

The trail of tears the  
most regretted event  
for americans



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Ever since Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean and landed in the Bahamas in 1492, Europeans have taken over Indian land. They continuously intruded, destroyed and stole from the Indians. It was obvious that eventually, a conflict would arise from these doings.

After a long time of tension and rebellions against the colonists, the proclamation line of 1763 banned the settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains, forcing American and European colonists to keep their distance from the Indians. Sadly, for the Cherokee Indians, more genocide, destruction, and intrusion on the land was yet to come. The Trail of Tears or The Indian Removal Act, was put into place by the Congress and was signed by the President, Andrew Jackson on May 28th, 1830. It must be assumed that the Native Americans were never really human in the eyes of the American people; they were just constantly in the way and always someone to win a battle against if need be.

In 1823, the decision in Johnson v. McIntosh proclaimed that the Indians were not owners of their land and that they only had the right to occupy the land. However, the Cherokees were already expecting this. The evidence in the Supreme Court case, heard by Chief Justice John Marshall, was all negative towards the Indians. Marshall said that before European colonization Native Americans were nomads, not permanent farmers. To say that the Indians had no real connection to the land they occupied was extremely inaccurate ethically and historically. Unfortunately for the Indians, the Discovery Doctrine came into the Supreme Court case, stating that Indians do not own land. This viewpoint dealt them a massive blow to their court trial, making it almost impossible for them to win.

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During the duration of the court trial, the Indians made many attempts to appeal the ruling of the Supreme Court, but one splinter of the Cherokee tribe agreed to give up their lands. In response to this, John Ross, the principal chief elected by the Cherokee nation, enacted a passive resistance movement. Ross was greeted by the federal soldiers that were present to vigorously remove the natives from their lands. Andrew Jackson's successor, President Martin Van Buren, ordered these federal soldiers to remove the Indians. This army captured over 18, 000 men, women and children bringing them west, where they would be forced to live.

The federal government tried negotiating a treaty with Chief John Ross, but during this process, the Treaty Party laid a deal upon John Ridge they knew he wouldn't accept. Ross was afraid of getting beat by the Treaty Party, so he told Jackson that the Cherokees would surrender their land for \$20 million. Knowing that the federal government would never pay that much for the land, Ross just avoided the issue. Ross recommended that the Senate come up with an offer themselves since Jackson rejected him. When the Senate named the price as \$5 million, Ross took this offer immediately. Ross knew the land that the government wanted was far more expensive than the Cherokees had asked for. Moreover, the government of the United States arranged the incredibly fraudulent Treaty of New Echota with the Treaty Party.

This superficial Treaty Party was led by a Cherokee tribe leader named Major Ridge. He had told the government that he represented the Cherokee nation, but he only spoke for a small group of them. The Treaty of New Echota stated that the Cherokee Indians would give up their land in northern

Georgia to the federal government, for five million dollars in compensation. This sent Chief John Ross into a rage. He was furious and tried to reason with the Senate that the Treaty Party did not represent the Cherokees at all. The Senate ignored Ross, and the Party was ratified by a single vote, starting the aggressive removal of indigenous people from Georgia.

The Cherokee Indians were forced into the boats to travel from their homes in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina to Oklahoma where they eventually awaited their destiny. On their long journey, tribes were forced into small forts where they had to make do with limited resources. The Indians were given little food, sometimes having to share between numerous people. On the trail, battles of hunger and disease were present. Due to thousands of Native Americans being forced from their homes to move west with little food or water, it was no surprise that a large amount of people were infected with typhus and smallpox. Sanitation was not something that was taken seriously, so those pathogens spread like wildfire. It was almost impossible to forage for food when the Native Americans were only taken through trails that would hinder their search in the wilderness for berries or fruits. The Cherokee and other tribes were confined to large groups, with very little space. Later, chief John Ross urged General Winfield Scott to split up these large groups and allow the people to wander off the path and into areas where scavenging was feasible.

Thankfully for John Ross, he was able to save some of his people, and cut down the mortality rate for a short period. As the Cherokee Indians and many other tribes advanced along the trail, winter came. The winter of 1838 through 1839 was one of the most brutal winters the people had ever seen. <https://assignbuster.com/the-trail-of-tears-the-most-regretted-event-for-americans/>

The materials given to the Indians were insufficient. The water was hard to come by and their clothing was limited.

The winter of 1838, is when the Cherokee Indians began their thousand-mile journey. After arriving at their designated city by boat, they were forced to travel by foot on the long, treacherous journey; some without shoes or moccasins. This migration began in the last Eastern capital of the Cherokee Nation Red Clay, Tennessee. As soon as the long and tiring journey began, many complications arose. Disease infected almost everyone forcing the tribes to travel longer distances to avoid any cities. Finally, after crossing the Tennessee and Kentucky rivers, they arrived at the Ohio River. There, the hunger-plagued Indians were charged a dollar a head to cross the river. Native Americans were very unwelcome at this time. They were charged twelve cents at Berry's Ferry, to cross the river after all the other customers had been helped across the river. The Cherokee and other natives who were not murdered by locals were forced to take refuge under Mantle Rock, where many would wait until their death, just to cross the river. The Cherokees then filed a lawsuit against the United States, alleging that they were forced to pay thirty-five dollars a person just to bury their relatives.

Eliza Whitmire was a five-year old girl who was forced to travel with her parents on the trail during the time. She recalls only children, elderly, or the injured Indians being able to ride on the wagons that carried bedding, while all other would walk alongside the wagon. The expedition was made during the cold winter, when many Indians who were unprepared, were subjected to snow and sleet. Unfortunately, this caused many to die from frostbite or

other related illnesses. Whitmire also said that those who experience the forced removal, or had parents who experienced it, would never forget.

By December of 1838, Chief John Ross was leading the last group of natives to Oklahoma the way he believed was best. This group was perhaps the most important, because they held all the important documents, records, and laws of the Cherokee nation. It took almost three months to cross sixty miles on land between the Ohio and Illinois river, due to them getting trapped east of the Mississippi river. After recovering many casualties, the trail through southern Illinois is where the Cherokee nation suffered most. Many Indians were also lost in this area. Their journey took longer than expected because the Cherokee were very weary of water travel, and they would not travel very fast in places they were not comfortable.

The Cherokee Indians eventually arrived at their relocated destination in Oklahoma. Their forced relocation caused them to not trust the federal government, forever making them feel alienated from the rest of the country- a country where they once peacefully lived.

The duration of the Trail of Tears produced a large amount of turmoil, which eventually led to the assassination of Major Ridge and John Ridge. This justifies that the Native Americans were not accepted in the place they lived in. The Cherokees who lived in single homes instead of with the rest of their tribe however, were an exception. The federal government thought these select Cherokees were less daring, and less of a nuisance than those who lived in the larger groups. In particular, a small group of about 400 Cherokees lived in North Carolina, in the Great Smoky mountains which were

owned by a white man named William Holland Thomas. As a young boy, Thomas was adopted by the Cherokee Indians. This was superb for the Indians who lived on his land since they were not subjected to the removal or the same amount of disrespect the rest of the Cherokees were forced to go through.

According to many first-hand accounts and history textbooks, the Trail of Tears was one of the most regretted events in American history. In 1987, the United States Congress designated the Trail of Tears Historic Trail, in an attempt to correct their wrong doings. This trail stretched over 2, 000 miles, and nine states. As of today, the Cherokee Indians are the largest Native American tribe. It is incredibly significant and important to emphasize how much improvement they have experienced over the years. Knowing the facts read in the previous pages, the Cherokee Indians and other Native American tribes were not supposed to thrive again, even IF they made it past this treacherous trail.

Over 4, 000 Cherokees died from many different reasons but they all had a huge impact in the lives of the Indians. The Cherokee Indians called this journey the Trail of Tears in order to sum up the pain and suffering caused by this traumatic event.