

Justice for All Isn't Specific Enough

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What does it mean to be American in a land that has historically wronged you? What does it feel like to create deals with the devil? What does it feel like to be mitigated by a stereotype created by the ignorant? Well, the best individuals to ask are the ones who have dealt with it for the longest on United States soil: Native Americans. The first treaty between the indigenous people and white settlers was in 1778; the Continental Congress made a treaty with the Lenape (Delaware) ([NLM](#)). This set precedent for other tribes to deal with the federal government through formal treaties. The complex nature of tribal and United States' sovereignty is not the yearning for peace, but the US repeatedly breaking the terms of their contract. The period from the United States Revolutionary War to the United States Civil War was about 100 years; within that period around 368 treaties were created ([History](#)). The treaties came from the idea that tribes were independent nations that had the right to sovereignty and self-government. However; as the idea of "Western Expansion" coursed through the minds of white Americans and the forgetfulness of history, the oppressed become the oppressor. The previously mentioned treaty between Delaware and the United States, which ensured mutual protection and friendship, was overturned as more and more white settlers sought homesteads in the land of Delaware. Soon, Delaware were forced to accept the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 by false accounts of violation and violence. This treaty forced other Ohio Country Natives to surrender most of their lands. The cycle of abuse continued through the Jackson administration as he passed the Indian Removal Act which forcefully removed more than 46,000 Native Americans and relocated them to the "Indian Territory", now known as Oklahoma, ([History](#)). Not only is it an atrocity to deny humans of basic dignity, but the president of the United States abused his power. The Indian Removal Act passed in 1830 was ruled unconstitutional

two years later; Chief Justice John Marshall wrote a majority opinion stating, "Constitution gave to Congress, not the states, the power to make laws that applied to the Indian tribes" ([CRE](#)). Jackson openly refused to enforce it and then told southern states to use force if necessary for natives who refuse to move "timely".

So this leads to how collective behavior can influence and change society. The collective behavior of denying Indigenous people fundamental human rights has perpetuated a cycle of abuse. "In the United States, violence against indigenous women has reached unprecedented levels on tribal lands and in Alaska Native villages. More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence, and more than 1 in 2 have experienced sexual violence. Alaska Native women continue to suffer the highest rate of forcible sexual assault and have reported rates of domestic violence up to 10 times higher than in the rest of the United States" ([Indian Law](#)). According to GAO in 2010, between 2005- 2009, US attorneys declined to prosecute 67% of Indian country matters involving sexual abuse of Native women and girls ([NCAI](#)). We have what is referred to as an epidemic of abuse in the native community largely because of the United States federal government. After natives were removed from their homelands and placed on small reservations, all former food sources like fruits, vegetables, and wild game were gone. Settlers gave them European-style rations to survive; this is how Indian fry bread was born and alcoholism bred. The government-supplied commodity foods are high in sodium and high fat; thus increasing health issues. Native Americans are diagnosed with diabetes at almost three times the rate of any other ethnic group (OMH). Most natives view their lives on reservations as hopeless; once again, the oppressed become the oppressor. The collective effort now concerning domestic, substance, and food abuse are in the works.

As more people like Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland (from the Pueblo tribe) argue for reconciliation, change can occur. A collective effort by voters, tribes, and congressional members is how the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 (VAWA 2022), was signed into law by President Biden and NCAI's Tribal Food Sovereignty Advancement Initiative (TFSAI) was passed ([Department of Justice](#)). A country made for the people by the people is not so simple, but when citizens can educate themselves on current affairs and issues progress can occur. Reparations can be formed and democratic ideals can be restored. The pillar of democracy can only be a pillar when the people of the country stand together and unite in the fight for justice for all.

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