

CRRES SPEAKER SERIES, Spring 2016

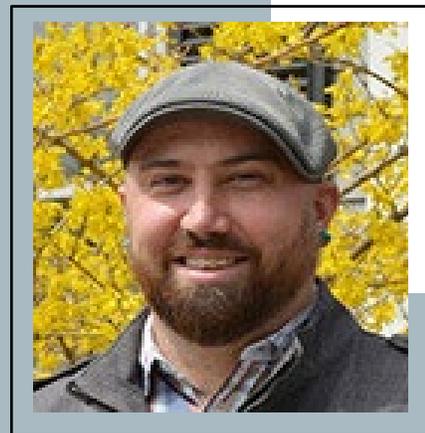
The Awakeners: Choctaw Neo-traditional Revitalization Efforts in Mississippi

This paper will discuss ethnographic research conducted with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) and will focus on contemporary community-based cultural revitalization efforts outside of the official MBCI tribal programs. In this paper I describe, define, and analyze a contemporary Mississippi Choctaw cultural revitalization movement, which I refer to as the Okla Okchalechi (Awakeners). I view the Awakeners as a socio-cultural response to both the MBCI tribal economic development and cultural preservation efforts. I begin my analysis by critically examining some of the impacts of the MBCI tribal economic development programs on Choctaw family and kinship structures, and briefly trace the history of the MBCI cultural preservation efforts. Some of the proponents of the Awakeners movement argue that the tribal cultural preservation efforts in some ways represent what I will call a “settler colonial logic,” inherited from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which has been internalized by the MBCI tribal government and has led to the promotion of a secularized version of Choctaw culture. I contrast the official MBCI cultural preservation efforts with the Awakeners movement and discuss the possibility that this movement represents an alternative or perhaps “decolonial” approach to cultural preservation, which seeks to “reawaken” a deep Choctaw logic and spirituality through the use of syncretic neo-traditional ceremonial and ritual practices.

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Thursday, January 21, 2016
College of Arts and Humanities Institute
1211 E. Atwater Ave.
4:00-5:30pm



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