

#### 4c – A Crime Against the Country



*Not every U.S. citizen endorsed the removal of Indians to reservations. Some supported Native efforts to hold onto lands that were rightfully theirs. In 1838, author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote an open letter to U.S. President Martin Van Buren expressing his outrage at the not-yet-signed Indian Removal Act. Van Buren did sign the act into law, setting the stage for the infamous Cherokee Trail of Tears.*

The soul of man, the justice, the mercy that is the heart's heart in all men, from Maine to Georgia, does abhor this business. ... A crime is projected that confounds our understandings by its magnitude - a crime that really deprives us as well as the Cherokees of a country, for how could we call the conspiracy that should crush these poor Indians our government, or the land that was cursed by their parting and dying imprecations our country, any more? You, sir, will bring down that renowned chair in which you sit into infamy if your seal is set to this instrument of perfidy; and the name of this nation, hitherto the sweet omen of religion and liberty, will stink to the world.

---

*This article is reprinted by from the Teaching Tolerance curriculum kit  
A Place at the Table.*