SOMEWHERE SOUTH
with CHEF VIVIAN HOWARD

MEET THE LUMBEE HISTORIAN, MALINDA MAYNOR LOWERY

The team behind “Somewhere South” was lucky to have a panel of academics and scholars working with us from the start. One of those advisors is Malinda Maynor Lowery, a history professor at the University of North Carolina and also Director of the Center for the Study of the American South. Not only did she offer her expertise behind the scenes but she served as Vivian’s guide at the annual Lumbee Homecoming in Pembroke, N.C. for the “It’s a Greens Thing” episode. Lowery shared more about the Lumbee people than what could be included on screen in the following Q&A.

Who are the Lumbee?

I’m a member of the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina. We are the largest Native American community east of the Mississippi River and the ninth largest in the country. North Carolina has the largest population of American Indians east of the Mississippi River. Most folks have a notion of Native people as being far away and long ago.

[When people ask] I start with some little facts like that and then talk about what it means to belong to a Native tribe or what it means to be Indian. It means so many things. But if you had to condense it down, it is a community that claims you, not just a community that you claim or a heritage or an ancestor that you claim. [Being Native] means that a Native community also recognizes you as a member.

Each tribe has different criteria for that [membership]. We have constitutional governments. Our ways of belonging are quite specific, which unfortunately hasn't resonated with the federal government's definition over the many hundreds of years. Tribal governments are often routinely challenged with proving the legitimacy of our identities, but we also know that it's hypocritical for people who are foreigners to try to tell us that we don't belong.

How do Lumbees define their identity?

Lumbees recognize ourselves as a member of not only a racial group but also a political community — a community that predates the existence of the United States. That's an important criteria in defining our political status as a sovereign nation. That political status as a sovereign nation also flows through and with ideas about kinship and place that are really fundamental.

Why are the questions: "Who's your people? Where do you stay at?" so revealing to fellow Lumbee members?

The 'Who's your people?' is a way of establishing our kinship relations. And I think sometimes it's hard for non-Natives to recognize that kinship relations are different from racial ancestry or heritage, but that sometimes they overlap. The important thing to remember about Native communities, and Lumbees specifically, is that we know we're Lumbees because our families are Lumbees. The idea of pure blood or pure ancestry or "how much Indian you are?" is an outsider's way of making us disappear. The whole premise behind quantifying "purity" is that one day you won't exist. Every group changes and mixes with other groups, and no other American group is asked to prove its identity with some standard of blood purity. But for Natives, it's a standard that U.S. policy has applied in order to define us out of existence. And so Lumbees and other Native communities are actively engaged in resisting that erasure by continuing to insist that our identity is foundationally situated in our family relations. When somebody who is non-Lumbee marries in or has a child with someone who is Lumbee, our assumption over the centuries has been that that person and their children acquire a kind of citizenship in our community that is more important than the place that they came from. So if someone is successful at understanding our own rules of hospitality, the ways in which we govern, the socialization of our children, our manners and our customs, [then] the fact that they're non-Indian often just doesn't matter or stops mattering.

What matters is, are their children maintaining a relationship to the community? Which extends to the other criteria, such as "Where do you stay at?" or "What's your relationship to place?" For me, my parents decided to have me born in Robeson County even though they knew that I wouldn't be raised there. It was really important for them to always be able to say I had a kind of unalienable attachment to the community. That status of being born there — in their minds — provides their peers, their community members, our relatives with that criteria that people need to know how I

am affiliated. I made the same decision with my daughter. I knew she was not going to be raised in Robeson County but I gave birth to her there.

Why is Lumbee sovereignty not dependent upon tribal recognition?

We have existed as a political community since before the federal government existed. As a matter of law, it's only an ancient and outdated "doctrine of discovery" that gives the United States any right to decide whether or not we're Indians or what the nature of our sovereignty is. And that doesn't just apply to Lumbees; that's everybody who is Indigenous. The doctrine of discovery is the idea that a Christian nation has the right to inhabit, take over and exploit the resources and people of a non-Christian nation. It is upon that legal basis that colonization proceeded following the arrival of Columbus and how the United States acquired by treaty this land from Great Britain after the American Revolution. So that legal doctrine — most people I think today would say--is discriminatory. It is a violation of human rights. It constitutes the alienation of the freedoms that we have come to expect in the United States. And yet it persists in the form of a federal recognition policy unfairly and unevenly applied to tribes who all have very different histories. So I think groups, like the Lumbees, like the Navajo nation, like the more recently recognized Mashpee Wampanoag nation in Massachusetts, retain their sovereignty because they have not given it up to anyone else and because as political communities, they predate the existence of the United States. The idea that federal recognition could determine such a thing is based on this fundamentally illogical and discriminatory belief system that really doesn't have a place in our 21st century society.

I was struck by a sentence in the introduction of your book, "The Lumbee Indians: An American Struggle." It read: "When American citizens continue to ignore American Indians or tell them they do not exist, they continue to take part in colonialism." Can you explain that a bit more?

The particular kind of colonialism that's practiced in the United States is called settler colonialism: one where the extraction and exploitation of Indigenous lands, resources and people depends on the settlement of foreigners onto land that they do not own or possess. There's other forms of colonialism, like what we've seen with Britain and East Africa and other places where a form of home rule is established, where the British don't go in and just try to eliminate the Indigenous population. What's happened in the United States is that Britain and other European empires have aggressively settled their populations here as a means of exploiting and seizing the land, people and resources of Indigenous communities. And so to justify that illegal takeover, they tell a false narrative, a false story. They have had to perpetuate a myth that Native people are no longer here or that we were never here to begin with. It's still true that at many schools, students learn that this was fundamentally an empty place before Europeans arrived. And if there were Native people here, then their technologies and bodies were so inferior that they died immediately because of disease. Or it was all just a happy accident to allow for the greatness of European civilization to expand. In propagating that myth, the result has been that many Americans believe that we never existed or that we no longer exist. We might used to exist, but we no longer do. So when people tell me today, you're not really Indian — that is a way of perpetuating colonialism. It's insisting upon my erasure as an Indigenous person while perpetuating the myth that a settler can come in and claim our bodies, our histories, our heritage, our culture with no actual legitimate basis for doing so.

In the episode, you talk about how Lumbee foodways and hospitality played a foundational role in what has become known as Southern foodways and hospitality. Can you expound on that a bit more?

When I speak of Lumbee foodways and hospitality, I'm speaking somewhat more generally of foodways and hospitality as we've inherited them and kept them alive from our ancestors who belonged to many, many different communities. We are survivors of a long and sometimes tortured process of cultural change. When Europeans arrived here, our ancestors and members of these multiple different tribal communities were ready to embrace them as potential political allies. It is very clear in the history of the Lost Colony and Jamestown and Plymouth that the early months and years of those relationships were ones of trade and diplomacy rather than hostility. Who was in the proper position to exercise such diplomacy? It was Native people who were at home, welcoming strangers. The foreigners understood their place as outsiders, and acted accordingly as guests. When it became clear that there was money to be made by insulting, killing and exploiting native people, then they turned from guests into enemies. The sense of hospitality that the South or what Southern food is now known for is also a betrayal of hospitality. And the betrayal is the story that's been underappreciated or ignored, I think, as people have celebrated what Southern food has to offer.

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HENRY BERRY LOWRY, THE LUMBEE RESISTANCE FIGHTER

If ever there was a movie to be made about a North Carolina historical figure, it should be Henry Berry Lowry — part Robin Hood, part resistance fighter of the Lumbee people. He rose to fame during the Civil War when the Confederate Army was conscripting Lumbee men to build Fort Fisher.

Henry, his brother William, and other men avoided conscription by hiding in the swamps around the Lumber River. They engaged in guerilla warfare with the Confederate home guard. In 1864 and 1865, Lowry killed two men because of long-simmering disputes between his family and these men, including the fact that one of the men had recently killed three of Lowry's first cousins. As a result, the Confederate home guard captured and executed Lowry's brother, William, and father, Allen; Lowry became the new leader of a group that became known as the Lowry gang and exacted revenge.

Their fighting became known as 'the Lowry War," and was chronicled in newspapers all over the country. Lowry became a mythical figure who made daring escapes — at least twice from jails and once under siege by a 15-man guard while on the river. He and his band stole food and money and shared with those in need. No one knows how he died, but most sources say it was in 1872; one theory is he killed himself by accident and his followers buried his body in the swamp so no one could claim the $11,000 bounty that the governor had placed on him. Most Lumbees, on the other hand, believe that he faked his death and left Robeson County, returning occasionally in secret to visit with family and friends.

To learn more, go to:

ncpedia.org/biography/lowry-henry-berry

wunc.org/post/legend-henry-berry-lowry

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GREENS ENCYCLOPEDIA

Illustration by Teddy Leinbach

The "It's a Greens Thing" episode introduced our viewers to a wide variety of greens. Here we offer a list of our favorite greens and others mentioned on the show:

BONIATO LEAVES OR SWEET POTATO LEAVES

Pronounced: bow-nee-AH-tow

What you need to know: Boniato and sweet potatoes are different plants in the same family; the tubers and leaves are both edible. Both have a softer texture and less bitter flavor than kale.

How prepared: Stir fried or sauteed.

Popular dishes: Stir fried sweet potato leaves.

CABBAGE

Pronounced: KA-buhj

What you need to know: In the same family as Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and kale. Sometimes round. Sometimes conical.

How prepared: Eaten raw in salad. Fermented. Cooked from sauteed, stir fried and roasted.

Popular dishes: Coleslaw, Sauerkraut, Kimchi, Cabbage rolls.

CASSAVA LEAVES

Pronounced: kuh-SAH-vuh

What you need to know: A shrubby, perennial plant with edible roots and leaves.

How prepared: Stewed.

Popular dishes: Cassava leaf soup, also called saka saka or pondu.

COLLARDS

Pronounced: KAHL-uhrd

What you need to know: It is a variety of cabbage that doesn't form a head, like kale. Peak season is January to April. An earlier term used by Europeans colonists was "colewort."

How prepared: Boiled or sauteed.

Popular dishes: Stewed collards with ham hock, Collard sandwich.

ROSELLE

Pronounced: roh-ZEL

What you need to know: A tropical plant that is part of the mallow family.

How prepared: Can be eaten raw in salads or stewed and sauteed.

Popular dishes: Fried Thai roselle leaves, Chin baung kyaw.

SPINACH

Pronounced: SPIN-ihch

What you need to know: Originated in the Middle East. Brought to the United States from Spain.

How prepared: Eaten raw or boiled or sauteed.

Popular dishes: Creamed Spinach.

TURNIP GREENS

Pronounced: ter-NUHP grEEN

What you need to know: Slightly sweet when young but become tough and stronger tasting as they age. Peak season is October-March.

How prepared: Boiled. Sauteed. Steamed. Stir-fried.

Popular dishes: Stewed with ham hock or other seasoning meat.

WATER SPINACH

Pronounced: WAH-ter SPIN-ihch

What you need to know: Also known as swamp spinach and native to tropical India.

How prepared: Stir fried or sauteed.

Popular dishes: Stir Fried Water Spinach.

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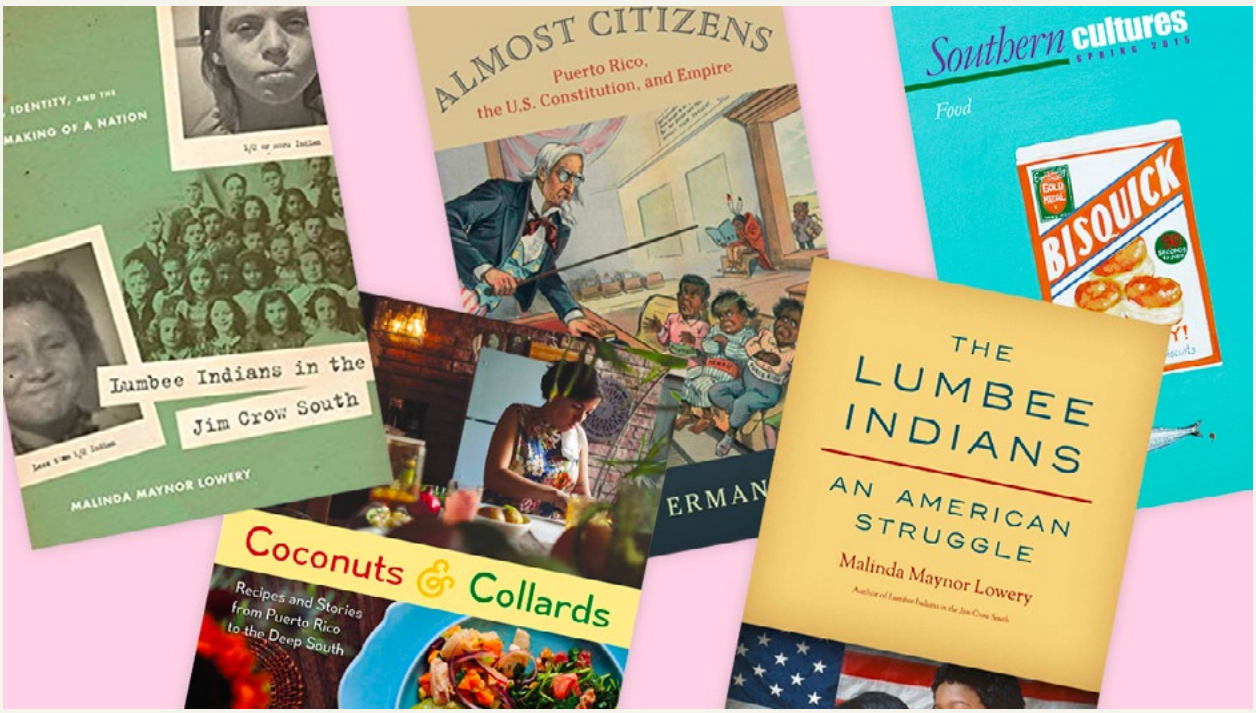
GREENS EPISODE READING LIST



With the help of our scholarly advisors, we dug into books and articles to research each of our episode themes. Below is a list of some of the most helpful books and essays we found that shaped our understanding of the Lumbee and Puerto Rican history and foodways.

"Coconuts and Collards: Recipes and Stories from Puerto Rico to the Deep South" by Von Diaz (University Press of Florida, 2018)

This delightful book from Von Diaz, who appears in the "It's a Greens Thing" episode, is a recipe-filled memoir. It will inspire you to go in search of culantro and other ingredients to make her Puerto Rican fare. It may also have you dreaming of booking a trip to the island to enjoy a soul-satisfying meal like the one Diaz describes enjoying in Yabucoa, a mountaintop rainforest overlooking the ocean.

"Almost Citizens: Puerto Rico, the U.S. Constitution, and Empire (Studies in Legal History)," by Sam Erman (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

This book explains how the United States denied Puerto Ricans full citizenship following annexation of the island in 1898. The debate over Puerto Ricans' rights represented a fundamental shift in United States' constitutional jurisprudence.

"Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation," by Malinda Maynor Lowery (University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

This scholarly book offers a deep look at the history of the Lumbee tribe — the largest tribe east of the Mississippi — from Reconstruction to the 1950s with a focus on how Jim Crow laws affected their community. This is the first of two books written by Malinda Maynor Lowery, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who appears in the "It's a Greens Thing" episode.

"The Lumbee Indians: An American Struggle," by Malinda Maynor Lowery (University of North Carolina Press, 2018)

This is the second book written by Malinda Maynor Lowery, a history professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who appears in the "It's a Greens Thing" episode. It is geared to a more general audience and challenges the myths surrounding America's origin story and Native Americans from Jamestown, the Lost Colony of Roanoke, and Plymouth Rock — while sharing the long history of the Lumbee people.

"As We Cooked, As We Lived: Lumbee Foodways," by Sara Wood and Malinda Maynor Lowery, in Southern Cultures, Vol. 21, No. 1: Food, 84-91.

A fascinating article written by Sara Wood, former oral historian for the Southern Foodways Alliance, and historian Malinda Maynor Lowery, advisor and participant in "It's a Greens Thing." This essay examines Lumbee foodways based on oral histories and challenges readers' assumptions about what it means to be Native American.

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COLLARD SANDWICH WITH CHOW-CHOW

This recipe is adapted from the method shown to Vivian Howard by Betsy Cummings and Barbara Oxendine of Pembroke, N.C. on the greens episode of “Somewhere South.” Unlike stewed collards, these collards are thinly sliced and sauteed with sausage to be enjoyed between two slices of fried thin crispy cornbread.

INGREDIENTS

For the collards:

2 pounds collard greens
1 pound ground mild pork sausage
1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
½ teaspoon pepper, or more to taste
2 teaspoons granulated sugar, or more to taste

more ingredients next page >

INGREDIENTS (CONTINUED)

For the cornbread:
2 cups stone ground white cornmeal
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 large egg
1 ½ cups water or whole milk, or more as needed
½ cup vegetable shortening, plus more as needed
Chow-chow, optional

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the collards: Rinse the collards with water to remove grit. Cut stems off leaves. Stack about 4 to 6 leaves on top of each other and roll together into a cylinder. Chiffonade the collards, or cut into ¼-inch or less strips. Rinse again and drain in a colander until ready to cook.

Sauté sausage in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Break sausage apart with spatula and saute until fully cooked, about 5 to 7 minutes. Leave the sausage and rendered fat in the bottom of the Dutch oven. Add salt, pepper and sugar to the pot.

Reduce heat to medium and add collards, a handful at a time. Saute the collards until wilted and tender, about 8 to 10 minutes. Season to taste with more salt, pepper and sugar, if needed. Stir to fully combine. Remove from heat, cover with a lid and set aside while frying the cornbread.

Prepare the cornbread: Combine cornmeal, salt, pepper, egg and water or milk in a medium bowl. Stir together. You want the cornbread batter to drip, not run, off the spoon. Add more milk or water as needed until you get the desired consistency.

more directions next page >

DIRECTIONS (CONTINUED)

Prepare the cornbread (continued): Add ½ cup Crisco to a 10- to 12-inch cast iron skillet on medium-high heat. When oil will sizzle, add 1 tablespoon cornbread batter at a time. Flip when edges are crisp and bubbles appear in center, about 2 to 3 minutes. Cook another 2 to 3 minutes. Remove to a paper towel-lined rimmed baking sheet. Add another tablespoon vegetable shortening as needed to keep a layer of oil in the bottom of the skillet. You should end up with about 30 pieces of fried cornbread, each about 2 to 3 inches wide.

To serve: Place a heaping tablespoon of collards on top of one piece of cornbread. Top with a teaspoon or two of chow-chow. Top with another piece of cornbread.

Yield: 15 sandwiches

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