

Gerry Georgatos has lived the impacts of racism, researched and examined the ways forward.

### Θερμοπύλες

Τιμή σ' εκείνους όπου στην ζωή των  
ώρισαν και φυλάγουν Θερμοπύλες.

Ποτέ από το χρέος μη κινούντες·  
δίκαιοι κ' ίσοι σ' όλες των τες πράξεις,  
αλλά με λύπη κιόλας κ' ευσπλαχνία·  
γενναίοι οσάκις είναι πλούσιοι, κι όταν  
είναι πτωχοί, πάλ' εις μικρόν γενναίοι,  
πάλι συντρέχοντες όσο μπορούνε·  
πάντοτε την αλήθεια ομιλούντες,  
πλην χωρίς μίσος για τους ψευδομένους.

Και περισσότερη τιμή τούς πρέπει  
όταν προβλέπουν (και πολλοί προβλέπουν)  
πως ο Εφιάλτης θα φανεί στο τέλος,  
κ' οι Μήδοι επί τέλους θα διαβούνε.

*Κωνσταντίνος Π. Καβάφης (1903)*



## Racism; institutional, structural and the perpetrator – the privilege of the oppressor

February 22nd, 2016

Social and political debates about racism rarely include the voices of the oppressed and are instead a prescription or stricture within the narrowest discourse. Australia's major institutions and think tanks are not just in a hostile public denial of this nation's knee deep racism despite the racism being self-evident, but are ruthlessly hostile to any legitimate discourse because it is their exclusive intention to protect White privilege and power. The racism is institutional, it is structural, it is about privilege and power, about the interests of the oppressor and therefore any authentic discourse about racism is a threat to the oppressor. The oppressor concedes only a level of perceived equality that is not threatening to their hold on power; corralled within one stop shop assimilation.

Social and political debates about 'conciliation' with the descendants of the First Peoples of this continent – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – and with multiculturalism and immigration and with asylum seekers are undermined by the vicious stricture of the discussions. Our parliaments and media do not reflect the demography of this nation, they continue to reflect the past two centuries. The majority of politicians are White, with few Brown and Black in their midst. As long as our parliaments and other institutions continue to fail to reflect the demography of this continent then they will continue to fail the demography, peoples. We will remain a socially fractured, divisive society.

The generation of racists I grew up with are now in our parliaments. This generation of racists I grew up with are the ones who became the generation who delivered the Northern Territory Intervention, who destroyed the hopes that Mabo's Native Title win offered, who failed to establish the long overdue conversation in this country that we needed on racism and the ways forward and instead we had to soak up the Cronulla Riots, Islamophobia, every imaginable xenophobia, the turning back of the boats of asylum seekers, and the degeneration of immigration detention centres into dungeons where children, mothers and fathers are cruelly punished because they sought out a better tomorrow.

Governments provide leadership but leadership does not guarantee the common good, does not always carry peoples universally. Many public statements by politicians are racist expressions, victim-blaming and reinforce origins-of-thinking one and two centuries old which led to a separation of peoples, reinforcing and establishing biases. These assertions lead to the racism of superiority and inferiority, to the scapegoating of past wrongs by perpetrators onto the victims of today instead of addressing the social inequities. The diabolical theories of race that emerged nearly a century ago continue in one form or another contemporarily, perniciously endemic. The science of eugenics justified colonial imperialism, misusing the notion of science as an "arbiter of truth" (Hannaford, 1997). This arbiter of truth pervades today in the policy making of Governments and institutions and in the public statements of high profile individuals who need to justify the rights of the oppressor over the oppressed. Today still continues to be about White terms of reference and one stop assimilation. Racism is not ageing and fading.

Racism is not subtle, it is always overt, and these days it is argued as passive, casual, lateral but in the end it is racism no different to the racism of yesteryear that led to segregation, apartheid, the Stolen Generation, obscene inequalities. Racism may no longer lead to many of the cruel wrongs of the past but it continues in other forms as the tool of the oppressor.

The contemporary reductionist and often skewed discourses on racism are evidence that racism is a tool for the oppressor and often not just for control over the lives of the 'othered', to desperately hold on to power but predominately so to exploit, to cheat people of their dues. To cheat them out of economic equalities, to cheat them of their resources of the land they live on. Greed undermines the pursuit of equality and harmony.

Mainstream media refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders as 'aborigines' and 'indigenous' – lower case! This is a diminution of the identities of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, of their ethnicity. Any description of ethnicity – Greek, Chinese, Indian – is personal noun, it is about identity. Many refer to blacks or blackfella but it should be Black, not black. They are not a colour but a people. There is a reason for this diminution of people as 'aborigines', 'blacks' instead of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples or Black; it is to signify inferior status, to dismiss their rights.

This racism of diminishing the identity of peoples leverages the oppressor's campaign to damn the claims of the oppressed to authentic self-determination and to continue the authority of the oppressor to continue

controlling the lives of the oppressed. Though there has been some progress in media coverage, we continue to read media that complies with the significations of the oppressor. They label peoples as inferior, dysfunctional, incapable of managing their lives. These stories pervade into the Australian consciousness.

“When tourists see drunken Aboriginal people in the streets and in the Todd River they never stop to ask themselves why?” – Lorraine Liddle, 1993.

We cannot move beyond racism until we understand racism, this is imperative to the ways forward. Racism is intended as a set of impenetrable assumptions that can systematically pervade audiences of the oppressor, turning them into armies of violent thinking towards those who are intended as the oppressed. Racism relies on portraying the oppressed as inferior and in whatever way possible ‘evidencing’ the oppressed as inferior. If people are assumed as inferior then they can be easily treated differently, less favourably and exploited. The Australian Constitution, which was penned by the same authors of the White Australia Policy, is a profound example of prescribed racism empowering the systematic differentiation and potential exploitation of peoples; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Racism is not disguisable; it is about what can be got away with.

Australia to this day, denouncing the White Australia Policy, continues to reject other cultures and minorities and continues to discriminate in multiple ways. In a racist society the other’s point of view is not only rejected, it is often not allowed a say. Voice is vital to us moving beyond racism; without listening to each other there is no hope for many. If listening only to stereotypes and to one side then the majority of people, including generations unborn, will continue divided, with prejudices, stereotypes shoved down people’s throats. Without the honest story there can be no common humanity.

I am writing this article from an east Kimberley town. I have travelled to more homeland Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities than most have and in the majority of these towns and communities I see the same narrative – of racialised inequalities, of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander poverty becoming more acute. Today, I have visited six remote communities, but which are reminiscent of apartheid South African townships and camps. It should be unimaginable that in the world’s 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy that such third-world-akin poverty languishes. This intersection of disadvantage and acute poverty does not only translate toxically as racism for the local peoples, it is racism.

Institutional racism dishes out the deflection that there has been much progress, that many more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders are benefiting from the one stop assimilation, from integrating, that more are going to school, graduating, building well remunerated careers. There are 204 doctors who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, with more than 300 on the way and there are more than 600 lawyers who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, with most of them working in the corporate sector or large established firms. But the majority of those who have always lived marginalised, who have always lived under the thumb of the oppressor continue to live marginalised and oppressed. Institutional racism tries to push the good news stories to deflect from the ongoing oppression and to victim-blame the marginalised. The good news stories are great but the bad news stories are more important and what we need to read and hear and respond to.

The issues that have led to the mass incarceration of the descendants of First Nations peoples are multifactorial and insidiously entrenched trans-generationally by the oppressor. The insidious management by one Government after another of the multifactorial issues and of eugenic policies, as arbiters of truth, as tyrannies of experts, has smashed the living conditions and stolen the hope that many once clung on to. Today, Australia is the mother of all jailers of the descendants of its First Peoples. Trust has been lost between the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the criminal justice system. The institutional racism to control the oppressed continues marred by racial profiling, multiple forms of

discrimination including mandatory policies and regulations and sentencing. Identity, historically and contemporarily, has been made a liability. Alcohol and Aboriginality will finish you up before the criminal justice system. Prior to 1967 the movement of Aboriginal peoples from 'reserves' or the breaching of 'curfews' in White precincts saw them hauled before the criminal justice system.

The relationship between police and the majority of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples was damaged when police played their role in the removal of children from their families, which translated as the institutions of the State discriminating toxically against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The pervasive mistrust of authority is a tool of the oppressor as it keeps people divided, fractured and weakened. The institutions of the State continue to do what they have always done and that is to act as if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not make their way into the one stop shop assimilation are inferior, are to be victim-blamed and scapegoated.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the Aboriginal Legal Services, continue to see the majority of the police and of the criminal justice system as the enemy.

"I have lived for over 70 years under a regime and a system that destroys," Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, 2014.

White terms of reference has articulated one justification after another; their courts enabled law after law, to justify racism, to turn human beings into chattel. To this very day and long into the future, we feel the effects. Generations to come will still not be free of racism. Australia remains an oppressively White dominated society – White dominated economy, White dominated parliaments, White dominated media. For anyone Black, Brown, Yellow to score a good gig in White dominated Australia you have to do a lot of quickstepping, kowtowing, backslapping and arse licking – you have to dance to the White man's song and you have to buy into their racism.

Certain emotional experiences, certain situational traumas drown the psyche, crippling psychosocially the self. Please do not speak to me about racism though you claim to be an expert on racism if you have never endured racism, because when you do, you reduce racism to something that was never brutal, never oppressive. When you have not lived racism and you speak to racism as if you know it then you reduce racism to something that was surmountable. Racism is insurmountable. You cannot beat racism, you can only survive it. Many of us become resilient but we do not become free of it.

More than a quarter of Australia's population was born overseas. More than an eighth of Australians were born in Asia. More than half of Australia has a parent who was born overseas. Australia does not reflect any of this in its Federal Parliaments. Therefore our parliaments do not reflect Australia but instead a particular stronghold of Australia – and this stronghold remains exclusive within the Anglosphere. Till Australia's political parties and our Governments remedy this predicament our parliaments will continue to discriminate and reject peoples.

The bloodshed of colonialism continues in other forms – in narratives of human misery and suffering, in a climate of death; in the suicides and in the premature and unnatural deaths. The descendants of the invaders are now established as the governments of this continent, ruthlessly gripping power. Modalities such as institutional racism continue the one-sided deliverance. Marginalisation appears entrenched. It is impossible to be without marginalisation when there is oppression unless it is eliminated by genocide. Genocide is not defined by the bloody slaughter of peoples; genocide is a systematic destruction of cultures, of a peoples, by discrimination and prohibitions, by psychological and emotional abuses, of either/or settings. The soldiers and advocates of the neoliberal colonialist regimes argue we are

perpetuating trauma – that we maintain the oppressed as the victim. They argue that we need to move on. But move on from what to where? How?

Racism in general is a convenient excuse – manufactured consent – for the economic exploitation and deprivation of peoples.

The problem is never the oppressed despite what racists think and argue, and despite what some of the media writes, despite what some historians declare, despite the prejudices and origins-of-thinking of the majority of our parliamentarians, despite the industry of researchers and so-called experts, of whom many are shameless profiteers. The problem is always the oppressor. The problem cannot be and should never be the victim. In order to unveil institutional racism, in order to expose the oppressor the research has to shift from the oppressed to the oppressor. Institutional and structural racism needs to shift and stay the research on the oppressed.

Institutional and structural racism is intended as practices to not only produce inequity but to sustain inequity. The othering of people is vital in sustaining the dichotomy of power verse powerlessness. In general the Whites of this generation have no intention of letting go. The idea that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on a board is breaking down institutional racism is hogwash. It does not matter even if there is some cultural safety with two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders – male and female – to support each other. In general they are handpicked deemed compliant or they are made 'benign'. They are only there to be seemingly consulted. They have little actual agency to determine the interests of their peoples. A step in the right direction to undermine institutional racism is to delegate decisions affecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to a committee or representative body of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consultation needs to be replaced by delegation and the directives from that delegation must be enabled – this is the beginning of self-determination. The membership of these committees must be removed from boards and government instruments and instead 'delegated' to authentic Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations.

May 4 to 6, in Alice Springs there will be the inaugural national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Conference. For several years I campaigned relentlessly for our Governments to respond to the escalating suicides crises. I published more than 200 articles on the extensiveness of the crises and on suicide prevention. I was able to score some responses from Governments and which included the crafting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project. But I stood solid to my convictions and stepped into the background and ensured the project leads are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders of stature and expertise. However I found it difficult to find enough Black researchers and the predominant reliance on White researchers continued. The Conference is an opportunity to inspire Black researchers and leaders and experts, to couple the lived experiences and the local knowledge and the stalwart community work with further knowledge and with networks. The Conference will be comprised of only Black keynote speakers, facilitators and every presentation must have a Black lead. Whites can present too but in tandem with a Black presenter.

Yalmay Yunupingu once said to me, "We are not brainless and dumb," as the victim-blamers dish out. "We can manage our own communities, our schools, teach in our languages in which our children are literate within and leave it to us to teach them English" and navigate both cultural settings but without the imposts.

Professor Graceyln Smallwood once said to me, "Some Whites do not know when to let go but most Whites do not want to let go." Well, they have to, for their sake too, so what they pass down to their children are assumptions vastly different to the assumptions passed down to them from the origins-of-thinking that have

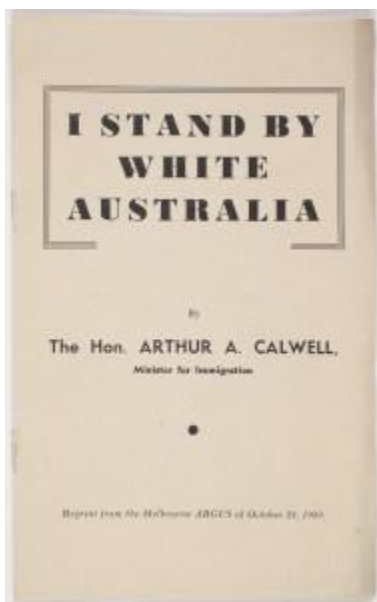
led to the horrific racialised inequities and diminution of cultural connections and identities that have left the unhidden toll we see daily; the constant narrative of human misery and suffering.

Oppression is the historical signature piece of the Australia we have known since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, since the arrival of the tall ships. However oppression remains contemporaneous. For more than a century there has been an increasing examination of the oppressed but very little examination of the oppressor. The often exploitative preoccupation to study and examine the oppressed while refusing to examine and bring to account the oppressor ensures oppression continues.

I have never wanted to hold the oppressors hostage to all their faults, of their oppressive and exploitative behaviours, of their racism, but in the name of humanity, in the name of everyone, to free them from their oppressive behaviours, from their ignorance and from their despatching of racism. But those tortured in all this are the oppressed. There is a hostile denial by the majority of White Australia of this nation's diabolical racism – of a racism that stoutly continues to stain the national conscience by dumbing down consciousness. Racism has many veils and layers and unless we move away from the obsession to only examine the oppressed we will continue to go nowhere fast and to generations yet unborn where society will be dangerously fractured, divided, impaired, hateful, angrier.

## **Stop examining the oppressed, instead examine the oppressor – this will do in racism & marginalisation**

July 15th, 2015



Oppression is the historical signature piece of the Australia we have known since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, since the arrival of the tall ships. However oppression remains contemporaneous. The viciously cruel rod of oppression has delivered narratives of human misery and suffering, the moral abomination of racism. For more than a century there has been an increasing examination of the oppressed but very little examination of the oppressor. The often exploitative preoccupation to study and examine the oppressed while refusing to examine and bring to account the oppressor ensures oppression continues.

Last year, on a national television program one of this continent's most revered and wisdom laden statespersons, Arrernte Amajere Elder, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks most eloquently stated what should have been heard long ago by the Australian nation – "*I am not the problem.*"

The problem is never the oppressed despite what many racists would like us to think, despite what far too many in the media write, despite what some historians want us to think, despite the prejudices and stereotypes the majority of parliamentarians wallow within, despite the industry of researchers and so-called experts, of whom many are shameless profiteers. The problem is always the oppressor. The problem cannot be and should never be the victim.

The victim may need healing, trauma counselling, support and reparations but the actual examining of why and how any problem has occurred must focus on the perpetrator, on the oppressor.

This is why two of my Masters and my doctoral research focused on racism. This is why I am a prolific writer about systemic issues, about the oppressor, about the racism. I am often hounded by the naysayers but I will never diminish the oppressed by writing predominately about them, for they are not the problem, they are not at fault and they are not the cesspool of wrongs that delivered the injustices, the damage and the trauma.

I do not want, and have never wanted to hold the oppressors hostage to all their faults, of their oppressive and exploitative behaviours, of their racism, but rather in the name of humanity, in the name of everyone, to free them from their oppressive behaviours, from their ignorance and from their despatching of racism. There is a hostile denial in this nation by the majority of the population of the racism that stoutly continues to stain the national conscience dumbing down consciousness. Racism has many veils and layers and unless we move away from the obsession to only examine the oppressed hence we will continue to go nowhere fast – and the narratives of human misery and suffering will continue to be rolled out, ruining more families and communities, destroying more lives, taking more lives.

Australia has the widest divide between the descendants of its First Peoples and the rest of the population. Yet, Australia is the world's 12th largest economy, one of the world's wealthiest nations per capita and boasts the world's highest median wages. So how is it that half of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population while comprising so little of the Australian population lives impoverished, with the majority marginalised in third-world-akin shanties?

How is it possible that non-Aboriginal Australia enjoys social infrastructure that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander homelands and their communities do not? The extreme poverty has been induced and it is perpetuated by one government after another. The racism is Australian made. This extreme poverty is racialised and this is an indisputable given. Racialisation is racism.

How is it possible that in this affluent nation there is hidden one of the world's highest suicide rates? One in twenty of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders die by suicide – this is the reported rate – a moral abomination. This racialised narrative is racism. The narrative of lives lost to suicide is worse than is being reported. I estimate that the real rate is one suicide in ten deaths, double the official rate. This is a humanitarian crisis, catastrophic, and yet it is not the pressing issue of our time despite it being highlighted by myself and others. The fact that it is not the issue of our time demonstrates the actuality to this day of the dominance of the oppressor, effectively uninterrupted.

The oppressor has been protected by casual references that they were the product of the stream of consciousness of their times, of a political climate, of intended well-meaning. These are hostile statements of defiance, of a refusal to be held to account. They are denied the opportunity to atone. Without atonement there are no ways forward and ignorance and racism will continue to keep us all hostage.

The majority of our parliamentarians have at least 100 years of familial history on this continent –and most are still kept hostage to origins-of-thinking a century old. Without an examination of the oppressor, instead of the oppressed, without a national conversation hence many premises and presumptions that should be done and dusted will continue perniciously into the ensuing generation.

The White Australia Policy may be gone as an official document but it still pervades. The Australian Constitution was penned alongside the White Australia Policy. The Australian Constitution sought to lift above all others a White Australia, a supremacist dominion and to keep downtrodden the First Peoples, to smash their Aboriginality. White Australia sought to keep out potential migrants who were not White. The non-White, the Black, the Brown, the Yellow person deemed inferior. The Australian Constitution is tainted and it cannot be fixed. It is a racist document –the most racist Constitution of any nation. It should be binned and a new one penned – not by an oppressor but by humanity.

Our parliaments remain the dominion of the oppressor, of a White Australia. When our parliaments finally reflect the demography of this nation so then we will journey to a more humane society.

Australia led the way with apartheid legislation and practices that South Africa learned and copied. There are laws, policies and practices to this day that racialise people, which negatively target people, which decimate people and ensuing generations. Many of these laws, policies and practices have led to land grabs, the degradation of communities, the legacy of extreme poverty, homelessness, the filling of jails and the horrific suicide rates. All of this, not just some of this, is a moral abomination.

Many good people sought to make a difference by focusing examination on the victim – the oppressed – but this has indeed now become an industry and which has blindsided hope. The examination has to shift to the oppressor but once again not to punish them, not to keep them hostage but to free us all into equality and the right to be as we so see fit.

Little else will work. Native title was tried as a compensatory mechanism and has culminated in the horrific debacle that fractures communities, spoils riches on the few and marginalises the majority. Native title is an example of what not to do – a free-for-all where the majority of benefactors are non-Aboriginal and who slew benefit away from the intended recipients. Native title is a trough of frenzied feeding by an endless queue of carpetbaggers, lawyers, anthropologists, every charlatan under the sun. It has been a significant betrayal of once huge expectations. In my many travels, I have found the filthiest of exploiters that I have ever known in the native title industry. I have often wondered have they no shame in effectively stealing from the poor, in reaping their spoils from the rights of the poor. In one form or another, in one guise or another, the oppression continues.

All lives matter but in an unequal society this will never be the case, will never be the legacy. Unequal societies flourish where those who perpetrate wrongs escape the light of day. We have to shift the focus of any examination of problems onto the oppressor, onto the perpetrator, onto the wrongdoer – and not continue to study alone the oppressed.



The oppressed are blameless.

Let the oppressor understand what they are doing or in the least bring them to the light of day so it all stops.

## “What do these Blacks want?”

November 6th, 2014

The veils and layers of racism **are many**. The White Australia Policy still thrives, veiled and layered. The racism **I was born into** manages a hefty say to this very day even if its ugliest forms are supposedly not as pronounced as they once were. Much of the overt racism that was the norm of my childhood is no longer acceptable but the racism etched in so many still does its dirty business. That racism, well hidden, steers its hosts through society and in their interactions. Racism does not just disappear because of a set of laws. If the racism rests in the recesses of the mind then it does its outwardly damage. Exposing racism is difficult when people just do the racism rather than speak the racism.

Silencing racism does not extinguish racism, in fact it enables racism.

I often wish that racists would be let speak, so we know where we stand. So we can have a shot at being able to do something about it.

I do not need anyone who has never experienced racism to tell me about racism, nor do I appreciate anyone speaking to what racism is if they have never felt it, known it, been hurt by it, been held back by it, lost years to it. No-one who is without the raw end of racism should speak to what racism is, other than to be reviled by it and to stand against it. All of us can stand against racism, solid-in-our-thinking, and walk the ways forward, live the ways forward, but not every one of us can speak to what often there are no words for. Someone who has never lived racism does not know what words to look for in order to describe racism. There are some experiences that only those who have endured them and who have reflected upon them can speak to. **Imagine the deepest well**, and then imagine a haunting precipice to the darkness, as if an abyss of darkness, and imagine then you cannot imagine further. That which you cannot imagine is not known to you. Even the best academics cannot find the words.

Certain emotional experiences, certain situational traumas drown the psyche, crippling psychosocially the self.

Please do not speak to me about racism as if you are an expert on racism if you have never endured racism, because when you do, you reduce racism to something that was never brutal, never oppressive. When you have not lived racism and you speak to racism as if you know it then you reduce racism to something that was surmountable. Racism is insurmountable. You cannot beat racism, you can only survive it. Many of us become resilient but we do not become free of it.

Racism takes a huge toll, unleashing widespread suffering and makes people inhuman. Racism is not just divisive, it is beyond sheer separatisms – racism is genocide. Racism hurts. Those who survive it are traumatised, beleaguered and indeed even so for those who have risen to high office. Those who experience the worst forms of racism look over their shoulder. They look deep into the eyes of those who

they meet for the first time. They listen to every word. They are on the alert. They fear this or that inference. Those who have survived racism, their major objectives are that their children endure less of it than what they did.

When it comes to racism, we trust no-one. We do not trust accomplished human rights practitioners – we do not trust acclaimed scholars, we do not trust eminent judges, we do not trust preachers of Godliness. We know the bigot can be in anyone. I once overheard a coterie of high profile barristers ridicule a migrant group, and then deride the First Peoples of this continent. It was disturbing, because one of these barristers has publicly presented numerous speeches deriding racism and in supporting the Aboriginal rights struggle. Now, hypocrisy is nothing new. Nor people exploiting 'advocacy' for various profit.

**My father's life is over**, in his 85<sup>th</sup> year he left – in April. The racism he experienced as a migrant, his children would experience less. My father never went to school. He left home at the age of 13 because of abject poverty, and the effects of war before finally migrating to Australia sixty-one years ago. He taught me, the eldest of his six children, "*to put nothing between myself and what is right*". When we let something get in the way, someone will suffer. In the last twenty years, this vast continent separated my father and me. However in our conversations, and in his last years as he strained to find the physical strength to muster a yarn, he kindly reminded me of the common good, and that all else does not get people anywhere, not in the ways that should matter, unless we are prepared to accept and to normalise divisiveness and inequalities – and in accepting inequalities then we accept as natural that the aspiration of humanity is wed to paradoxes – to vacuums of inhumanity.

When I was a young child growing up in the western suburbs of Sydney my father said to me that as I grew older I would understand the many layers of racism that veil Australian society, and the prejudices and stereotypes that are the stitches on these veils – prejudices and stereotypes shoved down our throats in order to justify racism. I have never forgotten the first time he mentioned to me our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, whom I now know as the First Peoples. I was 8 years old – and he tried to help me understand that Australia, and its governments, in the fullness of time would face an indictment of the cruel maltreatment of our brothers and sisters – worse had been done to this continent's First Peoples, he said, than to the many migrant cultures.

I learned quite young that various social ills, like plagues, hit humanity hard, and often with much seeming forlorn. I also learned that there is an unfolding human rights language and social justice vocabulary, and that the best of what shall arise in the name of the common good shall not be in our lifetimes. It is coming and it is up to us to not turn it away – for the most part, for many, but not for everyone, the world is a better place than most of the days that we have put behind us. My father, for the most part of his working life, a factory worker struggled with the English language however he stood side by side with workers in many class struggles – and in fighting to change working conditions that migrants were exploited within. In my father's generation, of waves of Greek migrant workers, the majority found themselves overwhelmed by the language barrier – and this is where I came in, beginning as a twelve year old. Probably what defined my life and dissociated my identity formation from a pursuance of many life goals others find requisite, were the mesothelioma sufferers for whom I was asked to act as an interpreter, and then as their ad hoc representative. In those days the unions were not ready for the asbestosis dramas unfolding viciously among migrant workers. I met humanity intravenously wired up, fighting for every breath, bed-ridden and withered – gasping at the end of life – I remember thinking that people should not have to live like this – Their employers denied culpability. With bastardry as bright as the light of day, they denied them the compensation they should have been entitled to in order to support their families. Many died lost in the anguish of what would become of their spouse, of their children. As a young child on behalf of these people without any sense of real hope and without real voice I finished up face to face with their employers, whose silence cleaned me up. I remember thinking that people should not be treated like this. There was no justice for these people who are now long gone, however in the name of their spirit some changes in terms

of a modicum of basic rights have come for some of the families of those who have suffered since. This is the way it goes with humanity, in the light of our unfolding human rights struggle – the aspiration for equality and for the right to be treated with dignity is an arduous journey; it requires people to speak up for those denied equal right. If we do not stand solid, we stand alone, we lose. The consequence is untold suffering, unheard narratives – firestorms of injustices. The challenge is not to tear down others for their transgressions, not to bring them down altogether, but to open their eyes, or at least to open up enough of the eyes around them that they can see they are being judged by their own mob. The objective is the truth. Truth is the means to the end, truth brings on the ways forward.

During the last decade I spent several years in the university sector, as a General Manager of a Student Guild. I was also on university planning boards and committees and on my university's board of directors. I was quite involved, not one to sit back or miss an opportunity to contribute. For all the great achievements along the way that we are all capable of, I am often inspired to work harder when I see the worst of humanity, the inhumanity, such as prejudices. None worse than the day when a big shot university officer said, **“Gerry, what do these blacks want? An education? Send them back to the bush where they belong...”** This is not where it ended. My battle to break such hidden attitudes in a bastion of identity forming education, in a university, was acutely traumatic, and came with brutal ostracisation and recrimination.

A Czech philosopher, Karel Kosik, arrested and interrogated for disagreeing with the state, wrote of someone who was put to death during the Inquisition, *“A theologian said that all will be well with me and all permitted to the degree that I obey the Council, and he added, ‘If the council were to declare that you have but one eye, despite the fact that you may have two, it is your duty to agree with the Council.’ I replied to him: ‘Even if the whole world were to affirm that, I, utilising whatever reason I may possess, could not acknowledge such a thing without a rejection of my conscience.’”* It is like I am listening to my father.

Recently, I read a National Tertiary Education Union report on claims of racial discrimination among university staff. The report found 72% of the Aboriginal university workers they had surveyed said that they had experienced direct discrimination and racist attitudes within their workplace. I worked alongside Aboriginal Learning Centres and alongside most of the First People academics and general staff. The academics especially described experiences of discrimination, tokenism and paternalism. Some of them I represented or assisted when it reached the confrontational. I will return to most of this further along in this article.

The last couple of years have been an interesting time for me as I have made decisions about my direction in life and in how I can best contribute to what I'm used to doing, what my father instilled in me, in putting nothing between myself and what is right. As I approached half my life done I reflected on how to best serve the causes I involve myself in, and how to best contribute my little bit to the unfolding human rights language, to us being there for one another. I packed up and left behind a high paying job, which had me in the top 7% of Australia's income earners. I would decide on the very difficult journey of working in the news media. It was a big deal at my age to switch to journalism. For years, on an almost daily basis I've spoon fed one story after another to various news media, working behind the scenes to give birth to, and where possible shape, stories that the public has a right to know about. It has not always been easy dealing with chiefs of staff of newspapers, or getting reporters to do the through-care journalism, to follow a story through to positive outcomes, however this is what I divested a lot of my time to. Many said to me why bother with the mainstream news media which they claimed is heavily influenced by various conservatism and cultures of favour-dispensation, that it is under the thumb, they say, of government and the influence-peddling of big business. However, I disagree in not working with the mainstream news media. I believe that there are many good journalists, and that we need to reach people far and wide, and that dissemination is an imperative in expeditiously unfolding positive changes and in articulating a quality human rights language. I do believe that the ability to discover the truth is outstripped by the capacity to manifest deceit however it is defeatist to not do what you can where you can. The frontiers can be scary, but we must put nothing in the way of doing what is right – as others before us, now long-gone, sacrificed

so we today are better off than those of generations past. *The National Indigenous Times* gave me a valuable opportunity to contribute through their voice as a journalist and I have valued this from the day they phoned me and asked me to join them. Just prior to this phone call from *The National Indigenous Times* I had tasted a whiff of journalism, having begun writing for a regional newspaper and now more than three years later I am immersed in journalism, even it is in my own offbeat style. I still contribute to the *National Indigenous Times* and to the *National Indigenous Radio Service*, but also as a co-editor and writer with an online news site, *The Stringer*, launched by my life partner.

Someone recently wrote to *The National Indigenous Times* and complimented that I don't mince my words and that they appreciate my reporting style. I want to continue in this vein – and in this article I want to reflect upon what I ferociously believe are this country's most difficult personal questions – racism, the hostile denial of this, and the passivity of those who witness racism. My stint thus far with *The National Indigenous Times* has reinforced in me the harsh reality of racism Australia-wide, from within the corridors of our parliaments through to the dungeons of our prisons. Racism has cut deeply with me from within my childhood, because of how I saw my parents treated by others, because of how I saw migrant workers treated by their employers and by how they were neglected by government authorities. It cut even after I left my childhood and lived alongside First People brothers and sisters. To my disgust, I learned via my first-hand witness that no people had been maltreated worse than this continent's First Peoples. The racism disturbed me and it became the most part of my extensive university education. I wanted to do something about it. Early in my university education there would be a fork in my life's journey from the mathematical and physical sciences to the study of the humanities – philosophy, philology, Aboriginal framed issues. Both my Masters dealt with the cause and rise of racism, and with the disadvantage and marginalisation among far too many First People, and my PhD research touched on the extensiveness of Australian deaths in custody and in understanding custodial systems. Prisons are places where in general those who go in come out worse. Why would anyone promote harsh sentencing regimes, mandatory sentencing when we can see the punitive does not work? When we can see that punishment compounds social issues? But the criminal justice system, the rule of law, legislation are the by-product of judgment – and judgements are supposed by premises, and these premises are not without a view of the world, not without assumptions, prejudices.

In my reporting for *The National Indigenous Times* and other media, I have written widely about the tragic incident where a 15-year-old Noongar boy, Rex Bellotti Jr was struck by a police four-wheel-drive. The youth lay fighting for his life. The incident devastated not only his life but the lives of his parents and his five siblings. His parents worked hard to provide their six children with private school education so they could rise above inter-generational poverty and mean-spirited stereotypes manifest by Australia's ever so evident racist past. I wrote that the police officers who drove the vehicle in all likelihood accidentally struck down this boy. But in order to save their arses they came out and said Rex Jr tried to kill himself. They claimed Rex Jr supposedly jumped out in front of the oncoming vehicle. Well, that's bullshit. This never happened. Rex Jr was just crossing the road, and I believe it was an accident. I don't believe the police officer who was driving the vehicle meant to hit him. The driver and his colleague had no time to make that bullshit assessment, not in a couple of critical seconds before impact, while swerving all over the place and just missing a teenage girl. But they did make that irresponsible and cowardly assessment. When they realised Rex Jr was Aboriginal, they tapped into some of the bullshit stereotypes of 'dysfunctional' Aboriginal youth. Improperly and unlawfully they slated comments into the public domain through the news media that Rex Jr was trying to kill himself. This was racism of the worst type. How can we trust the police when the police are prepared to lie? How can we trust the Office of the Commissioner of Police when they are not prepared to adequately investigate and hold their officers to account? How can we trust the Corruption and Crimes Commissions when they are not prepared to make more rigorous findings than they do – and appear to act only when the evidence is indisputable, such as the CCTV footage of Kevin Spratt tasered 41 times during five separate incidents involving police and prison officers? When stereotypes are exploited we only serve to further marginalise the marginalised. This is racism. When we do not investigate an incident because someone is Aboriginal, well that is racism.

If anyone thinks racism in Australia is on its deathbed then they have blinkers on. A significant proportion of Australians are not racist per se, however far too many are. Let us remind ourselves the supposed end of the White Australia Policy is only several decades old. Let us remind ourselves that the ascent of multiculturalist policies and protections are only decades old.

I am inundated with stories for *The National Indigenous Times*, and I try to find stories that will role model ways for many of us to move past the racist wrongs thumped upon our consciousness. I try to find stories that help us relocate ourselves from the consequences of those wrongs, however most of the stories that come my way emphasise the fact racism stares us down and that it is widespread. Three years ago, I reported the racist ranting that occurred at a BHP Billiton annual shareholders' meeting. At the meeting First People Elders, as shareholders, came to voice their concerns over uranium mining on their Country. Every time they got up to speak as shareholders the chairperson, Jacques Nasser shut them down. This is racism. However, he allowed a non-Aboriginal shareholder from Queensland, Phil Robson to speak freely, and during his turn he said 'Aborigines' are a "conquered race" and that Aboriginal people have no right to speak about the land, that "Aboriginal people do not know what to do with money", that Aboriginal people "are a bunch of drunks". This was racism. Jacques Nasser's passivity and refusal to intervene is racism. BHP Billiton refusing to respond about its chairperson's conduct is racism. If you pick up any copy of *The National Indigenous Times* you'll find that a significant share of the news items and community news are about success stories among First Peoples, about people overcoming tremendous injustices – injustices most Australians do not endure. You'll find that the multicultural news site *The Stringer* is similarly so. There are incredible success stories and in most instances you will find that these people have not forgotten their own – they are doing everything they can to help lift up those others who have been smashed by the type of racism that Phil Robson throttled out at the BHP Billiton shareholders meeting, while Jacques Nasser effectively gave him the green light to do so.

This is the type of racism that our federal governments are inclined to dish out. They are no different to Phil Robson and Jacques Nasser – look at what the government effectively says about the 29 per cent of the Northern Territory populated by First Peoples. The government says the same things about them that Phil Robson said to the 300 shareholders at the BHP annual money talk. The government justifies the Emergency Response (the 'Intervention') in the Northern Territory. A whole people's identity has been made a liability. Historical and cultural identities held against them. This is racism. There is an ongoing onus on the First Peoples to go 'White', to 'assimilate', to dissociate from their inherent form and content. This is not Aboriginal advancement by Aboriginal people. It is abominable eugenics – slavish social engineering – brutal. On April 15, 2009, the Herald Sun's Andrew Bolt, in his muddle-mindedness, wrote "*It's so hip to be black...*" as he tried to make sense of his skewed thinking in contemplating who is entitled to claim an Aboriginal identity and who is not, and in his musings who milks the system. Andrew's comment – 'hip' – has a number of connotations however none impute the myriad truths of what being an Aboriginal person in a racist paradigm means. Andrew did not consider the predicaments, the plights, the suffering imposed upon First Peoples because they are Aboriginal. Would a non-Aboriginal person have been treated differently in the back of the prisoner transport van in which the Warburton Elder, Mr Ward was burnt to death? – Yes. Would our state and federal governments and other jurisdictions permit non-Aboriginal families and children to live in the squalid shanties at Ninga Mia, five kilometres outside of the mining boom town of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, or in hovels on the outskirts of other affluent communities Australia-wide? – No.

Here are the facts, "*Up to 35% of Indigenous men do not drink alcohol compared with 12% of non-Indigenous men. 29% to 80% of Indigenous women do not drink alcohol compared with 19% to 25% of non-Indigenous women. In the Northern Territory, 75% of Aboriginal people do not drink alcohol at all.*" Therefore why have the First Peoples of the Northern Territory had their lives smashed by the Intervention? A couple of years ago, *National Indigenous Times* reporter, Geoff Bagnall did what Australian governments have failed to do. He consulted Elders in the Northern Territory. On the front cover of the newspaper Geoff's headline was, "*What consultation Minister Macklin?*" Minister Jenny Macklin long claimed that there had been widespread consultation but there is little real evidence of this, and everyone Geoff spoke to stated there had been little or no substantive consultation. Geoff spoke to Elders from Ampiliwatja, Urapuntja, Galiwink'u, Mt Nancy, Lagamanu, Tennant Creek, Yuendumu, Borroloola,

Kalkarindji and so on. I too have spoken to a considerable many Elders. All of them stated they are dished inequality. They stated that their culture should not be looked down upon by Australian government(s) and that the major problem is governments continue to neglect the obligation to provide the full suite of basic services and opportunities to them; employment, education, electricity, running water and health services. Indeed, by not doing so this is racism – a vile form of racism. I am not the only one to say so, most people know this, however many remain passive and withdrawn. Others find one argument or another to justify this vile racism. But the UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay, the UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya, and Amnesty International's Shalil Shetty and Irene Khan, all recent visitors to Australia and to the plight of the most impoverished among the First Peoples, numbering more than 100,000 people, describe our governments' actions and inactions as racism. In 2009, Amnesty's Irene Khan, said that it was an unexpected tragedy she had found many First People oppressed. She stated the oppression is the result of the underlying racisms of Australian governments.

Australia has one of the world's worst deaths in custody records – prison and police custodial – however this country's social wealth is envied by most of the rest of the world. How is it possible for wealthy Australia to be imprisoning its First People at the among the world's highest jailing rates? How is it possible for incarceration rates of First Peoples to be nearly six times the rate of apartheid South Africa's incarceration of its Black population?

Where does it all start and where does it end? How long will First Peoples retain their relative peacefulness? The Aboriginal people's human rights struggle has been a genuine non-violent one since their mighty resistances during the first one hundred years of the invader colonialism. During the last one hundred years, in the name of humanity they endured intolerable inhumanity. We know how and where the racism began, but how and why does it still continue?

Our management systems are moulded by prejudices, biases, social engineering, underwritten by origins-of-thinking that are one and two centuries old. In 1901, the Western Australian parliamentary federal member for Kalgoorlie, Hugh Mahon tabled a motion calling for a royal commission into the living and social conditions of the First Peoples in Western Australia and the administration of justice in the lower courts in reference to First Peoples. It was not heeded. 113 years after the tabling of that motion we are still calling for such inquiries or rather for 'the justice'. Just as inter-generational poverty perpetuates itself so do the base premises and stereotypes shoved down our throats regurgitate inter-generationally. Our parliaments are 90% Anglo-Celtic, with 90% of these parliamentarians with more than one hundred years of familial and 'settler' history – and therefore as much as the unfolding human rights language is challenging paradigms, the form and content of these parliamentarians carries with them a languish of stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions from yesteryear that have not been extinguished. A set of laws cannot achieve this, only education can. We have never had the national conversation on racism. I have spoken to hundreds of parliamentarians and half of them are not fit to represent their electorates or to contribute to the management of this nation's compassion. The brightest minds and fairest people are not necessarily our parliamentarians. There are well meaning people in our parliaments and some very good ones but we all know that for the most part all it takes to slot in as a politician is to hang around their particular party of choice and make friends. The representation of First Peoples in the Australian political landscape, and therefore within the body politic, is minimal, and for First Peoples it has been difficult to crack. This is racism.

It is imperative that the Australian consciousness permits itself a true understanding of the First Peoples of this continent, of the true history of Australia subsequent the English First Fleet to Botany Bay – a true history of the colonial invasion and the slam of imposts and of the torturous apartheid. The history of this continent's First Peoples includes the fact that they are the longest ongoing cultures on this planet. And the true history of what was been dished out to the world's longest ongoing cultures since 1788 should be taught mandatorily in our educational institutions, including universities. It is the only way we can evidence

to Australians, especially those born far removed from the sins of those past, the extensiveness and depth of the racism that was engineered. While I was at Murdoch University, I spent three years on the University Senate, 2006 to 2008, and four years on its Academic Council, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009. For seven years I had campaigned for the introduction of Aboriginal studies as a compulsory unit to all undergraduate students. The opposition I faced often surprised me even when it should not have – it's not as if academics and university personnel should be seen as vastly different to our parliamentarians and most of the rest of our humanity. During 2008 I raised the bar on the campaign for the introduction of First Peoples cultural studies – contemporary and historical – tabling a series of recommendations to Academic Council. On April 16, 2008 Academic Council heard my arguments for the ground breaking introduction of a compulsory unit of Aboriginal studies to all undergraduates – it would be an Australia-first. However, the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellors were not supportive, and their argument was that students should be allowed choice, and that the university could lose students. They did not front the April 16 Council meeting and instead sent proxies; staffers who had never attended an Academic Council meeting to vote against the motions I had foreshadowed. To achieve any chance of success in establishing what many Aboriginal scholars had backed me to do, I had to gear myself to the fifth foreshadowed motion in recommending that substantial Indigenous content be included in all Foundation Units. Murdoch's Foundation units are a set of units that undergraduate students must choose one of and which introduce them to university studies. The preceding motions sought a tailor made unit or other more substantive learning opportunities.

On 16 April 2008 I addressed our Academic Council, and First People scholars and students were in the gallery hoping Murdoch University would create history. I said, "In terms of its Indigenous population Australia has the worst record of all the OECD countries. Well known facts include the disproportionate number of Indigenous peoples incarcerated, who lack higher and tertiary education, who are worse off in terms of health and housing and who are denied social inclusion. It is a well-known fact that Indigenous Australians on average live 17 years less than non-Indigenous Australians."

"The Prime Minister of Australia delivered an Apology to the Indigenous peoples of Australia on February 13th. This is considered as a 'first step'. The 'next steps' must ensure they can actually improve the condition of Indigenous peoples in this country. We all have a responsibility to this end. It is higher education that can best deliver every opportunity to ensure this advance. It is all about our identity formation, our national consciousness, about reconciling ourselves with the truth, with understanding one another and hence improving engagement and moving towards bona fide social inclusion."

"We are still a country heavily governed, administrated and educated from within the constructs of Whiteness, conservatism and elitism. An important step forward for all Australians is if our universities move to ensure that there is compulsory study of Australia's Indigenous history, a true history of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia during the last 238 years, and of cross cultural education, which will ensure inter and intra cultural awareness."

**"Murdoch University can lead the way.** *In New Zealand Maori history and cultural education are compulsory to year 10 and are also foundational to many tertiary undergraduate programs. It has been evidenced that this has gone a long way to addressing historical and endemic problems between the 'Pakehas' and the 'Maoris'. The University of South Australia is moving forward with a push for Indigenous content in every course by 2010.*"

I tabled an excerpt from *The Australian*, by Verity Edwards, February 16, 2007:

"Indigenous content will be added to every undergraduate course at the University of South Australia by 2010, in a national first that the institution says will allow students to focus on how the 'white community engages with the black community'.

The University will today open the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research, which will drive the introduction of the course content.

College Dean Peter Buckskin told *The Australian* that introducing the studies would give students an 'Indigenous view' and create 'culturally sensitive' learning.

"We'd probably be the only western university to have committed ourselves to having Indigenous content," Mr Buckskin said. "Whether it's the school of business, whether it's the division of health sciences, education, nursing, pharmaceutical, there'll be Indigenous content in the delivery of courses."

Queensland University of Technology Deputy Vice-Chancellor Vi McLean said it was reasonable to expect Australian graduates to understand Indigenous culture, but that it was not 'easily done'.

"They will have to take great care if it's not going to be tokenistic," she said.

Professor McLean, who previously worked in curriculum development and education, said the university would need to either introduce Indigenous core subjects in the early stages of an undergraduate degree or consult with Indigenous academics to ensure studies were relevant.

Reconciliation Studies senior lecturer Heidi Norman, from the University of Technology, Sydney, said it would be a professional asset for graduates to understand Indigenous issues.

"There's a shift that's taken place where Aboriginal people are saying we don't want to be studied or scrutinised – (cultural studies) might instead take in more contemporary race relations rather than (say) 'this is a dying culture'," Ms Norman said.

I then continued, "I believe Murdoch University will benefit as a University in terms of its own reputation and as an education provider by ensuring substantial Indigenous content is taught to all Murdoch University undergraduate students of its South St., Rockingham and Mandurah campuses. Hopefully, with a new government focused on further unfolding the human rights language and policies of inclusion, we are in an era of higher education reform and positive new pathways. If we are the leaders in this, Murdoch will be well regarded and renowned, and opportunities surely will manifest where consequently funding streams will arise. Once this education is settled, there shall arise the myriad of opportunities to establish further direction and ensure that Murdoch will be able to provide research and other programs from this exciting direction."

"All that is being asked of Academic Council is do they believe that we should make substantial Indigenous content compulsory in our undergraduate education. How this shall be enabled is for working parties to explore and hence recommend to Academic Council. The options are many: it may be through a compulsory Foundation Unit, or threaded through all current Foundation Units. It may be delivered by students choosing from the 16 units at Murdoch with substantial Indigenous content, as approved by Kulbaradi, or through a tailor made unit(s). All that is being asked of Academic Council at this point is does it wish to ensure that all our undergraduate students study at least one unit with substantial Indigenous content. Whether we move forward with this direction should not depend on impact studies and other research but by deciding whether we want to move in this direction or not, and if we do we will be addressing the endemic problems, in terms of the conditions Indigenous peoples endure and in terms of the perceptions of Indigenous peoples by non-Indigenous Australians. Hence, if we decide to move in this



direction the research will be geared in determining the best way to go about delivering this education to all our undergraduate students.”

Twenty six members of Academic Council participated in an hour plus discussion fused with inadvertent racisms and some disturbing remarks, to the surprise and dejection of the gallery of First People scholars and students. The one obstinate argument that frustrated me was when one academic argued whether it would be cost effective to provide such a unit – it just smacked of the same bullshit that our governments come up with in finding ways to deny Aboriginal communities the full suite of funding they are entitled to – and the real cost instead is one of disenfranchisement and disadvantage. My first four motions were blocked however the final motion got up, 12 to 5 with a number of abstentions – the 5 who voted against it were the five proxies on behalf of the then Vice Chancellor and the four Deputy Vice Chancellors.

The Motion that was carried: *“Academic Council recommends that substantial Indigenous content will be included in all Foundation Units. Academic Council recommends that this should be implemented no later than the commencement of the 2010 academic year.”* To move forward from the debilitating racism plaguing Australia there isn't anything that we could do that we shouldn't do – and the argument of cost or debt aversion doesn't wash as the cost of not doing what should be done is worse in every manner imaginable and lived. The worst forms of racist attitudes I have come across are not necessarily from 'ordinary' Australians – four years ago my 10 year old daughter and I were called 'wogs' and told we should pack our bags and leave with the 'reffos' and take with us our 'coon mates'; this said by a couple of gentlemen at a 'Border Control Forum' in Rockingham (south of Perth) attended by 100 locals organised by Western Australia Liberal federal parliamentarian, Michael Keenan. Like Jacques Nasser of BHP Billiton allowing shareholder Phil Robson to rant unfettered so did Mr Keenan not intercede though he was keen to close me down every time I had the floor. I can live with all this, I've been doing it since I was kid, and so have many others who have had it so much worse. However the worst forms of racism for me are when it comes out of the mouths of our parliamentarians, from renowned pillars of Australian society and from those you would least expect it from – a dash of university academics and officers.

During an otherwise civil conversation between myself and a high profile university officer, with another person present who has never forgotten that particular meeting, I was pushing for certain privileges for Murdoch University's Kulbardi Centre (Aboriginal Learning Centre that supports First People students) – and then oh my goodness this person came back at me with, *“What do these blacks want? (he shook his head) An education? (he laughed) Send them back to the bush where they belong.”* (he looked at me dismissing my look of horror, and the stunned silence and shock of my colleague). He muttered some of it one more time. This is one of a number of incidents at the time that had led me to push Murdoch University to undertake compulsory anti-racism and anti-discrimination training – two schools would go through this, with one school undertaking the training over three days from every staff member to the Dean. The Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic refused to implement this training to the whole university as compulsory and insisted it should be at best made available for those interested to tap into – however will a racist undertake this education? The person who said, *“What do these Aboriginals want? An education? Send them back to the bush where they belong”* refused to take up the training! The Deputy Vice Chancellor said to me that I am 'full-on' and people don't know how to deal with it. Well we need to be 'full-on' because otherwise change comes far too slowly. If we do not believe in the sprint then we get suckered into the bullshit of the incremental. Former federal minister Fred Chaney once advised me that I need to treat the campaign for social justice as a marathon rather than a sprint. However I disagree – where we need to speak up, where we need to stand alongside others, where we need to make a difference, where we need to be on the frontiers then this is what we need to do – when enough rise, change happens. For the record, the then Vice Chancellor of that university and the Deputy Vice-Chancellors have all moved on, just about all of them against their will. However what's needed is a cultural shift and this does not automatically arise with a changing of the guard.

First Peoples do not comprise even three per cent of Australia's university student population, they are less than 0.5%. This too is racism.

Australia's racial incidents are far too many to document in this article and for the majority of Australians there is a hostile denial of the racism that underwrites these incidents. There is always some bullshit justification. This is why we need various education so as to unveil our racist layers and free ourselves from the effects of racist beliefs and attitudes. As long as there is a dominion of prejudices and negative stereotypes of other peoples – especially of minority groups – then dominant cultural groups will seek to impose themselves – and they will act as if people are the property of people, as does the Northern Territory government, as do federal governments, of the Territory's First Peoples, when in reality people are never the property of people, and at best people are the property of freedom. What is occurring in the Northern Territory is not only unlawful and immoral, it is unnatural. It is vile racism.

The trauma of the Intervention shall eventually be much studied, sadly and patronisingly so, by the ensuing generation of academics. They will find trauma and psychosocial damage equivalent to that of the Stolen Generations, the Stolen Wages era, equivalent to that of the century of apartheid.

During a body of research, I interviewed 100 of the Territory's Elders.

An Elder said, "We are not boss of our people, we are not boss of us, our ways are looked down upon and young people and rich people come in here and tell us we are nothing, we are no good and that they know better."

Another Elder said, "They tell us all these things that have happened in our town that we never saw happen till they came and told us so. There were not these bad things they said but now there are. Our people are getting sick because of them and our young don't care anymore."

Another Elder said, "They keep us poor... no electricity, no nothing, houses they would not live in... they come here to show us like we are children how to do what they never gave us a chance to do."

Another Elder said, "They are killing our children, look at our suicides, the numbers make the heart cry, can they not see what they have done?"

Another Elder said, "They want our land, and they take it... All Northern Territory is a prison, and the towns (are) prisons in prison."

I have never forgotten what the northeast Arnhem's Yalmay Yunupingu once said, "We are not brainless and dumb. We can manage our own communities."

Wearying and jading people into the sense of despair is racism.

The last three years have been ones of daily reflections for me, more intense than prior as I am now immersed in some of the news of our nation, of our multicultural nation. During these three years I was involved in a number of campaigns, some with their origin in the news stories I was covering or breaking. There was also a campaign that took up a good part of my life, the struggle to free thereabouts 100

Indonesian children, as young as 13 years of age from Australian adult prisons – and this abuse of children had been indeed racially motivated by our populist driven Commonwealth Government who refused to demonstrate moral leadership and languished Indonesian children in adult prisons. This too was racism.

In this year I have many times reflected on what was said to me by that university officer, **“What do these blacks want?...”** and for me it isn’t any different to what an inebriated off-duty Roebourne police officer, in 1983, said to a young Yindjibarndi, Ashley James, *“We’ll get you, you black cunt”* – and then alongside four other off-duty police officers thrashed into Yindjibarndi youth, killing 16-year-old John Pat, and for a time Roebourne became to Western Australia what Birmingham once was to Alabama. **A university officer and these coppers should have known better.** What’s changed? Much and nothing – that’s the tension, we’ve still got a long way to go. A couple of years ago, when I broke story after story on the plight of the Indonesian children, one of the producers of one of Australia’s biggest news programs said, *“Gerry, Australians don’t care about impoverished Indonesian children even if they are in adult prisons. They hate them anyway because government has fuelled the thought they’re people smugglers. We can’t do a story on this, it’ll hurt our ratings!”* This is racism. I didn’t give up, and now at least the majority of them have been freed – the Australian Human Rights Commission launched itself into the equation. The thinking that led to Australians dismissing Indonesian children as not mattering is borne of the underwriting that breeds racism, such as the colour of skin and because of the enculturated manner, because of attributions to presumptive differences. What some parliamentarians have said to me is shocking, reminding me of Plato’s warning, that the prospect of being governed by the dumb is always present.

My way is to speak up, and my experience is that my father was correct in what he taught me, that I should not put anything between myself and what is right – it’s what I would want of others for me or for my children, for my children’s children in the event that they are blighted and swarmed by inequalities and by wrong-doings. Where others who have a capacity to effect what is right, they must never put anything between themselves and what is right. We need to be ‘full on’ in the pursuit of justice for far too many do languish, suffer, lose their lives, and we with the loss of our dignity, our nobleness. The most courageous are those individuals who fight microcosmic battles. They do not have the protection of the whole world watching and their persecution is viler, crueller, and lonelier than the persecution of many of the heroes who are fighting for justices on the world stage.

When it comes to journalism, a journalist is not someone who merely reports events, at least not in my mind – a worthy journalist is someone who views whatever it is that there is between reporting and in chasing the ‘justice’ as thin, and contributes with through-care journalism to remedy. I am not one to spend my days, however few or many of them are left on this earth, worrying about what others may say or do to me because I will do as my father rightly taught me, and that is not to put anything between myself and what is right. This is what I ask of everyone.

Racism is haunting.

Let us who know it, who have lived it, let us keep on telling you about it and in time racism will die.

# MOΛΩΝ ΛΑΒΕ