



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 8, 2026

Leftists' "Land Acknowledgments": If the Land Is Stolen, When Will They Return It?

The process of making things right is simple: First you acknowledge wrongdoing. Next you show remorse. Then, finally, there's the last step: reparation — you make the aggrieved "whole." That third part is pretty important. If you happen to "skip" it, one may wonder if you were sincere about the first two parts at all.

This can come to mind with "land acknowledgments." These are statements, delivered before events, confessing that the land the venue sits on actually belonged to some Indian tribe. As to what's implicit in this, Canadian comedian Danny Polishchuk had an [interesting take](#) last year.



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"We do these land acknowledgments because we want to rub it in that, yes, we have their land," he said.

"And, no, they can't have it back!"

Now, it's said that behind every joke there's some truth, and this is no exception. Just consider Monday commentary by writer Brian C. Joondeph. Explaining that he accepted an invitation to a Sunday Methodist church service, he [wrote](#):

Before the service began, the pastor introduced herself, shared her preferred pronouns, and then solemnly informed us that we were gathered on stolen land.

The land, she explained, once belonged to Native American tribes that lived in the area long before Denver existed.

I sat quietly and listened. Then a simple question occurred to me.

If the land was stolen, why are we still sitting on it? To my knowledge, the church owns the valuable piece of property in an upscale Denver neighborhood.

If I knowingly occupy stolen property, I have a moral obligation to return it to its rightful owner. Merely acknowledging that it was stolen does not absolve me of responsibility.

Imagine explaining to the police that you know a car in your garage was stolen but you plan to keep driving it while periodically expressing regret. That defense would not get very far.

Yet this is precisely the logic behind the modern ritual of land acknowledgments.

Over the past several years, universities, churches, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and even sporting events have begun opening meetings with statements recognizing that they occupy land once inhabited by indigenous peoples.



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It has reached the depths of inanity, too. Under Joe Biden in 2021, Department of the Interior employees [began a Zoom meeting](#) with “land acknowledgments” and “their” pronouns. The same year, Washington state kindergartners [had to recite an acknowledgment](#) that they occupied stolen land. And just in case you want to refine your guilt, [this](#) interactive map “shows which indigenous lands you live on.” That’s just so you can know precisely which tribe you’re not going to give the land “back” to.

Who Owns What?

“Back” is in quotation marks for good reason. To whom would you return the land? Indian tribes warred frequently, [taking territory](#) and resources from each other. So the same real estate had different “owners” at different times.

Note that America’s situation isn’t unique, either. *All* nations were built on “indigenous” land and forged from conquered tribes, clans, etc. In Europe, for example, the vanquished and long-subsumed groups had names such as the Alans, Goths, and Marcomanni. So who owns what?

For millennia, this was determined via warfare, and might made right. If you lost “your” land because you were weaker, it was considered your fault for being weaker. (Strength was respected, perhaps above all else.) It was Western civilization that ultimately changed this and brought order, justice, and peace to the process. In America, for example, there’s the Public Land Survey System, the recording of deeds, and courts to adjudicate property disputes. Now, should modernity’s land borders instead be determined by a retrospective litigation of stone-age peoples’ ever-shifting pseudo-land possession?

It’s all a nonstarter. In fact, what we really need today is a Western Civilization Acknowledgment. It would go something like this:

I recognize that I live and work in a land birthed by Western Civilization. I acknowledge the place-creating knowledge and know-how of Western people, and I’m grateful they bequeathed to me world history’s greatest civilization. I’m also thankful for the unprecedented prosperity, human rights, just liberties, and knowledge of Truth that their tireless endeavors ensured I could enjoy.

Interestingly, too, less-successful civilizations don’t trouble over their territorial possessions. Turkey does not take pains to say, “We occupy land that was once the heart of Byzantium.” The Algerians and Tunisians do not plaintively acknowledge, “We sit on land that was owned by the Berber peoples.” And citizens in northern Japan don’t confess, “We stand on territory stolen from the Ainus.”

Charity Must Go Beyond the Tongue

Yet if leftists really believe what their “land acknowledgments” imply, reparation is in order. As Joondeph writes, they could place their property in a “tribal trust.” They could try making an arrangement to lease the land from a tribe. Or they could at least compensate that tribe handsomely.

But don’t hold your breath waiting. It’s mouth over money, posturing over pocketbook with the Left. Studies have borne this out, too. As journalist Peter Schweizer [related](#) in 2008:

Both the World Values Survey and the General Social Survey reveal Left-wingers are more likely to rate “high income” as an important factor in choosing a job, more likely to say “after good health, money is the most important thing”, and agree with the statement “there



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are no right or wrong ways to make money”. [Thank you, moral relativism/nihilism.]

... How is it possible that those who seem to renounce the money culture are more interested in money?

... Many on the Left apparently believe that espousing liberal ideals is a “get out of jail free” card that inoculates them from the evils of the money culture.

... Such progressives, sure that they are not overly interested in money and possessions, believe they are then free to acquire them.

It’s as with a guy who thinks he can drink a liter of whiskey a day because “he’s not an alcoholic.” He doesn’t actually have a problem — he can control it.

As for charity, leftists give far less than conservatives do. They instead support big-government programs (and that *is* the government’s job, don’tcha know?), so they’ve done their part. And to those who outsource their charity and fancy that virtue, land-acknowledgment words are as good as deeds any day.



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