Trail of Tears

The US government passed a law in 1830 called the Indian Removal Act. This allowed the US government the right to force Indian tribes to vacate their land and move to reservation lands, geographical areas the government had put aside for their use. Most Indian tribes did not want to leave their land. It was their spiritual and physical home. But the government sent in the army to force tribes to move.

[The Cherokee](http://nativeamericans.mrdonn.org/southeast/cherokee.html), like other tribes and nations, were told to leave. The US government gave them land in Oklahoma. The Cherokee refused to leave. They had no desire to live in Oklahoma. They wanted to live in the land of their ancestors, where they had always lived. The Cherokee took their case to the US Supreme Court. And they won! The Supreme Court said the Cherokee were right - the US government could not force them to move. The Cherokee people were so happy. They thought they had won the battle to live on their own land. But they were mistaken.

President Andrew Jackson ignored the Supreme Court ruling. He directed the US Army to capture all the Cherokee they could find and force them to move. The US Army followed the president's direction. The Supreme Court did nothing.

Jackson's attitude toward the Indians could be summed up in his words: "Humanity cry over what happened to the Native Americans, but one generation always leads the extinction of another generation " .... so why shouldn’t it be the Native Americans who become extinct?

This was an incredibly sad time in American history. Most Cherokee had to walk the whole way. They walked through rain and cold and incredible heat. More than 4000 Cherokees died on the journey. That is why this forced eviction was called "The Trail of Tears."