis continued to pursue her academic studies and received a Master of Fine Arts from the Case-Western Reserve University Cleveland Playhouse acting program in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2006.

Once Davis completed her education she began her career as a professional actress and landed several roles on television, in film and in off-Broadway productions like *The 39 Steps* at New World Stages. She starred in *The Starship Astor* at the Midtown International Theatre Festival and was nominated for the MITF Award for Best Actress. Davis also starred as Emily Dickinson in *Emily* at Theatre Row and won the New York Innovative Theater Award for Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role for her performance.

Despite her many roles, Davis is best known for originating the role of Réza in the musical adaptation of the 2007 film *Once*. She originated the role of Réza in the American Repertory Theatre production at Harvard University and stayed with the show when it moved off-Broadway for the New York Theatre Workshop. *Once* transferred to Broadway in 2012 and was nominated for 11 Tony Awards, one of which was a nomination for Davis for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. She left *Once* on March 24, 2013 and joined composer Duncan Sheik in a rare production of Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* at Classic Stage Company.

In addition to being a gifted musical theatre actress, Davis is also a talented violinist, composer, lyricist and writer. She was a Rhinebeck Writer's Retreat Finalist, a participant in the Johnny Mercer Writers Colony at Goodspeed Musicals and participated in Goodspeed's 2015 Festival of New Musicals. She created her first semi-biographical musical, *Indian Joe* with Luke Holloway, Jason Michael Webb and Chris Henry. *Indian Joe* was premiered at The Cherry Lane Mentor Project in 2013.

LUKE HOLLOWAY (*Music*) graduated from Berklee College of Music with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Music Composition. Holloway was in the critically acclaimed off-Broadway production of *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* as Kazino and was in *Million Dollar Quartet* at New World Stages. He is also the music director for the comedy musical improv troupe Story Pirates. *Indian Joe* marks his first foray into writing specifically for the musical theatre stage.

JASON MICHAEL WEBB (*Music*) was born in Neptune, New Jersey and began his musical training at the age of four. He studied classical piano throughout his childhood and pursued a Bachelor of Music degree in Classical Piano Performance at Rutgers University. One year after earning his degree, Webb made his orchestral solo debut with the Queens Symphony and went on to become the Assistant Musical Director for its Gospel Choir. In 2006 he became the Musical Director for the Grammy-winning Brooklyn Tabernacle and honed his songwriting, arranging and orchestrating talents by writing and producing four albums for the group with gospel artist Carol Cymbala.

Webb's musical arrangements and original songs have been performed and recorded by numerous groups and individuals including Israel Houghton, Paul Baloche, Jonathan Butler, the Nashville String Machine and the Harlem String Quartet at Carnegie Hall. In 2013, Webb and Cymbala's arrangement of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was played during the inauguration of President Barack Obama. He has also been the Musical Director for *The Color Purple*, *Motown: The Musical* and the Associate Musical Director for *Memphis*, *Violet* and *Leap of Faith* on Broadway.

Webb has built upon his talent for music direction and musical arranging by collaborating on several original musical theatre pieces. Webb co-wrote the book, music and lyrics for *The First Noel* which will premiere in 2015 at the Apollo Theater, he co-wrote the music for *Indian Joe* and is currently developing a musical entitled *Light it Up!*. He has also been commissioned by Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS to write, arrange and orchestrate the music for *Carols for a Cure*.

CHRIS HENRY (*Book*) is an accomplished writer and director based in New York City. She has directed such productions as Gary Duggan's *Dedalus Lounge*, *Haze*, *Trans-Euro Express*, *Love/Sick* (for which she co-wrote the music) and has collaborated with Wycliffe Gordon on a new musical, *Louie, Red and the Jazzman*, at Lincoln Center's Clark Theatre. Henry worked with Anthony Rapp to produce his one man show *Without You* as part of The New York Musical Theatre Festival in 2010 and is the Artistic Director for Royal Family Productions in New York City. In 2011, she was a Zelda Fichandler Award finalist, and was awarded the NETC Regional Award for Excellence in Theatre. In addition to co-writing the book for *Indian Joe*, in 2013 Henry acted as the show's director during The Cherry Lane Mentor Project.



Elizabeth A. Davis ©Diane Sobolewski

I felt forced to write this show. I mean, not like gun-to-my-head forced, but forced in the way that one is forced to skydive or tell someone you love him for the first time; if I didn't, I would never again look in the mirror without some sense of regret. Writing began in fits-and-starts essays about the angst and profundity of being friends with a guy who slept on the streets. *Indian Joe* then grew with TLC from smart people challenging me to ask better questions. Others then dared to suggest I write a song or two. I replied, "That's a terrible idea." 16 songs later (and residencies at the Johnny Mercer Writers Colony at Goodspeed Musicals and Goodspeed's Festival of New Musicals), I think they were on to something. *Indian Joe* is based on a version of real things and real people, and the fear of being real about it all is, well, real. But we keep

finding—and I think you probably would, too—that real things have the ability to affect us most profoundly.

Who Is Joe?

I wrote Joe's obituary while we were simultaneously writing this show. It included portions of the following, based on the information I was able to cobble together over our 14-year friendship.

Narciso Allala, long known as "Joe Lightfoot Gonzales" or, endearingly, as "Indian Joe," passed away Friday, August 15, 2014 at the age of 68 in Waco, Texas... "Joe" only completed the 7th grade, but had his Masters Degree in street smarts, living many of his 68 years intermittently on the streets across America. He took his infectious laugh and no-nonsense attitude with him. "Joe" worked hard when he found odd jobs, operating by the motto, "Don't take no wooden nickels." He loved the outdoors, to walk for hours uninhibited, keeping himself strong and full of fight. "Joe" had a Robin Hood heart, was fiercely loyal to some, and polarizing in most all

respects. His sense of humor, however, was unmatched, as were his civic and social opinions...

Why Joe?

Joe was the flesh, blood, grimaces, and profanity to scriptural platitudes about poverty I never quite understood. More, Joe was a fighter, a questioner. Somehow, I saw myself in him. However, my desire to empathically associate with Joe's journey disabled me from seeing my privilege and mixed motives. I couldn't see the invisible barriers he faced: economic paralysis, cultural underrepresentation, and atrocious, historic divides fueling his racism. But gradually, though Joe had no home, he became home to me. He remains such.

How You Can Help

We are on a fast-approaching deadline to raise \$50,000 to fully endow the Joe Lightfoot Gonzales Memorial Fund through Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The scholarship will go to a first-generation college hopeful, ideally of Native descent.

Imagine: a kid with no previous educational hope sleeps in a beautiful dorm room overlooking the I-35 bridge because a guy called Joe slept under the I-35 bridge and inspired hope in others.

GIVE NOW:

indianjoethemusical.com/take-action



Joe and Elizabeth A. Davis celebrating Joe's birthday in 2012.

was me using him and him using me. But over time, the rough edges of that were knocked off."

Gonzales became an informal member of her family. He liked her husband, Jordan Richard, before she did and sometimes slept on his back porch.

She had invited him to dinner with her family and, after she moved

from Waco to pursue theater and training in Ohio, then New York, fielded his calls made from a pay phone, often at night and sometimes when Gonzales was drunk.

"When you have homeless friends, sometimes their needs aren't time-sensitive," she said.

VOICE MAILS

Even now, she still has scores of his voice mails on her phone that she finds hard to delete.

Davis-Richard, nominated for a 2012 Tony Award for her part in the musical "Once," distilled some of her experience with Gonzales and the homeless into "Joe," a one-person play she presented parts of in 2012 at Waco's Jubilee Theatre and arranged for Gonzales to see her perform in New York. That play since has evolved into the four-character "Indian Joe, A Folk Musical," with Carolyn Rossi Copeland signing on as director. The actress presently works with Covenant House in New York, which provides support and services for homeless teens, and hopes that staging "Indian Joe" will help other young people in Gonzales' memory.

MEMORIAL FUND

A memorial fund in his name has been set up at Baylor, and money from it will support scholarships for first-generation college students on a basis of need.

Those wishing to contribute to the Joe Lightfoot Gonzales Memorial Fund may go online at www.baylor.edu/give.

Davis-Richard intends that any proceeds from the musical go toward the memorial fund.

"It's good that Joe's life and struggle could help the lives of first-year college students," she said. "An education was something Joe never had and he was very aware of that." Davis-Richard connected Kyle Dunn, college and teaching pastor at Highland Baptist Church, to Gonzales.

That acquaintance started to deepen last December when Dunn provided the cancer patient a ride to his chemotherapy treatment.

That first ride led to more over the months that followed — trips to the doctor, the bank, the grocery store.

"We sort of hit it off. We would talk man-to-man, and he felt I wasn't treating him as an indigent person," he said. "Joe had a high standard for what's right or wrong. If he was down to his last \$6, he might give \$3 to someone who needed it."

Friends of Gonzales noted a change in his crusty demeanor in his final months dying from cancer in hospice care. Dorrell saw a Christian faith, which usually flickered, start to glow more steadily.

Dunn, too, saw a different Joe.

"I think Joe was a deep thinker," he said. "When it became clear to Joe the reality of his illness and mortality, it became clear to him that for all the attacks and criticism of the rich and others he'd made, none of that mattered if you had your health. His sickness became a reason to tell others, indirectly, to make the most of their healthy days."

The Highland Baptist pastor said the homeless person remembered on Friday shows us "every life matters."

Gonzales hoped for cremation after his death, and one of his Waco friends has paid for that.

His ashes now are scattered in Waco.

TRACING THE CHOCTAW IN AMERICA



Before European explorers found their way to the Americas, indigenous people native to the landscapes populated much of the Western Hemisphere. Each indigenous tribe had its own traditions, language and hierarchy. It is difficult to discern the exact population numbers of indigenous people in North America before their exposure to Europeans in 1492; however, scholars estimate their numbers at anywhere from 1 to 18 million. By 1650, the indigenous population of North America had experienced a staggering decrease and is estimated to have dropped by 74-90%. In the United States, there are currently 566 federally recognized tribes. Joe "Indian Joe" Lightfoot Gonzales, also known as Narisco Allalha, is a descendent of one of the remaining Native American tribes, the Choctaw.

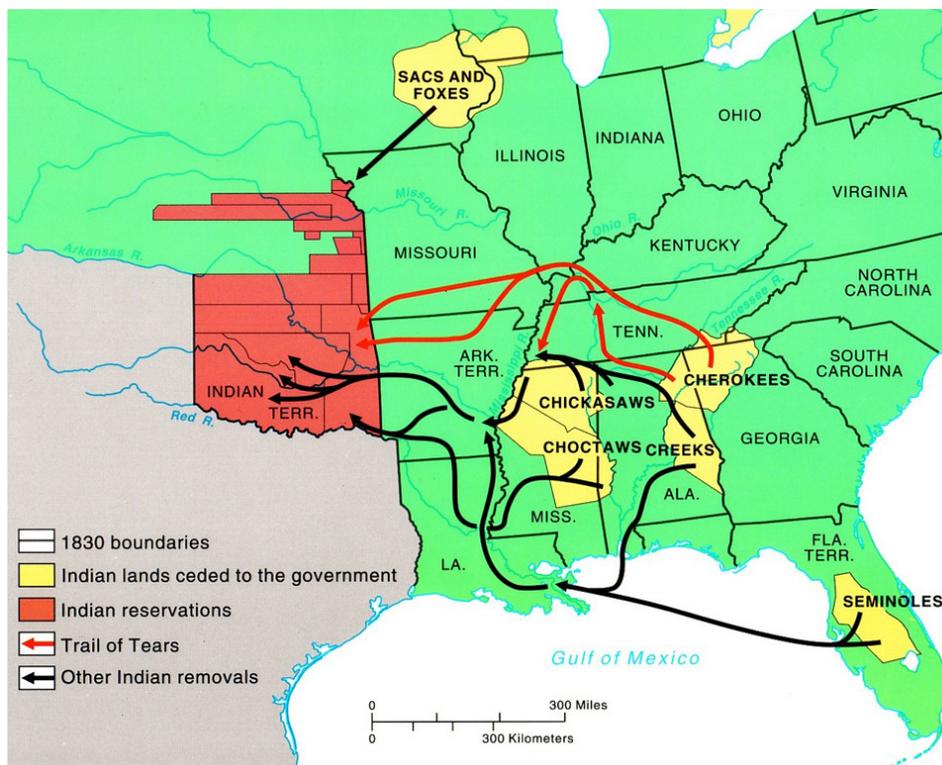
The Choctaw people were a matriarchal agrarian community that lived in the Southeastern portion of the United States, primarily in Mississippi and sections of Alabama. Tribal legends claim that

the Choctaw people originated from "Nanih Waya," a sacred hill near Noxapater, Mississippi. The Choctaw desired a peaceful relationship with the European explorers and adopted several practices that endeared them to the Europeans like traditional Anglo housing, market participation and written governmental documents. The Choctaw's adoption of these various aspects of the colonists' culture earned them the dubious distinction of being termed one of the "Five Civilized Tribes." The Five Civilized Tribes consisted of the Cherokee, Seminole, Chickasaw, Creek and Choctaw nations.

Despite the Choctaw's deep attachment to their ancestral lands and their partial assimilation of European practices, they were the first of the Native American tribes to be relocated under the terms of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which was drafted in 1830. The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek ceded land to the United States government and forced a mass relocation of the Five Civilized Tribes from their homes to an area west of the Mississippi that the government designated as Indian Territory; this relocation is commonly known as the Trail of Tears. The United States government forced nearly 17,000 members of the Choctaw nation to take the arduous journey to Indian Territory. Historians estimate that anywhere from 2,500-6,000 Choctaw died along the way causing a Choctaw chief to call it the trail of tears and death. This tragedy is remembered by modern Choctaw and has become a defining moment in their culture. Joe references the Trail of Tears several times throughout *Indian Joe* and specifically remarks on his cultural loss when driving to Liz's home saying, "the Trail of Tears right up in there too. Choctaw had 11 million acres. All gone." To which Liz aptly responds, "Beauty and brutality, this land."

The surviving members of the Choctaw nation arrived at their relocated territory and they were forced to adjust to their surroundings in Indian Territory, which would become modern day Oklahoma. The word Oklahoma has its basis in the Choctaw

The Trail of Tears



Continued ●●●●●●●●●●▶

TRACING THE CHOCTAW CONTINUED



CLICK TO LEARN
more about the
Choctaw tribe.

Link: <http://www.choctawnation.com/>

language and is rooted in the words *okla humma* which translates to red people. The use of designated Indian Territory was a precursor to the more modern reservation system that is still in use today. In fact in *Indian Joe*, Joe shares with Liz that his mother grew up on a Choctaw reservation in Oklahoma.

Indian Territory provided a new home for Native Americans; however, the acreage of assigned land steadily shrunk due to environmental factors, new treaties and the expanding European population causing bitterness that worked its way into the consciousness of modern descendants as evidenced by Joe when he states "you're not really America. I AM America, baby. See these wrinkles on Joe's face? This is America, girl. Cause my people are tough... We worked this land and then you stole it from us."

Despite religious persecution,

governmental greed and constantly shrinking territory the Choctaw people endured and made many contributions to American society. During World War I, Choctaw servicemen worked with the U.S. Army to create a code based on their language. The Choctaw code talkers helped win several key battles in France against the Germans that helped to end WWI. The services of Choctaw and other Native American code talkers were also used to great effect during WWII.

Though much of the Choctaw culture has been lost over the course of history, the past thirty years have seen a renewed effort to preserve, strengthen and restore the tribe's heritage. Language programs have been created to preserve the Choctaw language, a registry of Choctaw artists that work in traditional art forms like weaving, beadwork, wood sculpture and basket making has been started and children are taught historical games and native dances. This cultural resurgence does not negate the tragedy of the past; it demonstrates the resilience of the Choctaw people and their will to survive in the ever-changing landscape of America.



The Choctaw code talkers during WWI

HOMELESSNESS: A STAGGERING EPIDEMIC



Homelessness is an ongoing epidemic in the United States that affects all races, genders and ages. According to the 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development presented to Congress, there were 578,424 homeless individuals in the United States in January 2014. Children under the age of 18 comprised 135,701 of the recorded homeless population, 58,601 were individuals

between the ages of 18 and 24 and 384,122 individuals were 25 or older. Perhaps the most distressing fact about this demographic is that a homeless population of over half a million people in the United States was actually a decrease in homelessness by 2% from 2013.

Though the economy has improved in recent years, economic and housing programs have been slow to improve the scourge of homelessness. According to the United States Census Bureau, 14.5% of the United States population, or 45.3 million individuals in the United States lived in poverty during 2013. The homelessness and struggle that Joe experiences in *Indian Joe* is widespread. According to an expert panel assembled by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or SAMHSA, only 1.2% of the United States population self identifies as an American Indian; however, 4.8% of families and 4% of individuals in this category are homeless. In fact, an expert panel assembled by SAMHSA in 2012 to study homelessness among American Indians, Alaska natives and native Hawaiians found that 28.4% of all American Indians and Alaskan natives live in poverty.

While there is government assistance and targeted resources available to Native

Americans in the United States, many individuals lack the official documentation needed to prove they are eligible for the programs available to them based on blood requirements or other eligibility criteria. American Indians and Alaskan natives are also more likely to encounter situations that lead to homelessness and are less likely to report their situation, which indicates data collected from this population is somewhat inaccurate and does not represent the scope of the problem. The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) notes that obtaining accurate data on homelessness is extremely difficult within rural American Indian lands for several reasons, two of which are a lack of resources to conduct formal surveys and a widespread distrust of outsiders. *Indian Joe* conveys the significance of land to Native Americans when Joe states, "Land is everything, girl. Your people got no land, you got nothing... But Choctaw Indians don't really have land no more. It was taken away from them. So, you got 14,000 [acres] now; I'd be happy with one."

Homelessness is an unfortunate situation caused by any of a myriad of situations such as lack of affordable housing, unemployment, poverty, mental illness, or substance abuse without access to necessary services. Homelessness affects children, adults, senior citizens, veterans, and citizens of all races regardless of their plans or experience. In *Indian Joe*, Liz attempts to understand Joe's plight by sleeping under a bridge for a single night. This experience motivates her to try to bring awareness to the needs of the homeless; although, she is unable to truly relate to Joe's fight until she moves to New York City and faces her own desperate struggle to survive. As she says early on in the musical, "homeless people are everywhere" and it is a surprisingly simple jump from struggling to homeless.

- 19. Sign up your company/school:** - Ask your company or school to host fund-raising events, such as raffles or craft sales and donate the proceeds to nonprofit organizations that aid the homeless.
- 20. Recruit local business:** One of the easiest ways to involve local businesses is to organize food and/or clothing drives. Contact local organizations to find out what is needed, ask local businesses to set up drop off points in their stores, donate goods to the drive, or publicize the drive.
- 21. Create lists of needed donations:** Call the organizations in your community that aid the homeless and ask them what supplies they need on a regular basis.
- 22. Employ the homeless:** Help Wanted - General Office Work. Welfare recipient, parolee, ex-addict OK. Good salary, benefits. Will train. That's the way Wildcat Service Corporations Supported Work Program invites the "unemployable" to learn to work and the program works!
- 23. Help the homeless apply for aid:** Governmental aid is available for homeless people, but many may not know where to find it or how to apply. You can help by directing the homeless to intermediaries that can let them know what aid is available and help them apply.
- 24. Stand up for the civil rights of the homeless:** In recent elections volunteers at shelters and elsewhere helped homeless people register to vote.
- 25. Join Habitat for Humanity:** This Christian housing ministry builds houses for families in danger of becoming homeless.
- 26. Write to corporations:** Some of the largest corporations in America have joined the battle for low-income housing. Contact various organizations and ask them what they are doing.
- 27. Contact your government representatives:** Our legislators rarely receive more than three visits or ten letters about any subject. When the numbers exceed that amount, they sit up and take note.
- 28. Push for state homelessness prevention programs:** While states routinely supply aid for the poor and homeless, many do not have programs that provide funds and other services to those who will lose their homes in the immediate future unless something is done.



- *Indian Joe* is a semi-biographical story.
- *Indian Joe* started out as a one woman show.
- Elizabeth A. Davis is an accomplished musician and has played the violin for over 18 years.
- The Choctaw Nation has 198,835 members and is the third largest Native American nation in the United States.
- There are two formal Choctaw tribes, the Mississippi Choctaw and the Oklahoma Choctaw. The Mississippi Choctaw live on a reservation while the Oklahoma Choctaw live on trust land.
- The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians requires all tribal members to have a certain blood quantum while the Oklahoma Choctaw Nation does not.

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