

NEWS RELEASE

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COMPLAINT FILED AGAINST U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR SEEKING TREATY BENEFITS FOR BLACK INDIANS AND FREEDMEN

Washington, D.C., February 1, 2007 – Dr. Claud Anderson, president of the Harvest Institute Freedmen Federation (HIFF) announced that it has filed a Complaint in the United States Federal Court of Claims in Washington, D.C. against the United States Department of Interior and its Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) seeking legal redress and civil and property rights for the descendants of Black Indians and Black Freedmen. HIFF discussed background and details of the Complaint at a noon press conference at the National Press Club in downtown Washington, D.C.

Dr. Anderson said, “The Complaint is based upon treaties of 1865 and 1866 that were negotiated after the Civil War, between the United States government and slave-holding Indian tribes who had fought on the side of the Southern Confederacy during the Civil War.” The slave-

owning tribes included the Creek Nation, Cherokees, Seminoles, Choctaw and the Chickasaw Nations. Before the Civil War, these tribes had treaties with the United States. However, when these Indian tribes repudiated allegiance to the United States and supported the rebelling states by joining the Southern Confederacy, they in effect violated the terms of all existing treaties with the United States and rendered them null and void. When the Civil War ended, Congress passed the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery. The slave-holding Indian tribes claimed sovereign nation status, and refused to abolish slavery within their respective territories. Having just fought a war that ended slavery, the country could not allow Indian tribes within its borders to defy Congressional mandates and continue to hold slaves. The United States demanded that the Indian groups abide by the outcome of the War and free their Black slaves. In order to reconcile differences over slavery, the United States entered into a series of agreements with the affected tribes. The treaties of 1865 and 1866 resulted from those negotiations. The treaties abolished slavery and mandated allotments of land and other benefits for the Freedmen and Black Indians. Freedmen were the emancipated slaves previously owned by Native Indians. Black Indians were the offspring of Indians and Blacks, whether slave or free. The Harvest Institute Freedmen Federation's lawsuit seeks enforcement of these treaties.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of Interior is responsible for implementing the terms of treaties between Native American tribes, the United States government and Black Freedmen. Dr. Anderson said, "HIFF's legal complaint asks the Department of Interior to acknowledge responsibility of the United States government to the descendants of Black Indians and Black Freedmen. It further seeks that the Department establish contemporary procedures to distribute the allotments of land and other benefits such as tax exempt status, free college educations, rights to own and build casinos, annual income allotments

and medical, health and housing services to the descendants of Black Indians and Black Freedmen.”

The Harvest Institute Freedmen Federation (HIFF) is a partnership organization between The Harvest Institute and the Black Indians United Legal Defense and Education Fund. The purpose of the new organization is to pursue common legal issues.

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