“…. The question of the honorableness of the United States' dealings with the Indians turns largely on a much disputed and little understood point. What was the nature of the Indians' right to the country in which they were living when the continent of North America was discovered? Between the theory of some sentimentalists that the Indians were the real owners of the soil, and the theory of some politicians that they had no right of ownership whatever in it, there are innumerable grades and confusions of opinion. The only authority on the point must be the view and usage as accepted by the great discovering Powers at the time of discovery, and afterward in their disposition of the lands discovered.

Fortunately, an honest examination of these points leaves no doubt on the matter.

England, France, Spain, little Portugal—all quarrelling fiercely, and fighting with each other for the biggest share in the new continent—each claiming "sovereignty of the soil" by right of priority of discovery—all recognized the Indians' "right of occupancy" as a right; a right alienable in but two ways, either by purchase or by conquest….

The history of the United States Government's repeated violations of faith with the Indians thus convicts us, as a nation, not only of having outraged the principles of justice, which are the basis of international law; and of having laid ourselves open to the accusation of both cruelty and perfidy; but of having made ourselves liable to all punishments which follow upon such sins….

To prove all this it is only necessary to study the history of any one of the Indian tribes. I propose to give in the following chapters merely outline sketches of the history of a few of them, not entering more into details than is necessary to show the repeated broken faith of the United States Government toward them….

There is but one hope of righting this wrong. It lies in appeal to the heart and the conscience of the American people. What the people demand, Congress will do. It has been—to our shame be it spoken—at the demand of part of the people that all these wrongs have been committed, these treaties broken, these robberies done, by the Government….”

From *A Century of Dishonor* by Helen Jackson