

**Symposium on Law and Culture, Featuring a Lecture by  
Honni van Rijswijk**

**University of Giessen**

**March 7, 2013**

**Professors Greta Olson (English and American Literary and Cultural Studies) and  
Frank Reimer (Public Law and Legal Theory)**

*Room to be announced*

This symposium is intended to offer an opportunity for scholars working on Law and Culture topics in Germany to present their projects, network with one another, and also meet with other local and international scholars working in the field. It is also aimed at fostering scholarly ties between Germany and Australia. It shall feature a lecture by Dr. Honni van Rijswijk (Senior Lecturer at University of Technology Sydney Law School, and Co-convenor of the Law and Culture Group at UTS Law).

**Schedule**

- 3:00      Begin and Introductions Including Project Descriptions**
- 3:45      Dr. Honni van Rijswijk's Lecture and Q &A**
- 5:45      Reception and Dinner**



## **Narrative Interventions into National Responsibility? Australian Stolen Generations' Testimonies in 2012**

The historical narratives of the Stolen Generations that have been developed in recent case law (*Trevorrow v South Australia* 2010) and the Federal Government Apology in 2008 are valuable in that they recognise state policies of removal, and the suffering these policies caused to Indigenous survivors. However, these narratives also tend to emphasise Indigenous suffering rather than state responsibility for this suffering. Despite recognising that the child removal policies were directed specifically to Indigenous children, legal and political responses have failed to make material amends for these historical wrongs. These responses have also put in place problematic narratives concerning actions of the past, (for example, the role of parental consent in relation to child removals), and the relationship of this past to the present.

A real problem arises as to how to intervene in these narratives. One form that has been used in a number of counter-national/historical projects is the testimony, which was utilized previously in this context in the *Bringing Them Home Report* in 1997. This paper examines recent web-based testimonies that have been produced with a similar approach, through The Stolen Generations' Testimonies project, an initiative of the Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, which filmed the personal testimonies of members of Australia's Stolen Generations Survivors in 2009 and published them online this year.

This paper asks whether these testimonies might be read as texts that animate a present-time responsibility rather than tell a story of past suffering. At the same time that they recount the harm caused to Indigenous Australians, they also recount the actions of the state and other entities, and these accounts can be developed toward a conceptualization of deep responsibility. But this reading in some ways means reading against the grain of the testimonies, whose form invites a particular kind of engagement and affect from the reader/viewer. The paper considers the potential and limits of the testimonial form in relation to social justice projects regarding the Stolen Generations, and suggests critical reading practices that can make the most of the form in this context.

**Please contact Dr. Birte Christ or Dr. des. Mirjam Horn about your plans to attend:**

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