

Source #4: President Andrew Jackson

Newspapers printed this letter by the President to the Cherokees on April 7, 1835.

To the Cherokee Tribe of Indians East of the Mississippi river:

Part A: What complaints does Jackson have about the Cherokees?

My Friends: I have long viewed your condition with great interest. For many years I have been acquainted with your people...

You are now placed in the midst of a white population. Your peculiar customs.... have been abrogated [abolished by law] by the great political community among which you live; and you are now subject to the same laws which govern the other citizens of Georgia and Alabama...Most of your young people are uneducated, and are liable to be brought into collision at all times with their white neighbors.

Part B: What complaints does Jackson have about the Cherokees?

Your young men are acquiring habits of intoxication (drunkenness). With strong passions, and without those habits of restraint which our laws inculcate and render necessary, they are frequently driven to excesses which must eventually terminate in their ruin. The game (animals to hunt) has disappeared among you and you must depend upon agriculture and the mechanical arts for support. And, yet, a large portion of your people have acquired little or no property in the soil itself....How, under these circumstances, can you live in the country you now occupy?...

Part C: What complaints does Jackson have about the Cherokees?

You are encompassed by (full of) evils, morals and physical, and these are fearfully increasing....

I have no motive, my friends, to deceive you. I am sincerely desirous to promote your welfare. Listen to me, therefore, while I tell you that you cannot remain where you now are. Circumstances that cannot be controlled, and which are beyond the reach of human laws, render it impossible that you can flourish in the midst of a civilized community. You have but one remedy within your reach. And that is, to remove to the West...

Part D: Why does Jackson want the Cherokees to move west?

Why...should any honest man among you object to removal? The United States have assigned to you a fertile and extensive country, with a very fine climate adapted to your habits, and with all the other natural advantages which you ought to desire or expect....

Think then of all these things. Shut your ears to bad counsels...

Your friend, Andrew Jackson - Washington, March 16, 1835

Resource: Trail of Tears by John Ehle, pages 275-278