

First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta Land Acknowledgement Statement_

(Adopted June 6, 2021)

The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta acknowledges that its sanctuary and the homes of most of its members stand on land taken from indigenous Muscogee (Creek) people. In the Nineteenth Century, the United States of America forcibly seized Muscogee and Ani'yunwi'ya (Cherokee) lands for the plantation economy of Georgia and other profitable ventures that continue to benefit many Caucasian Georgians today through generational wealth.

Historians ascribe numerous social, political and economic conditions leading to the destruction of the Indigenous ways of life on this continent. Some White Americans favored the assimilation policy, forcing Indigenous People to abandon their cultures and adopt agricultural and industrial economies. However, other Whites advocated removal or extermination. They ignored rights guaranteed to Indigenous People in treaties, routinely trespassed on and confiscated their lands, inflicted random violence against them and waged genocidal war on them. When a militant faction of Creeks retaliated against these abuses in 1813-14, forces under Colonel Andrew Jackson massacred and burned Creek villages and killed more than 1,000 warriors. Spurred by the 1829 gold rush on Cherokee land and self-righteous ideas of "Manifest Destiny," the United States, led by President Jackson, forcibly removed more than 20,000 Creek people from their ancestral homes to Oklahoma in 1836-37. Approximately 3,500 men, women and children died on the long journey.

Over the past two centuries, White Americans inflicted systemic racism against Indigenous People and their descendants in many other ways, such as sterilizing young women without their knowledge and incarcerating children in harsh Bureau of Indian Affairs schools designed to eradicate all remnants of Indigenous cultures. Today Indigenous People continue to suffer affronts to individual dignity by racist persons and policies, and many reservations have suffered violations of tribal sovereignty by profit-seeking U.S. corporations supported by government entities.

The First Existentialist Congregation recognizes that to heal these societal wounds and advance our nation to a brighter, sustainable future of peace, liberty, justice and equality for all citizens, we must know the past and its effects on the present. We seek to understand and support with appropriate action the needs of Indigenous People living in our community, state and nation. We support reparations that would best suit the needs of America's Indigenous People. Furthermore, we acknowledge and celebrate the wisdom and values of America's Indigenous heritages and the many contributions of Indigenous People to our country and to the world.