**The Trail of Tears: The Rights of the Native American Society and The Responsibilities of the American Government**

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Group Website

**Process Paper**

    When we were first told we were competing in National History Day, we were overwhelmed with a number of ideas.  However, after much deliberation, we decided to research the injustices done to the Native americans, and their unjust removal from their homelands, such as the infamous Trail of Tears.  The Native American background of one of our group members influenced us to make this choice.  As we researched this society, our passion to explain the rights of the Native Americans grew, as did our desire to expose the corruption and injustice that that the United States’ fell to when they ignored all their responsibilities as an early government.

    When starting to gather research, we began in the classroom, either from articles our teacher had given us or the information provided in our textbooks.  We also delved into the archives of Gale in our computer lab.  Although many websites were rich in information, almost all of our sources were secondary.  In order to overcome this shortcoming, we decided to pour all our time into finding strong, primary sources. One of our most helpful and interesting sources was a website full of first-hand accounts of Native Americans who were interviewed.

    The National History Day competition is rich with options.  However, the choice of creating a website out of our garnered research was simple.  Although this platform may have been difficult, we were excited for this project.  Our main desire was to share the information with others, letting other researchers, or young people have access to intelligence on the Native Americans and parts of their history.  To do so we collected video documents, images, and primary source statistics.  The main purpose of this project was to compete in NHD, but our underlying ambition was to produce a reliable source of data to others who were as curious as we were about this topic.

It was obvious that the U.S. government blatantly ignored the Indian’s basic human rights, such as their right to own and protect their homeland, have religious freedom, and their civil rights.  They forced the young Native Americans into boarding schools, another example of the brutal juggernaut of Americanization.  While early America was cruel and ignorant to these violations, they were required to be held responsible for their actions. Such actions resulted in a long lasting effect, including the later enforcement of the Dawes Severalty Act in 1887, which was a feeble attempt to give Indians recompense years after the Trail of Tears.  These were feeble attempts of the government to “take responsibility” for what they had done. This was exemplified by a quote from John Burnett, a military messenger, “Murder is murder, and somebody must answer.  Somebody must explain the streams of blood that flowed in the indian country in the summer of 1838.”

Word Count: 498