



# Video Story Transcript

## AN AFRICAN NATIVE AMERICAN

**By: Storyteller Mama Edie McCloud**

<http://www.storytellingraven.com/>

**Link to YouTube Video:**

<https://youtu.be/wjLhrddZLk0>

---

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

---

Hello, my name is Edith McCloud Armstrong but most people simply call me Mama Edie. You know, when you are identified as someone other than from a European heritage, sometimes the way your people can be presented in history, can make you feel categorically small or flawed or ugly or useless and even invisible. And when you're a child, your childhood perceptions when blended with images from your history as that has unfolded can actually haunt you and can leave you feeling mentally in bondage forever if you allow that to happen. And what becomes important is for us to then realize that there is some healing that needs to be done. I have had my healing to be done and I continue to do so.

I remember, though, one of my first recognitions of how people can perceive things differently (I mean, the same event! They can see the same event. They can all be there but they see it differently.) was with my grandmother, my paternal grandmother. Her name was Estella Hunt McCloud. And she was born around 1890 and her people were from the Seminole, Cherokee and Blackfoot tribes. And so she is, actually, our most familiar branch to those lineages. And she taught us many things. Now, her people were from Florida and she married my grandfather Quilla McCloud from Georgia somewhere between those borders. Now, although she did die when I was young, I do remember her and I cherish the relationship that we had.

I can remember her firmly set square jaw. I remember her thin lips as she talked. I remember her eyes, her large warm eyes, and, you know, it was almost as though she could look straight through you with those eyes. And, you know how, oftentimes, people talk about how mothers and grandmas have eyes in the backs of their heads. Well, my grandmother also had eyes in the back of her head. She saw everything.

---

1

© 2011-16 RaceBridges Studio. This lesson plan is part of an initiative for educators called RaceBridges Studio. It is a project that seeks to provide free tools for teachers and students to motivate them to build stronger and more inclusive communities. This transcript may be freely used, reproduced and distributed for educational purposes as long as this copyright information is displayed intact. The transcript included in this unit is copyrighted by Mama Edie McCloud. Used with permission.

We loved her very much. We called her Nonnie Dear. Now Nonnie Dear was kind of quiet even though she was firm but when she spoke, she ended up saying something that most people were going to long remember.

And she also did some things that were pretty memorable as well. I can remember a particular time when I had gone over... (I must have been about five years old or so, so this must have been... say about 1956) and I'd gone over to spend the night. I used to enjoy spending the night with my grandmother and we would watch television together for a while. But this one particular day, this was the first time I had ever had this experience with her. We were watching an old western on TV. Now keep in mind that these were the programs that depicted the U.S. Cavalry and also the invading frontiersmen as the good guys. And the Indians or the Native Americans who were fighting to keep their homes and their lives were depicted as the bad guys. Well, now, needless to say, Nonnie Dear didn't care for that particular percept... perception or portrayal that she offered... that she saw there. And what she would do sometimes? Once the soldiers and the frontiersmen came charging in and they were shooting up everybody and they were setting fires to the village and you saw young children scattering, looking and calling for their parents, my grandmother Nonnie Dear would get so upset she would take off a house slipper and she'd throw it at the television set. And she'd say, "Leave 'em alone! Leave 'em alone, you dirty rascals! Leave 'em alone!" I wasn't quite sure what was going on and I'd thought it was a little strange. It was kind of funny and I wondered if maybe Nonnie Dear had been out in the sun a little bit too long. But as time passed, I came to understand what made her so angry. And those things started to make me angry too.

And, in fact, I can even remember when I was younger and I had gone to St. Elizabeth, the Catholic Elementary School in Chicago where I grew up. And also, later at St. Carthage. And while there, the nuns always seemed to have a ready arsenal of patriotic music to arm us with and to teach us. Well, one of the songs that they taught us was the one that repeatedly states, "This land is your land. This land is my land, from California to the New York Island. This land was made for you and me." But as I got older and as I started to experience the responses from different people simply to my presence and as I began to see how the country really functioned and what was important and who was important and who was not, I wasn't really so inspired to sing that song because I didn't feel like this land was made for me. But actually the whole world is made for you and me, isn't it.

I mean that it is intended for us to share it and to honor the humanity in all of us. But that's, that's not the way it happened here. That wasn't the way it happened so I came to understand my grandmother's anger.

And sometimes as I'm driving across beautiful rolling meadows in my car, when I look out in the distance across those hills, it's as though I can almost see horses running free across land that at one point had no gates, no fences. People understood how to honor each other's boundaries. And I can almost see the shadows of young children at play, running to and fro. I can see fathers talking with their sons and explaining to them what it means to be a man. I can see mothers talking with their daughters, teaching them how to weave blankets and how to braid hair. And how to cook and just laughing and giggling and having a good time being girls.

But I'm also haunted by the image of my ancestors who crossed too many trails of tears. I understand that even though I still feel the pain, I still feel the wounds of my African ancestors, of my Native American ancestors, somehow, through it all, I've come to appreciate and to embrace the totality (or as much of it that I know) that I happen to be.

Don't know too much about our rather obscure relative, Bezhati, who was from Italy but who apparently really, really loved my great-great grandmother and bore many children.

But I think that the important thing is to continue this story on because I'm a part of this continuum. And, as such, I will continue to tell the story. And I'll continue to try to heal my wounds. And I will continue to try to encourage my daughter Aiyana and anybody else - anybody else's children, even grown folks, to try to heal those wounds that we hold inside and to try to see a little bit of God in each and every one in all of God's creation.

And I think that this would be our greatest achievement. This would be our greatest gift that we can give back to those ancestors who loved us. We need to remember that we've got the strength to do it because we are the children of those who survived.