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## The Trail of Tears

However, the adoption of white culture did not protect the Cherokee. After gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Georgia, their treaty rights were ignored. When the Cherokee refused to move, the Georgia militia began attacking Cherokee towns. In response, the tribe sued the state. The Cherokee said that they were an independent nation, and that the government of Georgia had no legal power within their territory.

In 1832 the Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice John Marshall, agreed. In *Worcester v. Georgia* the Court ruled that “[the Cherokee nation] is a distinct community, occupying its own territory, ... in which the laws of Georgia can have no force.” The Court stated that only the federal government, not the states, had authority over the Cherokee.

The Supreme Court decision declared Georgia’s actions illegal. However, when Georgia ignored the Court’s ruling, President Jackson took no action. “John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it,” Jackson said. Most Americans accepted Jackson’s position.

With President Jackson refusing to enforce the Supreme Court’s decision, many Cherokee saw removal as unavoidable. Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, wrote that he had no hope “that we will be reinstated in [given back] our rights.” To silence further criticism, the Georgia militia destroyed the *Phoenix*’s printing press.

In the spring of 1838, U.S. troops began to remove all Cherokee to Indian Territory. A few were able to escape and hide in the mountains of North Carolina. After the Cherokee were removed, Georgia took their businesses, farms, and property. The Cherokee’s 800-mile forced march, which lasted from 1838 to 1839, became known as the Trail of Tears. Almost one fourth of the 18,000 Cherokee on the march died.