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# From the Guest Editor: An Introduction to Stolen People, Stolen Land, Stolen Identity: Negotiating the Labyrinth of Anglo-American Culture and Law

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# From the Guest Editor: An Introduction to Stolen People, Stolen Land, Stolen Identity: Negotiating the Labyrinth of Anglo-American Culture and Law

## **Keywords**

Indigenous, law, identity, land, property, American Indian, Native American, violence

This issue of *Landscapes of Violence* came out of a session at the interdisciplinary conference Landscapes of Violence: Conflict and Trauma through Time. Dr. Ventura R. Pérez and Dr. Linda R. Tropp organized the conference, which took place on the campus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in April 2008. This session, entitled “Stolen People, Stolen Land, Stolen Identity: Negotiating the Labyrinth of Anglo-American Culture and Law,” was an interdisciplinary look at the legitimized structural violence perpetrated against people of color by the American colonial and U.S. governments. Violence perpetrated against African slaves and their descendants and against indigenous people and their descendants served as the foundation for all that we know today as the United States of America. Before the ink had dried on the Declaration of Independence, the Founding Fathers were concocting schemes to perpetuate slavery, steal land, limit sovereignty, and impose European culture and values on non-Europeans. American Indians and tribes survived colonization, disease, wars, conversion, removal, and reservations. The papers in this issue explore the various ways in which violence against people of color was the formative basis of a country that holds itself out as the greatest republic on earth and the keeper of all things worthy of inclusion. And it does this by excluding from most textbooks the true stories of its own history. One of the many things the *Landscapes of Violence* journal does is begin to correct this not just by offering a voice to the historically silenced, but by making their stories accessible to many. It is important to tell the story, but it is equally important that it is available. *Landscapes of Violence* is a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal that provides a venue for top scholars that are interested in both the quality and accessibility of their work. As such, it is an important tool to begin to reclaim the telling of our stories and expand their reach into previously untapped markets. And, from that, healing can begin.

In this issue, Bonnie Newsom (Penobscot) and Jamie Bissonette-Lewey (Abenaki) examine the eighteenth century Phips bounty proclamation issued on the Penobscot Indians and how the Penobscot use the document in the twenty-first century. Amy Den Ouden’s essay takes the reader south to Connecticut, where tribes fought the imposition of private property and governmental attempts to use land as a mechanism to divide, conquer, and colonize. Jane Anderson refocuses the reader into the area of intellectual property and its applicability to Indigenous interests in knowledge control and circulations. As governments devise new and improved ways to continue to strip Indigenous people of control and identity, tribes must meet them head-on, in the courtroom if necessary, to ensure that control is never again unwillingly relinquished. Kathleen Brown-Perez’s (Brothertown) essay further addresses the issue of control and self-identity. The U.S. government continues to enact laws and regulations that perpetuate the structural and cultural violence inherent when the majority defines the minority. After centuries of violent actions that served to decrease the number of American Indians, the government now supports legal mechanisms to define these groups out of existence. José Angel

Hernandez then looks at the Revolt of La Ascensión, 1892, through a postcolonial lens, using regional and federal archives to construct a more accurate picture of the revolt that earlier scholars termed “pre-political” and “primitive.” Each of the essays looks at some aspect of violence as it is used to control Indigenous people. While the methods have changed over the years, with current methods having the appearance of legitimacy, the end goals have changed little, if at all: disempower, disregard, and eradicate, either physically or on paper. This includes attempting to remove the ability of Indigenous people to tell their own story. *Landscapes of Violence* is an important tool that will move us in a new direction, one that will lead us to a place where we have regained the power and ability to tell our stories rather than having them told to us.

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