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EXECUTIVE ORDER 2026-01-CTH

EXECUTIVE ORDER TO ENSURE THAT CHEROKEE NATION MUSEUMS, HISTORIC SITES AND RELATED MATERIALS ACCURATELY AND FULLY REFLECT THE CHEROKEE NATION EXPERIENCE ENSLAVING BLACK PEOPLE, EMANCIPATION AND THE FREEDMEN EXPERIENCE

Short Title: THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ON FREEDMEN HISTORY AND CULTURE

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation. See also the [Executive Order on Equality, 2020-05-CTH](#) as [expanded](#) on February 16, 2024, and [2025-04-CTH](#) relating to a review of enslavement with the resulting [report](#) Of January 27, 2026 and the [Cherokee Nation Advisory Committee on History and Culture, 2024-04-CTH](#).
2. **POLICY:** It is in the interest of the Cherokee Nation to fully embrace the entirety of its history. Since the the signing of Executive Order of Equality in 2021 it has been the policy of the Cherokee Nation to take affirmative steps to embrace the history of our nation's act of enslaving Black people in the 19th century under our own laws and in support of our economy, to explore the emancipation of enslaved Blacks beginning in 1863 and the effort across more than 150 years of Cherokee Freedmen and their descendants to secure citizenship and equal rights guaranteed under the Treaty of 1866. To effectuate the purposes and policies of the Executive Order on Equality, this office established the Cherokee Nation Art and History Project Committee, the work of which has deepened this nation's understanding of some of the darkest chapters of its history. Pursuant to Executive Order 2025-04-CTH a task force issued the [Report](#) on January 17, 2026, which among other things identified opportunities to improve the interpretation of enslavement, emancipation and the Freedmen experience at Cherokee Nation's museums and historic sites. Based on the foregoing, it is the policy of the Cherokee Nation to systematically evaluate each of its historic sites, museums and materials relating to historic interpretation and take correct action to ensure

that each fully embraces Cherokee Nation's history of enslavement of Black people, their emancipation and the experience of Freedmen and their descendants to gain full and equal citizenship. To this end, the reorganization and renaming of Cherokee Nation Freedmen Art and History Project Committee into the successor and permanent "Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History" is warranted. Assigning to this successor advisory committee the responsibility of reviewing and recommending a remediation plan for all of Cherokee Nation's history and culture assets, as defined herein, consistent with the purposes and polices of this order and on an ongoing and indefinite is also warranted.

3. **Reorganization and Renaming of the Freedmen Art and History Project Committee to the Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History:** The committee established by direction of this office in or about January 2022, known as the Freedmen Art and History Project Advisory Committee, referred to herein as the predecessor advisory committee, is hereby renamed the "Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History," referred to herein as the "Advisory Committee." Said Advisory Committee shall further be reorganized as follows:

- a. **Composition:** Except with resort to the creation of the position of "Member Emeritus," all incumbent members of the predecessor advisor committee shall continue in service on the Advisory Committee for the Principal Chief's term ending August 14, 2026, subject to indefinite hold over and eligibility for reappointment for a successive term as prescribed herein, provided:
 - i. **Number of Seats:** There shall be a maximum of seven seats on the Advisory Committee, exclusive of *emerita* and *ex officio* members.
 - ii. **Public Notice of Advisory Committee Members:** The Principal Chief shall provide notice to the council and to the public, by publication of a record in Cherokee Nation's website, of the names of Advisory Committee members no later than February 27, 2026.
 - iii. **Advisory Member *Emerita*:** Gerome Riley, Sr, in honor of his elder status and service as a founding member of the Freedmen Art and History Project Advisory Committee, is hereby named "Member Emeritus" of the successor Advisory Committee, on which basis he will be provided relevant meeting and event notices and, upon his request, access to records of the Advisory Committee. Additional

Advisory Committee members emerita may be named by the Principal Chief without limitation.

- iv. **Ex Officio Members:** Ex Officio members of the committee shall include:
 - i. Principal Chief
 - ii. Deputy Principal Chief
 - iii. Secretary of Natural Resources

- b. **Terms:** Members of the Advisory Committee serve terms coextensive with the term of the appointing principal chief, subject to an indefinite period of carryover in the absence of formal action to reappoint for a successive term.

- c. **Officers:** The Advisory Committee shall appoint a chair among its members each fiscal year and may appoint among its members such other officers each fiscal year as it deems warranted, for renewable terms not to exceed one fiscal year.

- d. **Administrative Support:** Absent some other designation by the Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation Businesses Cultural Tourism shall provide administrative support to the Advisory Committee in a manner consistent with its policies and practices as to the predecessor advisory committee as of the date of this order, including:
 - i. **Relationship to Cherokee Nation Advisory Committee on History and Culture (CNACHC):** The Advisory Committee may maintain an organizational relationship with the Cherokee Nation Advisory Committee on History and Culture (CNACHC) consistent with the practice and organizational structure of the predecessor advisory committee, including being organized as a subcommittee of CNACHC.

- e. **Compensation:** Beginning no later than October 1, 2026, members of the Advisory Committee shall receive a stipend or other payment of no less than \$300 per month not to exceed compensation prevailing among other Cherokee Nation boards or commissions. Additionally, members of the successor advisory board shall receive reimbursement, prepayment or the in-kind provision of travel, to cover reasonable travel expenses, provided:
 - i. Members *ex officio* or members emerita are not eligible for compensation, but may be eligible for provision of travel expenses,

- ii. Members who also serve and receive compensation under the Cherokee Nation Advisory Committee on History and Culture are ineligible for compensation for service on the Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History.
- f. **Objectives:** The successor advisory committee shall maintain the objectives of the successor advisory committee, including but not limited to advising the principal Chief as it relates to the enslavement of Black people, their emancipation and the experience of Freedmen and their descendants in the areas of history, art and culture. The successor advisory committee shall further advise the principal chief on such matters as the principal chief may pose to the successor advisory committee from time to time.
- g. **Public Notice and Annual Report:** Although the Advisory Committee is an Executive Branch internal work group and not a public body within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, the Advisory Committee should issue public reports on no less than an annual basis beginning with a reporting for fiscal year 2026, with such reports provided to the Principal Chief upon completion and made public no later than February following the end of the subject fiscal year reporting period by the Principal Chief's placement of the report on the Cherokee.org website, with such reports:
 - i. Identifying the members of the Advisory Committee Servicing during the reporting period, and
 - ii. Summarizing the work of the Advisory Committee, with specific references to work undertaken pursuant to paragraph 4 of this order.

4. Review of Cherokee Nation History and Culture Assets

- a) **Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History to Lead Review:** The Advisory Committee shall undertake the review described herein, provide that it does so in accordance with:
 - i. Supported by Cherokee Nation Cultural Tourism,
 - ii. In coordination with the Cherokee Nation Advisory Committee on History and Culture (CNACHC) and any subcommittees thereto and
 - iii. In coordination with the Cherokee National Historical Society, as such coordination is relevant.

- b) **Objectives of Review:** The objectives of the review is to ensure that Cherokee Nation's museums, historic sites, interpretative materials and other records, collectively referred to herein as "History and Culture Assets," accurately depict, interpret or reflect the historic record primarily as it relates to
- i. The practice and legal sanction of the enslavement of Black people by some Cherokee Nation citizens in the 19th century, including the experience of those so enslaved.
 - ii. The emancipation of enslaved Black people including the experience of those emancipated.
 - iii. The further grant of freedom of those so enslaved, and the grant of equal citizenship, in the Treaty of 1866, commonly referred to along with there descendants as "Cherokee Freedmen," and the experience of those granted such freedom and equality.
 - iv. The experience of Cherokee Freedmen particularly in connection with the period following emancipation up to and through the period of the compilation of the Dawes rolls.
 - v. The experience of Cherokee Freedmen in the period of emancipation through contemporary times, particularly as it relates to
 1. The efforts of Cherokee Freedmen to secure the rights of citizenship and equality in the courts and as it relates to public sentiment.
 2. The acts of suppression and opposition of the government of the Cherokee Nation and Cherokee Nation political leaders to Cherokee Freedmen's efforts to to secure the rights of citizenship and equality, which must include political and legal opposition to citizenship or efforts to require Cherokee Freedmen to prevail in the political arena in order to secure such rights.
 3. Efforts by the Cherokee Nation, particularly during the period of 2017 to present, to meet its obligation to grant Cherokee Freedmen citizenship and equal rights.
 - vi. The contributions of enslaved Black people and Cherokee Freedmen to the civic, religious, art, business, culture, educational and other important elements of Cherokee society.
- c) **Scope of Review:** The review should include all museums, historic sites, interpretive materials and other such records and materials (collectively referred to herein as "history and culture assets") relating to Cherokee history and culture:
- i. Under the ownership or control of Cherokee Nation or any of its entities

- ii. Under the ownership or control of third parties with which Cherokee Nation possesses consultation or advisory rights or interests based on law, regulation, government policy, formal agreements or past practice.
- d) **Methodology for Review:** The Advisory Committee should adopt a methodology for the conduct of the review, which:
- i. Prioritizes the sequence of review history and culture assets based the relative degree of notoriety, public interest, etc., provided the highest priorities of review are:
 - 1. The Cherokee National History Museum.
 - 2. *Cherokee Nation: A History of Survival, Self Determination, & Identity*
 - 3. The development of the Cherokee Heritage Center.
 - ii. Develops a standardized set of questions or issues against which to test each history or cultural asset or sub-elements of each history or cultural asset in a manner consistent with the objectives of this order.
 - iii. Includes opportunities for public feedback and input.
 - iv. Catalog the review of each history and culture asset for the preservation of a written record of the Advisory Committee's work and specific findings warranting remediation.
- e) **Remediation Plans:** The Advisory Committee should, with respect to each history and culture asset, develop a written remediation plan consistent with the Advisory Committee's findings, provided:
- i. In the case of the Cherokee Heritage Center or other history and culture assets, the Advisory Committee should provide programming and development guidance.
 - ii. In the case of the review of *Cherokee Nation: A History of Survival, Self Determination, & Identity*, the Advisory Committee shall make specific recommendations as to the publication and distribution of a second edition, no later than December 31, 2026.
 - iii. In the case of the Cherokee Nation History Course, the Advisory Committee shall make specific recommendations as to changes to course curriculum and materials no later than December 31, 2026.

- f) **Period of Review:** The Advisory Committee's review is open ended, with history and culture asset reviews and remediation plans produced on a rolling, continual and indefinite basis. A summary of this work should be included in the report prescribed in paragraph 3(g) of this order.
5. **ORDER:** The reorganization and renaming of Cherokee Nation Freedmen Art and History Project Committee into the successor and permanent "Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History" is so ordered. The reorganization and renaming of Cherokee Nation Art and History Project Committee into the successor and permanent "Principal Chief's Advisory Committee on Freedmen Art and History" is warranted in order to ensure that Cherokee Nation's culture and history assets accurately reflect and interpret Cherokee Nation's history of the enslavement of Black people in the 19th century, emancipation, the right to citizenship and equality guaranteed for Freedmen and their descendants in the Treaty of 1866, the struggle to secure those rights into the 21st century's and the overall Cherokee Freedmen experience. This Order may be alternatively referred to in short form as "The Principal Chief's Executive order on Freedmen History and Culture."
6. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Order is effective immediately on this 21st day of February, 2026, and remains in effect until repealed or modified by law.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation