

Ella Romano

Mr. Glider

AP US History

11 June 2021

Patriarchal Power Creating Inequality

The spheres of power within American society have allowed for the manipulation and control of minority groups. Throughout all of history the people in power have targeted minority groups, knowing their power will allow them to stay in control. Women and Native Americans are two examples of minority groups that have experienced disadvantages since the beginning of America. Women's value was based on their performance in the home. In general, women were to take care of the kids and deal with the home life, women doing much else was looked down upon. They did not have much representation in society, but with the uprising in court cases of domestic abuse in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, brought the opportunity to assert how much power women were allowed in the courts. Much of the questioning centered around how much power they could give women in the courts before it would start to make the patriarchy look weak. Rich white men being at the top of the social ladder meant they were also at the head of power in almost all aspects of society, and these rich white men would always be protected by their power. Native Americans were another targeted group. Ignoring that the Native Americans had occupied the land on the United States soil long before any European settlement, the government had a motive to eradicate them and take over any land that was in their way of expansion. Expansion became a huge priority in the years of Andrew Jackson's presidency. Throughout the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears, the United States Government showed how far they were willing to go to rid of Native Americans,

specifically in the southeast states. The tragedies of the eighteenth century with the Native American tribes is a major example of the government abusing their authority. Power is addicting and once someone had power, it was inevitable that they'd do anything to maintain their power. The power structures allowance in controlling and manipulating minority groups, allowed for extreme inequality in American society.

Abuse of Power: Women

Women's roles in society in early America are often defined using their work in the home, but women did a lot more for America then what is often noticed. Women were not particularly allowed to deal with public resources, such as money. In the 1780s women, a part of the Philadelphia Ladies Association, raised money in order to give it to the men in the continental army (Skalar 25-27). Due to women having to ask for men's approval on what they could do with money, they asked General George Washington what to do with the 200,000 dollars they had raised. Washington responded by asking for clothes to be made for the continental army, a popular task women did all the time (Skalar 25-27). Women making these clothes was crucial to both the continental army's performance and their survival. Many women actually turned their houses into factories temporarily in order to meet the needs of these men (Skalar 25-27). Accomplishments of women, like these, were often overlooked. It is important to look at women's accomplishments on a broader scale, because the influence of women's broader accomplishments were what made change in the rest of society possible. Women being low on the societal ladder, made it easy for their importance to be downplayed.

Women in Native American societies often had a role of power, which was unlike the newly created American societies (Howe 7-11). In the early years of the republic, the more democratic the country got, the less opportunities there were for women and the more there were

for men (Ryan 586–625). Women were not able to vote or have any place of power in the political field, but the influx of domestic abuse cases gave them the chance to interact with the courts. Courts questioned whether to accept these cases at first, “...they also believed that by disciplining disorderly men they were upholding the patriarchal household and their own authority as agents of the government” (Ryan 591). They were almost more concerned over upholding the patriarchy and their power than the safety of women in their homes. Thankfully, courts took these cases on. It was mostly poor women reporting these cases; five percent of cases came from African-American women (Ryan 586–625). In *"The Spirit of Contradiction": Wife Abuse in New England, 1780–1820* by Kelly A. Ryan, Ryan argues “...women’s political activism was not declining in the early republic- instead, their activism centered on expanding their power within the home.” These cases created a pathway to the women's rights movements in the future. Women found a way around not having political power by creating their own sphere of power in the home life, while powerful men in society only continued to get more powerful.

It was common for those who supported women's rights to pair with abolitionists to work together in pushing for change, whether they were abolitionists for moral or economic reasons. An example of this is when several women worked with Sojourner Truth for women's rights and abolition (Ryan 586–625). The first women's rights movement, however, did not occur until 1848. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 took place in Seneca Falls, New York, marking the beginning of the feminist movement (Harris 9). Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a major figure in this convention's outcomes. Stanton proposed the idea to add suffrage to the Declaration of Sentiment that was being written at this convention, which was a rather radical idea to start off with, but Frederick Douglass and Stanton pushed the idea of suffrage being mentioned until it

was finally added (Harris 9). The Declaration of Sentiment was a direct response to the Declaration of Independence from 1776. Speaking of this convention writing to Lucretia Mott, Stanton stated “We did not meet to discuss fashions, customs, or dress, the rights of a man or the propriety of the sexes changing positions, but simply our own inalienable rights, our duties, our true sphere” (Stanton 19). Women wanted representation, they wanted to be noticed. Those with power had the authority to change things, but as a form of power abuse they decided to stay silent on the matters at hand.

Every woman was essential to the survival of their families. Women hoped the American Revolution would create more opportunities for them in society, sadly it disappointed them. There were no new opportunities, however, after the American Revolution, mothers were looked at to be “Republican Mothers”, meaning they were expected to “train their sons to be politically active” (Howe 7-11). While teaching their sons to be politically active they would be teaching their daughters how to tend to the home. It was not until the Market Revolution in the early nineteenth century that women saw change in their position economically. Factory work became a possible job for women, although not as sustainable as it was for working men. It was still a rarity for women to work in factories. The factory work created relief for women making clothes, allowing them to focus on their job within the home. Men were not usually as present in the family, in fact close families did not really exist until the Market Revolution (Kennedy 278-308). Women were the backbone of the family. Despite not having power in society and having to ask for mens approval even within the home, family life would not have evolved if women did not have the impact that they did. Women held their power in the home, something that was almost untouchable to the men in power.

Abuse of Power: Native Americans

Tensions between the United States and Native Americans had been high since the first settlers arrived. From the moment Europeans arrived in Jamestown in 1607, they tried to take over the land, leading to the Anglo-Powhatan wars (Kennedy). Even before any government had been created, the people automatically felt they had the right to take over the Native Americans land. Americans wanted independence from Britain's control, yet they still wanted to force natives from their land. The people with power abused their power in order to eliminate any Native American that threatened the land they wanted.

The Five Civilized Tribes occupied land that President Andrew Jackson, as well as the United States government, wanted for the expansion of white settlement. Alfred Balch, as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote to Jackson as a friend. Balch mostly spoke of his opinion on the Bank of the United States, but at the end of the letter he mentions removal of Native Americans in the southeast. Balch wrote, "The removal of the Indians would be an act of seeming violence. But it will prove in the end an act of enlarged philanthropy. These untutored sons of the Forest, cannot exist in a state of Independence, in the vicinity of the white man. If they will persist in remaining where they are, they may begin to dig their graves and prepare to die" (Balch). Men with power were so focused on expanding white settlement, they did not care to recognize the value Native Americans had as human beings. They did not believe that Native Americans deserved to have a place amongst white men. Men with power knew what they were doing but for their own benefit, they were willing to eliminate any Native American that got in their way. The government created false hope by promising Natives their land if they submitted themselves to the white lifestyle. The Cherokee are one tribe that tried to succumb to the white lifestyle. The Cherokee led by Chief John Ross, changed their nation in order to fit in with the country that was threatening them with removal (Inskeep). Jackson signed the Indian Removal

Act into place in 1830, setting a precedent granting presidents the power to move Natives west (Bowes 65–87). Granting this power presented the inevitable removal of the southeastern native tribes to the west of the Mississippi River.

The Cherokee's rights were invalidated by the state of Georgia when Georgia set laws based on their boundaries. If the Cherokee Nation was considered a foreign state, they would be allowed to file against the state of Georgia directly to the Supreme Court ("Removal.") (Constitution Article III Sec. II). William Wirt filed for the Cherokee against the state of Georgia, which resulted in the Supreme Court case *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831). In the decision of this case, John Marshall states that the Cherokee are not a foreign state but "more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations... Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian..." ("*Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia*"). *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) was another Supreme Court case that affected the Cherokee. In the decision, Marshall decided that the Georgia laws were unconstitutional and that the Cherokee Nation was sovereign. Although the government would not pay much mind to them being considered sovereign, it was an important case to Native American affairs with the United States Government ("Removal.").

The government was stuck on white encroachment; they wanted the southeastern land to themselves. The Cherokee assimilated almost completely with the white settlers in the same area, hoping to remain on their land peacefully. In 1835, some members of the Cherokee agreed with the United States to sign the Treaty of New Echota. This began the forced removal of the Five Civilized Tribes from their home to their new western land. The Treaty of New Echota spoke of the commissions the Cherokee would receive and in what amount of time they had to move west. Regarding what the Cherokee would get for their removal from the land the Treaty of New

Echota states, "Cherokee people have supposed that the sum of five millions of dollars fixed by the Senate in their resolution of - - day of March, 1835, as the value of the Cherokee lands and possessions east of the Mississippi river was not intended to include the amount which may be required to remove them, nor the value of certain claims which many of their people had against citizens of the United States" ("Treaty with the Cherokee, 1835."). In the years following this treaty, Chief Ross and other Cherokee leaders fought to keep their land. In 1838, Martin Van Buren sent Winfield Scott to the Cherokee territory (Satz 431–466). This eventually led to the forced removal of the Cherokee tribe to the land west of the Mississippi River. The Trail of Tears was a huge tragedy. Many Native Americans, especially the Cherokee, died along their way to modern day Oklahoma. Most had barely any clothing or food as the army led them to their new territory ("Removal."). Promises were broken as the United States failed to compensate Cherokee people for their homes and livestock ("Removal."). The government had one focus only, and that was white expansion. The men in power used the authority they had to force people out of land, completely disregarding their livelihood.

Conclusion

Minority groups were able to be manipulated and controlled by the people in power. Once people had power, their goals seemed to shift towards never losing that power. The hardships Native Americans and women had to face due to men and their power, is a clear example of abuse of authority. They pushed anyone below simply because they wanted to, if someone wasn't a white man, they were not considered fit for a position in power. If something benefitted those in power, of course they were going to move through with it. Although some individuals may argue that the people with power did not abuse their power, but rather did what they thought was best, it is clear how much the men in power overstepped their authority when

making decisions about the Native Americans and women. The people in power, diminishing Native Americans rights to their land and constantly belittling women, created a country full of inequality.

Works Cited

- “An act to provide for an exchange of land with the Indians residing in any of the state or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi, May 28, 1830.” U.S. Congress, 28 May 1830.
- “Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia (1831) and Worcester v. Georgia (1832) - Background & Excerpts of the Supreme Court Decisions.” *Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia (1831) and Worcester v. Georgia (1832) - Background & Excerpts of the Supreme Court Decisions* | *Blue Cereal Education*, bluecereaeducation.com/wellockthen/two-chokeee-court-cases.
- Davis, Kenneth Penn. “The Cherokee Removal, 1835-1838.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4, 1973, pp. 311–331. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42623406. Accessed 20 May 2021.
- Harris, Jennifer chapin. “Celebrating Women's Herstory: The Story of Seneca Falls.” *Off Our Backs*, vol. 28, no. 7, 1998, pp. 9–9. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20836139. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Howe, Barbara J., and Helen M. Bannan. “Women's History, Local History, and Public History.” *History News*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1995, pp. 7–11. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42652350. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Inskeep, Steve. *Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab.* , 2015. Print.

- Jackson, Andrew, and Alfred Balch. Alfred Balch to Andrew Jackson, January 8. January 8, 1830. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/maj011860/>.
- John P. Bowes. "American Indian Removal beyond the Removal Act." *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp. 65–87. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/natiindistudj.1.1.0065. Accessed 20 May 2021
- Kennedy, David M., and Lizabeth Cohen. *The American Pageant*. 16th ed., Cengage Learning, 2016.
- Pitchlynn, John, and Andrew Jackson. Andrew Jackson to John Pitchlynn, August 5. August 5, 1830. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/maj012027/>.
- "Removal." *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier*, by Stuart Banner, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England, 2005, pp. 191–227. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjf9vqr.9. Accessed 20 May 2021.
- Ryan, Kelly A. "'The Spirit of Contradiction': Wife Abuse in New England, 1780–1820." *Early American Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2015, pp. 586–625. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24474858. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Satz, Ronald N. "The Cherokee Trail of Tears: A Sesquicentennial Perspective." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 3, 1989, pp. 431–466. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40582012. Accessed 20 May 2021.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish, and Thomas Dublin. "Feminism and Mainstream Narratives in American History, 1780-2000." *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2005, pp. 25–27. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25163758. Accessed 18 May 2021.

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences." *Google Books*, Google, 2013, books.google.com/books?id=t7pWAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Swindler, William F. "Politics as Law: The Cherokee Cases." *American Indian Law Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1975, pp. 7–20. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20067867. Accessed 20 May 2021.

"Treaty with the Cherokee, 1835." *National Museum of the American Indian*, americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Treaty-of-New-Echota-1835.pdf.