

# The Causes and Consequences of Indian Removal

---

## An Online Professional Development Seminar



**Sponsored by the Library of Congress  
Teaching with Primary Sources  
Eastern Region Program,  
coordinated by Waynesburg University.**

**AMERICA *in* CLASS<sup>®</sup>**

*from the* National Humanities Center

## GOALS

- To appreciate American Indian voices in U.S. history
- To understand the complex reasons that the United States forced many Native nations from their homelands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century
- To become aware of the legacy of Indian removal for both Native peoples and U.S. law

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS RESOURCES SUPPORTED BY THIS SEMINAR

American Memory Timeline

The New Nation, 1783-1815

Government Policy Toward Native Americans

(<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/newnatn/nativeam/>)

Primary Resource Sets

Westward Expansion: Encounters at a Cultural Crossroads

(<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/westward/>)

- What was the human impact of Indian removal?
- What did Native Americans lose as a result of removal?  
What, if anything, did they gain?
- How are the consequences of Indian Removal felt today?
- How can we teach the history of Native Americans without presenting them either as victims of white aggression or as icons environmental wisdom?



## Theda Perdue

Atlanta Distinguished Professor Emerita of History  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

National Humanities Center Fellow

*Race and the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition of 1895*  
(2010)

*North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction*  
(2010)

[Co-authored with Michael D. Green]

*The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*  
(2007)

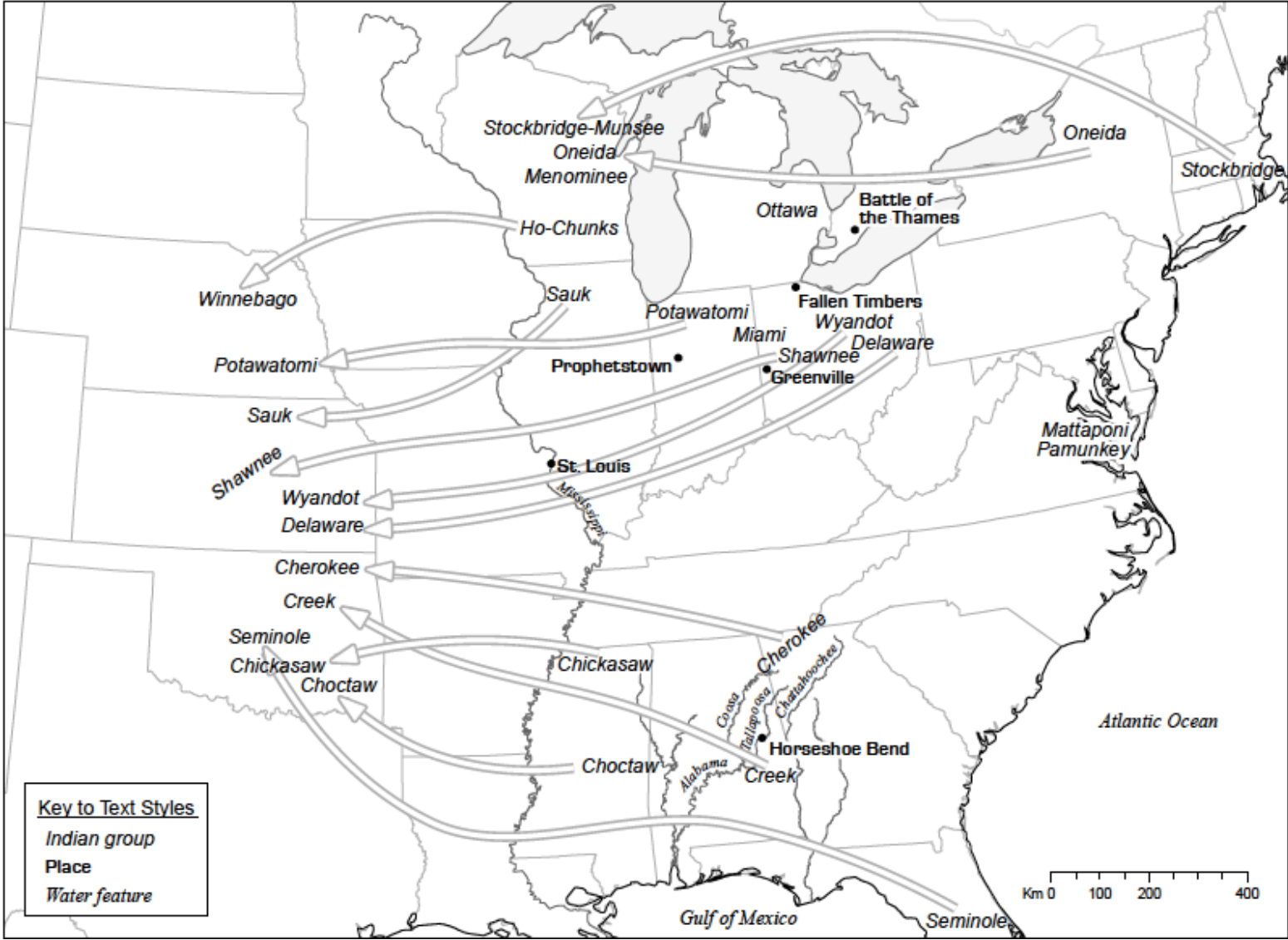
[Co-authored with Michael D. Green]

*Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*  
(1998)

Indian Removal raises troubling questions about the nature of American democracy, especially indigenous rights, racial ideology, and the human cost of national expansion. Although the United States forced tribes in the Northeast and Midwest as well as the South to sell their lands and move west, the best documented experience is that of the Cherokees, on which this seminar will focus.

The documents in this seminar and others related to Cherokee Removal can be found in *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford Series in History and Culture) by Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green.

# The Causes and Consequences of Indian Removal



**Discussion Question**

What does this map tell us?

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. . . . It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.

## Discussion Questions

What are the limitations in using this primary document to write about Indian Removal?

What useful things can it tell us?





John Ridge, Cherokee

“I don’t want you to recommend these things to my people,” [a Cherokee man told the U.S. agent in the 1790s.] “They may suit white people, but will do [nothing] for the Indians. I am now going to hunt & shall be gone six moons & when I return, I shall expect to hear nothing of your talks made in [my] absence to induce my people to take hold of your plan.” But in his absence the Agent induced his wife & daughters to Spin & weave with so much assiduity as to make more cloth in value, than the Chief’s Hunt of six months amounted to. He was astonished & came to the Agent with a smile, accusing him for making his wife & daughters better hunters than he & requested to be furnished a plough & went to work on his farm.

## Discussion Question

What conflicting views of human difference does this anecdote reveal?  
How does this anecdote challenge Jackson’s view of Indians?

# Nancy Reece (Cherokee Student at Brainerd Mission), Letter to Reverend Fayette Shepherd, Dec. 25, 1828

I do not think that all people are friends to the Cherokees. Miss. Ames has been reading a part of the Presid. message. Perhaps he does not like the laws of the Indian tribes for he says, “This state of things requires that a remedy should be provided.” . . . I have been talking to the children about it and one says “if white people want more land let them go back to the country they came from,” another says “they have got more land than they use, what do they want to get ours for?”



Brainerd Mission Cemetery, Chattanooga, TN

## Discussion Questions

- How does this young girl understand the effort to remove the Cherokees?
- What does she regard as the motivations of Georgia and the federal government?
- How does her view challenge Jackson?

# Georgia State Assembly, Laws Extending Jurisdiction Over the Cherokees, Dec. 19, 1829 and Dec. 22, 1830

An act to add the Territory lying within the chartered limits of Georgia, and now in the occupancy of the Cherokee Indians, to the counties of Carroll, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Hall and Habersham, and to extend the laws of this State over the same, and to annul all laws and ordinances made by the Cherokee nation of Indians.



## Discussion Question

What was the impact of this law on the Cherokee Nation?

Sec. 2 *And be it further enacted,* That it shall and may be lawful for the President to exchange any or all of such districts, so to be laid off and described, with any tribe or nation of Indians now residing within the limits of any of the states or territories, and with which the United States have existing treaties, for the whole or any part or portion of the territory claimed and occupied by such tribe or nation, within the bounds of any one or more of the states or territories, where the land claimed and occupied by the Indians, is owned by the United States, or the United States are bound to the state within which it lies to extinguish the Indian claim thereto.

## Discussion Questions

- How does this act propose that the president resolve the conflict between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation?
- What difficulties were likely to arise?



The Cherokee women who submitted this petition may have looked much like the Cherokee woman in this drawing by George Catlin from the 1830s

We the females, residing in Salequoree and Pine Log, believing that the present difficulties and embarrassments under which this nation is placed demands a full expression of the mind of every individual, on the subject of emigrating to Arkansas, would take upon ourselves to address you. Although it is not common for our sex to take part in public measures, we nevertheless feel justified in expressing our sentiments on any subject where our interest is as much at stake as any other part of the community.

## **Discussion Question**

**What was the impact of the removal crisis on Cherokee women?**

# Elias Boudinot, Editorial from the Cherokee Phoenix, November 12, 1831

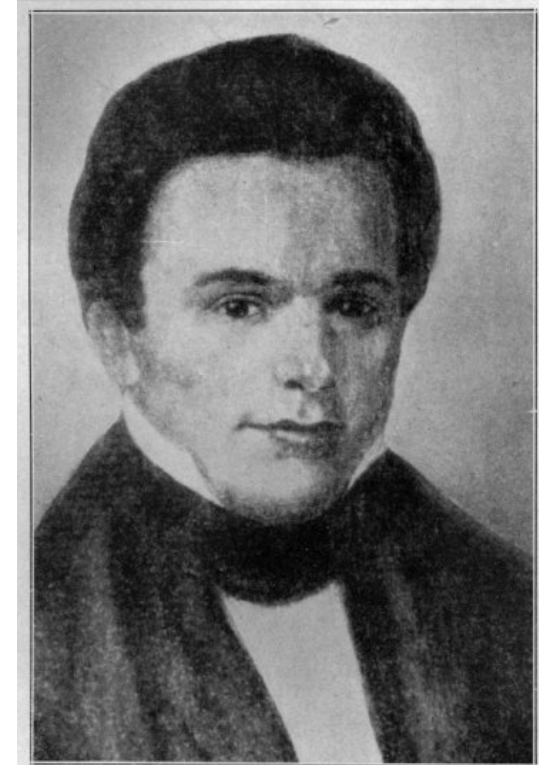


It has been customary to charge the failure of attempts heretofore made to civilize and christianize the aborigines to the Indians themselves. Whence originated the common saying, “An Indian will still be and Indian.” . . .

On the contrary we have instances of nations, originally as ignorant and barbarous as the American natives, having risen from their degraded state to a high pitch of refinement – from the worst kind of paganism to the knowledge of the true God.

## Discussion Questions

- What view of human difference is Boudinot attributing to the enemies of the Cherokee Nation? What evidence to the contrary does he cite?



ELIAS BOUDINOT

Editor of the weekly, bilingual newspaper

The Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial, with the single exception of that imposed by irresistible power, which excluded them from intercourse with any other European potentate than the first discoverer of the coast of the particular region claimed; and this was a restriction which those European potentates imposed on themselves, as well as on the Indians. The very term “nation,” so generally applied to them, means “a people distinct from others.” The Constitution, by declaring treaties already made, as well as those to be made, to be the supreme law of the land, has adopted and sanctioned the previous treaties with the Indian nations, and consequently admits their rank among those powers who are capable of making treaties. The word “treaty” and “nation” are words of our own language, selected in our diplomatic and legislative proceedings, by ourselves, having each a definite and well understood meaning. We have applied them to Indians, as we have applied them to the other nations of the earth. They are applied to all in the same sense.

### **Discussion Question**

On what grounds does the U.S. Supreme Court find in favor of the missionary who was arrested for violating Georgia law (and indirectly in favor of the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation)?

# Treaty with the Cherokees, 1835

...since our difficulties are daily increasing and our situation is rendered more and more precarious uncertain and insecure in consequence of the legislation of the United States; and seeing no effectual way of relief, but in accepting the liberal overtures of the United States...

And whereas the said commissioners did appoint and notify a general council of the nation to convene at New Echota on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of December 1835; and informed them that the commissioners would be prepared to make a treaty with the Cherokee people who should assemble there and those who did not come they should be transacted at this council and the people having met in council according to said notice.



Major Ridge, Treaty Signer

## Discussion Questions

- What does treaty-making imply?
- Does this passage raise questions about the legitimacy of the treaty?



# Memorial of Protest of the Cherokee Nation, June 22, 1836



Principal Chief John Ross

...owing to the intelligence of the Cherokee people, they have a correct knowledge of their own rights, and they well know the illegality of those oppressive measures which have been adopted for their expulsion, by State authority. Their devoted attachment to their native country has not been, nor ever can be, eradicated from their breast. This, together with the implicit confidence, they have been taught to cherish, in the *justice, good faith, and magnanimity of the United States*, also, their firm reliance on the generosity and friendship of the American people, have formed the anchor of their hope and upon which alone they have been induced and influenced to shape their peaceful and manly course, under some of the most trying circumstances any people ever have been called to witness and endure.

## Discussion Question

How does this view differ from that expressed by Andrew Jackson in the first document?

# Evan Jones, Letter, Camp Hetzel, Near Cleveland [Tenn.], June 16, 1838



Corner blockhouse of Fort Marr, near Cleveland, TN, the only surviving part of a removal stockade

The Cherokees are nearly all prisoners. They have been dragged from their houses, and encamped at the forts and military posts, all over the nation. In Georgia, especially, multitudes were allowed no time to take any thing with them, except the clothes they had on. . . . These *savages*, prisoners of *Christians*, are now all hands busy, some cutting and some carrying posts, and plates, and rafters – some digging holes for posts, and some preparing seats, for a temporary place for preaching tomorrow.

## Discussion Question

The author, whose outrage is palpable, was a white missionary to the Cherokees. What is his attitude about racial difference?

My father had a wagon pulled by two spans of oxen to haul us in. Eight of my brothers and sisters and two or three widow women and children rode with us. My brother Dick who was a good deal older than I was walked along with a long whip which he popped over the backs of the oxen and drove them all the way. My father and mother walked all the way also... Other emigrants who had been driven from their homes without opportunity to secure cooking utensils came to our camp to use our pots and kettles. There was much sickness among the emigrants and a great many little children died of whooping cough.



## Discussion Question

What does this elderly woman's recollection tell us about the Cherokees?



Wilma Mankiller, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, 1985-1995

We had already settled this land for many years before the whites even arrived. Although it is so crucial for us to focus on the good things – our tenacity, our language and culture, the revitalization of tribal communities – it is also important that we never forget what happened to our people on the Trail of Tears. It was indeed our holocaust.

## Discussion Questions

- Why does the former chief of the Cherokee Nation think that it is important for Cherokees to remember removal? Why should all Americans remember removal?

**Final Slide**

**Thank You.**

This seminar is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.