

United States Policy of Assimilation for the Tribes

Document 1

Source: Treaty of Holston, Henry Knox, Secretary of War, Treaty Negotiator for the United States Government (July 2nd, 1791)

“That the Cherokee Nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will from time to time furnish gratuitously the said nation with useful implements of husbandry”.

Document 2

Source: President Thomas Jefferson, letter to Andrew Jackson major general of the Tennessee militia (1803)

“The Indian Tribes have for a considerable time been growing more and more uneasy at the constant diminution of the territory they occupy, although effected by their own voluntary sales, and the policy has long been gaining strength with them of refusing absolutely all further sale on any conditions. In order to peaceably counteract this policy of theirs and to provide an extension of territory which the rapid increase of our numbers will call for, they should be led to an agricultural way of life, thus lessening their need for land. In leading them thus to civilization, I trust and believe we are acting for their greatest good”.

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Document 3

Source: President James Monroe, First Annual Message to Congress (December, 17, 1817)

“Because of these purchases of Indian land, it is our duty to make new efforts for the preservation, improvement & civilization of the native inhabitants. The hunter state can exist only in the vast uncultivated desert. It yields to the more dense and compact form and greater force of civilized population; and of right it ought to yield, for the earth was given to mankind to support the greatest number of which it is capable, and no tribe or people have a right to withhold from the wants of others more than is necessary for their own support & comfort”.

Document 4

Source: John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War, Letter to Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives (January 15, 1820)

“While many of the Indian tribes have acquired only the vices with which a savage people usually become tainted, by their intercourse with those who are civilized, others appear to be making gradual advances in civilization and industry. The Cherokee exhibit a more favorable appearance than any other tribe of Indians. They are already establishing two flourishing schools among them. Besides reading, writing & arithmetic, the boys are taught agriculture & the ordinary mechanical arts; and the girls sewing, knitting and weaving....Although partial advances may be made under the present system to civilize the Indians, I am of an opinion that, until there is radical change in the system, any efforts which may be made must fall short of complete success. They must be brought gradually under our authority and laws, or they will insensibly waste away in vice & misery.”