



# The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People

N. Brent Kennedy, Robyn Vaughan Kennedy

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### The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People

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The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People N. Brent Kennedy, Robyn Vaughan Kennedy As early as 1654, English and French explorers in the southern Appalachians reported seeing dark-skinned, brown- and blue-eyed, and European-featured people speaking broken Elizabethan English, living in cabins, tilling the land, smelting silver, practicing Christianity, and, most perplexing of all, claiming to be "Portyghee." Declared "free persons of color" in the late 1700s by the English and Scottish-Irish immigrants, the Melungeons, as they were known, were driven off their lands and denied voting rights, education, and the right to judicial process. The law was enforced mercilessly and sometimes violently in the resoundingly successful effort to totally disenfranchise these earliest American settlers.



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