

Renowned Scholar of Pretendians Exposed as Herself a Pretendian

Subject: Dr. Circe Sturm

Title: Professor, University of Texas-Austin Department of Anthropology

Indigenous Identities falsely claimed: Choctaw and Cherokee

Determination: Zero American Indian ancestry

For more than two decades, University of Texas-Austin (UT-Austin) anthropology professor Circe Sturm has repeatedly and publicly identified as a Mississippi Choctaw descendant and a person of Cherokee ancestry. With these false identities, she has ascended to a position as a leading scholar of American Indian Studies. Sturm has purported to write, teach, and produce scholarship about Cherokees, as well as about the global pandemic of Pretendians, among other phenomena, from an American Indian perspective. In addition to conducting research on actual Cherokees, Sturm has interviewed dozens of Pretendians, written a book about them, been interviewed by NPR about them, and been awarded funding by, among others, the Society of Advanced Research and the American Council of Learned Societies. UT-Austin has awarded Sturm as many as eleven fellowships and awards for her scholarship.

Yet the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds (TAAF) conducted a review of 888 of Sturm's relatives and found that Sturm has zero Indian ancestry. Reminiscent of Pretendian Elizabeth Warren, Sturm told TAAF that her claims to having Indian ancestry are based on family lore, DNA tests, and a photograph. Sturm admits that she has zero documentation of Indian ancestry and concedes that records identifying her ancestors as white contradict her claims. Sturm's scholarship on Pretendians appears to be a tactic to deflect attention from her own fraudulent claims to having Indian ancestry. For the full report of TAAF's investigation, see tribalallianceagainstfrauds.org.

TAAF strongly endorses the Cherokee Scholars Statement that "in the context of higher education, falsely claiming a Cherokee [or other legitimate Indian] identity is academic dishonesty, [and] falsification of a material fact." Based on this standard, Sturm has engaged in academic misconduct and dishonesty by misleading her colleagues and students into believing that she is of Choctaw and Cherokee ancestry and that her scholarship reflects an Indian positionality. TAAF also supports those American Indian scholars who contend that UT-Austin has a long history of hiring faculty who make false claims to being Indian and of supporting those faculty, such as Dr. John Lowe, even after their claims have been exposed as spurious.

In addition to TAAF's finding that all 888 individuals in Sturm's genealogical tree are non-Indians of European ancestry, the three federally recognized Choctaw Tribes and the three federally recognized Cherokee Tribes affirmed that Sturm and her ancestors in question do not appear in any of their records as having any kin connection to Choctaw or Cherokee people.

Unbelievably, Sturm's UT website asserts that she has "a deep commitment to ethics." TAAF asks that Sturm publicly declare in writing that she is not, in fact, a descendant of American Indians. Additionally, TAAF requests that Sturm apologize to Indians at length, explain her past actions in full, acknowledge the tremendous harm she has done, and redress the harm she caused.

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