

Three-Voice Narrative by Leah Wright

First Voice

When the little girl asked why she lived in Oklahoma, she was told this. Once there was a beautiful Chickasaw woman who lived on a plantation with her husband and son. She was very happy. She had pretty dresses and lots of food. What made her happiest was her rose garden. She spent much of her time working in her garden, trimming, watering, and caring for her plants. She had one rosebush that produced the most beautiful roses ever seen. That bush came to her from Europe.

One afternoon, soldiers came and threw her into a wagon. The soldiers said that they must go to Oklahoma and give up their home. Then the soldiers gave the woman's house and gardens to a filthy, hairy-faced white man. The woman cried and cried because she had to leave her rose garden. That night the son escaped and went back to the mother's garden. He wanted to get a cutting from the rosebush from Europe, so that his mother would have roses in Oklahoma. The dirty man heard the son and came outside and shot him. The son died in his mother's garden, holding a cutting. The white man looked down at the son and said, "That'll teach you Indians to trespass on my land and cut my bushes!"

Second Voice

The Chickasaw Indians considered farming an important part of their economy. They cultivated public farms and household gardens. The women performed the duties of clearing the land and caring for the crops. Corn played an especially important role in the Chickasaw community. The Green Corn Festival was ordained for renewal and perpetuation of health. The marriage ceremony required the groom to divide an ear of corn in two and to give one half of the ear to his bride.

Third Voice

Granny Julie was my great-grandmother. She was born in a house on the family allotment land in Oklahoma. My grandmother and mother were born in the same house. Granny Julie loved to garden. She raised acres of peanuts for a cash crop and had several big gardens close to the house. She grew green beans, tomatoes, okra, corn, and flowers. Granny had a separate cutting garden for flowers.

I remember walking in the garden between her bean vines. They were taller than I was and the squash bugs buzzed from vine to vine over my head. It was shady under the vines, but still hot. It smelled dry and the bean pods would rattle if a breeze happened to blow. I've got a picture of Granny Julie standing there beside those vines. She's wrapped up in an Indian blanket and her pet owl is sitting up on her right shoulder. I told her to put the blanket on. I knew she was an Indian, and I wanted a picture of her looking like one.

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