

### DECOLONISATION AND INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY.

*This issue of Just Voices focuses on decolonisation and solidarity with Aboriginal people. It is hoped to be a resource to challenge our ideas on colonisation, to inspire ways we can be active and effective in the process of decolonisation and to better provide solidarity with Aboriginal people here, and Indigenous people world-wide.*

*It is not a new topic, and not the first resource of its kind. It is an attempt to provide critical writing on a range of issues in the contemporary climate as well as resources for further reading and engagement. The focus of this zine is on Australia, but some content addresses colonisation of Palestine.*

*The views represented in these articles do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the AJDS.*



- AJDS indigenous statement (p2)
- What's wrong with colonialism? Avigail Abarbanel (p4)
- Thoughts on decolonisation- Clare Land (p7)
- Empire gets smacked- Bogaine Spearim (p13)
- On Decolonisation; Aboriginal voices (p16)
- The differential impacts of colonialism across race and whiteness- Anastasia Kanjere (p.18)
- How can we begin to think about decolonising Palestine- Nader Ruhayel (p22)
- Pay the rent- Yael Leah (p27)
- Allyship, solidarity and further resources (p31).

The AJDS formally acknowledges that we, as an organisation, have members who live and work on the land of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin nation, owners of the Melbourne region. We also have active members in other parts of Australia, all of whom reside on Aboriginal land.

We pay our respects to elders past and present, and acknowledge the history of the lands we stand, work and live on, noting that Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded, and that colonisation continues. We are committed to standing in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples in the fight for justice and real land rights. In doing so we pay tribute to a history of Aboriginal-led resistance, from struggling against initial colonial invasion, to the Gurindji, Cummeragunja, and other walk offs, the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, the self-determination movement, organisations, and Tent Embassies which began in the 1970s, the fight to retain control of spaces such as Lake Tyers, legal battles to attain land and cultural rights, and the resistance of actively practicing culture and fighting for self-determination and sovereignty in the face colonisation and forced assimilation.

Since its colonisation, Australia has perpetrated genocide against the Aboriginal peoples, dispossessed them of their lands, split up their families and left a long history of trauma and oppression. Furthermore, this colonisation continues, informing government policy and benefiting non-Indigenous people. Aboriginal peoples and nations are still being dispossessed and, in some cases, removed from their lands, and Aboriginal people live in stark socio-economic disadvantage compared with the living standards of the rest of the population.

Instead of addressing the gaps in health, education and employment, successive governments have cut funding from Aboriginal services and undermined Aboriginal-run services such as health and legal centres. The AJDS affirms that self-determination at all levels of life is crucial to Aboriginal communities. As one of a series of measures, this requires the negotiation of a treaty.

Aboriginal communities across Australia are extraordinarily diverse, and AJDS seeks to affirm that understanding this – and understanding its implications – is crucial to creating justice for Aboriginal peoples.

Differences abound in terms of language, cultural practice, history, identity and politics. Differences also exist in forms of resistance, and in the differentiated ongoing impacts of colonisation. These differences are created by factors including

location, gender, sexuality, class, poverty, age, and relationship to Aboriginality, amongst other facets of life.

### Jewish communities and Aboriginal communities working together

In a manner in many ways reflective of the broader society, while the Jewish community has not always stood in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, there are some groups and individuals who have histories of mutual solidarity with Aboriginal peoples. [These have often drawn on commonalities of persecution.](#) On December 6<sup>th</sup> 1938, less than one month after Kristallnacht, William Cooper, a Victorian Aboriginal man, led a delegation of Kooris from the Australian Aborigines\* League to the German Consulate in Melbourne with a statement condemning the persecution of Jews in Germany. Not only were they first group in Australia to lodge a formal protest against Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews, but they are acknowledged as the only private protest against the Germans following Kristallnacht.<sup>[1]</sup>

There has also been much involvement by the Jewish community in Aboriginal civil rights and land rights movements. Indeed, the AJDS was established in 1984 with four major aims, one of which was "to support rights for Aborigines [sic], including land rights."

Over the years the AJDS has been a member and supporter of various Indigenous groups and institutional faculties, including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Koorie Heritage Trust, Justice for Indigenous Australians and the Monash Indigenous Centre at Monash University, as well as having been involved in numerous grassroots campaigns.

---

[1] National Indigenous Times, "Holocaust museum to honour William Cooper", 5 August 2010, p. 5. Gary Foley, 1997 '[Australia and the Holocaust: A Koori Perspective](#)' from the Koori History Website.

\*Please note that the word 'Aborigines' is used here to be historically accurate, but this word is now considered by many to be offensive and harmful language.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH COLONIALISM

**Avigail Abarbanel.** Printed with permission by the author. Originally article published in Mondoweiss. <http://mondoweiss.net/2018/01/whats-wrong-colonialism/>

*Avigail Abarbanel was born and raised in Israel. She moved to Australia in 1991 and now lives in the north of Scotland. She works as a psychotherapist and clinical supervisor in private practice and is an activist for Palestinian rights. She is the editor of *Beyond Tribal Loyalties: Personal Stories of Jewish Peace Activists* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).*

I remember many years ago sitting through a seminar at Macquarie University in Sydney during my Honours studies in Politics. That particular seminar focused on Western colonialism in the South Pacific, and modern Western imperialism in general. I remember one thing vividly from that class that remained etched into my mind. It was a question that the lecturer asked us repeatedly and insistently. 'Why is it so important for indigenous people to maintain their identity? What is so bad with a particular way of life or culture disappearing?'

At the time I could not think of an answer. In fact none of us was able to answer it. I remember feeling like a rabbit in the headlights. Every bit of me told me this was very wrong, but I couldn't explain why. It was the mid-nineties, and only four years after I had moved to Australia from Israel. I was ignorant about what colonialism or settler-colonialism are, and their legacy. I was still blind to the Zionist settler-colonialism in which I grew up, and did not register the fact that by virtue of being white, I automatically embraced the settler-colonial power structure in Australia too.

The entire topic was taught in a sanitised way, and in what I now recognise as an apologist Western attitude with a strong white Western bias. That lecturer did not ask his question to get us to think critically about colonialism. He really meant for us to consider that there is nothing wrong with cultures disappearing and being replaced with other cultures, not by a natural, organic process of social and cultural evolution, but by force and coercion employed by someone coming in from elsewhere.

I didn't understand at the time that the disappearance of a culture by force is always in the context of psychopathic control, that it is in effect a rape, an exercise of pure power; that it is always in the service of, and for the benefit of the coloniser's ruling classes. Colonialism is never for the benefit of the colonised, and it is always carried out in the context of a system of violence, control, and domination.

Colonisers do not knock on the door of the colonised, and ask politely if it is OK to borrow a cup of sugar and a couple of eggs. There is no equality of power, and the colonised cannot respond politely that they have nothing to give, or alternatively choose to offer the cup of sugar and two eggs. The key factor here is choice. The colonisers step in with superior weaponry, efficient bureaucracy and organisation, all supported by an ideology of superiority and entitlement, and they take. It's theft of land, resources, culture. It is rape on every level. It is taking what isn't theirs without asking permission, and without concern for the impact that this has on the ones from whom they are taking.

Colonisation is an exercise in objectification. Others exist only as a resource for the coloniser, not in their own right. In psychotherapy, we recognise this easily as a psychopathic power structure that is harmful and extremely dangerous to the victim. It can lead to psychological annihilation, and often to death, either directly, or as a longer-term consequence of the psychological destruction.

Colonisation ultimately has to be accompanied by a 'policy of elimination', as Patrick Wolfe calls it. Without a policy of elimination the exercise cannot succeed. There will be resistance. Colonialism is ultimately about the bottom line, material gain. Or in the case of Israel's settler-colonialist project in Palestine, in the service of the goal of establishing and securing an exclusively Jewish state in the whole of historic Palestine. As many colonisers throughout history have learned the hard way, colonialism can backfire. When too many resources have to be diverted to quashing resistance, it can end up in a loss rather than gain for the coloniser. The dynamic of resistance is at the heart of the success or failure of colonial projects. An effective policy of elimination is therefore crucial for colonial success because it tackles the problem of resistance directly.

Elimination does not just mean killing a lot of people, or eliminating an entire people. A policy of elimination means also, the annihilation of the indigenous people's identity, or 'spirit'. The spirit of a people (or of an individual for that

matter) isn't something that can be quantified or measured. But it is nonetheless as real and as tangible as the art, craft, customs and traditions, cuisine, history, relationships, and stories that a culture contains. It's about how a culture expresses its own unique experience of life.

Cultures are never monoliths. They are diverse and multifaceted, but are still identifiable as different and unique from other cultures. A culture to a group, is what an identity is to an individual. Take that away, and only a shell is left. Humans do not live well as shells, either as groups or as individuals. It's like being a zombie, an animated physical form devoid of a soul. Culture and identity are both driven by, and are an expression of the essence of existence, the 'life force' if you will of a group or an individual. They are intertwined. Damage one, and you compromise the other.

In the lives of individuals, the equivalent of colonialism is the experience of being affected by someone with a personality disorder. So many clients with such a history describe being left feeling 'like a zombie', an empty shell. In psychotherapy, we have to help these clients reconstruct their sense of identity and self by helping them rediscover what is important to them, what their interests are, their values, feelings, thoughts and beliefs, and how they like to express them. It's a huge job.

Kamel Hawwash's excellent article, 'Israel implements a deliberate policy to terrorise Palestinian children' (Middle East Eye, 4th January 2018) made me think of how cunning Israel is in its attempt to destroy the essence of the Palestinian people, their very 'life force', their spirit. Attacking children is an aspect of the policy of elimination that isn't focused on numbers, but on breaking the spirit of resistance.

One of the biggest injuries you can inflict on adults is to render them powerless to protect their own children. As Hawwash says, "The knock on the door, the shouting of a name, the forced entry into a bedroom, can happen to any Palestinian child and without warning. No regard for age or circumstance is given." If the Israeli forces can rape their way into a family's home and do whatever they wish to the children, what power does the parent have left to protect the children?

The trauma this produces, the way it breaks the spirit of people, is beyond what anyone can imagine. Only when you work closely with clients who were put in that situation do you catch a glimpse of the devastation this causes. The guilt and the

trauma are beyond what even excellent psychotherapy can help repair. Most parents would not be able to even conceive the idea of not being allowed to protect their own children. But this is both the threat and reality that every single Palestinian parent both in the colonised West Bank and in Gaza are living with.

Leaving parents powerless to protect their children destroys families and chips away at the social ties and links that are such an important aspect of what makes a culture what it is. This is calculated and intentional, and I believe it falls under the UN definition of genocide along many other Israeli practices. But then again when is settler-colonialism not a type of genocide?

To answer that nasty question of that lecturer whose name I do not remember, What's wrong with the disappearance of a culture (due to colonialism)? What is wrong with it is precisely the same thing that is wrong with a rape.

## THOUGHTS ON DECOLONIZATION: CLARE LAND

This text is Clare's presentation from the Decolonisation Forum: From Australia to Israel-Palestine, organised by AJDS in Melbourne on 4 September 2016. Also on the panel were Prof Gary Foley from Victoria University, Dr Sary Zananiri from Monash University and Niva Grunzweig from Zochrot (zochrot.org).

# Decolonisation

From Australia to Israel-Palestine

*Dr Clare Land is a non-Aboriginal activist and researcher who has been involved in supporting Aboriginal land rights struggles in southeast Australia since 1998. Her acclaimed book, Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and directions for supporters of Indigenous struggles, is a comprehensive resource about the ways non-Indigenous people can work in solidarity with Aboriginal aspirations today.*

## INTRODUCTION

There are three ideas I want to contribute tonight. First a couple of thoughts about what decolonizing solidarity means. Then a comment on 'decolonizing the mind'. Then a comment on how you can really see some of the big questions about white supporters in Australia when you take a look at aspects of solidarity politics in other struggles and places.

## PART I

At the outset I want to share what I mean when I talk about decolonizing solidarity – the title of my book; Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles.

The title pays homage to an earlier book first published in 1999 by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, called Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. No doubt her title pays homage to an earlier book by Kenyan scholar Ngugi Wa Thiongo: Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature (1986).

Now, in contrast to the authors of those two books I write as a non-Indigenous person. But I only know the limited amount I know about racism and Indigenous struggles from Black scholars and people of colour, and Aboriginal educators like Gary Foley. So it is appropriate for me to make this very clear in terms of the genealogy of the ideas I peddle by clearly giving credit and paying homage.

There are two meanings to this title, Decolonizing solidarity.

Firstly, the argument of the book is that the way non-Indigenous people in Australia express support for Aboriginal struggles needs to be decolonized. People of colonial backgrounds who aspire to be supporters of Aboriginal struggles without realising it bring a deep paternalism with them. This needs to be recognised and undone. It undermines and takes energy away from the political agendas of Aboriginal people and dealing with racism also creates a great emotional burden. Beyond that, for Aboriginal people to be educating supporters who are struggling to come to terms with how we might be shaped by the colonizing world that we are a part of and who might be defensive about that is an additional massive burden also.

All this is one reason why it is a lot more powerful for Aboriginal people to do their own thing. So those of you who are non-Aboriginal have to find ways to both be guided by and also not be demanding of Aboriginal people.

Now, secondly, Decolonizing Solidarity means that solidarity should be decolonizing. Solidarity should be a force for decolonization. Not for reconciliation or other such immaterial movements. So, I am saying that because that is in a nutshell what Aboriginal people from the south east of Australia are saying – and that is the political community in relation to whom this book is written. So, the solidarity of the kind that I write about is about supporting the political agenda of Aboriginal people whose movement is about Land Rights, Self Determination and Economic Independence. The Black GST also came out of this same political community. The Black GST is about Genocide, Sovereignty and Treaty.

So decolonization is about the return of Land and Power. It is about supporting Aboriginal peoples' struggle for Survival as a distinct people and returning stolen wealth. That is what colonization has been about here in Australia, a settler colony. It has been about eliminating Aboriginal people and settling in their place. If you look at what my forebears did you can see the major techniques of colonization, and then you can work out what the opposite of that is, and what the current political realities are. Taking land and children, snuffing out language, taking over in terms of what laws are in place and in force. Colonization has also tried to lump Aboriginal people into one mass – erasing all the diversity within this continent. Colonization has also appropriated the right to certify who is Aboriginal and who is not. And who is going to be recognised as the owners of a particular place and who is not. All of these things have been resisted but most of these things are the subject of ongoing struggle.

One of the most pragmatic solutions to the current political reality is the notion of Pay the Rent. That is the idea of people of colonial backgrounds paying rent to Aboriginal people for the occupation of this land. As Gary Murray said in an interview for Decolonizing Solidarity: You take Aboriginal people's land away forever, you pay rent forever.

One of the things settler Australians also do is assume we have a future in this place. That needs to be confronted too because at the moment there is a great illegitimacy here, a great injustice, and a huge mess. People of colonial backgrounds, myself included, really need to take a good hard look at questions like ownership of land,

inheritance, returning land, actively supporting land returns and buy backs, and changing greedy lifestyles that rely on land being ripped up for mining and so on.

## **PART II**

So, moving on now to talk about 'decolonizing the mind': Many of you will have heard of this phrase and may well be able to imagine into what it probably means. It is about native people's psychological recovery, unlearning ideas of inferiority and self-hate imposed by colonial processes, and reclaiming cultural pride.

Decolonizing the Mind is the title of an important book by Kenyan scholar Ngugi Wa Thiongo which was published in 1986. Its main concern is the Politics of Language in African Literature, and the importance of farewelling English and French to write in African languages (such as his own – Gikuyu). It addresses the colonial legacy that has remained so strong even after formal decolonization in countries across Africa had occurred. So, it is extremely important to think about material and political decolonization, and not to somehow skip over those things straight to decolonizing the mind.

People of colonial backgrounds are also profoundly shaped by the colonial process and there is a huge amount of work to be done for people like myself to unlearn ideas about Australia and about Aboriginal people that are constantly repeated by dominant cultural sources like media and schools and universities. However, decolonisation is not mainly about attitudinal change, or critique. And it is not a process that is independent from the return of land and power.

There is a very, very important article about this called 'Decolonization is not a metaphor' by *Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang* that is freely available online.

## **PART III**

Now let's take a look at 'non-normalization,' one particular aspect of solidarity politics in Israel and Palestine. Because I think when you do that, you can really reflect back on some things here with a greater sense of cynicism, if you are not wholly cynical already.

I am going to address this by paraphrasing some ideas from my book. And I do invite comments and corrections from Sary Zananiri and people at Zochrot about how I have understood non-normalization and what developments there might have been since.

Non-normalization is a position that criticises and boycotts any collaboration between Palestinians and Israelis that creates the impression that harmony exists or that it can be created without attention to the return of land and refugees. It says that giving the impression of harmony and normal life is deceptive and may mislead outside observers about the real situation.

So, the non-normalisation stance calls for a boycott on activities that bring the two sides together for any reason other than to further the goal of strengthening resistance to the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination. That is, until Israel complies with international law and Palestinian rights.

So – there is a lot that could be said and there would be wider debates and views on everything that is connected to this but can I just reflect on that by saying I think it should be particularly interesting to solidarity activists here because I think there are lots of ways in which white support groups make demands on Aboriginal people to ‘be nice’, and to focus on what we want to focus on such as reconciliation, without actually answering a call to support Aboriginal peoples’ more hardcore agendas. We take energy and focus away from the bigger issues like land rights. Now I am sure many people here can mount scathing critiques of Government sponsored reconciliation – but I think no critique sums it up more concisely than that of Robbie Thorpe, who has said, ‘Let’s reconcile the *accounts*.’

## CONCLUSION

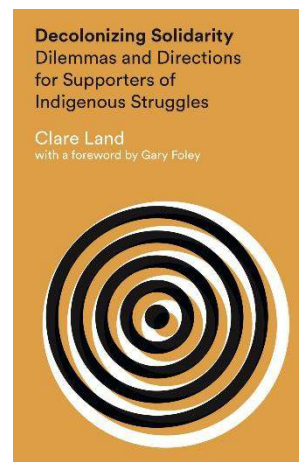
So just some thoughts to wrap up about what you can do.

I’m going to quote Foley here. He has suggested that supporters form into like-minded little groups and affiliate themselves to Aboriginal groups. Your task is to learn as you go, and stay up to date about what needs to be done in support and do it with a minimum of fuss. There are some great little crews around who are really in a good position to be of practical support to rallies and actions: the Street Medics and the Legal Observers group. If they are not happening at the moment then they

might need new energy. Or you can just take inspiration and think about what you could do – a screen-printing group, a photocopying group, a poster group, a self-education study group (that also creates events like this – spaces to educate self and others). If you are organised into a group then you can be called upon to be a support to Aboriginal-led campaigner groups.

The important thing here is a group to group relationship. There is something very powerful and good about that because each collective does a lot of its own work to empower each other, reach a shared understanding, and also if necessary, to support, challenge and hold each other accountable. There is a collective spirit in all of it, which is good.

But there are some things you can do when there is no obvious political Aboriginal group doing public stuff. That is not the case at the moment but at times it might be. There is no harm in continuing to educate yourself about Aboriginal struggles of the past and present – that can be done at any time and without asking much of Aboriginal people. It can be done by seeking out any opportunity to hear or see or read things authored by Aboriginal people. There is also lots of work to be done in getting to know how racism and paternalism works, and in examining how every one of us is shaped by all our transactions with the white dominated world. Anyone of any background is shaped by this – obviously how this impacts on you depends on who you are and the ways in which both oppression and privilege may shape your life. Some people will know well the experience of moving in and out of worlds within the same city.



If you want to know more you can read my book, and one thing that might support and deepen your engagement in the book is to join a Decolonizing Solidarity Book Club group so you can discuss the ideas in the book as you go. Information about all of this is available on my website:

<http://decolonizingsolidarity.org/>

## THE EMPIRE GETS SMACKED

**Bogaine Spearim** (Kooma/Murrawarri/Gamilaraay).

*Printed with permission by the author. The original article appears in The Black Rising Magazine; 'A national Aboriginal publication dedicated to informing our people about decolonization and inspiring them to take action in the anti-colonial struggle.'*

<https://issuu.com/blacknationsrising>

The 2018 Commonwealth Games is fast approaching, with this on the horizon I want to look at some examples of resistance of our people here and First Nations around the world. Indigenous people have always played a hand in the destruction of arrogant and ignorant sporting events. The Olympics, The FIFA World Cup and the Commonwealth Games are held on stolen land and continue to attempt to destroy the lives of Indigenous people. In this article I will talk about the 1982

Commonwealth Games protest in Brisbane, The 2006 Commonwealth Games protest in Melbourne, The 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, The FIFA World Cup and what we have the potential to do on the Gold Coast next year.



The announcement of Brisbane hosting the 1982 Commonwealth Games (formally known as The Empire Games) hit a chord with Aboriginal people because of the conditions we were in. In the eyes of our people, Australia (least of all Brisbane) was not worthy of hosting a cheerful and commemorative event like the Commonwealth Games. Queensland was the last state in so called "Australia" to still have the oppressive Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Act (also known as The Black Acts). Due to this the state of Queensland held immense power over blackfullas. The condition Aboriginal people were living in was appalling, especially in missions and

reserves (not much has changed). It was common to be brutalised by the police force; mob would often be seriously hurt or die because of this brutality. This was before the royal commission into black deaths in custody and was under the reign of racist, former Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson.

Over the two weeks the Commonwealth games were held in '82 thousands of Aboriginal people and supporters across so called Australia and the world gathered in Musgrave Park. This gathering was considered illegal at the time as laws and legislation did not permit our people to gather in groups and the Aboriginal flag was prohibited. In the months before the games a committee of blackfullas called Black Unity worked hard strategizing and organising a planned resistance. Protests and rallies were organised all over Brisbane at various arenas where the games were hosted. Aboriginal people snuck into events holding banners and Aboriginal flags, and streets were also shut down in the Brisbane CBD.

In 2006, for the fourth time, so called 'Australia' hosted the Commonwealth Games, this time in Melbourne. Aboriginal people and supporters protested the games again. This was exactly a year before the Howard government, in a show of power, issued a state of emergency in the Northern Territory temporarily removing the Racial Discrimination Act from the constitution to implement what was known as the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the bastard child of Stronger Futures, a program implemented 10 years later that still exists today).

The organising group launched a concept called The Black GST aiming to get Indigenous rights back on the agenda by calling attention to the issues of genocide (G), sovereignty (S), and treaty (T). The same organising group decided to dub the games "The Stolenwealth Games." This title shone a light on the wealth the Commonwealth had stolen since occupation; the land, lives and cultural knowledge that were forcibly destroyed at the hands of the British Empire and Australian Government.

Over a course of 3 to 4 months (before, during and after the games) Aboriginal people and supporters occupied Kings Domain in Melbourne CBD calling the occupation 'Camp Sovereignty'. They burnt the Australian and the British Flag within the Queen and the Royal Families eye sight. I remember my older brother and father leaving to get the bus with staunch Brisbane mob that were headed to Melbourne to participate in the resistance. They had the honour of meeting

different Aboriginal people from around the continent that had the same drive they did; to expose and shame Australia in the watchful eye of the world.

When the 2010 Winter Olympics was announced to be held on Turtle Island (so called Canada) in Vancouver, First Nation's Warrior Societies and non-Indigenous groups began organising. Actions and information sessions were held about why it is important to oppose the Winter Olympics on stolen land. Homelessness groups occupied buildings to raise awareness towards how the city upgrades were effecting Indigenous, low income and homeless people. The Warrior Society stole a massive Olympic flag in response (and to honour) a native elder who passed away after being incarcerated in the lead up to the games for blockading the then proposed highway expansion into Vancouver city. They also organised blockades against the Olympic torch relay and raised awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

In 2014 Brazil hosted The FIFA World Cup and like the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Brazil was accused of using the event as a pretext for social cleansing as thousands of Indigenous, low income and homeless people were forced out on the streets. In the lead up to The FIFA World Cup, there was an increase in bus and train fare in some major cities, multiple issues arose regarding infrastructure, education and health care, the cost of living increased and multiple scandals of corruption surfaced regarding embezzlement and over billing in the government. Indigenous people resisted against extreme police forces to protest the land grab in the Amazon, the expansion of mines, dams, army bases and other industrial projects.

The 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast is an opportunity for our people from all corners of the continent to gather in protest once again. Just like in the lead up to the 1982 and 2006 Commonwealth Games with the organising groups; Black Unity and the Black GST, a collective has begun for the 2018 Commonwealth Games called Black Liberation Ally Action Collective (BLAAC). The aim of this collective is to involve as many progressive political groups as possible such as; various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, Unions, Socialists and Environmental and Student groups. We have launched an art competition in Issue 7 of The Black Rising called Stolen Land, Stolen Lives, Stolen Wealth. We are also working on a zine called the Empire Gets Smacked aimed to inform and inspire creative action.

Revisiting stories of resilience and resistance of our own people and Indigenous

peoples around the world can give us a sense that we're not alone in the global struggle against oppression and colonisation. Looking at these past examples we can remind ourselves we do have the strength, we do have the unity, we do have a reason to live and that's what scares the colonisers the most.

## ON DECOLONISATION

*Adam Sharah is co-chair of ANFA- Australian Nuclear Free Alliance, Campaigner with Friends of the Earth QLD and student of Bachelor of Contemporary Aboriginal Art*

### **What does decolonisation mean to you?**

Decolonisation means liberation and freedom from colonial systems designed to oppress Indigenous First Nations Peoples.

### **What are some ways non-Indigenous people can actively engage with decolonisation?**

I have observed that the conversation surrounding decolonisation occurring on this land is in itself defined by the parameters set by colonial structures, in that these conversations are primarily being driven by academics, often non/indigenous academics. This is confusing for me, considering the core and central role western academia plays in colonial oppression. If these conversations remain in the realm of academia inaccessible to the Aboriginal People on the ground who are impacted by colonialism, then these conversations serve to strengthen colonisation by advancing western academic structures that denigrate and devalue Indigenous knowledge whilst strengthening the white saviour complex that dominates western academia. For me what is more powerful than resisting or deconstructing colonisation is to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to reform and construct Indigenous systems. By Indigenous systems I mean systems designed, controlled, and administered by Aboriginal People for Aboriginal People.

This can be done in many ways, such as:

- Assisting Aboriginal People to regain and retain their connection to Country- their Traditional Homelands.



- Supporting Aboriginal cultural initiatives to rebuild cultural practices that reaffirm our cultural identity.
- Supporting Aboriginal communities engaged in practical community-based programs designed to increase Aboriginal autonomy and self-governance.

Decolonisation is meaningless unless Aboriginal people can create opportunities to be the authors of Indigenous systems, systems that replace the oppressive systems colonisation put in place and restore Aboriginal self-governance.

*Uncle Robbie Thorpe is a Gunnai/Mara elder from eagle and pelican tribes.*

### What does decolonisation mean to you?

Know where you stand.

Do you know the lore of the land? Ever contemplated what that may mean? This was a lawful place before colonisation. It's invaders that made it lawless. Decolonisation is a war crimes commission and a truth commission.

### What are some ways non-Indigenous people can actively engage with decolonisation?

The opportunity arises once again here in Australia with the Stolenwealth games.

This is an opportunity for people who are struggling in this country, in a war that's never been recognised and never ended, to expose this countries' genocidal criminal history and illegal occupation. We are always waiting for international spotlight to expose these issues. Blackfullas target the international spotlight,



because it's no good talking to the government to resolve these issues. That's why it's important.

There is no treaty here, no consent and obviously no jurisdiction. It's an ongoing crime scene from 1770 to this point. Australia remains a crime scene. For this to change we need a resolution of the Black GST- Genocide to be stopped, Sovereignty to be restored and Treaty to be made.

There is a fundamental legal issue of customary lore.

Australia doesn't have a date to celebrate until the issues of genocide & occupation are resolved.

Stop talking, start doing. Pull down the statues, tear up the plaques. Recognise the lore of the land. 240 years back rent, compounding interest, damages and a war crimes commission.

## THE DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF COLONIALISM ACROSS RACE AND WHITENESS

*Anastasia Kanjere is a white settler scholar, writer and activist born and raised on stolen land in Narm. Hit me up on twitter at @a\_kanjere*

Colonisation hasn't, and doesn't, impact people along binary dimensions.

In so-called settler colonies, it's common to use the binary of settler/First Nations as a rough way of distinguishing who has been dispossessed by, and who is in the position of benefiting from, colonisation. This is, in my opinion, a very useful turn of phrase. It puts the focus on colonisation, rather than the less inflected category of race, and also avoids erasing the existence of settlers of colour through a binary of white/Indigenous.

But, of course, things aren't so simple. The benefits of colonisation and privilege are accessible to different people in different ways because such access is further delineated by other aspects, including whiteness. In North America, because of the more visible history of the slave trade, people can identify that colonisation not only dispossessed Indigenous people of their lands, but also displaced other

Indigenous people to other lands. In Australia, we have our own history of slavery (see, for example *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labor Trade*, Tracey Banivanua-Mar (2007)) – although this is much less recognised or discussed. Even outside of slavery and indentured labour, though, there are vast differences between the experiences of non-Indigenous people in this place.

How do we make sense of these differences?

I'm going to offer a couple of – very academic – paths into thinking through these questions. As a Critical Race and Whiteness scholar, these texts come up for me on an almost-daily basis, and I still find them fairly challenging! On the other hand, theoretical approaches like these can also be very illuminating, so persevere if you can. I'm choosing some of the best, and will try to talk it through as we go. If there's one thing you take away from this, I hope it will be that colonialism is global. While the most compelling political commitment must be to the colonialism manifesting where we stand, we can see colonialism stretching beyond that and inflecting all forms of global power.

In *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, Goenpul scholar and leading theorist of Critical Whiteness and Critical Indigenous Studies Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes that non-white migrants to Australia 'can belong, but they cannot possess' (p. 6). Moreton-Robinson's argument focuses on the idea of white possession being the underpinning logic of the violent formation of Australia as a nation-state. Possession was the logic with which British colonisers related to this land. Unable to see evidence of a concept of possession in the original inhabitants, they declared this place *terra nullius* – no one's land. Since it was not *owned* it was *not anyone's*, as the colonisers were unable to conceive of any other kind of relationship that might exist between people and land. Going yet one step further, the colonisers took the absence of ownership in Aboriginal societies to be evidence of their deficiency – even their non-humanness. Possession is a core attribute of human society, they argued, therefore beings who do not possess are not human beings. In this way they were able to rationalise their occupation and theft of Aboriginal land.

So the concept of possession is crucial in the colonisation of this land and the founding of Australia. Importantly, Moreton-Robinson explains that possession is an idea that is always inextricably tied to whiteness: 'Race indelibly marks the law's possessiveness' (*xii*). Elsewhere, she writes:

Australia was acquired in the name of the King of England. As such patriarchal white sovereignty is a regime of power that derives from the illegal act of possession and is most acutely manifested in the form of the Crown and the judiciary. The crown holds exclusive possession of its territory, which is the very foundation of the nation state. The nation state in turn confers patriarchal white sovereignty on its citizens through what Carole Pateman argues is the sexual contract (1988). However, not all citizens benefit from or exercise patriarchal white sovereignty equally. Race, class, gender, sexuality and ableness are markers that circumscribe the performance of patriarchal white sovereignty by citizens within Australian society.

'The Possessive Logic of Patriarchal White Sovereignty: The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision,' (2002) *borderlands*, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 5

This leads us back to her argument about what kind of relationship settlers of colour have to the spoils of colonisation in Australia. Non-white migrants do have a legal and emotional state of belonging that is predicated upon dispossession, she writes. They are therefore tied to the logics of *terra nullius* and capital that undergird Australia. However, she writes, 'whiteness is the invisible measure of who can hold possession' (p. 6). Therefore the ability to possess is denied to those settlers who are not white, while the ability to belong is granted. Settlers of colour can belong, but they cannot possess.

Moreton-Robinson is writing here about possession of the nation-state in a metaphorical sense – of course settlers of colour are legally able to acquire property. Her account speaks to the way that First Nations peoples' very existence is seen as a threat to the nation, which needs to be expunged or silenced, whereas the migrant can be generously welcomed in a way that does not threaten white ownership.

On the other hand, many migrants of colour feel that they do not – even cannot – belong. At best, the experience of belonging that is offered is one that is constantly contingent upon white approval. This is what Moreton-Robinson calls '[patriarchal] white sovereignty' – the assertion of sovereignty by whiteness. White sovereignty means that it is only white people who have the right to determine who belongs here: who is welcomed and who is suspect; who, as John Howard put it, will come to this place and the circumstances in which they shall come. Ghassan Hage refers to this as 'governmental belonging': a habit of whiteness which asserts its belonging to the nation through a managerial scrutiny of those non-white others who seek inclusion. In this context, the belonging available to non-white migrants seems tenuous at best.

Complicating things further, many settlers of colour in Australia are (or are descended from) Indigenous peoples of other places: displaced by force, by war, by poverty, by environmental devastation, or by persecution. Therefore someone may be a part of colonising processes here due precisely to their own (or to their ancestral) experiences of colonisation elsewhere.

To make sense of this contingency, it's useful to turn to the work of Peruvian postcolonial scholar Aníbal Quijano, and his theory of the 'coloniality of power.' Quijano's article 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America' is a crucial text for postcolonial thought. He argues that colonialism was an event of key importance in founding the structure of the modern world. Colonisation cemented theories of racial hierarchy, established practices of labour exploitation, built capital and expropriated land – and did all of this with the accompanying ideological work of establishing Europe as the centre of knowledge and the repository of modernity. As a result, all kinds of aspects of global power – labour, capital, land, knowledge – can be understood as mediated by colonialism. 'The model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality,' he writes (p. 533). Because of colonial history, power, race, and money continue to operate in a colonial model.

Bringing this back to our question, Quijano's work can help explain why it shouldn't be surprising to observe that patterns of migration are often intermingled with forces of colonisation. The forces of interglobal money and conflict fit into the model of the coloniality of power – which is to say that money, war, and environmental destruction can be understood vectors of that coloniality which inflects them. A global understanding of colonialism shows how people may be in the position of colonisers (or at least settlers) on this land, but have been led to that position by practices of colonisation and power enacted upon them. This isn't by any means to diminish the momentousness of colonialism, but only to extend the reach of how we conceive of it.

#### **Some further readings:**

*The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*, by Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015):

A collection of her essays over the last decade or so, organised around the central principle of her theory of white possession. One trouble is that Moreton-Robinson

writes in very dense theoretical language. Her work really is the leading in the field but be prepared to invest some time!

*Undoing Border Imperialism*, Harsha Walia (2013):

A small handbook produced by anti-border activists in Turtle Island (Canada), this book does a beautiful job of discussing the connections between the struggles of First Nations peoples and racialised migrants. Written in an accessible manner and with a variety of voices and types of texts (poems, essays, memoir).

*White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, Ghassan Hage (1998):

This is from several years ago now, and Hage himself has observed that his engagement with the issue of First Nations dispossession in the book is inadequate.

On the other hand, this is a superbly readable book which presents an analysis of whiteness in Australia that is still highly relevant.

## **HOW CAN WE BEGIN TO THINK ABOUT DECOLONISING PALESTINE?**

### ***Nader Ruhayel***

Comparative settler colonial studies have been productive in highlighting parallels and divergences in the methods of establishment and expansion of settler colonial societies. An examination of the patchwork of juridical, military, political, and social strategies by which these societies are established, can lead us to understand the particular ways in which indigenous cultures are intercepted, appropriated, or destroyed. Settler colonial projects always proceed by effecting the erasure of one people, and replacing it with another. The psychology of European settler colonial identity comes to value very highly and anxiously the fictive notion of 'Western civilisation.' Alongside this, these societies privilege modes of thinking that invite us to understand that, despite the wholesale devastation of indigenous cultures by settler society, the surviving indigenous population has gained immeasurably by forcibly being made to join 'the West.' Decolonial politics in this setting challenges this psychology, which creates a mental gap between the colonising population and the act of colonisation. Against the attempts of the settler state to normalise its

presence, decolonial politics aims to expose all the ways in which the colonial relationship between the settler state and the indigenous population is still ongoing. This is especially critical in the Australian context, for example, where there has been no treaty, no constitutional recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, and no reparative justice for Indigenous survivors.

In one sense, the establishment of Israel was a conservative and belated reiteration of the foundational logic of numerous other European settler colonial projects that preceded it, including here in Australia. In another though, Zionism complicated its colonial relationship to Palestine through its strategic mobilisation of a Jewish historical and biblical claim to that piece of land. Through the relentless pursuit of military, political, diplomatic, and cultural avenues, it forwarded and normalised a very particular idea of Jewish indigeneity while simultaneously transforming the indigenous Palestinians into trespassers or offending pests in their own homeland. What is the prognosis for the Palestinian people in the face of a colonial state that still openly pursues their complete ruination, in broad daylight? I would like to propose that the colonial project in Palestine depends specifically on this illusion of two competing indigeneities of equal significance. Zionism has been highly efficient in naturalising this binary frame, which informs the problematic notion of an Israeli-Palestinian 'conflict' and its corollary two-state solution. Decolonial politics must address itself to this illusion, and work towards challenging and dissolving the Zionist appropriation of the language and form of an indigenous polity, at the expense of the people of Palestine.

The history of Zionism, says Elias Sanbar, co-founder of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, is the history of emptying a land of its people within a frame of settler colonialism. Its ideology, however, is that of the negation of exile. *A people without a land for a land without a people*, as the Zionist maxim goes. For this ideology to have symbolic currency, what had to be effected in Palestine was the double disappearance of the indigenous population. On the one hand, the region had to be physically cleared of its residents, but on the other, the violent clearing itself had to be made to vanish for the colonial project to represent itself as this homecoming, as the end of Jewish exile. In Sanbar's words, this double disappearance 'had to function from the start as if it had already taken place, which is to say never "seeing" the existence of the other who was indisputably present all the time.'

As such, there is an intellectual current within Zionism, which figures the European colonisation of Palestine as a restorative or even, bizarrely, a decolonising act for

the Jewish people. Colonial Israel comes to imagine itself as the eternal Jewish homeland, wrested, with an unfortunate but incidental violence, from the hands of illegitimate occupiers variously figured as Muslim hordes, Arab conquerors, or, in the last instance, as the ambivalent and chimeric figure of the Palestinian, flickering in and out of existence in the Zionist narrative. Jews come to occupy the position of an indigenous people. Meanwhile, the fundamental Zionist affect towards Palestinians is not that they aren't entitled to enjoy the freedoms and dignities of others, but rather that the figure of the Palestinian is itself already a problematic fabrication, a frustrated afterthought to the Jewish return, a personification of an antisemitism that constantly threatens to deliver the Jewish people back to genocide. This peculiar position has allowed the emergence of a particularly virulent and unabashed form of settler colonialism to emerge within historic Palestine, buttressed by a Jewish sense of moral and historical entitlement to the lands and homes of another, extant population.

Thus, we find a dissonance between the reality of Israeli colonisation and the ideology of a Jewish indigeneity that instantly erases all other non-Jewish indigeneities. This has generated some strange fault lines in Zionist cognition around the settler colonial nature of the Israeli state. In the 1990's Israeli historiography showed beyond a doubt what Palestinian testimony had long maintained: that the birth of the Israeli state involved the planned (and often violent) expulsion of the indigenous of Palestine, numbering in their hundreds of thousands both in 1948-9 and in 1967. And yet, to this day, there is an uncanny and unmistakable inability of most Israelis to narrativise the ethnic cleansing through which Israel was founded, a societal affliction that Palestinian scholar Edward Said described as a phenomenon 'bordering on schizophrenia.'

In its first aspect, Israel is for its Jewish subjects a highly developed ethnocracy with a very sophisticated staging of the rituals of liberal democracy for its own colonial ends. Increasingly in recent years, the Knesset has mulled (and passed) ever more racist laws that secure a Jewish supremacy formulated in illiberal, anti-democratic and tangentially fascist terms. Today, the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to grow in scope and deadliness, a relentless and incremental policy of 'Judaisation' that aims at the removal of all Arab presence from Palestine at a time where mass expulsions are no longer a viable procedure for a nominally democratic state. In its second aspect, Israel is for its Palestinian subjects a brutal necropolitical regime (or, a regime that concerns itself with the death of people) whose operation is the material destruction of Palestinian bodies

and populations, achieved through technologies of surveillance, exclusion and incarceration, the disruption and erasure of societies, the suppression of intellectual and cultural production, and the merciless and unadulterated exposure of civilian bodies to the firepower of one of the world's most ferocious militaries. It is a state that is holding almost two million Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip in a state of moribund destitution, a grotesque experiment in human strangulation the form of which today represents a singular kind of criminality.



Against the attestations of liberal Zionists, the gradual but undeniable emergence of apartheid in Israel represents not a corruption of the Zionist project, but its maturation. In Australia, perhaps for demographic, political or geographic reasons, assimilation of the surviving Indigenous population became expedient to the settler colonial project. This has been state policy for more than sixty years, a policy which Indigenous sovereignty movements in Australia continue to challenge. Meanwhile, Zionism emerged from the outset as a racist and separatist ethnonationalism. Its ideology and political project were formulated in the midst of global and regional upheaval on a background of centuries of Jewish persecution in Europe and Russia. Augmented no doubt by the traumas of the Nazi-authored genocide of Europe's Jewry, in the Zionist imaginary Israel is figured as a Jewish sanctuary, and the

impulsion to evacuate historic Palestine of *all* of its non-Jewish violators remains. Apartheid here establishes the image of the snare, or stranglehold. Apartheid is a kind of political and material compromise, and it enforces legal, geographic, and societal discontinuities between the coloniser and the colonised. It names a relationship of inclusion through exclusion, between Israel and a population that cannot be removed, and must not be assimilated, but that must instead be incrementally neutralised or snuffed out of existence.

Such are the stakes, and in this story, decolonisation of Palestine and de-Zionisation of Palestine become synonymous. In terms of how we might position ourselves ethically in relation to Israel and Palestine, then, the question of Jewish indigeneity as it is deployed by Zionism, is something of a moot one. Yes, Jews were indigenous to historic Palestine; yes, Jews were and are indigenous to much of the Middle East. It is maybe useful, as many Jewish writers do, to speak of Jewish indigeneities in the multiple, as a stratagem to upturn the exclusivist Zionist claim to a singular Jewish indigeneity that is consonant with ethnonationalist racism, that increasingly depends on fascistic and militaristic self-representations, that slides into Jewish exceptionalism, and that increasingly embraces motifs of Jewish racial supremacy. In the end, the Zionist claim of a Jewish indigeneity in Palestine, to the exclusion of all other peoples, inevitably and fatally depends on a Eurocentric racial hierarchy. This is especially the case when this claim is predicated on the removal of an already present indigenous population, home by home, village by village, and consequently Zionism remains antithetical to all progressive and decolonial politics.

Palestine in this sense, is not the 'other,' competing national claim over that same plot of land in the Levant. The question is not: Jewish nationalism *or* Palestinian nationalism, for this creates a false equivalence between the coloniser and the colonised. By its formalised misrecognition of the history of Palestinian dispossession, this is a logic of equivalence that re-iterates all the blindspots and falsehoods of the peace process and the two-state solution which at every moment continue to privilege the Zionist project of territorial expansion and Palestinian eradication. The project of Palestine is the project of the recovery of a cosmopolitanism destroyed by the Zionist colony; the re-assertion of the diversity of cultures and peoples in all their divergences and contradictions, in the face of Zionist exceptionalism.

# PAY THE RENT

Yael Leah with the help of Uncle Robbie Thorpe

## Pay the rent concept and history

Since the 1970's there have been repeated calls by indigenous activists for non-Aboriginal Australians to pay the rent to local land owners. The concept of pay the rent recognises Aboriginal sovereignty of the land. It recognises that this sovereignty has never been ceded, and that their land was stolen under the legal fiction of *terra nullius*, continuing to this day through successive government policy which erodes land rights. It also recognises that this country is built on indentured Aboriginal labour and stolen wages, and seeks to redress these injustices and the illegal occupation of this country.

While the pay the rent concept became more tangible in the 70's, it is not new, and was first demonstrated in Australia by a Quaker settler, Robert Cock in 1837 who paid the interest on one-fifth of the value of his land as a 'yearly rent'. In the 70's, amongst a powerful Aboriginal movement for self-determination, pay the rent was developed as a policy of NAIHO (National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation), with pay the rent money funding much of the essential services provided by Aboriginal controlled health services, and to a lesser degree other Aboriginal services such as legal services. It could be said that the pay the rent policy is the only Aboriginal policy ever successfully implemented.

A flier on pay the rent from the 80's reads:

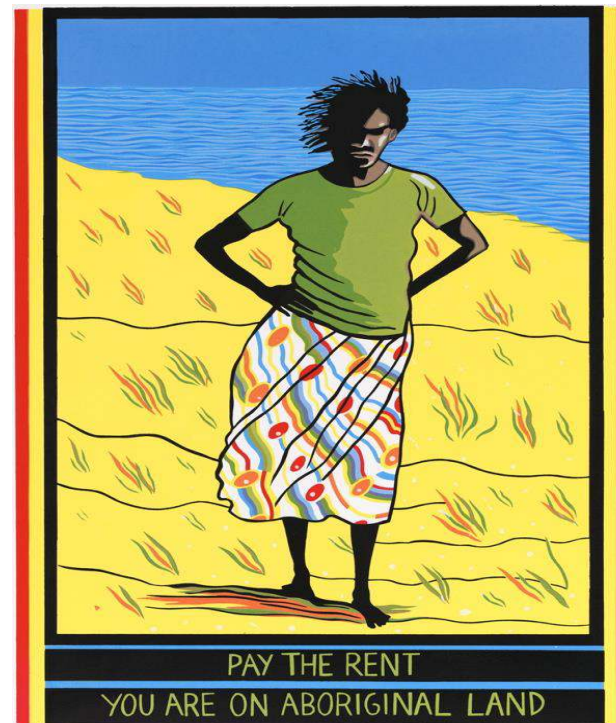
"Today **PAY THE RENT** is a reasonable, rational and responsible way of ensuring the survival of the oldest living culture in the world."

Paying the rent is a practical way to support the self-determination of Aboriginal peoples. It supports elders and strengthens the capacity for economic independence, the practicing of lore and protection of land.

Gunnai/Mara elder Robbie Thorpe speaks about the pay the rent concept as "justifying your occupation." It is important to note however that the practice of paying the rent in the 70's developed as a concept that not only encompassed monetary compensation (at a suggested minimal payment of 1% of one's annual income), but as a forum for which non-indigenous people could commit themselves to redressing colonisation through non-monetary actions as well. This is

demonstrated through the discourse of treaties, where leases that were drawn up whereby individuals would commit to paying money to specific people or orgs, as well as explicit commitment to taking actions. Paying the rent was framed as giving non-Indigenous people the right to stay in this country but stipulated that groups of people who pay the rent also meet to self-educate and take further political action. "Idealistically your rent should be paid to the Aboriginal community of whose land you occupy. However, this may not be possible due to the fact that many Aboriginal people have not been able to form communities in your area. Therefore you must see to it that this money REACHES THE HANDS OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE."

The history and continuation of colonisation has dislocated and eroded Aboriginal communities. Whilst recognising the tremendous strength in the continuation of practicing culture and lore, many communities have suffered a decimation of their culture, communities and land. It may therefore not be so straight forward as paying rent to local traditional owners. However, within this context paying the rent could actually provide resources to support the capacity of elders and Aboriginal communities to establish elder's councils and treaty circles. Other factors which could also be considered are that resources that we consume are extracted from distant locations, for example the water we drink and the electricity we use, and therefore it may be appropriate to pay money to the custodians of these lands. Practically speaking, this thinking would address potential inequity of tribes whose land is more densely populated, and with people more sympathetic to paying the rent, to others.



## Why pay the rent?

We live in a system that continues colonisation whilst privileging and benefiting non-Indigenous settlers. The conditions in which Aboriginal people live in reveals the extent to which they are oppressed and marginalised in their own country. Health statistics, racial profiling, deaths in custody, unemployment, incarceration rates... All of this continues riding a history of massacres and genocide. It can't be argued that these things occurred in the past when the rates of child removal are now higher than during the so called stolen generation era. Government policies continue to perpetuate these conditions, paying large amounts of money into policies and royal commissions where recommendations are subsequently ignored, and implementing policies which instead stigmatise and further dispossess Aboriginal people, for example the NT intervention. With continuing destructive approaches by government, prioritising of resource exploitation and ecocide, and in the absence of any treaties, it becomes paramount for individuals, groups and institutions to address what's going on. We benefit from the occupation. Through inheritance of property, through wealth acquired from indentured labour, through unequal legal and political systems that benefit non-Aboriginal people.

The implementation of the cashless welfare card throughout Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia reveals the extent that the government seeks to control Aboriginal people's movement and consumption. Rather than restricting Aboriginal sovereignty and right to practice culture and lore, paying the rent provides money outside of government control and directly to Aboriginal control to exercise their sovereignty. Today, most Aboriginal organisations are state funded, all requiring a level of co-option to keep receiving funding. Furthermore, the extent of government spending on Aboriginal people is deceptive, with massive costs swallowed up by bureaucracy and wages for non-Aboriginal persons working in what has been termed the 'Aboriginal industry.' Koori historian Wayne Atkinson notes allegations that at least two thirds of the ATSIC budget was absorbed by ATSIC in "administrative costs, consultancy fees and payments to a whole range of so called experts...the majority of whom are non-Koori."

A report from the Australian revealed the NT government kept over \$2 billion of its Indigenous aid budget. The report revealed that successive governments under-spent on allocated Indigenous and remote disadvantage GST funding. A recent damning report on the Close the Gap campaign showed barely any improvement in

identified indicators, saying: "The nation is now in a situation where the Closing the Gap targets will measure nothing but the collective failure of Australian governments to work together and to stay the course." Royalties often get locked away or used on infrastructure and services that non-Aboriginal communities already receive. Large amounts of money are spent on royal commissions which lie in a dust pile, few recommendations ever being implanted. The Royal commission into deaths in custody cost \$50 million. **What we see is a clear picture that the government is not throwing money at Aboriginal communities, but rather squandering money and paying non-Aboriginal beneficiaries.**

## Benefits of pay the rent

Contrary to government funded and orchestrated organisations and campaigns, Aboriginal controlled services and policies are the only platforms which have enacted sovereignty with demonstrable efficacy. The Aboriginal political movement in the 60's and 70's saw immense social change and political action, such as the freedom rides, constitutional recognition, and the establishment of the Aboriginal tent embassy. Alongside these changes, Aboriginal communities, initially in Redfern and Fitzroy, set about establishing Aboriginal controlled services which weren't being provided to them by the government. Community controlled food programs, childcare, legal services, health care, and other projects were set up. The establishment of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO's) is a clear example of the importance of Aboriginal control. According to the World Health Organisation; "Since their establishment, ACCHO's have demonstrated their ability to provide effective, appropriate, acceptable, affordable and accessible health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people." This resulted in the first positive improvements in the health statistics of many Aboriginal communities in which these new clinics were operating (Foley, 1999). As these services received recognition for their achievements, state bodies began funding them, with resulting decline in their management and service provision. Paying the rent can support much needed community-controlled organisations and self-determination free of funding strings and government intervention with its detrimental impacts. ["PAY THE RENT promotes understanding, mutual respect and good will between colonial societies and Indigenous sovereign nations throughout the world"](#)

*Image: Marie McMahon (1982)*

# SOLIDARITY & ALLYSHIP RESOURCES

*Excerpts from various writings on solidarity and allyship and resources.*

## **BOOK: Clare Land 'Decolonizing solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles.' 2015**

The thinking and learning of many community members and activists about how to work in support of Aboriginal struggles has gone into this book, and is crucial reading for anyone interested in decolonisation and allyship.

Appendices and other resources are available on the website:

<http://decolonizingsolidarity.org/>

## **'Everyone calls themselves an ally until it is time to do some really ally shit'**

**Xolpakelxhit** from ancestral pride.

[https://warriorpublications.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/ancestral\\_pride\\_zine.pdf](https://warriorpublications.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/ancestral_pride_zine.pdf)

"Every single time we speak publicly, or put ourselves out there, we are always asked by other Indigenous Nations, settlers, and settlers of color: what can we do? We then go on to outline all the ways those who want to be potential allies can help us out in a tangible way, in a targeted way, and in a general way. Everyone takes notes, asks more questions, and seems really earnest. Then inevitably soon after something happens that we need to utilize these tools and reach out to our settler allies, guess what happens?! Not much"

## **Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality**

[https://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um\\_sourcebook\\_jan10\\_revision.pdf](https://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um_sourcebook_jan10_revision.pdf)

A 211-page sourcebook compiled by Unsettling Minnesota covering a broad range of topics including; white supremacy, belonging, allyship, addressing classism, cultural and spiritual appropriation, the unsettling nature and work of decolonisation, intersectionality, Indigenous feminism & decolonising restorative justice.

## **BOOK: Jen Margaret. 'Working as Allies: Supporters of Indigenous justice reflect.' 2013.**

In depth interviews with a number of non-Indigenous allies/supporters of Indigenous justice in New Zealand/Aotearoa and Australia. Honest reflections, and insights from years of solidarity work covering a range of focal points, from language revival to the Barmah-Millewa campaign in North West Victoria.

## **So what do Indigenous people want?! AND what can I do about it?**

Frank Hytten, Coordinator 2003-2006 ANTAr Vic

<http://decolonizingsolidarity.org/2015/05/22/what-can-i-do-36-ideas/>

"This question is often asked, but seldom answered, partly because it is the wrong questions focused on the wrong people. We do not have an "Aboriginal problem". This is *NOT* an issue about Aboriginal people. The issues here is not what we can do for "them"; it is about what we need to do to redeem ourselves, of the brutality of our past and present relationship with indigenous people. The question ought to be "what are Indigenous people owed?" and must be asked of non-Indigenous people"

- Acknowledge sovereignty
- Be honest about our history
- Safeguard Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Recognise and respect Aboriginal culture
- Seek Aboriginal representation in all areas and at all levels of civic society
- Pay reparation

## **Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the ally industrial complex. An indigenous perspective**

[www.indigneousaction.org](http://www.indigneousaction.org)

*"This provocation is intended to intervene in some of the current tensions around solidarity/support work as the current trajectories are counter-liberatory from my perspective"*



“The commodification and exploitation of allyship is a growing trend in the activism industry.”

“Ally has also become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support. The term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless.”

“Allies all too often carry romantic notions of oppressed folks they wish to “help.” These are the ally “saviours” who see victims and tokens instead of people... Guilt is also a primary ally motivating factor. Even if never admitted, guilt & shame generally function as motivators in the consciousness of an oppressor who realizes that they are operating on the wrong side. While guilt and shame are very powerful emotions, think about what your doing before you make another community’s struggle into your therapy session.”

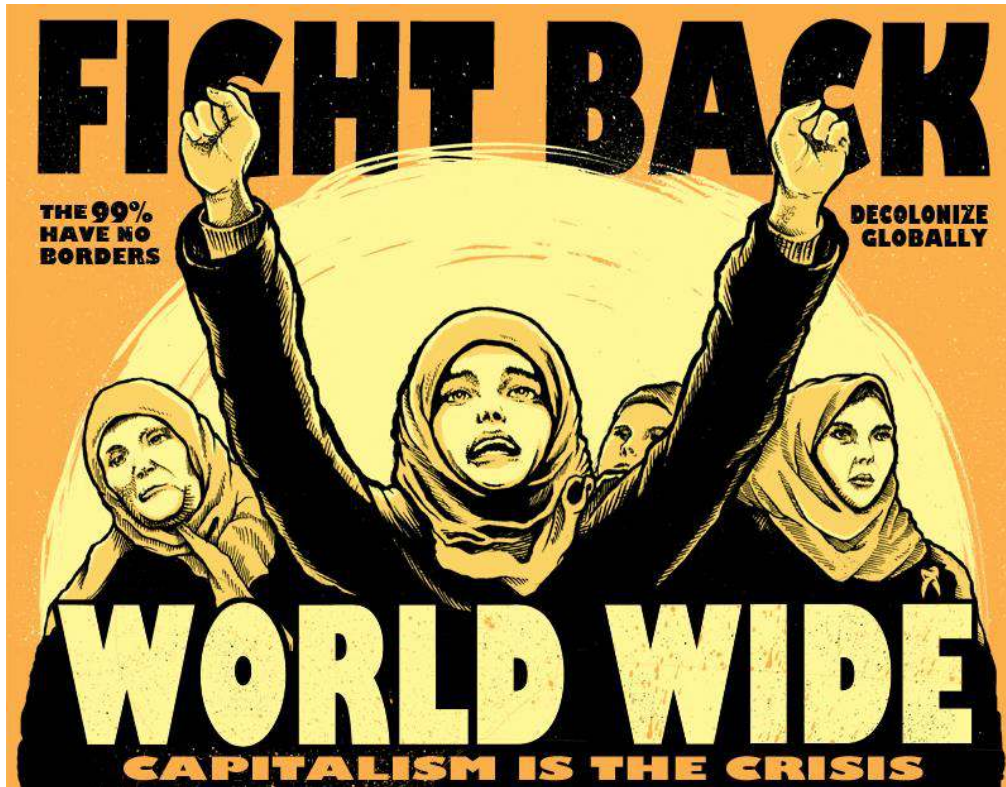


Image from justseeds.org. Occupy Posters: Fight Back—World Wide

## When being an ally turns into being an appropriator

Xolpakelxhit from ancestral pride.

<https://warriorpublications.wordpress.com/>

“Settler Self Check:

-If you are part of an action that involves Indigenous people or communities, do you plan to stick around event after the confrontation/conflict/escalation has happened? How can you support long-term and what are people asking for?

-In a situation where police or other “authorities” are involved, are you acting in a way that might bring more heat and violence down on Indigenous people?...

-What are the privileges you have? How can you use those strategically? Are you wasting your privileges by denying them?”

A critique of Ally politics, excerpt from ‘Taking Sides: Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism.’ 2015

<https://www.sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/anti-oppression/critique-ally-politics/>

*“This writing takes apart the concept of ‘ally’ in political work with a focus on race, thought clearly there are parallels across other experiences of identity.”*

“The solidarity model also dispels the idea of one inside and one outside, foregrounding how individuals belong to multiple groups and groups overlap with one another... The charity and ally models, on the other hand, are so strongly rooted in the ideas of I and the other that they force people into distinct groups with preordained relationships to one another.”

“For a liberating understanding of privilege, each of us must learn our stake in toppling those systems of power, recognizing how much we all have to gain in overturning every hierarchy of oppression.”

“Oppression runs along countless axes, and the subtleties of our experiences are irreducible.”

“There is no singular mass of black people, latino folks, or “people of color” to take guidance from, and that people within a single identity not only disagree with each other but also often have directly conflicting desires and politics...In seeking

oppressed groups to take directions from, white folks often end up tokenizing a specific group whose politics most match their own...This approach to dismantling racism structurally reinforces the hierarchical power that we're fighting against by asking a small group to represent the views of an entire category of people with radically different lived experiences."

"..and the goal of opposing oppression morphs into a strange political competition in which we valorize oppressed identities to such an extent that people strive to be identified as oppressed, or at least to be allied with the "most oppressed.""

"It is essential to understand how systematic forms of oppression shape us, but the point is to collectively dismantle those privileges. Individual transformation can only happen concurrently, not prior to this."

#### Further resources:

**Unsettling America:** <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/allyship/>

**Zochrot-** <http://zochrot.org/> Zochrot is an Israeli NGO working on decolonisation, accountability for the Nakba, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

**Gary Foley's** Koori History Website article is full of articles, history and archives: <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/indexb.html>

**Indigenousx** is an independent Indigenous media platform celebrating Indigenous Excellence and Diversity and striving to amplify Indigenous voices across Australia and beyond.

<https://indigenousx.com.au/>

**Allies decolonising** on facebook.

---

Published by the **Australian Jewish Democratic Society**- A progressive voice among Jews and a Jewish voice among progressives.

[www.ajds.org.au](http://www.ajds.org.au)

[co@ajds.org.au](mailto:co@ajds.org.au)

0423 234 069

'We are the bringers of change. We are the strength of our people, we are the generation that will fight for our ancestors, for our mob. We are the future, as our mothers were the past. We are the warriors, the powerful. We are still here and we will always, be here.'



Art reproduced with permission by the artist, Charlotte Allingham, 24 year old Wiradjuri woman. Follow Charlotte on instagram @coffinbirth.