

ADDRESS

FROM THE

CHOCTAW DELEGATION OF INDIANS

In Washington

Relative to their condition in common with other Tribes.

AND

PRAYING THAT THE SAME MAY BE IMPROVED.

FEBRUARY 21, 1825.

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WASHINGTON, *February 18, 1825.*

SIR: The enclosed is an address from the Choctaw Delegation, now in this City, to the Congress of the United States. Be pleased to present it to the Senate, and much oblige,

Yours, very respectfully,

J. L. McDONALD.

One of the Delegates.

Hon. JOHN GAILLARD,

President pro tem. U. S. Senate.

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

As the Representatives of the Choctaw Nation, and (in part) of the Aborigines of this Country, we feel ourselves impelled, alike by duty and by inclination, to address you at the present crisis. The Indians are becoming objects of increasing interest among your people. Sympathy is felt for their condition; and the most benevolent exertions have been, and continue to be, made to improve and civilize them. Under such circumstances, we cannot refrain from giving an expression of our feelings with regard to our condition and prospects. You are an Assembly which we have been taught to consider the most august in the world, and into whose hands are committed the destinies of our people. To whom, then, could we more properly address ourselves on the great points connected with our happiness and prosperity?

Our good Father, the President, has spoken to you, and requested you to adopt some measures to improve the condition of the Indian race. He has recommended that all the Indians east of the Mississippi be persuaded to remove and establish themselves to the west, that a certain form of government be provided for them; and that the land to which they may remove, be secured to them forever.

Of the policy and practicability of the measure, we will not now express a decided opinion; time alone can determine. Of the motives which prompted the recommendation, we entertain no question. The opinion expressed by the President, that, under no pretence, should the Indians be forcibly removed from the lands which they occupy, gives us an assurance that his feelings are truly paternal towards us. That opinion accords with the sentiment entertained by all just and reflecting men, and cannot, therefore, fail to be responded to by your honorable body.

We have long been sensible of our weakness; and we know that, should the Government of the United States rise in hostility against us, we must inevitably be exterminated, or driven to the west. We know that the extensive country which you now possess, once belonged to our forefathers. We have heard that, from a small beginning, you have grown to be a great and powerful people; and that, as you advanced, we receded; as you flourished, we decayed. We have been tempted to ask, Why should this be so? Has the Great Spirit frowned upon his red children, that they should thus have withered in your presence? Yet we have been told from the Good Book, that he loves all his children alike; and that his greatest attribute is that of infinite mercy. This we are most willing to believe; and, believing, we are led to the natural conclusion, that for some great end, only

known to himself, he has permitted us to melt before you; but that the time must come, when his interposing hand will be outstretched in our behalf, and we be made to become like white men.

We rejoice to think that that period is approaching. The voice of the President; the sentiments of philanthropy which seem to pervade the people; the schools and religious institutions which have been established among us—all give us the consoling assurance that we are not doomed to extinction. We have become sensible that one great reason of the power and prosperity with which our white brothers are so eminently favored, has been the general diffusion of literature and the arts of civilized life among them. You have institutions to promote and disseminate the knowledge of every branch of science; you have a government, and you have laws, all founded upon those principles of liberty and equality which have ever been dear to us. For, in all our vicissitudes of fortune, and notwithstanding the constant and gradual diminution of our numbers, we have never been the slaves of any power; and we trust in the Great Spirit, we never shall be. The theory of your Government is, justice and good faith to all men. You will not submit to injury from one party because it is powerful; nor will you oppress another because it is weak. Impressed with that persuasion, we are confident that our rights will be respected.

We have but small tracts of territory remaining, and our numbers are comparatively few. The majority of those east of the Mississippi are turning their attention to agriculture, are settling themselves, and would, in time, become useful citizens. We admit, at the same time, that a large number still continue a wandering life; are wretched and degraded. These it would give us pleasure to see settled west of the Mississippi. It would be better for them, and better for those who remained. But you cannot persuade all to remove. The gradual operation of the laws which you may enact with regard to this subject, would probably effect much. But there are those whom the strongest inducements could scarcely persuade to leave the land which contains the bones of their fathers; and which has been rendered dear to them by the recollections of youth. The important question then presents itself. What will you do with those that remain? What measures will you adopt to improve their condition; to promote their happiness? It is this great point to which our address is intended, principally, to direct your attention.

As connected with the subject, and with the question just proposed, we are constrained to say, that, in several of the southern states, we are denied privileges to which, as members of the human family, we are of right entitled. However qualified by education we may be, we are neither permitted to hold offices, nor to give our testimony in courts of justice, although our dearest rights may be at stake. Can this be a correct policy? Is it just, is it humane? When schools are multiplying among us; when we have made liberal appropriations of money for the education of our children; when we are forsaking the chase, and turning our attention to agriculture, and are becoming an orderly and social people—does it comport with an enlightened and

liberal policy, to continue the imposition of those degrading restrictions upon us? Should not inducements be held forth to our young men to qualify themselves to become useful citizens of your Republic? Should not the portals of honorable distinction be thrown open to them as well as to their white brothers? But the subject is a painful one, and we will dismiss it. The mist of prejudice is gradually vanishing before the light of reason, and enlarged sentiments of philanthropy begin to prevail. We leave the issue of the question to your wisdom, and to the liberality of the South.

In conclusion, we would express the earnest hope that the result of your deliberations respecting our unfortunate race, may be such as to ensure durable benefits to them, and lasting credit, in the eyes of posterity, to yourselves.

Respectfully submitted, by

Mooshulatubbe, × his mark,
 Robert Cole, × his mark,
 Daniel McCurtain, × his mark,
 Talking Warrior, × his mark,
 Red Fort, × his mark,
 Nittuckachee, × his mark,
 J. L. McDonald.

Washington, February 18, 1825.

Interpreted, and the signing witnessed by me,

JOHN PITCHLYNN,
United States' Interpreter for the Choctaws.