

in your position as Principal Chief you're up to your elbows in alligators on a more or less constant basis. I respect that, and I won't press the issue of taking up your time there in Tahlequah. However, I think the Cherokee experience is extremely instructive to activists in many different struggles for social change, most especially in the communities of color. This is what the Bulletin IDOM hopes to get across to its readers. Specifically:

1. The Bulletin IDOM, which was founded by expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party, continues the long-standing SWP position of support for self-determination for the oppressed peoples of color within the United States. What does that mean in practice? In the late 1960s, consistent with what Black Power activists were promoting at the time, the SWP supported the demand for "Black Control of the Black Community." We have never seen a concrete example of that in the African-American context; however, the Cherokee experience, as I mentioned in my book review, is an example of at least partial community control by an oppressed people of color. The Cherokee Nation's experience, as I see it, not only shows why community control is a step forward, but demonstrates how it can be won and preserved. Another example--which unfortunately ended badly--is the experience of the predominantly Chicano Crystal City, Texas, in the early 1970s. In that situation, the La Raza Unida party, led by José Angel Gutiérrez, was elected to town government on a Chicano nationalist and community-control platform. They enacted a number of positive reforms, but the project went sour when they made the "unreasonable" demand that the Del Monte cannery--the principal employer--stop polluting the town's water supply. Del Monte closed the plant.
2. One idea which African-American activists are raising today is the demand that reparations be paid to the African-American people for the past injustices of slavery, Jim Crow, and northern-style racial discrimination. In your letter to me, you mentioned becoming a "master of garnering federal funds" to finance all kinds of programs to help people. Well, it seems to me that the U.S. Government owes the Cherokee people every nickle it has provided, and more besides. That can be seen as "reparations"--in any event, it seems to me that what you have accomplished might show how the just demand for reparations can be effectively formulated and won. Does the record of your administration have all the answers to this question? Probably not, but it would be useful to examine what answers it does provide.