

Eli O'Haver
May 26, 1830

1

Dear President Jackson,

After hearing that you have signed the Indian Removal Act today, I am writing this letter to try to persuade you to allow the Cherokees to remain on their land. I know the Indians fought against the colonists when we were first settling here in America. I also know they fought with the British against us during the Revolutionary War. But, since those times, I know the Indians have fought with us against our common enemies as well. Do I need to remind you that your own life was spared at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, because of the actions of Junaluska, one of the Indians that would be removed by this Act?ⁱ Surely, this lets us see that the Indians can be our friends and allies, not our enemies.

These people have changed from the "savages" we first met (who taught us to hunt and gather non-poisonous fruits and vegetables that were foreign to us) to a peaceful society of families, who work, farm, buy and sell. They have also taught us how to better use the land in a more respectful manner, preserving the resources for future use. Many have accepted the Christian faith, and have also learned to read and write English as well as their own language.ⁱⁱ The Cherokee people have been very quick to learn our ways and attempt to fit in with our society. How much more might they learn from us if allowed to stay here? How much might we learn from them? Many of the bad things some Indians do now are a result of things the white men has given or introduced to them, such as alcohol. Their culture is based on values similar to ours. It is a just and good society, focusing on family and home.

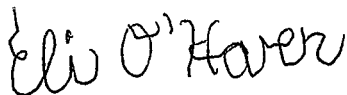
Think about it for a moment...what if our situations were reversed, and we were the ones facing removal? How would you feel to know that you were going to have to involuntarily leave the only home you had ever known? How would you feel about going to a place where you were not sure how you would make a home for your family or how you would find food and water to survive? Would you want your mother or father to have to make a trip like the one you are proposing? Would you want your small children or a sick relative to attempt to travel so far to an unknown part of the country? Many of the ones having to make this trip are elderly, young or sick. Surely you know that many of them will never survive such a long and dangerous trip. Have you

truly given thought to the hardship you are proposing to put on these people who have done nothing to deserve it, except inhabit the land before we even got here?

Is there no way to come to some agreement with the Cherokee Indians that would allow them to stay in their homes? I know the discovery of gold in their landsⁱⁱⁱ has made greedy men stop at nothing to obtain that land, that gold. Could the government not allow the Indians to trade or sell the gold while taxing it? That way, everyone might benefit. Could we not allow the Indians to remain on their land by "selling" it to them for that gold?

Mr. President, I am appealing to you, a man with vision, a man with wisdom, to try to reason out a way, a compromise that all parties with an interest in these lands could live with which would give them what they want without anyone having to lose everything they have. I have every confidence that you and your advisors could come up with a better solution for this problem if you could just think of everyone's best interest, not only those with the deepest pockets or the loudest voices. Remember that we came to this land to escape persecution and experience "liberty and justice for all". Let us not now become the persecutor of another people.

Sincerely yours,



Elijah T. O'Haver

ⁱ Cherokee Nation: www.cherokee.org (Official site of the Cherokee nation, including current news and information).

ⁱⁱ Cherokee Heritage Center: www.cherokeeheritage.org (information about Cherokee history and culture, including primary source documents).

ⁱⁱⁱ Cherokee Nation Trail of Tears: <http://www.cherokee.org/Culture/ToT/Cat/Default.aspx> (Primary source documents from the Cherokee National Cultural Resource Center)