

## **Research Week Abstract**

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**Title** – Rising Choctaws: The Journey to American Indian Civil Rights

**Program of Study** – History

**Presentation Type** – Oral Presentation

**Subtype** – Choose one of the following for poster or oral presentation types: Textual or Investigative

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### **Abstract:**

This paper explores the historical discrimination of Native Americans from their forced removal in the early 1800s to their fight for justice during the era of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The paper focuses primarily on the Mississippi Choctaw tribe and their unique civil rights approach through economic means. The widespread mistreatment of American Indians led to a great outcry from Native communities in pursuit of justice. Spurred on by the African American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Natives sought civil rights within the United States; however, Native American civil rights differed from African American civil rights, in that Native American discrimination was primarily socioeconomically motivated rather than racially motivated. Therefore, American Indian civil rights leaders, such as Choctaw chief Philip Martin, took different approaches to achieve their intended goals of tribal sovereignty and economic growth. In fighting for tribal sovereignty, the Choctaws wanted to distinguish themselves as an independent nation thus exempting them from Jim Crow laws. Under Chief Philip Martin's leadership, the Choctaw Nation was able to distinguish themselves as an independent nation and achieve an incredible economic standing in Mississippi that persists to this day. Therefore, this paper demonstrates the historical resilience of Native Americans by illustrating the rise of the Choctaw Nation and how the tribe once deemed a burden by society became indispensable to the state of Mississippi.