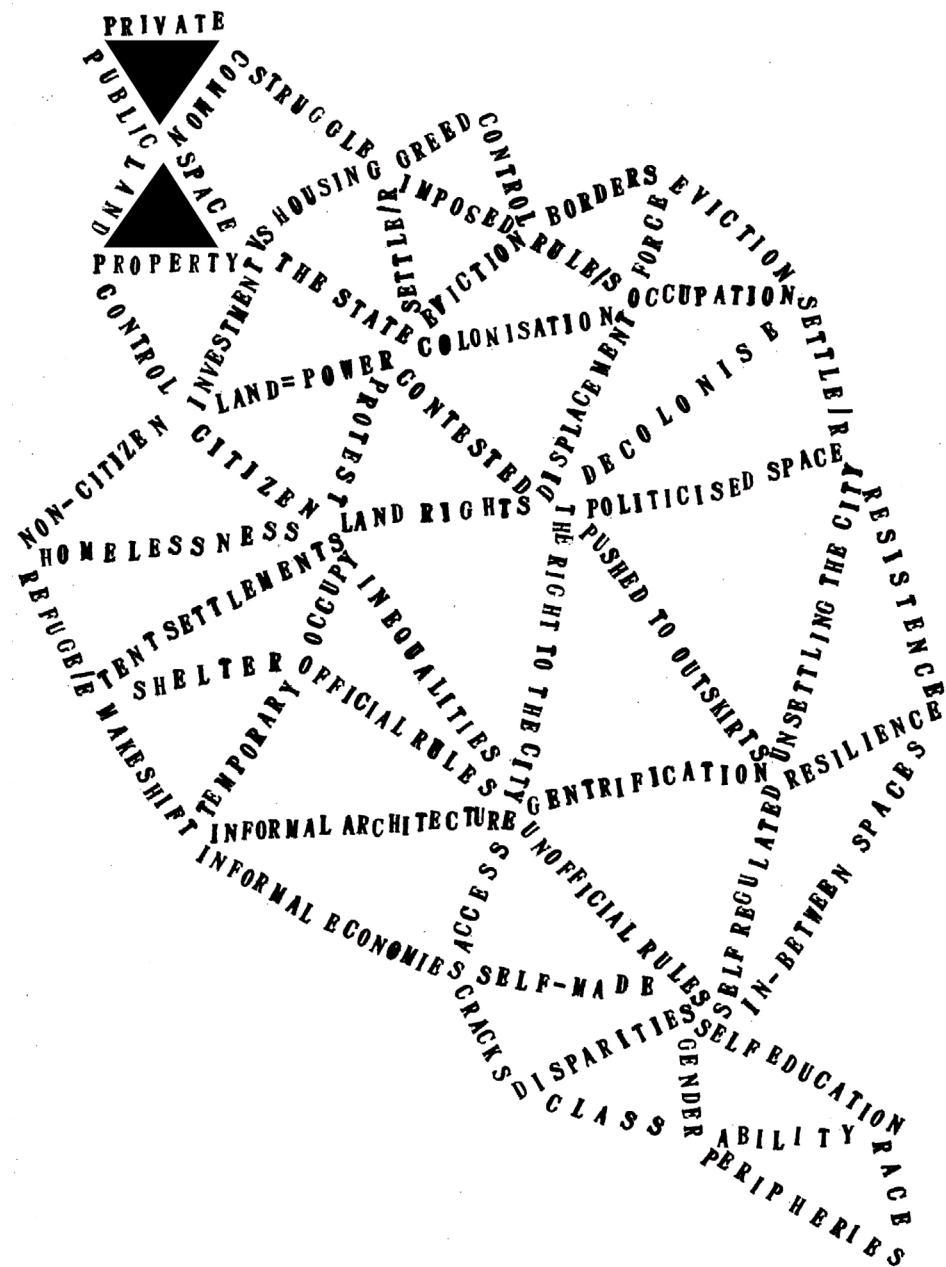


REDFERN

School of Displacement



Contents

Introduction to the Redfern School of Displacement

Black Power in Redfern 1968 - 1972

Gary Foley

SquatSpace's Redfern - Waterloo: Tour of Beauty

Art as Situated Experience

Lucas Ihlein

Tour of Beauty

Eve Vincent

*Complexity, Aesthetics and Gentrification:
the Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty.*

Lucas Ihlein

'Our eyes are constantly adjusting'

Tim Wright

Waterloo Public Housing Estate

Waterloo, a potted history

Waterloo documentary

The Waterloo Walk

Contributions from Ross Smith

Forced Migration and the Future.

excerpt transcribed from RSD events 7th and 21st May 2016

*Dispossession and displacement through enforced and
prioritised language.*

edited by James Oliver

transcribed from RSD event 28th May 2016

The following texts relate to the discussions and tours that took place inside *We Built This City* for the 20th Biennale of Sydney in 2017. These events were collectively known as the *Redfern School of Displacement*.

Redfern School of Displacement

Redfern School of Displacement acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which it takes place, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and pays respect to Elders, past and present.

Beginning from here *Redfern School of Displacement* aims to cultivate local knowledge about globally relevant issues of displacement through a series of discussions and tours. By creating a platform for conversation and debate that explores the politics of displacement, *RSD* promotes learning as a useful tool to combat the forces of dispossession for the future.

The School focuses on collective learning and knowledge production. *RSD* emphasised that learning should not be confined to institutions and instead become more inclusive, accessible and connected to community. Key participants who have particular knowledge relating to the topics at hand are invited to contribute to the dialogue, helping to make it both meaningful and in depth.

Marginalised voices that are often displaced from mainstream dialogue are at the centre of the *RSD*. Participants attending the school are requested to acknowledge their personal privileges and actively make space for 'other' voices. *RSD* focuses on alternative approaches to education and sets up an independent platform for the sharing of information and experience. The goals of the school are to create dialogue and debate around issues relating to social justice and equality from a local perspective.

Some of the topics explored through the talks and tours include: dispossession and displacement through enforced and prioritisised language; housing and homelessness; transforming displacement caused by conflict and changing climate into a vision of the future that can counter this displacement with belonging; displacement through gentrification. *Redfern School of Displacement* is hosted within the makeshift architecture of *We Built this City*. The related tours, known as the *Redfern-Waterloo: Tour of Beauty*, are hosted by SquatSpace and venture into the streets of Redfern.

It is more meaningful to learn about a place, whilst being in the place. *Redfern School of Displacement* extends the idea that situated learning occurs through actively lived experience. School excursions, as bike and bus tours around Redfern, are a key route to knowledge for the school, and prioritised learning about the local displacement that results from gentrification. The *Redfern-Waterloo: Tour of Beauty* makes it possible for participants to learn directly from local stakeholders at significant neighbourhood sites and set up the complex ecology of this neighbourhood as a microcosm to discuss broader issues relating to displacement.

Black Power in Redfern 1968-1972

Gary Foley

Reprinted for the *Redfern School of Displacement* with permission from Gary Foley.

© Gary Foley 5th October 2001.

*Let no one say the past is dead.
The past is all about us and within.*

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) 1970

On Australia Day 1973 Dr. Herbert Cole ("Nugget") Coombs, the Chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs, Governor of the Reserve Bank and influential Government advisor to six Australian Prime Ministers, speaking at a University of Western Australia Summer School, declared that,

The emergence of what might be called an Aboriginal intelligentsia is taking place in Redfern and other urban centres. It is a politically active intelligentsia...I think they are the most interesting group to emerge from the political point of view in the whole of the Aboriginal community in Australia.[2]

Coombs' view was shared by many with an intimate knowledge of the indigenous political movement of the day, but it was a view apparently not shared by the predominately male, non-indigenous Australian historians who have since written about that era. The antipathy of the historical and anthropological establishment toward the urban, militant activists of Redfern, Fitzroy and South Brisbane seems equaled only by an apparent lack of knowledge of events that occurred in these effectively 'closed' communities during the late 60s and early 70s. Attendant as a natural consequence of ignorance of the defining events of these communities, is the manner in which historians have trivialized, marginalized and dismissed the achievements and historical influence of the so-called Australian Black Power Movement.

Black Power was a political movement that emerged among African-Americans in the United States in the mid-1960s. The concept sought to express a new racial consciousness, and Robert Williams, of the NAACP, was the first to put the actual term to effective use in the late 1950s.[3] Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael also had major roles in the formation of the ideas of Black Power. Malcolm X inspired a generation of black activists throughout America and beyond, whilst Carmichael 'made Black Power more popular, largely through his use of the term while reorganizing the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) so that whites would no longer possess leadership responsibilities.'[4] The term was catapulted into the Australian imagination when the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) under the leadership of Bruce McGuinness and Bob Maza who, galvanized by the same notions as Malcolm and Stokely, 1968 invited a Caribbean activist and academic, Dr. Roosevelt Brown, to give a talk on 'Black Power' in Melbourne.[5] The initial result was frenzied media overreaction that was closely observed by younger activists in Brisbane and Sydney, thus the term came into use by a frustrated and impatient new indigenous political generation.

For the purpose of this thesis I define the 'Black Power movement' as the loose coalition of individual young indigenous activists who emerged in Redfern, Fitzroy and South Brisbane in the period immediately after Charles Perkins'

'Freedom Ride' in 1965. In this thesis I am particularly interested in the small group of individuals involved at the core of the Redfern 'Black Power movement', which existed under a variety of tags including the 'Black Caucus'.^[6] This group themselves defined the nature of the concept of Black Power that they espoused. Roberta (then Bobbi) Sykes said Australian Black Power had its own distinct (from US) interpretation. She said it was about 'the power generated by people who seek to identify their own problems and those of the community as a whole, and who strive to take action in all possible forms to solve those problems'^[7] Paul Coe saw it as the need for Aboriginal people 'to take control both of the economical, the political and cultural resources of the people and of the land...so that they themselves have got the power to determine their own future.'^[8] Bruce McGuinness, speaking in 1969 as Director of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) had declared that Black Power 'does not necessarily involve violence' but rather was 'in essence...that black people are more likely to achieve freedom and justice...by working together as a group.'^[9]

So the Australian version of Black Power, like its American counterpart, was essentially about the necessity for Black people to define the world in their own terms, and to seek self-determination without white interference.

I contend that Australian historians who seek to analyze events of the more recent Mabo era cannot properly comprehend the shape and state of race relations today without an understanding of the dynamics, personalities and events of the era of Black Power. The events, ideas and personalities of that era continue to resonate in the indigenous political/cultural movements of today. A growing disillusionment in black Australia today with the apparent limitations of the Native Title Act and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) mirrors a similar community disaffection with Aboriginal organisations and leadership in the late 1960s. The disaffection then resulted in indigenous communities supporting more radical forms of action advocated by the Black Power movement. Thus there are important lessons to be learned from serious study of the events of that era.

Yet, apart from Scott Robinson (The Aboriginal Embassy 1972, MA Thesis, ANU, 1993) and Heather Goodall (Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW, 1770-1972, 1996) no Australian historians seem to have made a serious attempt to examine the long-term political, social and economic factors underlying the emergence of Black Power in Redfern. Only Margaret Ann Franklin (Black and White Australians, 1976), Andrew Marcus^[10] and Bain Attwood^[11] seem to have shown some interest in the era, but then only relatively superficially and in the context of the wider story of the 60s and 70s. Peter Read wanders around the subject of Black Power in his biography of Charles Perkins,^[12]

the Australian version of Black Power, like its American counterpart, was essentially about the necessity for Black people to define the world in their own terms, and to seek self-determination without white interference.

but because his focus is on Perkins he is deficient in his understanding of the younger generation that superseded the relatively conservative notions of Perkins. Bennett (Aborigines and Political Power, 1991.) and Griffiths (Aboriginal Affairs: A Short History 1788 - 1995, 1995) on the other hand are openly hostile to Black Power. So it is some of the gaps that exist in the work of Robinson, Goodall, Franklin, Marcus, Griffiths, Read, Attwood, Bennett et al that I seek to fill in this thesis. In doing this I firstly have the problem facing any indigenous person in the academy trying to give an accurate account of historical events within conventional Western academic constraints and as a linear narrative. ^[13] But, as Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in her book Decolonising Methodologies has asserted,

a critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to rewriting and reorienting our position in history...The sense of history conveyed by these approaches is not the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts collide, crash into each other. ^[14]

So this analysis of the Black Power movement in Redfern must be read in the context of an indigenous academic attempting to reconstruct our understanding of the important moments, influences, events and personalities of that period. As a participant in most of the events discussed, I have both the advantage of first hand knowledge and the disadvantage of the constraints imposed by the inherent subjectivity of such a position, not to mention the unreliability of memory.

Nevertheless, I intend to provide a narrative of three of the important defining moments in the emergence of Black Power as a seminal political force in indigenous politics in Australia.

These events were; the 1970 establishment of the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service; the 1971 Springbok rugby tour; and the Aboriginal Embassy in 1972. These three events helped define the ideas, personalities, actions and alliances that formed the Redfern Black Power movement, which in turn influenced indigenous political notions and actions for more than a decade. Indeed, today as significant sections of indigenous communities become disaffected with the illusions of progress represented by the era of Mabo and the Native Title Act, many are beginning to call for a return to the political strategies and tactics of the Black Power era. Thus there is a considerable residual perception in indigenous Australia that remembers the Black Power era as a time of greater social, political and economic gains than at any time since.

In the course of a narrative of these events I challenge assumptions and interpretations of those few Australian historians and commentators who have proffered an opinion or analysis of the era. In challenging false impressions created by less detailed accounts I hope to give greater insight into the significance of the ideas and philosophies of the Black Power era, from an indigenous perspective. Furthermore, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith asserts, 'indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization.' ^[15]

Since the 1860s, as the Aboriginal peoples in regional areas of southeastern Australia experienced the spread of the white invasion and forcible occupation of their homelands, there can be said to have been significant resistance, both

passive and active. Goodall notes that in NSW from the beginning of black/white contact 'Land was seen by its Aboriginal owners as a central factor in their experience of colonialism. Their sense of invasion, of loss and deprivation of land was expressed clearly and unarguably'.^[16] Land continued to be at the heart of Aboriginal concerns and protest over many decades, and many disputes were conducted at a very localised level. By the 1920s a self-educated former drover who had been active in the Waterside Worker's Federation during the first World War, Fred Maynard, had set up the Australian Aboriginal Progress Association (AAPA).^[17] The AAPA, officially launched in February 1925, was the 'first Aboriginal political organisation to create formal links between communities over a wide area'.^[18] Whilst it could be argued that a strong Christian influence moderated the actions of the AAPA, a more important aspect of its history is the role it played in planting political seeds that flowered in future generations of indigenous political leaders in southeastern Australia.^[19]

One of the early all-Aboriginal political organisations was the Australian Aborigines League, established by William Cooper, Doug Nichols, Bill and Eric Onus and others in early 1936 in Melbourne.^[20] Membership was open to all Aborigines and the aims of the group were 'to gain for Aboriginal people those civil and human rights denied since occupation'.^[21] This was one of the first significant attempts by a group of Koori political activists to try and assert control over their own destinies, although other dedicated groups emerged around then including Bill Ferguson and Jack Patten's Aborigines Progressive Association (APA), founded in 1937.^[22] The Australian Aborigines League never became more than a regional organisation, effectively functioning only in south-east Australia, although key members traveled far and wide throughout Australia in the 1930s to 1960s making contacts, compiling information and politically organising. However, Patten and Ferguson joined up with William Cooper, along with Marge Tucker, Doug Nichols and Pearl Gibbs to mount the famous 1938 'Day of Mourning'. This idea, inspired by Cooper, was described by Goodall as a 'brilliantly symbolic plan... recognised as a turning point in capturing white attention'.^[23] These were difficult and tough times for Aboriginal political organisers because of the range of restrictive and discriminatory state laws that controlled the movement of indigenous people.

Just how tough it could be was demonstrated by the protracted dispute at Cummeragunja which began in 1937 and in part prompted William Cooper's disillusionment and idea for a protest at the sesqui-centenary celebrations the following year. Aboriginal residents had at first sought William Cooper's assistance over grievances with the Protection Board manager. When Cooper's moderate tactics of petitioning the NSW Protection Board failed, the community turned to former Cummeragunja resident Jack Patten who, on Friday 3rd

Upon arrival in Canberra early on the morning of 27th January 1972 the Koori men pitched a beach umbrella on the lawns outside Parliament House and proclaimed the site the office of the "Aboriginal Embassy".

February 1939, was arbitrarily arrested when he addressed the people on the reserve. Two thirds of the residents immediately packed up and crossed the Murray River into Victoria and thus withdrew their labour from the NSW Protection Board. This action has been described as, 'perhaps the first direct political action taken by Aboriginal people which lay outside the guideline offered by the established system'.^[24] The same author points out the vital importance the Cummeragunja strike in terms of its profound effect on the thinking of [the] Aboriginal people involved, despite its lack of short-term success. *Former Cummeragunja residents who moved to Melbourne in the 1940s and 50s had learned a valuable lesson on the intransigence of the white bureaucracy and the possibility of direct and united Aboriginal action. These people and their sons and daughters became part of the core of activists who were to take a much more radical line in the Aboriginal movement for self-determination in the late 1960s.* ^[25]

Goodall notes that 'political organization of all types was constrained in the conservative atmosphere of Menzies' post-war Australia'.^[27] Nevertheless, in February 1958 twenty-five people representing eight organisations, met in Adelaide and formed the first national Aboriginal organisation, The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA). Of the twenty-five people who were at the meeting, only three (Bert Groves, Doug Nicholls and Jeff Barnes) were Aboriginal. As the organisation grew the dominance of non-indigenous people on its governing committee became entrenched, and even as it changed its name at its Easter conference in 1964, there were rumblings of Aboriginal discontent at lack of indigenous control.^[28] But in NSW the focus remained on local struggles usually over issues of land, segregation and discrimination until 1965. Then, former soccer-player and student at University of Sydney, Charles Perkins, decided to emulate similar action by the American civil rights movement as he sought to expose the level of segregation and racism rampant in NSW at the time.^[29]

In February 1965 Perkins and Reverend Ted Noffs of the Wayside Chapel organised a "Freedom Ride" with 30 white Sydney University students from the group Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA).^[30] He took SAFA on a bus ride into some of NSW's most notoriously racist country towns. They were pelted with eggs and rotten fruit when they tried to desegregate the Moree swimming pool and such was the level of violent response they encountered that the hired bus driver left the tour halfway through out of fear.^[31] But the resultant publicity resounded around the world and exposed the vicious nature of Australian racism in an unprecedented way. As Adam Shoemaker described it,

Internationally inspired, a product of cooperation between whites and blacks committed to the same ideals, confrontationist but non-violent, the Freedom Ride was a consciousness-raising exercise that was very effective. Awakening media interest in Aboriginal affairs was, for the first time, marshalled in favour of the Black Australian cause, to the severe embarrassment of many white townspeople in rural New South Wales. All of these elements foreshadowed a pattern of protest that was to continue and expand in the 1970s and 1980s. ^[32]

Sydney Black Power and the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service

The Freedom Ride had the effect of inspiring a young generation of Koori political activists in southeast Australia to stand up for their rights. Paul Coe and his sister Isobel had grown up on Erambie Mission in Cowra, Gary Williams and Gary Foley at Nambucca Heads, Billy and Lyn Craigie at Moree, Keith Smith at Nowra, Bob and Sol Belleair at Tweed Heads and Michael Anderson in Walgett. Lyall Munro had been inspired by the Freedom Ride when it passed through his

home town, and he later said the experience enabled him to see ‘the power of direct action that day in Moree.’[33] All of these young people had then been part of the significant Aboriginal migration to the city that had occurred during the 60s. As Gale wrote in 1975,

...Aborigines continue to move out of their isolation into the mainstream of Australian city life...[they] are no longer willing to accept the lowest position in the socio-economic scale...This resurgence of Aboriginal identity has led to a change in the patterns of race relations in this country...[34]

Whilst a few like Coe and Williams had matriculated, the majority having had a better education than their parents, had nevertheless dropped out of school very early. More often than not this was because the education system itself was perceived by Aboriginal youth as a part of the system that oppressed them. Paul Coe spoke of the ‘isolation of the black kid going through the present education system’ in which they were ‘forced to aspire towards lower middle class values’ and ‘conditioned to uphold and try to keep white material values.’[35] Furthermore, at that time school ‘histories, encyclopedias and other popular works, informed by social evolutionary ideas, represented Aborigines as primitive and passive people.’[36] Thus, these young Aboriginal immigrants from the rural areas of NSW and beyond, in part saw themselves as people who rejected the racist tenets of the ‘Assimilation Policy’ in the education system as it existed at that time. Coe himself had come from Erambie mission in Cowra and a long tradition of family and tribal resistance, and as Peter Read pointed out in his book on the Wiradjuri people, A Hundred Years War,

Paul’s father Les had been one of the fiercest opponents of managerial rule and his mother Agnes is the chairperson of the Wiradjuri Cultural Committee. Paul’s grandfather was the third of the trio who had refused to sign its agreement to the Manager’s entry regulations on Erambie Station in 1955. [37]

In time, like most Koori arrivals from the bush at that time, they began to congregate around the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs(FAA), a social/welfare centre established by community leaders like Charles Perkins, Ken Brindle, wharfies Chicka Dixon and Jack Hassan and boxers Roy Carrol and Teddy Rainbow. The FAA had set up premises in an old funeral parlour at 810 George Street, near Central Railway Station,[38] and by 1968 had become the major social congregation point for the increasing number of young arrivals from the bush and more established Koori city-dwellers. It was at the social functions held by the FAA that most of the later Black Power movement met each other and began to discuss the events of the day.[39] Many had participated in the campaign for the 1967 referendum and had respected and supported and Charlie Perkins and Ken Brindle in the Gurindji campaign and various actions through 1967 - 69. As a result by their late teens they had developed a relatively sophisticated knowledge and understanding of politics and political methodology from old hands like Brindle, Perkins, Shirley “Mum Shirli” Smith, Faith Bandler, Bert Groves, Chicka Dixon, Dulcie Flowers and others.

Further, they came to sense themselves as the inheritors of a long tradition of political struggle as they met and conversed with aging legends of the indigenous struggle such as Bill Onus, Jack Patton, Bert Groves and Frank Roberts. By 1968 a small discussion group emerged that at times comprised of Paul Coe, Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, John Newfong, Alana and Samantha Doolan, Lyn Craigie and husband Peter Thompson, Bob and Kaye Belleair, Naomi Mayers, Gary Williams, Norma Williams, Pam Hunter, Isobel Coe and others.[40] This group, at the behest of Coe and Williams, began consuming all they could

of the political literature of the day. Paul Coe was a strong critic of what he perceived as, ‘...too many white liberals running black affairs. Nothing will get done until young blacks take the initiative.’[41] To a man and woman these young Kooris had come to the city in the previous five years, and all agreed with Coe when he observed, ‘In the country racism is blatant, In the city it is more subtle. But the result is the same’.[42] These sentiments and the way they were vehemently expressed by Coe resonated deeply with the other young blacks. They may not have been as articulate as Coe, but they strongly related to what he was talking about. At that time, as Roberta Sykes noted, the streets were regarded as ‘our only true meeting place’.[43]

It should be remembered that this was a time of exciting social and political upheaval in Australia and the rest of the world. The late 1960s saw student rebellion in Paris, riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago and the emergence of the American Black Power movement. In both America and Australia demonstrations against the War in Vietnam brought together elements of black and white political activists. In Sydney people like Paul Coe, Gary Williams and Gary Foley were starting to encounter new people and new ideas. Goodall describes these as ‘diverse groupings of young people who sometimes called themselves “New Left”, but who might just as well associate themselves in Australia with the anarchist, libertarian traditions’. They were ‘influenced by the anti-colonial movements in India and Africa’ and writers like Franz Fanon, Jean Paul Satre and Camus.[44]

...the young disaffected Aborigines of inner city Sydney set about to raise their level of political awareness.

Within that context, the young disaffected Aborigines of inner city Sydney set about to raise their level of political awareness. One thing that accelerated their international awareness had been the sudden influx in the late 60s of American servicemen on R&R (Rest and Recuperation) leave in Sydney. A significant number of these were the African-American troops who some said were America’s cannon fodder in Vietnam. These troops often gravitated toward the Sydney Black community in Redfern seeking solace from the prevalent white racism of Sydney. Consequently, the young indigenous activists became exposed to the latest developments in racial politics in America, and were provided by Black GI’s with some of the latest in African-American political literature and music.

The young Kooris were acutely conscious of the strong sense of alienation and injustice, and the hostility toward white authority that they had in common with many of these African-American servicemen.[45] Another reason why the young Redfern activists came to focus on the USA was because at that time there was very little available in the form of good political literature for them to study. Very little being written at that time about the historical situation of Australia was of use to them because of the ‘British’ nature of that material.

Furthermore, only one bookshop in Sydney sold the type of material they were after. This was the Third World Bookshop, run by Bob Gould, an anarchic Sydney left wing identity. It was from Gould’s bookshop that the Redfern activists began acquiring their reading matter, at first by the simple and expedient way of theft, and later when Gould agreed to provide the group with whatever books they wanted, gratis. The bulk of the relevant literature that Gould had related to the African-American political struggle, and so the Redfern activists began consuming the works of Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale,

George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver and Angela Davis. But, as Goodall reminds us, it is also important to remember that in 1969 these Redfern activists 'were just as aware of the seizure of Alcatraz by Vine Deloria Jnr as they were of the Panthers'...and Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee was as widely read as Soul on Ice.'[46]

But, as Tatz said, 'the ambiguities in Aboriginal life would fill volumes',[47] and when the high expectations created by the 1967 referendum were dashed by government inaction, the younger activists felt a strong sense of betrayal and cynicism at the more non-confrontationist methods and tactics of the older generation. All the effort that respected political leaders like Faith Bandler, Ken Brindle, Perkins and others seemed to amount to nothing. To the impatient young firebrands who were contending on a nightly basis with confrontations with NSW police, including the notorious and brutal 21 Division, the apparent lack of progress meant more effective methods had to be considered. As Kath Walker put it at the time,

Looking back, the only major improvement has been the 93% 'Yes' vote of the referendum of May 1967; but this improvement did not benefit the black Australians though it eased the guilty conscience of white Australians in this country and overseas. It can be regarded therefore as a victory for white Australians who formed a coalition with black Australians. Black Australians must be seen as stooges for white Australians working in the interest of white Australians. [48]

Thus it seemed to the young radicals that the old style organisations that had fought the referendum campaign were ineffective, especially after the referendum had delivered so little in terms of real reforms on the ground. On the

Because of the degree of daily confrontation with police in Redfern, it should be of no surprise that the young radicals came to decide that the issue of Police harassment and intimidation should be tackled.

was beaten up by Redfern police. Perkins was arrested in Alice Springs after he had rung up police to complain about a publican. What the Sydney Aborigines...understood intuitively...was the brutal reality of Aboriginal daily life. [50]

Furthermore, Chicka Dixon had said that he spent most of his teens in gaols but that he was 'lucky enough' to get an education in them. He said, 'It says

streets of Redfern young Kooris were confronted on a daily basis with the brutal reality of dealing with a racist and corrupt NSW police force. Paul Coe was motivated in his early activism by outrage at the police murder of his cousin Pat Wedge.[49] The same police killing had triggered a major controversy about the gaoling of Ken Brindle when he demanded details of the death from police, thus the young blacks from Redfern had much about which to be aggrieved, and good reason to feel that no progress was being made. As Peter Read observed,

Here was the shared experience of Aboriginality. Here was the point of intersection. Foley was arrested at Central station about this time on a trumped up charge. Brindle

something about Australian society when a black man has to go to gaol to get an education'.[51] Because of the degree of daily confrontation with police in Redfern, it should be of no surprise that the young radicals came to decide that the issue of Police harassment and intimidation should be tackled.

Parallel developments in the relatively politically sophisticated Koori community in Fitzroy, Melbourne, had seen the emergence of the term "Black Power". It began when the Aborigines Advancement League's Chairman, Bob Maza, and the organisation's first Koori Director, Bruce McGuinness, invited Caribbean political activist, Dr Roosevelt Brown to a conference at the League in March 1969.[52] Brown clashed verbally with Pastor Doug Nichols and the Melbourne media had a field day, as the official AAL history states, the clash was to 'provide the Press with the fuel for an hysterical outburst on the dangers of Black Power...(which) was interpreted by the Press to be the equivalent to violent revolution and the establishment of black dictatorships.'[53] These ructions led to Pastor Doug Nichols resigning from the League in October 1969 and a subsequent push by the new leadership under McGuinness and Maza to remove all non-Koori members of the organisation from positions of power. This was resisted by the white supporters within the AAL, as the official AAL history records,

After fifteen years of operation, seven of them with an autonomous Aboriginal branch, one could be forgiven for wondering why the Aborigines Advancement League was not ready for black direction. It would be easy to criticise those white League members who controlled the day-today running of the organisation for not ensuring that Aborigines were able to take over the operation of the AAL, and no doubt there was at least a hint of paternalism in their unwillingness to concede that Aborigines were ready and able to take over from them. [54]

Opposition to the new notions of black assertiveness being developed came from some of the older, more conservative sections of the indigenous movement, predictably including QLD President of the assimilationist One People of Australia League (OPAL), Neville Bonner, who wrote to the Brisbane Courier Mail, 'OPAL disassociates itself from Mrs. Kath Walker's disruptive brand of Black Power, that which used solely as a disruptive tactic.'[55] But the Redfern/Fitzroy "Black Power" groups were conscious of the "winds of change" sweeping through Africa and other parts of the colonised world and saw themselves and the Koori situation in the context of de-colonization.[56] Consequently one of their major slogans was 'self-reliance' which meant they were dedicated to creating a new form of Koori community organisation; one which was first and foremost Aboriginal-controlled.[57]

It was only natural that the young Koori activists would look more closely at recent events in the United States where the civil rights movement was caught up in the same cathartic process. As Max Griffiths said, 'the success of Black political activism in the USA provided a stimulus and a model for the more militant urban Aborigines'[58] and Scott Robinson observed, 'The Black American experience was the most profound exogenous influence on Aboriginal political activism in the 1960s.'[59] In America, black communities had become disillusioned at the pace of change under the old conservative, passive, Christian leadership of Martin Luther King and a younger generation of activists sought direct confrontation. Many historians and commentators dismiss or denigrate the effect Black Power had on Aboriginal Australia. Scott Bennett in one breath disparages Black Power for its 'stridency' and connotations of violence (connoted by whom). He then states that the Aboriginal Embassy 'seems to have been a far more effective medium for presenting the Aboriginal case than merely calling for the white-threatening Black Power.'[60] Bennett seems

oblivious to the fact that it was the Black Power movement that created and controlled the Aboriginal Embassy!

The young Kooris of Redfern saw striking similarities in the American experience and their own communities. They began to adopt and adapt the strategies and tactics they were reading and hearing about in America. Thus when Redfern activists pondered the problem of police harassment in their own community, they were drawn to consider methods adopted by a group called the Black Panther Party of America, operating in the San Francisco suburb of Oakland, California. This was a scenario that had been predicted older activist Chicka Dixon. In 1967 he had argued for 'hostels for Aborigines because of this mass migration of teenagers from the river banks to Sydney' and pointed out that an 'explosion point was coming'. He said that, 'it's quite certain that there are going to be race riots. There is no doubt in my mind that something has got to give.' [61]

...the most exciting and dynamic era in modern indigenous history.

harassment and intimidation that seemed to the Australian young radicals to be very similar to their experience in Redfern. Panther leader Huey P. Newton's response to the Oakland situation had been to research California law and ascertain that it was legal for citizens to carry firearms as long as the weapons were not concealed. Armed with this legal loophole, Newton then armed the Panther's with guns and set out to 'defend the black community'. [62] In the US experience, this tactic of direct, armed confrontation with police resulted ultimately in the leadership of the Panthers being decimated, but this did not deter the Redfern group.

The basic Panther idea of a patrol to monitor police activity seemed to the group to be a good one. It was felt that by monitoring and keeping a record of police harassment of the community they might be able to build a solid database of information that they might then use politically to alleviate the situation. Thus the information gathering began one Saturday night in 1969 when young activists including Coe, Williams, Billy & Lyn Craigie, Foley and others began observing and collecting information on the regular police raids against the Koori pub the Empress Hotel in Redfern. [63] About the same time the Redfern activists were developing and extending contacts with similar young indigenous groups in Melbourne and Brisbane.

At the 1968 FCAATSI Conference in Canberra, members of the Redfern group had encountered Kath and Denis Walker and Don Brady from Brisbane and Bruce McGuinness and Bob Maza for the Aborigines Advancement League in Melbourne. Both the Victorian and QLD groups had since visited Sydney and strong friendships developed between the three groups, largely based on an almost identical political philosophy centred on indigenous Self-Determination and economic independence. The means by which this was to be achieved was through Land Rights and the method was direct confrontation. These were the ideas that bonded the different groups from a diverse range of historical circumstances together. Additionally, numerous other individuals from all parts of Australia drifted to Redfern to see what was happening. Some, like Roberta Sykes and Naomi Mayers stayed and became involved, whilst others, like Colin (Black Mac) MacDonald of South Australia and Black Allen Murawulla from Western Australia, came and absorbed and travelled on to pass the word.

The American Black Panther Party for Self-Defense's early program called the 'Pig Patrol' attracted the interest of the Redfern group. In the Oakland ghetto a situation existed regarding police

Roberta Sykes remembered that she first met Denis Walker on Evelyn Scott's verandah in Townsville where he told her, 'Sydney's where the action will happen. There are many young Blacks working there...It's lots closer to Canberra, we have to put pressure on federal politicians to honour the referendum.' [64] In Redfern, the activists monitoring of the police had resulted in increased attention from the police toward the activists. The notorious NSW Police squad, the 21 Division, originally created in the 1930s as an early form of paramilitary unit to deal with the Darlinghurst "Razor Gangs" of that era, suddenly began a presence in Redfern and the level of police harassment of the community increased. The police Crime Surveillance Unit secretly compiled a dossier on the "Black Power Group" in which detailed information on key activists was combined with the records of Aboriginal bank robbers to accentuate the implied criminality of the group. The document, which was distributed to all police stations in NSW, called on all districts to be alert for any of the people named in the dossier and that their presence and activities should be immediately reported to the central office of the Crime Surveillance Unit in Sydney. [65] Sykes says of this period, 'the group of community activists who were in the process of setting up a range of services to the Black community had, of course, attracted the attention of ASIO and the police.' [66]

For the first time Aboriginal people were being represented in Sydney courts and were defending charges brought against them by Police.

At this time activists in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane also reported increased police surveillance and harassment, and individual responses to this more intense attention varied. In the case of Black Power leaders Bruce McGuinness and Denis Walker, the reaction was defiance, but in the case of some, like a young Marcia Langton, the early 'heat' was too much. In Langton's own words she states,

...on learning from a newspaper article entitled 'Black Power in Brisbane' that the police Criminal Investigations Branch were searching for 'a group of radicals', I took my young son, Benjamin and left town.' [67]

Langton fled overseas for five years and her dramatic and abrupt departure meant that she was to miss the most exciting and dynamic era in modern indigenous history. The irony was that the Brisbane police were in fact much more interested in the Black Panther Party being formulated by Denis Walker, and which Langton had no real association with. Nevertheless, back in Redfern, within a matter of months Koori activists collected extensive evidence of arbitrary arrests, beatings, wrongful imprisonment and other serious allegations. As Paul Coe had in the interim began his studies in Law at University of NSW; the activists enlisted the support of Professor J. H. Wooten, the conservative Dean of the Law Faculty to their cause. [68]

With the support and assistance of Professor Wooten the Redfern group set about to try and replicate the idea of shop front legal aid in Redfern. Early white lawyer recruits Eddie Newman and Peter Tobin assisted in the recruitment of solicitors and barristers willing to do volunteer work once a month or fortnight. John Russell and people from South Sydney Community Aid helped to locate and secure a vacant shop in Regent Street in the heart of the Black community. A community working bee transformed the shop into a law office and early in 1970 Australia's first free, shop-front, legal aid centre opened its doors for business. [69]

On 29 December 1970 the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. William Wentworth, announced a \$20,000 grant (and thereby formal Commonwealth recognition) for the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service, which he described as the 'first of its kind in Australia'. [70] The establishment of the Redfern ALS was to create a resurgence of pan-Aboriginal nationalism as a surge of confidence swept through the Aboriginal community in Sydney. For the first time Aboriginal people were being represented in Sydney courts and were defending charges brought against them by Police.

The Springbok Tour 1971

On 26 June 1971 the South African Springbok rugby union team arrived in Perth for the beginning of a tumultuous six week tour of Australia which would not only divide the nation on the issue of race, but would also have a profound effect on the indigenous political movement. As the South African footballers stepped off their plane in Perth, on the other side of the country the Redfern Aboriginal activists had already developed strong connections with the leaders of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). The convenors of AAM were Meredith Burgmann, Peter McGregor and Denis Freney, and all three had become friends of various members of the Redfern Black Power group.

Burgmann was to later spend time at Wattie Creek with the Gurindji's at the behest of Frank Hardy, [71] and Freney had already written many articles for the Communist Party (CPA) newspaper Tribune about the situation in Redfern and indigenous issues in general. Furthermore, as Freney points out, 'much of the planning for our activities took place at Meredith's house in Glebe' [72] which was a house also frequented by Williams, Coe and Foley, and also where the Redfern group met people such as Heather Goodall and Sekai Holland. Sekai is a Zimbabwean woman who had a profound impact on the AAM in Australia and who had been instrumental in AAM members being encouraged to take more notice of the indigenous Australian struggle. Sekai is today very prominent in Zimbabwe as an opposition leader against Robert Mugabe. Aboriginal and Islander people in Brisbane provided protection for Sekai when Nazi activists had threatened her. [73] Freney and other members of the CPA also had close connections with some of the Redfern activists through Tribune photographer Noel Hazard teaching Foley photographic processing [74] and Builder's Labourers Federation (BLF) leaders Jack Munday, Bob Pringle and Joe Owens strong political support for the indigenous cause. Thus there were already strong links developing between the Redfern radicals and the Sydney Left.

The twelve months of 1971 were to be the most dramatic in recent indigenous history as a series of events and actions rocked the Australian government and

The police Crime Surveillance Unit secretly compiled a dossier on the "Black Power Group" in which detailed information on key activists was combined with the records of Aboriginal bank robbers to accentuate the implied criminality of the group.

significantly strengthened the emerging Black Power movement in Redfern. The tour of the South African Springboks was but one of the events of that year that impacted on the Redfern group, others included the release from gaol of Aboriginal poet, playwright and political activist Kevin Gilbert. In July 1971 the Aboriginal Medical Service of Redfern opened its doors and gave life to the political philosophies of the Black Power movement. As a self-help project, conceived, created and controlled by indigenous people, it personified the ideals of the young Redfern radicals who had created it. The Gove land rights case was handed down in the NT High Court effectively denying Aboriginal rights to land. [75] So 1971 was to be an exciting and intense year for the young radicals of Redfern.

But the greatest single event that enamoured the Sydney Left to the Redfern activists was the day Paul Coe gave a speech at the biggest of the Anti-Vietnam Moratorium rallies at the Sydney Stadium. Denis Freney described it as 'a brilliant speech, perhaps the best I've ever heard', [76] whilst Meredith Burgmann described it as the 'mother-fuckers speech'. [77] Coe criticized the protestors for being prepared to turn out en masse in support the oppressed people of all other countries but Australia. Coe said, 'You raped our women, you stole our land, you massacred our ancestors, you destroyed our culture, and now - when we refused to die out as you expected - you want to kill us with your hypocrisy...'. [78] This speech made many of the leading lights of the Sydney Left sit up and take notice of what was happening in their own backyard of Redfern and Black Australia. Freney said that Coe's speech that night represented 'the birth of black militancy', which in some ways for the white Left in Australia, it was.

On the eve of the arrival of the South African's in Australia, two events that would be of significance to indigenous Australia occurred, one of a positive nature the other negative. On 10 June one of Australia's most famous Aboriginal prisoners, Kevin Gilbert, was released after fourteen years in gaol. His art, poetry and plays had rehabilitated him in the eyes of white society, but he was to remain on license until 1976 and thus whilst becoming an important background political player was inhibited from participating in actions beyond the limits of his parole conditions. [79] In an ironic and stark contrast, in Europe at the same time in June 1971, an eminent Aboriginal tennis player, Evonne Goolagong, was asked by a SMH reporter whether she would play tennis in South Africa again since anti-apartheid demonstrators were threatening to target her. She replied, "Oh yes, if they invite me. They treat you so well over there. They really look after you." Did she see no oppression of black people? "No, I saw no misery. I didn't really think about that. I was just playing tennis." [80]

When the South African Springbok rugby team arrived in Sydney on 4 July 1971, the local Redfern activists were already intensively involved in the planning of actions against them. The location of Sydney motel where the Springboks were to stay had been kept secret by the authorities. But by a remarkable stroke of luck it turned out to be the Squire Inn, which was virtually next door to the communal 'Black Power' house that the Redfern activists had established in Bondi Junction to escape intense police attention in Redfern. Meredith Burgmann remembered, 'We used the place in Eveleigh Street as a sort of springboard for so much of the activity for the month or so that the Springboks were in the Squire Inn'. [81] So the Bondi Junction commune was thrown open to become a virtual headquarters of the protest vigils being maintained at the Squire Inn. Also, a former Australian rugby player, Jim Boyce, who had played in South Africa in 1963 and had been horrified by what he had seen of the apartheid system and by 1971 was a committed anti-apartheid activist, approached the Redfern activists through Sekai Holland. Boyce had some

genuine Springbok football jerseys that he provided to Paul Coe, Billy Craigie, Gary Foley, Tony Coorey and Gary Williams. He later said, 'in wearing the jerseys, I believe they made a valid point - in South Africa you would never see a black man wearing a Springbok jersey.' [82] Indeed, on the first occasion the Kooris wore the jerseys outside the Springboks motel two of them were immediately apprehended by NSW Special Branch officers who had thought the activists had somehow stolen them from the visiting South African team. Craigie and Foley were hustled into the Squire Inn where the NSW police paraded them before a distinctly uncomfortable group of Springboks and asked from whom had the jerseys been stolen. It rapidly became apparent that the jerseys were genuine but weren't stolen, and the red-faced Special Branch officers were forced to eject Foley and Craigie from the Squire Inn. Paul Coe later told London Times correspondent Stewart Harris that,

..we were told by a plain clothes detective that the jersey we were wearing was a national symbol and that people in the hotel found it offensive that we should be dressed this way. The detective warned us to take off our jerseys or we would be charged under the NSW Summary Offences Act. [83]

...the Redfern group's high profile involvement in the anti-apartheid demonstrations was a desire to keep up the momentum and now confront issues of race in Australia's backyard.

football jersey". The newspaper went on to say that South African rugby supporters, "...revere their jersey as Australians do the Digger's slouch hat. No coloured man is permitted to wear the green and gold on a football field." [84]

Soon after, in other moves to embarrass the South Africans, Ken Brindle, in his capacity as secretary of the all-Aboriginal Redfern All-Blacks rugby league team, demanded that the South African Rugby Union invite his team to South Africa. [85] Gary Williams visited the South African Airways office in Sydney and attempted to buy a ticket to Johannesburg and Gary Foley was photographed outside the Springboks hotel with a placard that read, "Pardon me for being born into a nation of racists". In Brisbane during the Springbok visit, Denis Walker's mentor Pastor Don Brady ("the Punching Pastor") held a service outside the South African's hotel, only to be subjected to a tirade of abuse in Afrikaans from the balcony. [86] Aboriginal political activists were making great political capital out of the tour. Paul Coe said that the tour was 'the best thing that's happened for a long time because it's made Australians realise just how racist their country is.' [87]

One of those who was reminded was Charles Perkins who attended the Canberra game and was pelted with rubbish, called a 'Dirty nigger', 'Black bastard' and told, 'Go back to Africa where you belong'. In a letter to the Australian Perkins bemoaned, 'I really thought that white people in this country

This was one of the few occasions when security was breached during the tour and protestors were able to confront the Springboks face to face, and it was all courtesy of a mistake by NSW Special Branch. Furthermore the Australian reported that up until that point of the tour the South African rugby players had displayed indifference toward the anti-apartheid protestors, but had "showed the most obvious agitation" when "Gary Foley turned up at their Sydney motel in a South African

had come closer together in the past ten years.' [88] For another eminent indigenous Australian the Springbok tour and attention on South African race policies bought a different sort of problem. Tennis player Evonne Goolagong, who had earlier accepted 'honorary white' status to play tennis on the all-white tennis circuit in South Africa, now found herself the target of anti-Apartheid demonstrators in London as she was on the verge of her first Wimbledon win in July 1971. [89]

Indigenous activists Kath Walker, Denis Walker, Liela Watson, Don Brady and others took a high profile role in anti-Springbok tour activities in Brisbane where eccentric, right wing Premier Jo Bjelke-Peterson had imposed a State of Emergency to protect the South African rugby visitors. [90] Kath, Denis and Pastor Don Brady provocatively dined with poet Judith Wright at the Springbok's Brisbane hotel, whilst Leila Watson and other Brisbane activists took a leading role in Brisbane demonstrations. In Melbourne more than 200 people were arrested in what the Australian newspaper described as a 'riot' and race issues were suddenly at the forefront of political debate. [91] In all centres the Springbok footballers played there would be a small group of indigenous people among the anti-apartheid protesters, thus attention was being drawn to the parallels between South African and Australian racial policies. At the same time bonds began to develop between black and white activists and a greater mutual understanding blossomed.

By the time the South African rugby team left Australia, the product of the Redfern group's high profile involvement in the anti-apartheid demonstrations was a desire to keep up the momentum and now confront issues of race in Australia's backyard. On 22nd July 1971 the Sydney Morning Herald reported that British anti-apartheid activist Peter Hain (today a Minister in the British Government) had called for 'immediate international action' to 'put pressure on the Australian government to improve the Aborigines status in society'. [92] Ironically, one month later Yvonne Goolagong arrived back home after winning Wimbledon and was given a motorcade through the streets of Sydney. Beside the front-page SMH report of her triumphant return was a report from America on the death of US black activist George Jackson in a prison shoot-out at San Quentin. [93] It was a bizarre juxtaposition reflecting the schizophrenic nature of Australian race relations at that moment in history.

Then, in December 1971, just months after the departure of the springboks, members of the anti-apartheid movement, in conjunction with the Gurindji Campaign called for a march against racism and left the organising of the march to the Redfern Black Power group. [94] In the subsequent march, outside the old Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in George Street, police attacked the marchers and in the subsequent melee, among those arrested was Laurie Aarons, secretary of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). This raised insinuations of Communist influence on the Aboriginal movement, but it should be remembered that Communist writer Denis Freney always said that he wondered just who was using who when it came to the Redfern radicals constant demands for resources and support. [95] Nevertheless, the scene was now set for the Black Power group's greatest coup.

The Aboriginal Embassy 1972

In the wake of the demonstrations in Sydney the Redfern activists began seriously linking up with like-minded groups in other southeastern states. Gary Foley was invited to Adelaide to assist in the establishment of an ALS and whilst staying at the home of Australia's first Communist QC, Elliot Johnston, he met a young Northern Territory artist named Harold Thomas. They became friends

and in the course of helping to organise a Land Rights rally in Adelaide they collaborated in the design of a new symbol for the Aboriginal movement. When Foley took Thomas' design back to the eastern states it quickly gained acceptance and became the most recognizable symbol of indigenous Australia today, the Aboriginal Flag. Further demonstrations followed in Brisbane and Sydney and Melbourne. The resultant publicity made it seem as though Aborigines were revolting in four states, and with the Gurindji struggle and land battles at Lake Tyers in Victoria and Yirrikala in the Northern Territory, a hapless Prime Minister William McMahon dithered in formulating a response.

Whilst the Prime Minister vacillated the external political pressure increased with the Australian newspaper in an editorial titled 'Aboriginals a problem' demanded 'imagination and leadership' on the issue and stated, 'the time is well overdue for Australia to be brought into the Seventies'.^[96] Also during January indigenous activists continued to grab front-page headlines with 'Black Power activist' Michael Anderson confronting Evonne Goolagong at Kooyong,^[97] and on the 19th January Denis Walker announced in Brisbane that he had formed the first Black Panther Party in Australia.^[98]

Eventually a hapless, besieged Prime Minister decided to make his major policy statement on Aboriginal Affairs on the 25th January, the day before the national day. To make his statement so close to what the indigenous people regard as Invasion Day was to be seen as a very provocative move, and it was inevitable that regardless of what he had to say the Black Power movement would, in the inimitable words of Denis Walker, 'deliver some sort of consequence!'^[99]

In his statement, which was titled, Australian Aboriginals - Commonwealth Policy and Achievements, Prime Minister McMahon stated,

When the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory decided on April 22 last year that Australian law did not recognise Aboriginal title to land in Australia, the Government decided to review its policy relating to the Aboriginal people and their aspirations.^[100]

He indirectly acknowledged the political campaign of the radicals by referring to the, 'changing conditions in the seventies and a greater awareness of Aboriginal wishes' which had 'made necessary a restatement' of government policy.^[101] He said the resultant review had decided to 'create general purpose leases' rather than a system of Land Rights through granting of freehold title, as had been demanded by both northern and southern indigenous activists. He also announced that the Government would appropriate \$5 million for the purchase of land for Aboriginal communities and 'would contemplate' a further \$2million in each of the next four years. He said that mining would be permitted to continue on Aboriginal lands. As Adelaide activist Ruby Hammond pointed out, 'undoubtedly the government hoped that Aboriginal people would welcome this statement, but they had failed to understand many of the needs of the Aborigines and the intensity of their feelings'.^[102]

The use of the term 'embassy' as well as the call for Aboriginal Land Rights and recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty created disquiet in the McMahon Government.

The 'consequence' alluded to by Denis Walker was swift in coming. Indigenous leaders meeting in Sydney that night were outraged at what they regarded as stonewalling. By that time the core of the Redfern group comprised of Paul Coe and sister Isobel from Cowra, brilliant QLD writer and theorist John Newfong, Bob, Kaye and Sol Belleair, Tony Coorie from Lismore, Alana and Samantha Doolan from Townsville, Gary Williams and Gary Foley from Nambucca, Lyn Craigie and her brother Billy from Moree. As Goodall noted, 'all these activists came from communities scarred by the loss of their lands'.^[103] Gathering at first at Lyn and Peter Thompson's Darlinghurst flat, they discussed ideas on how they should respond to the Government's statement. One of the group's mentors, Chicka Dixon, was keen on replicating the Native American's takeover of Alcatraz. He urged that they take over Pinchgut Island (Fort Dennison) in Sydney harbour. 'Not just take it over, defend it!', he said, because the when the Indians had taken over Alcatraz they had placed their peoples plight into 'the eyes of the world'.^[104] Ultimately however, a decision was made to confront the Federal Government on its own ground. So they dispatched four young men to Canberra. They were Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, Michael Anderson, and Bertie Williams and were driven by a Communist Party photographer, Noel Hazard.^[105] Their general instructions were to set up a protest and 'hold the fort until a major demonstration could be organised',^[106] the idea being to at least be seen to be mounting an 'immediate response' to McMahon.

Upon arrival in Canberra early on the morning of 27th January 1972 the Koori men pitched a beach umbrella on the lawns outside Parliament House and proclaimed the site the office of the "Aboriginal Embassy". They declared that Prime Minister McMahon's statement the day before had effectively relegated indigenous people to the status of 'aliens in our own land', thus as aliens 'we would have an embassy of our own'.^[107] One which in its form as a set of tents would physically reflect the typical housing of Aborigines in Australia today, and one which would be strategically placed under the noses of Australian politicians across the road in Parliament House'.^[108] Normally such an audacious project would have lasted as long as it took the ACT Police to arrive, but by a sheer stroke of luck this group of activists had accidentally discovered a loophole in ACT ordinances regarding camping in Canberra. It seemed that there was in fact no ordinance that prevented camping on the lawns of Parliament House as long as there were less than twelve tents. As long as the newly established "Embassy" compound consisted of eleven tents or less, there was nothing the ACT Police to do to remove the protest group.^[109]

The inability for the Government to remove this embarrassing protest from in front of their Parliament House captured the imagination of not just indigenous Australia. Within days the site had established an office tent and installed a letterbox in front. Two days later the PMG began delivering the mail. Tourist bus operators became aware of the new attraction in town and began bringing their busloads of tourists to the "Aboriginal Embassy" before escorting them across the road to Parliament House. The Koori activists would solicit donations and distribute educational literature about their cause. Local residents of Canberra would bring food and blankets and invite Embassy staff into their homes for showers and dinner. Students at the nearby Australian National University opened their union building for support activities and the mass media began to display great interest. The Aboriginal Embassy very quickly became the most successful protest venture yet launched by the Aboriginal political movement.

The use of the term 'embassy' as well as the call for Aboriginal Land Rights and recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty created disquiet in the McMahon Government. The Minister for Environment, Aborigines and the Arts, Peter Howson described it as 'a disturbing undertone...The term implied a sovereign state and

cut across the Government's expressed objection to separate development and was kindred to apartheid.'[110] Another reaction from some in the white community was to describe the protest as an 'eyesore', to which Embassy official John Newfong responded, 'If people think this is an eyesore, well it is the way it is on government settlements.'[111] But the overall response from the general community seemed to the activists to be very positive, and this encouraged the groups now involved at the Embassy (which included representatives from Brisbane, Melbourne and NSW south coast communities) to become bolder in their approach.

On the 2nd February the Embassy staff, to emphasize the sense of alienation the Embassy represented, as well as underlining their assertions of Aboriginal sovereignty, set about designing and flying their own flag. The first flag that flew on the tents was a black, green, red and black pennant, and by April it was joined by another 'comprising of a spear laid across a red and black background with four crescents looking inward to symbolize the black rights struggle from the four corners of Australia'.[112] Three days later in another move to formalise its proclaimed status the Embassy issued a five point plan for land rights. This plan called for Aboriginal control of the Northern Territory, legal title to all existing reserve lands and settlements through out Australia and minimum compensation of at least six billion dollars and a percentage of the gross national product for lands alienated.[113] These demands strongly reflected the general philosophy of the Black Power group that now controlled the Embassy. This group included John Newfong, Billy Harrison, Billy Craigie, Chicka Dixon, Gary Williams, Paul Coe, Gary Foley, Bruce McGuinness, Lyn Thompson, Isobel Coe, Ambrose Golden-Brown, Choc Moore, Brian Marshall and Alan Sharp-ley, and a constantly changing stream of visiting activists from all states.

So strong was the support being expressed in both black and white Australia for the Embassy protest that the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Mr. Gough Whitlam, felt compelled to pay a formal visit to the tents. In early February, when the Embassy had only been in existence for less than a fortnight, Whitlam met with Embassy officials and discussed matters raised in the Embassy demands. After the meeting he declared that a Labor Government would 'absolutely reverse' the McMahon Government policy on land rights, introduce a civil rights bill, overrule state laws that discriminated against Aborigines and would provide free legal aid for Aborigines.[114] This was clearly a major and significant breakthrough for the Black Power activists who were the core of the tent Embassy protest action. Two weeks later when Embassy based indigenous demonstrators invaded the public gallery during question time, the Age's correspondent, Michelle Grattan noted that 'It was an occasion for stressing "blackness" because the protestors were 'making a symbolic stand against all the injustices they felt at the hands of white society'.[115]

Three months later in April the Embassy had grown to consist of six tents. Spokesperson Ambrose Golden-Brown was able to boast, 'We've achieved recognition, just by being here...We haven't made the Government change its policy, but we've succeeded in embarrassing it, and we've made people think about the Aboriginal cause'.[116] The Government responded by the Minister for the Interior, Ralph Hunt, announcing the Government's intention to introduce a new ordinance that would make it an offence to camp on unleased Commonwealth land within the city.[117] Federal Opposition spokesperson Kep Enderby in turn declared, 'The Aborigines are exercising one of the most fundamental rights recognised by British law. This is the right of peaceful assembly for the purpose of communicating a political point of view and informing the Parliament of a grievance they claim to have.'[118] The next day thirty Federal Labor parliamentarians promise to take 'physical action' to prevent the forced

removal of the tent Embassy, and the stage was set for a Government vs Aboriginal Embassy confrontation.

On July 20 whilst parliament was in recess, the Government gazetted the amended Trespass on Commonwealth Lands Ordinance. Immediately after its gazettal almost 100 ACT police, without warning, forcibly removed the tent Embassy and arrested eight people including two prominent members of the Sydney Black Power group, Roberta Sykes and Gary Foley.[119] When the scenes of police violently removing the tents were aired on television that night it provoked a strong response in both black and white communities. Whilst Liberal party indigenous Senator Neville Bonner warned of 'an upsurge of Black Power violence in Australia',[120] the Melbourne Age worried, 'the risk is that in demolishing one symbol, the Government might have established violence as a new symbol of black-white relationships.'[121] It quickly became apparent that the McMahon government had seriously miscalculated the extent of support that the Black Power group had amassed with its Embassy protest.

Three days later hundreds of indigenous activists descended on Canberra and held a demonstration on the site of the Embassy. The demonstration was addressed by Black Power activists Gary Williams, Len Watson, Michael Anderson, Chicka Dixon, Paul Coe, Roberta Sykes, Shirley Smith and Denis Walker. London Times correspondent Stewart Harris was to later observe that these speakers 'spoke thousands of words on an historic occasion and none, or very few, were reported in the Australian press'.[122] The demonstrators then attempted to re-erect the tent Embassy only to be confronted by hundreds of police. The resulting altercation saw wild scenes as Aborigines and police fought a pitched battle on the lawns of Parliament House that resulted in eighteen people being arrested and many injured (including Paul Coe). Chicka Dixon was to describe it as 'the most violent event ' he had ever witnessed, and Gary Foley called it the 'most violent confrontation in the history of Canberra'.[123] Again violent scenes on television provoked outrage in many indigenous communities and the Black Power group called for another, bigger demonstration for July 30. Embassy representatives sought a meeting with Interior Minister Hunt but he refused to see them, so they then called on the Prime Minister to intervene to 'prevent a national black crisis including bloodshed and possible deaths.'[124]

On 30 July more than two thousand indigenous people and their supporters staged the biggest land rights demonstration in the history of Canberra. The government had prepared for the occasion by cancelling all police leave in the ACT, enlisted the aid of the NSW Police riot squad and was even said to have the Royal Military College on alert in case needed.[125] During an intense standoff between hundreds of police and thousands of protestors, Embassy and other indigenous leaders conferred and decided that, to avert serious injury to the many young and older people in the crowd, they would passively allow the police to walk in and remove the tents. The indigenous activists regarded the action as 'a great moral victory' for the movement, and it certainly represented the political high point for the advocates of Black Power. Even Faith Bandler of FCAATSI, who had in 1969-70 fought Black Power attempts to 'aboriginalise' her organisation, now came out and said that the Government action against the Embassy had 'brought everybody together and strengthened ties between the black people'.[126]

By now the universally bad publicity that the Government had attracted over the Embassy affair lead the government to urgently convene a national conference of hand picked indigenous representatives in Canberra. Aboriginal Affairs Minister Mr. Howson dismissed media allegations that the conference was

‘staged’ and that the 66 indigenous representatives were chosen because of their more ‘moderate’ stance. He said the group was the ‘true’ representatives of ‘all Aborigines’.[127] It was therefore very unfortunate for Mr. Howson when the conference voted to give tent Embassy representatives full speaking and voting rights and passed a motion calling for the Embassy to be re-established.[128] The fiasco for the Government continued when four weeks later the full bench of the ACT Supreme Court declared the Trespass on Commonwealth Lands Ordinance was invalid because it had not been introduced in the proper manner. Immediately the Embassy was re-erected whilst the Government rushed through retrospective legislation to restore the ordinance, but was further embarrassed when prominent QLD Liberal Senator Jim Killen crossed the floor to vote with the opposition and called for all charges against Embassy demonstrators to be dropped.[129]

By the end of 1972 as a Federal election campaign got under way the McMahon Government’s reputation and credibility on indigenous affairs was in tatters. Secretary of the conservative Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines & Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), Faith Bandler, spoke for all when she said, ‘We’ve never been involved in party politics before but we’ve no alternative. Getting rid of the McMahon government is the goal of everyone now - it’s a priority, even over land rights.’[130] As the 1972 federal election campaign began Gough Whitlam declared in his policy speech, ‘Australia’s treatment of her Aboriginal people will be the thing upon which the rest of the world will judge Australia and Australians - not just now but in the greater perspective of history.’[131]

During the last months of the McMahon government the Redfern Black Power group intensified their propaganda war by establishing the National Black Theatre Company, run by one of the fathers of Australian Black Power Bob Maza. As they produced and performed their legendary political revue *Basically Black*[132] another Black Power stalwart, Chicka Dixon, prepared to lead an Aboriginal peoples’ delegation on a visit to the People’s Republic of China.[133] The National Black Theatre production played a highly successful sold-out season at Sydney’s Nimrod Theatre, receiving rave reviews and establishing black theatre as a viable proposition. On the night of the final performance the cast, crew and audience gathered in the theatre foyer to party and watch the results of the Federal election come in on specially installed TV sets. Thus many members of the Sydney Black Power group watched as the McMahon government (and twenty-two years of conservative rule) lost the election to a Labor landslide.[134]

Ruby Hammond’s biographer Margaret Forte summed up the Aboriginal Embassy protest when she described it as ‘imaginative, ingenious and highly successful’,[135] and even Attwood and Markus conceded it ‘brilliantly symbolized Aborigines sense of being foreigners in their own land.’[136] In 1972 legendary political correspondent for the Age, Michelle Grattan, wrote that the Embassy had ‘caught the imagination of Australians and focussed attention all over the world on the plight and problems of the Aborigines...one thing the embassy has done is to make the whole Aboriginal question very much a live political issue.’[137] Gough Whitlam has said that the Aboriginal Embassy played a ‘significant role’ in the ‘final destabilization of the McMahon Government’ and thus had helped change the course of Australian history.[138] Heather Goodall observed that the Embassy ‘had flung onto the public stage the powerful idea of land rights. Land had been the underlying current for so long in Aboriginal politics, but it had not until then reached the wider public debate.’[139] But at the end of the day, the Aboriginal Embassy had its greatest impact and most enduring effect by influencing the moderates in the broader indigenous

political struggle. Legendary Redfern matriarch Shirley “Mum Shirl” Smith said of her experience at the tent embassy, ‘If I was going to think of a sign along the road that marked for me the beginning of militant Black Power politics, that sign would have printed on it - Aboriginal Embassy.’[140]

It can be said that the era I have written about in this thesis is one that to the greater extent has been ignored by Australian historians who tend to gloss over or superficially analyze its important in recent history. As stated earlier, many historians and commentators dismiss or denigrate the effect Black Power had on Aboriginal Australia. Scott Bennett disparaged Black Power for its ‘stridency’ and connotations of violence and says, ‘the movement never managed to take firm roots in Australia’. Given today most of the old Black Power nationalists are held in the highest regard by a “new” generation of Aboriginal leaders like Aden Ridgeway, and that the issues brought to prominence by the Black Power movement remain front page issues today, it is impossible to accept Bennett’s assertion. Margaret Ann Franklin in her book *Black and White Australians* regards the Black Power Movement as merely its more dramatic manifestations like Roosevelt Brown’s visit and Denis Walker’s made-for-media Black Panther Party. She thereby completely ignores the Redfern community where Black Power gained its greatest following and had its biggest local impact.[150] Humphrey McQueen at least acknowledged that ‘today Aboriginal organisations are now run by indigenous people themselves and not by white sympathisers, as had been the case before Black Power struck in the mid-1960s.’[151]

Otherwise superficiality seems the order of the day when it comes to academic historical accounts of the Black Power movement, and until that problem is addressed we cannot begin to understand the profound effect it had on both black and white Australia. Nor can we properly analyze or understand events, actions and ideas in contemporary indigenous communities unless we are aware of the way in which these communities perceive their own histories. In indigenous communities memories of the Black Power era and the events at the Aboriginal Embassy are vivid and strong and span across generations, whereas in white Australia these same events are almost completely unremembered. The official history of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League states that the Aboriginal Embassy and the Black Power era ‘marked the entrenchment of a new and uncompromising stance in Aboriginal politics where any reversion to paternalistic white direction of Aboriginal affairs would not be acceptable.’[152] ‘These Black Power mythologies influence the way indigenous people politically and culturally deal with white Australia, yet virtually no-one in white academia seems interested in knowing about how and why they might. White Australia will never understand or begin to know the deep historical alienation and frustration that people in indigenous communities feel, they can only begin to understand when they begin to comprehend our history. Yet the history of indigenous communities over the past forty years has been all but ignored by mainstream Australian historians.

In writing this far from comprehensive narrative about these significant moments in modern indigenous (and thereby Australian) history, I have made but a very humble attempt to begin the long and arduous process of overcoming that ignorance and disinterest. Much more needs to be done.

Gary Foley
5th October 2001.

[1] Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal), *My People*, Jacaranda Press, 1970.

[2] H.C. Coombs, 'Transcript of Q and A to University of Western Australia summer school' 26 January 1973 Coombs box 44 folder 369, quoted in, Rowse, Tim, *Obligated to be Difficult: Nugget Coombs Legacy in Indigenous Affairs*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 106.

[3] J.C. Albert and S.E. Albert, (eds.), *The Sixties Papers*, Praeger, 1984, p. 105. See

< <http://www.umich.edu/~eng499/concepts/power.html>>

[4] Ibid.

[5] See, "Victorian Aborigines Advancement League Statement on Black Power 1969" in Attwood, Bain, & Andrew Markus, 1999, p. 243.

[6] Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW, 1770-1972*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1996, p. 351.

[7] Roberta (Bobbi) Sykes, in Ann Turner (ed.), *Black Power in Australia: Neville Bonner vs Bobbi Sykes*, South Yarra, Heinemann Educational, 1975, p. 10.

[8] Paul Coe, in Attwood, Bain, & Andrew Markus, 1999, p.261.

[9] Bruce McGuinness, in Attwood, Bain, & Andrew Markus, p. 243.

[10] See, Markus, Andrew, *Blood From a Stone*, Clayton: Monash Publications in History, 1986, and Markus, Andrew "After the Outward Appearance: Scientists, administrators and politicians", all that dirt: An Australian 1938 Monograph, ed. Bill Gammage and Andrew Markus, Canberra, History Project Incorporated, 1982.

[11] See, B. Attwood, & J. Arnold, (Eds.) *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Special edition of *Journal of Australian Studies*, La Trobe University Press, Melbourne, 1992., and Bain Attwood, & Andrew Markus, 1999., and Attwood, Bain, *The making of the Aborigines*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1989.

[12] Read, Peter, Charles Perkins: A Biography, Ringwood, Penguin, 2001.

[13] See Mudrooroo, "Our Histories", *Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 1995, pp. 175-192.

[14] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999, p. 28.

[15] Ibid., p. 30.

[16] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 35.

[17] Bain Attwood, & Andrew Markus, 1999, pp.58-59.

[18] Heather Goodall, 1996, pp. 149-152.

[19] Ibid., p. 338.

[20] Andrew Markus, *Blood From a Stone*, Clayton: Monash Publications in History, 1986, p. 10.

[21] VAAL, VAAL, *Victims or Victors?: The Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League*, Melbourne: Hyland House, 1985, p. 27.

[22] Jack Horner, "Steadfast Pioneers", *Identity*, Vol.1No.5, July, 1972.

[23] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 230.

[24] VAAL, VAAL, *Victims or Victors?*, 1985, p.37.

[25] Ibid., p.38.

[26] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 255.

[27] Heather Goodall, "Crying Out for Land Rights", in Verity Burgmann & Jenny Lee (eds.) *Staining the Wattle: a peoples history of Australia since 1788*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble, 1988, p. 194.

[28] VAAL, VAAL, *Victims or Victors?*, 1985, pp. 57-59., pp. 286-291.

[29] Charles Perkins, letter to Mr. A.G. Kingsmill, Chairman, NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, 18th Jan. 1956, from Bain Attwood & Andrew Markus, 1999, p. 215.

[30] Ibid

[31] "Race Tour Bus Driver Walks Out", *Australian*, 22 Feb. 1965.

[32] Adam Shoemaker, *Black Words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929 - 1988*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989, p. 107.

[33] Lyall Munro, interview on 'Broadband', ABC Radio, 20 February 1978.

[34] Fay Gale, and Alison Brookman, *Race Relations in Australia-The Aborigines*, Sydney, McGraw-Hill, 1975, p. 32.

[35] Paul Coe, in Colin Tatz (ed.), *Black Viewpoints: The Aboriginal Experience*, Brookvale, Australia and NZ Book Co., 1975, p. 106.

[36] Richard Broome, "Historians, Aborigines and Australia", in Bain Attwood (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1996, p. 71.

[37] Peter Read, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People & the State*, Canberra, ANU, 1988, p.131.

[38] Peter Read, Charles Perkins: A Biography, Ringwood, Penguin, 2001, pp. 93 -100.

[39] G. Foley, "A Black Life", *Rolling Stone*, Issue 426 - Yearbook, 1988.

[40] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 338.

[41] "Introducing Paul Coe", *The Australian*, 23 December 1970.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Roberta Sykes in Ann Turner (ed.) *Black Power in Australia: Neville Bonner vs Bobbi Sykes*, South Yarra, Heinemann Educational, 1975, p. 21.

[44] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 326.

[45] G. Foley, "A Black Life", *Rolling Stone*, Issue 426 - Yearbook, 1988.

[46] Ibid., p. 336.

[47] Colin Tatz (ed.), *Black Viewpoints*, 1975, p. 95.

[48] Walker, Kath, "Black-White Coalition Can Work", *Origin*, 18 Sept. 1969.

[49] Meredith Burgmann, "Old radicals never die, they just get nostalgic", *Farrago*, Volume 80, edition 7, October 2001, p. 24.

[50] Peter Read, 2001, pp. 132 -133.

[51] Chicka Dixon, "Chicka Dixon", in Colin Tatz (ed.), *Black Viewpoints*, Brookvale, Australia and NZ Book Co., 1975, p. 32.

[52] VAAL, VAAL, *Victims or Victors?: The Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League*, Melbourne: Hyland House, 1985, p.88.

[53] Ibid., p. 89.

[54] Ibid., p. 92.

[55] Neville Bonner, letter to the editor, *Courier Mail*, 25 September 1969.

[56] "Black Power Looms Larger", *Age*, 12th Feb. 1973.

[57] See, Bobbi Sykes, "Black people want to control their own destiny", *Australian*, 22nd June 1972.

[58] Max Griffiths, *Aboriginal Affairs: A Short History 1788 - 1995*, Kenthurst, Kangaroo, 1995, p. 114.

[59] Scott Robinson, *The Aboriginal Embassy 1972*, MA Thesis, pp. 22-23.

[60] Scott Bennett, *Aborigines and Political Power*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 13.

[61] Chicka Dixon, "Chicka Dixon", in Colin Tatz, (ed.), *Black Viewpoints: The Aboriginal Experience*, Sydney, Australia & New Zealand Book Co., 1975, p. 34.

[62] Jim Haskins, *Power to the People: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997, p. 27.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Roberta Sykes, *Snake Dancing: autobiography of a black woman*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1998, p.115.

[65] "Black Power Group", NSW Police Crime Surveillance Unit document 1972, in Foley Collection, Melbourne.

[66] R. Sykes, *Snake Dancing: autobiography of a black woman*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1998, p.143.

[67] M. Langton, "Marcia Lynne Langton", *Murawina*, Sydney: Doubleday, 1993, p. 164.

[68] G. Foley, "A Black Life", *Rolling Stone*, Issue 426 - Yearbook, 1988.

[69] Ibid.

[70] "\$20,000 for Aboriginal Legal Service", *The Australian*, 29 December 1970, p.1.

[71] Meredith Burgman, in O'Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995, p. 16.

[72] Denis Freney, *A Map of Days: Life on the Left*, Port Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991, p. 287.

[73] Lilla Watson, "Richard Buckhorn and Lilla Watson", O'Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995, p. 158.

[74] Denis Freney, 1991, p. 310.

[75] See, Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 337.

[76] Ibid., p.267.

[77] Meredith Burgmann, *Farrago*, 2001, p. 24.

[78] Heather Goodall, 1996, p.267.

[79] Helen Frizeli, "After 14 years the light will not go out at 10", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June 1971.

[80] Chris Pritchard, "'Just a game' says Evonne", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June 1971, p. 19.

[81] Meredith Burgmann, *Farrago*, 2001, pp. 24-25.

[82] Jim Boyce, "Jim Boyce", in O'Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995, pp. 24-25.

[83] Harris, Stewart, *Political Football - The Springbok Tour of Australia 1971*, Melbourne: Gold Star, 1972, p. 123. [84] Dare, Tim, "The Day the Police Stole the Initiative", *The Australian*, 12 July 1971, p. 7.

[85] Harris, Stewart, 1972, p. 93.

[86] *Ibid.*, p.98.

[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 122 - 123.

[88] Peter Read, 2001, p. 163.

[89] Chris Pritchard, "Aboriginal Target in Protest", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1971.

[90] Stewart Harris, *Political Football*, 1972.

[91] Richard Zacariah & Tim Dare, "Police arrest 200 in Springbok riot", *The Sunday Australian*, 4 July 1971.

[92] Chris Pritchard, "Action sought on Aborigines", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1971.

[93] "Six die in wild US jailbreak attempt", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August 1971.

[94] Denis Freney, 1991, p. 312.

[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 310-317.

[96] Editorial, *The Australian*, 3 January 1972, p.8.

[97] David Armstrong, "Black Power loses to stubborn Evonne", *The Australian*, 6 January 1972, p.1.

[98] See "Aboriginals set up militant Black Panther Movement", *The Australian*, 19 January 1972, p.2., and, "Panthers group announces its aims", *The Age*, 14 January 1972, p. 3.

[99] Denis Walker, quoted in Ningla-Ana, Dir. A. Cavadini, 90min. B&W, 1972.

[100] William McMahon, Prime Ministerial statement, *Australian Aborigines - Commonwealth Policy and Achievements*, 25 January 1972, quoted from edited text in, "The PM's statement on policy", *Canberra Times*, 26 January 1972, p. 12.

[101] *Ibid.*

[102] Ruby Hammond, in Margaret Forte, *Flight of an Eagle: The Dreaming of Ruby Hammond*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1995, p.134.

[103] Heather Goodall, 1996, p. 338.

[104] Chicka Dixon, Transcript of First in Line Programme, 22 August 1989.

[105] *Ibid.*, pp. 338-339.

[106] Gary Williams, personal interview with author, Nambucca Heads, Foley Collection, 20 December 1999.

[107] Gary Foley, in *The Australian*, 10 February 1972.

[108] Gary Williams, 1999.

[109] Billy Craigie, personal interview with author, Sydney, Foley Collection, 25 July 1986.

[110] *Canberra News*, 31 January 1972.

[111] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 1972.

[112] Coral Dow, "Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Icon or Eyesore?", *Social Policy Group*, 4 April 2000, p. 3.

[113] Bain Attwood, & Andrew Markus, 1999, p.

[114] *The Age*, 10 February 1972.

[115] Michelle Grattan, *The Age*, 23 February 1972.

[116] *The Australian*, 29 April 1972.

[117] *Canberra News*, 11 May 1972, and *The Age*, 12 May 1972.

[118] *Ibid.*

[119] *The Age*, 21 July 1972.

[120] *Ibid.*

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Stewart Harris, *The Age*, 29 July 1972.

[123] Scott Robinson, "The Aboriginal Embassy: an account of the Protests of 1972", *Aboriginal History* vol.18 (1) 1994, pp.49-63.

[124] *The Age*, 28 July 1972.

[125] Gary Foley, "Whiteness and Blackness in the Koori Struggle for Self-Determination: Strategic Considerations in the Struggle for Social Justice for Indigenous People", *Just Policy* No. 19/20, September 2000, p.80.

[126] *The Bulletin*, 5 August 1972.

[127] *Canberra Times*, 11 August 1972.

[128] *The Age*, 15 August 1972.

[129] *Canberra Times*, 13 September 1972, and *The Age*, 13 September 1972

[130] *The Bulletin*, 5 August 1972.

[131] E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1985, p. 466.

[132] Bryce Fraser & Ann Atkinson (eds.) *People of Australia: key events in population, society, the environment*, Sydney: The Macquarie Library, 1998, pp. 17-18.

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[134] G. Foley, "A Black Life", *Rolling Stone*, Issue 426 - Yearbook, 1988.

[135] Margaret Forte, *Flight of an Eagle: The Dreaming of Ruby Hammond*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1995, p. 225.

[136] Attwood, Bain, & Andrew Markus, 1999, p.174.

[137] Michelle Grattan, *The Age*, 22 July 1972.

[138] Gough Whitlam, interview with author, Paris 1984, Foley Collection.

[139] Heather Goodall, 1996, p.351.

[140] Shirley Smith, *Mum Shirl: an autobiography*, Port Melbourne, Mammoth Publishing, 1992, p. 110.

[141] Margaret A. Franklin, *Black and White Australians*, South Yarra: Heinemann Educational, 1976, p. 1.

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[143] Richard Broome, "Historians, Aborigines and Australia", in Bain Attwood (ed.), *In the age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1996, p. 68.

[144] Richard Broome, 1996, p. 68.

[145] Henry Reynolds, quoted in, Franklin, Margaret A., *Black and White Australians*, South Yarra: Heinemann Educational, 1976, p. 1.

[146] W.E.H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming*, Sydney, 1968, pp. 22-25.

[147] C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1970, p. 2.

[148] Richard Broome, 1996, p. 67.

[149] Scott Bennett, *Aborigines and Political Power*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1989.

[150] Franklin, Margaret Ann, *Black and White Australians*, South Yarra, Heinemann, 1976, pp. 198 - 212.

[151] Humphrey McQueen, *Suspect History: Manning Clark and the future of Australia's past*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1997, p. 218.

[152] VAAL, 1985, p. 101.

Bibliography

Primary Source

Anderson, M., "Michael Anderson", in Colin Tatz, (ed.), *Black Viewpoints: The Aboriginal Experience*, Sydney, Australia & New Zealand Book Co., 1975.

Bandler, Faith, *Turning the Tide: A personal history of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1989.

Black Panthers of Australia, "Platform and Programme" 1970, Riley & Ephemera Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Cavanagh, Senator J.L., *Selected Policy Statements on Aboriginal Affairs 1973-1974*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1974.

Coombs, H.C., 'Transcript of Q and A to University of Western Australia summer school' 26 January 1973 Coombs box 44 folder 369, quoted in, Rowse, Tim, *Obligated to be Difficult: Nugget Coombs Legacy in Indigenous Affairs*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 106.

Fogarty, Lionel, "The Making and Breaking of a Black Militant", in Buchanan, C. (ed.) *Murrie Cooe*, Brisbane: Cheryl Buchanan, 1983.

Foley, G., "An Aborigine in the Peoples Republic of China", *New Dawn Magazine*, Vol.5, No. 2, ISSN 0028-4513, July-August 1974.

Foley, G., "A Black Life", *Rolling Stone*, Issue 426 - Yearbook, 1988.

Freney, Denis, *A Map of Days: Life on the Left*, Port Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991.

Gilbert, K., *Living Black: Blacks talk to Kevin Gilbert*, Ringwood, Allen Lane-Penguin, 1977.

Hardy, Frank, *The Unlucky Australians*, London, Pan Books, 1968.

Harris, Stewart, *Political Football - The Springbok Tour of Australia 1971*, Melbourne: Gold Star, 1972.

Hasluck, Paul, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs, 1925-1965*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1988.

Horner, Jack, "Steadfast Pioneers", *Identity*, Vol.1No.5, July, 1972.

McMahon, William, Prime Ministerial statement, *Australian Aborigines - Commonwealth Policy and Achievements*, 25 January 1972, quoted from edited text in, "The PM's statement on policy", *Canberra Times*, 26 January 1972. Perkins, Charles, "Charles Perkins", in Stuart Rintoul, *The Wailing: A*

National Black Oral History, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1993.
 Rowley, C.D., *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1970.
 Smith, Shirley, *Mum Shirl: an autobiography*, Port Melbourne, Mammoth Publishing, 1992.
 Stanner, W.E.H., *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973*, Canberra, ANU Press, 1979.
 Sykes, Roberta, “Black people want to control their own destiny”, *Australian*, 22nd June 1972
 Sykes, Roberta, *Snake Dancing: autobiography of a black woman*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1998.
 Tatz, Colin, (ed.), *Black Viewpoints*, Brookvale, Australia and NZ Book Co., 1975.
 Walker, Kath, [Oodgeroo Noonuccal], in Gilbert, Kevin (ed.), *Inside Black Australia: An anthology of Aboriginal poetry*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1988.
 Walker, Kath, [Oodgeroo Noonuccal], *My People*, Jacaranda Press, 1970.

Secondary Source

Aborigines Advancement League, *Victims or Victors?: The Story of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1985.
 Aboriginal Medical Service, *AMS: A Political History*, Redfern AMS 20th Anniversary Book, Sydney: Redfern AMS, 1991.
 Attwood, B. & Arnold, J. (Eds.) *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Special edition of *Journal of Australian Studies*, La Trobe University Press, Melbourne, 1992.
 Attwood, Bain, & Andrew Markus, (Eds.) *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Melbourne, 1999.
 Attwood, Bain, *The making of the Aborigines*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1989.
 Bennett, Scott, *Aborigines and Political Power*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991.
 Berndt, RM (Ed) *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s*, New Jersey, 1977.
 Boyce, Jim, “Jim Boyce”, in O’Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995.
 Broome, Richard, *Aboriginal Australians: Second Edition*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1994.
 Broome, Richard, “Historians, Aborigines and Australia”, in Attwood, Bain, (ed.), *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1996.
 Burgmann, Meredith, “Old radicals never die, they just get nostalgic”, *Farrago*, Volume 80, edition 7, October 2001.
 Burgmann, Meredith, in O’Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995.
 Burgmann, Verity & Lee, Jenny, (eds.) *Staining the Wattle: a people’s history of Australia since 1788*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble, 1988.
 Coombs, HC *Aboriginal Autonomy: Issues and Strategies*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994.
 Coombs, HC, and CJ Robinson, “Remembering the Roots: Lessons for ATSIC”, in Patrick Sullivan, (Ed.) *Shooting the Banker: Essays on ATSIC and Self-Determination*, North Australia Research Unit, ANU, Darwin, 1996.
 Coombs, H.C., ‘Transcript of Q and A to University of Western Australia summer school’ 26 January 1973 Coombs box 44 folder 369, quoted in, Rowse, Tim, *Obliged to be Difficult: Nugget Coombs Legacy in Indigenous Affairs*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 106.
 Cowlshaw, Gillian, and Morris, Barry, (eds.), *Race Matters*, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997.
 Cowlshaw, Gillian, “Studying Aborigines: Changing Canons in Anthropology and History”, in Attwood, B. & Arnold, J. (Eds.) *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Special edition of *Journal of Australian Studies*, La Trobe University Press, Melbourne, 1992.
 Darian-Smith, Kate, Liz Gunner & Sarah Nuttall (eds.), *Text, Theory, Space: Land, Literature and History in South Africa and Australia*, London, Routledge, 1996.
 Davidson, Jim, (ed.) *Meanjin*, “Aboriginal Issue”, Vol. 36, No. 4, December 1977.
 Davis, Jack, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo Narogin & Adam Shoemaker, *Paperbark: a collection of Black Australian writings*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
 Foley, Gary, “Whiteness and Blackness in the Koori Struggle for Self-Determination: Strategic Considerations in the Struggle for Social Justice for Indigenous People”, *Just Policy* No. 19/20, September 2000.
 Foley, Gary, “Teaching the Whites a Lesson” in Burgmann, Verity & Lee, Jenny (eds.) *Staining the Wattle: a people’s history of Australia since 1788*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble, 1988.

Forte, Margaret, *Flight of an Eagle: The dreaming of Ruby Hammond*, Kent Town, Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1995.
 Frankenberg, Ruth, *White women, race matters: the social construction of whiteness*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
 Franklin, Margaret Ann, *Black and White Australians*, South Yarra, Heinemann, 1976.
 Fraser, Bryce & Atkinson, Ann, (eds.) *People of Australia: key events in population, society, the environment*, Sydney: The Macquarie Library, 1998.
 Gale, Fay and Brookman, Alison, *Race Relations in Australia-The Aborigines*, Sydney, McGraw-Hill, 1975.
 Goodall, Heather, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW, 1770-1972*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1996.
 Goodall, Heather, “Crying Out for Land Rights”, in Burgmann, Verity & Lee, Jenny (eds.) *Staining the Wattle: a people’s history of Australia since 1788*, Fitzroy, McPhee Gribble, 1988.
 Griffiths, M., *Aboriginal Affairs: A Short History 1788 - 1995*, Kenthurst, Kangaroo Press, 1995.
 Haskins, Jim, *Power to the People: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
 Hiatt, L.R., *Arguments About Aborigines: Australia and the evolution of social anthropology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
 Horner, Jack, “Steadfast Pioneers”, *Identity*, Vol.1No.5, July, 1972.
 Kidd, Rosalind, *The Way We Civilise*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1997.
 Langton, Marcia, “Marcia Lynne Langton”, *Murawina*, Sydney: Doubleday, 1993.
 Lippmann, Lorna, “The Aborigines”, in Allan Patience & Brian Head (Eds.), *From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979.
 Lippmann, Lorna, *Words or blows : racial attitudes in Australia*, Ringwood : Penguin, 1973.
 Manne, Robert. (Ed.) *The Australian Century: Political Struggle in the Building of a Nation*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1999.
 Markus, Andrew, *Blood From a Stone*, Clayton: Monash Publications in History, 1986.
 Markus, Andrew “After the Outward Appearance: Scientists, administrators and politicians”, all that dirt: *An Australian 1938 Monograph*, ed. Bill Gammage and Andrew Markus, Canberra, History Project Incorporated, 1982.
 Massey, Douglas S., and Denton, Nancy A., *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993.
 McAdam, Doug, “The Heyday of Black Insurgency 1961-1965”, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.
 Middleton, Hannah, *But now we want our land back: A history of the Australian Aboriginal People*, Sydney, New Age Publishers, 1977.
 Morris, Barry *Domesticating Resistance: the Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989.
 McQueen, Humphrey, *Suspect History: Manning Clark and the future of Australia’s past*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1997.
 Mullard, Chris, *Aborigines in Australia Today*, Canberra, National Aboriginal Forum, 1974.
 Munro, Lyall, interview on ‘Broadband’, ABC Radio, 20 February 1978.
 Nathan, Pam, *Home Away From Home: A study of the Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy*, Melbourne: PIT Press, 1980.
 O’Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995.
 Olbrei, Erik, (ed.) *Black Australians: Prospects for Change*, Townsville, Students Union James Cook University, 1982.
 Pement, Eric, “Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam: Part One”, *Cornerstone*, vol.26, issue 111, 1997.
 Perkins, Charles, “Charles Perkins”, in Rintoul, Stuart, *The Wailing: A National Black Oral History*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1993
 Pollard, David, *Give and Take: The Losing Partnership in Aboriginal Poverty*, Marrickville, Hale & Ironmonger, 1988.
 Prentis, Malcolm D., *A Study in Black and White: The Aborigines in Australian History*, Methuen Australia, 1975.
 Rader, Benjamin G., “Blacks and Women Demand Equal Rights”, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983.
 Read, Peter, *Charles Perkins: A Biography*, Ringwood, Penguin, 2001.

Read, Peter, *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State*, Canberra, ANU, 1988.
 Rintoul, Stuart, *The Wailing: A National Black Oral History*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1993.
 Roberts, David. “Self-Determination and the Struggle for Aboriginal Equality”, in C. Bourke, E.Bourke, B. Edwards, *Aboriginal Australia*, UQP, 1994.
 Robinson, Fergus and Barry York, *The Black Resistance*, Melbourne :Widescope, 1977.
 Robinson, Scott, *The Aboriginal Embassy 1972*, MA Thesis, ANU, 1993.
 Robinson, Scott, “The Aboriginal Embassy: an account of the Protests of 1972”, *Aboriginal History* vol.18 (1) 1994.
 Rose, Michael *For the Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996.
 Rowse, Tim, *Obligated to be Difficult: Nugget Coombs Legacy in Indigenous Affairs*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
 Rowse, Tim, *After Mabo: Interpreting indigenous traditions*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1993.
 Said, Edward, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, Penguin, 1978.
 Shoemaker, Adam *Black Words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929 - 1988*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
 Smith, Hazel M., and Biddle, Ellen h., *Look Forward, Not Back: Aborigines in Metropolitan Brisbane, 1965-1966*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1975.

Smith, Jennifer B., *An International History of the Black Panther Party*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.
 Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999.
 Sullivan, Patrick (Ed.), *Shooting the Banker: Essays on ATSIC and Self-Determination*, North Australia Research Unit, ANU, Darwin, 1996.
 Sykes, Roberta, *Black Majority: An analysis of 21 years of Black Australian experience as emancipated Australian citizens*, Hawthorn, Hudson Publishing, 1989.
 Tatz, Colin, *Race Politics in Australia: Aborigines, Politics and Law*, Armidale, University of New England Publishing Unit, 1979.
 Tugby, Dr. Donald (ed.), *Aboriginal Identity in Contemporary Australian Society*, Ryde, Jacaranda Press, 1973.
 Turner, Ann,(ed.) *Black Power in Australia: Neville Bonner vs Bobbi Sykes*, South Yarra, Heinemann Educational, 1975.
 Watson, Lilla, “Richard Buckhorn and Lilla Watson”, O’Donnell, P. and Simons, L. (eds.) *Australians Against Racism: Testimonies from the anti-apartheid movement in Australia*, Annandale: Pluto Press, 1995.
 Whitlam, E.G. *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1985.

Newspapers
 The Australian, 1968-1972.
 The Age, 1968-1972.
 National Times, 1968-1972.
 Daily Mirror, 1968-1972.
 Sun, 1968-1972.
 Canberra Times, 1968-1972.
 Sydney Morning Herald, 1968-1972.
 © G. Foley 2001.

SquatSpace’s Redfern - Waterloo: Tour of Beauty

As part of the *Redfern School of Displacement*, the theme of local displacement through gentrification was explored as a series of “excursions” hosted by SquatSpace collective, known as the *Redfern - Waterloo: Tour of Beauty*.

The *Tour of Beauty* first ran from 2005-2009 and took people on a bus (or bike) tour of these inner Sydney suburbs, it highlighted particular sites which were threatened by the Redfern Waterloo Authority’s plan to “revitalise” the area. These inner city suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo, has a long history of being home to a large working class and Indigenous community. In more recent years the area has witnessed a process of rapid urban change, displacing many of these residents.

Each of the tours lasted 4-5 hours and tourists were addressed by various representatives of the local community - for example, from the local Indigenous Women’s Centre, the Settlement Community Centre, the Aboriginal Housing Company, the REDWatch activist group, architects and the Indigenous Social Justice Association.

These 2016 tours mark their 10-year anniversary. A decade on, some people view the area as gentrified, but the plans for the area have only just begun. The Block - a unique place within Sydney’s urban landscape as a centre for the Indigenous community - is about to have construction begin on a major new mixed-use development and further down the road Waterloo has been earmarked as the site for a new metro station with corresponding high-rise construction, confirming the local area is set for another major transformation.

Each tour met with speakers at significant sites around the area who will present their perspective on the urban transformation of the suburb and how they see it affecting the local residents, giving a personalised insight into this highly complex and contested changing suburb.

The following texts were reprinted for the *Redfern School of Displacement* and were written during the period the original tours, from 2005-2009.

Art as Situated Experience

Lucas Ihlein

Published in *If you see something say something* newspaper, which accompanied exhibition of the same name, Mori Gallery, 2007.

SquatSpace's *Tour of Beauty* takes place in the contested, congested inner-Sydney suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo. These areas, which have for many years housed a large proportion of Indigenous residents and low income public housing tenants, are now seen as potentially valuable land for real estate speculation. In late 2004, the New South Wales state government created the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA), effectively excising a slice of land south of Sydney's central business district from the jurisdiction of the local council by

How could we intervene in a supposedly democratic process when the proper channels of consultation had been swept away, and where traditional dissent seemed fruitless?

the Redfern area. We wanted to "do something" about this alarming situation, but we were confounded; How could we intervene in a supposedly democratic process when the proper channels of consultation had been swept away, and where traditional dissent seemed fruitless?

The group embarked on a process of conversational research: we began meeting with local community representatives in an attempt to understand, from their perspectives, what the RWA's actions might mean for life in the area. It became clear that the "locals" felt strongly about their own predicament - we could not do justice to their wealth of knowledge and depth of emotion by utilising second-hand information in the production of an artwork about them. In fact, we discovered that the more people we spoke to, the more we were referred to others who would report different experiences of their particular situations.

declaring it of significance to the entire state. With this legal sleight of hand, the government can now push through commercial redevelopment plans, sell off local assets, and override existing heritage regulations under the pretext that the land is too important to be subject to normal planning laws.

Not surprisingly, this heavy-handed approach to urban planning has generated great anxiety amongst the numerous local stakeholders. Many of the artists in the SquatSpace collective (of which I am a member) live in

SquatSpace organised its first *Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty* in September 2005 to investigate the disjuncture between the Redfern-Waterloo Authority's plans and the current lives of local people. "Tourists" are transported by mini-bus, or travel en masse by bicycle, to each stop. Here they are greeted by a "local", who speaks briefly about the place and his/her connection to it, answering questions and facilitating discussion before we move on to the next site. The tour visits several endangered sites in the area: Aboriginal housing at The Block, community centres, government assets to be sold off, and public housing towers. We also visit locations which indicate a possible future: a growing commercial art gallery precinct, and new private apartment developments at the eastern end of the suburb. With the *Tour of Beauty*, the members of SquatSpace draw on their extensive toolkit of aesthetic strategies. We act something like site-specific DJs, mixing the conversation "live" to create an affecting (and sometimes overwhelming) experience for our "tourists."

'It is a commonplace that we cannot direct, save accidentally, the growth and flowering of plants, however lovely and enjoyed, without understanding their causal conditions. It should be just as commonplace that esthetic understanding - as distinct from sheer personal enjoyment - must start with the soil, air, and light out of which things esthetically admirable rise.'

With this statement, John Dewey deploys a botanical metaphor to connect art with life. Rather than cutting a flower at its stem and placing it in a vase in my kitchen, I am urged to admire it in the garden, grounded in the earth where it grows. Similarly, aesthetics, for Dewey, is a situated practice in which our senses are stimulated and challenged continuously in the places and spaces we inhabit every day. In his 1934 book *Art as Experience*, Dewey sought to restore continuity between aesthetic experiences usually thought to reside only in "special" places like museums and galleries, and those that happen in our daily lives. As a result, both spheres might be enriched. Art within museums would be viewed as intertwined with a wider ecology of cultural practices, and everyday life could be equipped with a set of aesthetic tools to make sense of, and enhance, its rhythms, forms and intensities.

SquatSpace's *Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty* belongs to a long tradition of art which attempts to connect aesthetic participation with a rhetoric of participatory democracy. In contemporary art, "participation" has often been used by artists and critics to connote a kind of liberating function. The involvement of the audience can be framed as a salutary move towards a model of idealised social democracy. In allowing the audience to share responsibility for the act of creation (rather than merely its reception), interactive artworks break down the authoritarian, privileged speaking voice of the artist. By extension, an

...everyday life could be equipped with a set of aesthetic tools to make sense of, and enhance, its rhythms, forms and intensities.

individual's participation in the creative act might lead to a stronger sense of his/her ability to participate in society. Audiences are thus released from their passivity and empowered to take more responsibility for governing their own lives. This relationship between aesthetic interactivity and participatory democracy is by no means uncontested. However, in the case of the *Tour of Beauty* the model of participation employed – verbal dialogue which takes place within specific sites and neighbourhoods – brings the question of democracy itself sharply into focus. By considering and discussing redevelopment plans set in place by the NSW state government in the very places those plans are set to affect, the *Tour of Beauty* allows aesthetic considerations to come into play in a directly experienced manner. The texture of the streets and buildings, the tone and passion of spoken voices, and the presence of my own body in these sites makes me conscious of the complexity of lived space. By taking on board many different voices, the *Tour of Beauty* embodies the difficulty we have as grounded citizens in coming to grips with the disjunction between lived space and something as abstract as a “plan.”

The dialogical nature of the *Tour of Beauty* acts as an implicit critique of the systems and methods of the tourism industry, where conflict and contestation is swept under the mat and not regarded as appropriate for public display. In standard city bus tours, a prosperous atmosphere of harmony and progress is presented as an out-come of the well-functioning democratic process – a process in which we participate via the proper channels of voting and buying. By contrast, SquatSpace's tour offers a more direct experience of democracy – one more closely aligned with Chantal Mouffe and Ernest Laclau's vision in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*:

‘a fully functioning democratic society is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but one in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate—in other words, a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained , not erased.’

In this, the *Tour of Beauty* resembles the *Western Cape Action Tours (WECAT)* in Cape Town, South Africa. These tours are run by former members of the Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress who fought against the old apartheid regime of South Africa. They visit the Cape Flats, a place “most white South Africans, aware of rising crime rates and a history of unrest, would never dream of visiting”. Heidi Gruenebaum-Ralph describes the passionate and conflict-laden stories told on the *Western Cape Action Tours* as a process of “claiming one's own memories”. This is impossible in national memorials of apartheid atrocities because of the necessity for the official voice to speak with a certain “propriety” and thus efface individual,

This relationship between aesthetic interactivity and participatory democracy is by no means uncontested.

messy and contradicting accounts. Similarly, on the *Tour of Beauty* speakers represent themselves, and not an official, editorially sanctioned position.

After each tour, SquatSpace uploads reports, information, links, and photographs onto its website. On the site, “tourists” are able to write about their own experiences, a dialogical process which directly feeds back into the way we carry out subsequent tours. Importantly, rather than exploiting a local political situation for the production of a gallery-based artwork, the group has, in fact, begun to produce a series of relationships. We choose not to instrumentalise these relationships in the production of a commodified art object. Rather, the work-that-art-does is to allow “knowledge” to emerge through social interaction in contested places. In the process, SquatSpace's developing network of local knowledge becomes a resource in its own right, feeding back into the very earth from which it springs.

Lucas Ihlein is a member of the SquatSpace Collective.

NOTES:

Dewey, J., 1958, *Art as Experience*, Capricorn Books, New York, p.12

The political theory of Laclau and Mouffe is discussed in relation to participatory art practice in Bishop, C., 2004, ‘Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics’, *OCTOBER*, no.110, p. 66.

Tarica, A., 2004, ‘Choosing the Rebel Tour: A visitor to Cape Town takes an alternative look at South Africa's recent past’, *Budget Travel Online*, August 5, 2004,

< <http://budgettravelonline.com/bt-dyn/content/article/2005/06/04/AR2005060400728.html> >.

See also the WECAT website: < <http://www.dacpm.org.za/wecat.html> >

Gruenebaum-Ralph, H., 2001, ‘Re-Placing Pasts, Forgetting Presents: Narrative, Place and Memory in the Time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol.32, No. 3, Fall 2001, p. 205.

Dewey, 1958, p. 3.



Image: Ali Blogg (2006)

Tour of Beauty

Eve Vincent

Published in Meanjin, Vol. 65, No. 2, 2006

We sit at the foot of the Waterloo public housing towers, beside the community garden. Tower-block tenant and residents' activist Ross Smith is meant to be telling our group of twenty what it's like to live here, what it means to live here. Instead he remarks, 'Most people wind up their windows and lock their cars as they drive through Redfern-Waterloo.' I think about how I pick up speed on my bike when passing Redfern station on my way home to Marrickville. Smiling, and genuinely curious, Ross asks the group: 'Why are you here?' A few people murmur a response. I've got my jeans rolled up, my cap jammed on my head, my notebook out. Then, directly to me, he looks at me and says: 'You in the baseball cap, why are you here?'

The tour was the work of an arts-activist collective, SquatSpace, that has been making work about housing, urban development and gentrification since 2000. I came across them in 2002 at the annual This Is Not Art Festival in Newcastle. I find their work thoughtful, politicised and usually funny.

The tour was conceived as a way to present different interpretations of a complex place and complex issues. Tricked out in immaculate, ironic uniforms—skinny red real-estate-agent ties, black pants and hats, white shirts—SquatSpace members hand the audience over to various local storytellers, such as Ross, at various locations. SquatSpace members also drive the mini-bus, make introductions, and quarter oranges for a half-time snack. There's no attempt to direct the tour towards a definitive interpretation. The effect is kaleidoscopic.

In November 2004 the NSW Government passed an Act that created the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA). This effectively excised an area from Sydney City Council jurisdiction, empowering Minister for Redfern-Waterloo Frank Sartor to declare any property within the authority's area as State Significant—a status that effectively exempts these sites from ordinary heritage laws. On the Tour of Beauty we drive past a few of the smaller State Significant sites: the pinkroofed Redfern Public School, purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation in 2005, and the Rachel Forster hospital. At the outset, State Significant declarations applied to the Australian Technology Park, the Eveleigh railway workshop site, the public housing estates and the Block.

Sartor, who is also the Minister for Planning, is the chief consent officer for all private development in the authority's area and has the power to acquire land compulsorily, without room for objection. Documents leaked to the Sydney Morning Herald in November 2004 outlined the planned privatisation of up to \$540 million worth of public assets over ten years in order to facilitate the CBD's expansion and double the area's residential population.

They detailed extensive redevelopment of the Department of Housing's 23.4 hectare Redfern-Waterloo estate as part of a deliberate plan to change the social mix of an area in which many of the current residents are poor, old and on a disability support pension.

The RWA has assumed responsibility for human services, infrastructure and employment policies in the area under its authority. It is not simply a new government department either: designed to run as a business, the RWA needs to make a profit on development in order to generate a budget for public spending.

So far, the RWA has released three plans for public comment that detail proposed social policies and redevelopments. The latest of these, the Built Environment Plan Stage One (BEP), was released in February 2006 and includes plans for six 18-storey office blocks in a 'revitalised' commercial centre around Redfern station.

In response to the RWA's creation, local residents Lyn and Geoff Turnbull formed a community group called REDWatch, a kind of RWA watchdog that spans Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo and focuses on issues of transparency and community consultation.

Our hired mini-bus heads down Cleveland Street to Redfern. We park in Edward Street and spill out onto the footpath. We walk to the corner and stop in front of our first site of Local Significance: a blank wall.

Edward Street, Darlington, is lined with renovated terraces. The building on the corner is the Settlement, Sydney's oldest community centre. Lyn Turnbull tells us that a jumble of Aboriginal artists' tags, paintings and graffiti once covered the front of the Settlement, including something by Tracey Moffatt, until the new residents of Edward Street had it painted over.

Inside the Settlement, we spread out over the squeaking floorboards, checking out the hall, which is covered in murals, sappy poems, a giant turtle, lots of little handprints. 'The kids own this space,' says Lyn. She then tries to explain to us the complex politics of the Settlement's committee of management, in which power is split between old and new residents. Many of the newcomers, according to Lyn, don't like the rowdiness that reigns on the corner—noisy Aboriginal people acting as if they own the place. An antagonistic committee sold the Settlement for a meagre amount, but power shifted again and a subsequent committee reversed the decision. Lyn hopes the sale will not proceed.

Out the back of the Settlement in the scrappy yard Lyn says, 'Now TJ was no angel, but ...' Later, we will stop at the fence where T.J. Hickey was impaled. The fence reads, 'Fly Angel Boy.'

When the RWA was created, journalists routinely invoked TJ's awful death in February 2004 and the subsequent riot at the Block and Redfern station. The

issues were clearly linked: the events of late summer provided the impetus for an inquiry that year, which in turn allowed for a broad-ranging proposal to fix the ‘problem’ that is Redfern.

Conflict between Sartor and the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC), which owns the Block, seemed inevitable. The AHC has unveiled its solution to two decades of devastating smack saturation in Redfern—the award-winning Pemulwuy Project. The Pemulwuy Project, AHC chief executive Mick Mundine argues, is a social plan designed to foster community safety and Aboriginal education and employment opportunities. The sticking point is that the AHC wants to replace 62 of the 102 homes it demolished when it rooted out the dealers, and at this stage doesn’t have the money to do so. (Nineteen houses remain on the Block.) Sartor is adamantly opposed to rebuilding—he calls it high-dependency housing and insists that this repeats the mistakes of the past. The BEP rezones the Block from residential mixed-use to commercial mixed-use; provides for 2000 more residences, allowing only thirty on AHC land; voids the Block’s heritage status; and raises building heights to up to five storeys.

Koori people settled the working-class suburb of Redfern, Gadigal country, during the Depression. They moved to the inner city to work as fettlers at the Eveleigh rail yards. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was another wave of migration as Aboriginal people left reserves in rural New South Wales and headed to Sydney—and Redfern. Local Catholic pastor Ted Kennedy opened his doors to them. Community and political initiatives flourished. The Block was purchased in 1973 with a grant from the Whitlam government.

The Block is now prime real estate, adjacent to Redfern station, which the state government is impatient to redevelop in order to divert train traffic from Central. It needs to do so using the controversial private–public partnership model, and needs to attract an investor. This is difficult. It’s never said outright but every RWA statement implies that major developers won’t build where Aboriginal people hang out.

In October 2005, Mundine summarised his relationship with Sartor: ‘Mr Sartor and I are in a bitter dispute over his attempt to grab control of privately owned Aboriginal land, so he can carry out his plan to profiteer on the sale of our local public assets and gentrify Redfern’. If Sartor has his way, added Mundine, ‘it won’t be long before we lose everything we love about Redfern-Waterloo’. Following the release of the BEP, Mundine was quoted in the Herald as saying: ‘The ... zoning changes dash any hopes of affordable home ownership for Aboriginal families on The Block.’ In a later statement he remained defiant: ‘The AHC will never replace the Pemulwuy Project with Sartor’s ill-considered alternative.’

We walk from the Settlement down to the Block. It’s a hot afternoon. We are conspicuous as a group, walking around the sunny streets. A few grinning blokes call out to us from a roof where they’re working, ‘Are you on a pub

crawl?’ At the Block we meet Richard Green, who launches into a rave. A Darug descendant of Sydney, Richard is a linguist who speaks indigenous languages from across the entire country, as well as a few others. Today, he feels like speaking Arabic with someone, but we’re a pretty white crowd, and predictably polite. He quickly gets over his disappointment, and talks about the Pemulwuy Project and the impasse with Sartor. He concludes with a story about greed, which I have also heard from Nunga woman Irene Watson. She tells the story as follows:

In the beginning there lived a giant frog, who drank up all the water until there was no water left in the creeks, lagoons, rivers, lakes and even the oceans. All the animals became thirsty and came together to find a solution that would satisfy their growing thirst. The animals decided the way to do this was to get the frog to release the water back to the land, and that the ‘proper’ way to do this was to make the frog laugh. After much performing one of the animals found a way to humour the frog, until it released a great peal of laughter. When the frog laughed it released all the water, it came gushing back to the land filling creeks, riverbeds, lakes and even the oceans. As the community of animals once again turned their gaze to the frog they realised they had to make the large frog transform into a smaller one, so that it could no longer dominate the community. They decided to reduce the one large frog to many much smaller frogs, so that the frog would be brought to share equally with all other living beings.

From the bus window, we take in most of the State Significant areas. Lyn Turnbull talks non-stop into the microphone, overwhelming us with anecdotes and facts. Every site, every street reminds her of something else to say. We pass Ted Kennedy’s old church, which is written on with chalk: ‘Crucified on every city sidewalk, the aboriginal Christ should be free in his own church, among his own people in Redfern.’

It’s late afternoon by the time we pull up in Waterloo. The long, long shadows of the public housing towers fall across the grass. Two elderly Russian women with scarves tied under their chins sit on seats nearby, chatting. We sit in a semicircle on the green.

Ray Jackson of the Indigenous Social Justice Association goes over the events of Valentine’s Day 2004 when 17-year-old T.J. Hickey cut behind the Turunga block of the towers on his bike, came over the handlebars and was impaled on a metal picket fence. Ray, the Hickey family and the community maintain that police were in pursuit of TJ that morning.

The NSW State Coroner’s Report into Deaths in Custody and Police Operations 2004 set out to establish whether or not Hickey was being pursued by two police vans. The police maintain that while they saw Hickey on his bike, he was not a ‘person of interest’ to them that morning. The police officer at the centre of the allegations, Senior Constable Hollingsworth, was excused from giving

evidence to the coroner. All officers involved sat down together to produce a written account of events after Hickey had been taken to the Sydney Children's Hospital by ambulance in the morning. He died late that night. While seemingly unimpressed with the 'defensive' testimonies of key police witnesses, the coroner consistently accepted the police's version of events, and regarded conflicting accounts as unreliable. He was satisfied that it was a 'freak accident'. Ray Jackson is far from satisfied. The community maintains that the bike the police submitted as evidence was not the bike TJ was riding that morning. They also have unanswered questions about the procedure after police found TJ, impaled. Why did officers call first for police 'back-up' rather than medical help? Why did officers fail to follow normal procedure in impaling incidents: leaving the victim to be cut off under medical supervision?

We sit there on the ground, listening to all this quietly. Looking up I can see different-coloured curtains in the hundreds of tower windows. I can hear the Babushkas chatting, whirring pigeons, the whoosh of traffic.

Ray has his back to the fence and we sit facing it. The fence is made of a wall of bricks and atop that, metal palings. 'RIP Bruz.' Scraps of black material are tied to the palings. 'RIP TJ.' Faded plastic tulips are jammed into the cracks between bricks. 'Fly Angel Boy.'

We walk across the lawn to Ross Smith. When he asks me why I'm here, I mumble something about wanting to discover the particular meanings places hold for people who live there. He nods, and asks someone else. I haven't been in Sydney very long. When friends from Melbourne ask me how it's going, I say, 'It's interesting.' It's the extremes that interest me: extremes of pretension, of wealth on display, of self-expression; and extremes of marginalisation, disadvantage, violence and racism. I'm increasingly interested in the particular kind of bureaucracy-administered violence and dispossession that redevelopment here involves. And I am interested, as I have been everywhere, in the intricacies of everyday life and the rich, particular meanings of place— historic, social, personal.

Ross says that whatever else you want to say about the public housing estate, 'people say hello to each other here'. He talks of a proposed shift towards shorter leases and a change in eligibility criteria, which would see the estate transformed from a close albeit poor community into mere crisis accommodation. Initially, Sartor planned to demolish the high-rises, then changed his mind. Their future will be determined in the second stage of the Built Environment Plan. There's speculation that the open space around them will go.

Ross invites us to take a look at the community gardens. While most people grow vegies, someone has planted their patch with irises. In fading light, we stand beside a fountain in the deserted quadrangle of a swanky apartment complex called Crystal Waters. We're not sure what suburb we're in. Pockets of this area are sometimes called Redfern East or Moore Park in order to distinguish them from Redfern proper.

Someone has glad-wrapped a notice to a pole, which I think is innovative: this notice won't fade.

It's a list of things for sale:

Ikea leather sofa

Ikea bed and mattress

Ikea shelving unit

Ikea computer desk

Ikea coffee table

Ikea knives (set of 4).

We attract the attention of two security guards who, suspicious, do a loop to check us out.

Afterwards we speak with Stella Downer, who owns a gallery on Danks Street, a precinct our tour guides describe as a 'little piece of Paddington in Waterloo'. Do we really imagine ourselves—mostly white, mostly middle class, mostly artists—as outside the gentrifying process?

I've started to ride my bike slowly through Redfern—for research. I rode past Lyn Turnbull. She was sitting on a chair pulled into the middle of the footpath on Abercrombie Street outside the Aboriginal Legal Service. She was laughing and talking through the open door to someone inside.

I've done some walking, too, and I notice more on foot. Down by the Technology Park someone has got to the concrete before it's dried. In it they've etched half a flag. A hastily drawn line runs through the circle of the sun. The words BLACK POWER have been smeared over, but they're set into the path.

Nearby there's a small shopfront, with a display board that announces: '\$5 billion plan to redevelop Redfern! \$27 million to redevelop Eveleigh Street precinct! [The Block.] Be a part of the Redfern Renaissance!'

There lived a giant frog, who drank up all the water until there was no water left in the creeks, lagoons, rivers, lakes and even the oceans.

NOTES

For more information on SquatSpace, see <www.squatspace.com>.

Thanks to Lucas Ihlein, and to Irene Watson for permission to quote the frog story from her 'Buried Alive', Law and Critique, no. 3, 2002, p. 253.

Tour of Beauty Complexity, Aesthetics and Gentrification:

The Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty.

Lucas Ihlein

First published in *There Goes The Neighbourhood*, eds. Begg, Z & de Souza, K. 2009

It's now nearly 4 years since SquatSpace began running its *Tour of Beauty* through Redfern and Waterloo. Being involved with this project as one of the Tour's organisers has been a formative and grounding first-hand experience in spatial politics, gentrification, urban planning and design. I want to now take this opportunity to briefly reflect on the neighbourhood complexity which the *Tour* makes visible (if not entirely comprehensible) as it relates to two key issues in the ecology of neighbourhoods: gentrification and aesthetics.

The *Tour of Beauty* began as a strategy for coming to grips with the complexity of Redfern. In Sydney, the word "Redfern" comes packaged with all sorts of (often unspoken) associations: pride: for the Aboriginal folks from near and far, for whom Redfern is a physical and spiritual foothold in an increasingly hostile urban environment; fear: for a huge slab of the non-indigenous population who steer clear of the place as a general rule; hope: for the property developers whose watchful eye is cast on Redfern's precarious social and architectural structures; and endless frustration: for politicians of all persuasions, who have continually failed, in their own terms, to "solve the Redfern Problem" - which presents an entanglement of racial politics, welfare policy, and land value. It is precisely Redfern's resistance to problem definitions which makes it so complex.

A problem? For whom? A solution? In whose terms? Redfern is not a chess game. Chess, though offering an enormous array of potential moves and counter-moves, always moves forward towards a known and desired goal. Thus the term "wicked problem", coined in 1973 by design theorists Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber, seems appropriate for Redfern. A wicked problem has no clear definition. It has no clear "rules" of engagement. There is no way of knowing when a wicked problem has been solved, or when one should stop trying to solve it. It is impossible to simply impose a solution which functions well in analogous situations, and any attempt at a solution tends to generate a proliferating cascade of further problems, each of which may be equally difficult to define and solve.

It is precisely Redfern's resistance to problem definitions which makes it so complex.

In mid 2005, when SquatSpace naively stepped into the Redfern fray, we were presented with a problem of our own. As artists, we are used to making Art. Art tends to select, define, frame, solidify and simplify elements from the world, and transplant them into another context. It is a process of representation in which one thing comes to stand for another, resulting in a (provisionally) satisfying coherence and sense of unity. Choosing to "make art about Redfern" is thus a tricky proposition. How could we reconcile the tension between the complexity of our subject-territory, with art's requirement of coherence? Our tentative experiment at moderating this tension was the *Tour of Beauty*, which provides an experiential framework for dialogue and dissent without requiring closure and consensus.

We run the tours as "fellow citizens", although by now, most of the members of SquatSpace have been forced out of the neighbourhood by rising property prices.

The *Tour* works well at providing "a foot in the door" to Redfern local politics. Our role as tourguides steers clear of party lines. We are not beholden to the correctness of council or state government policy, nor are we hamstrung by the orthodoxy of hard-core oppositional local action groups. We run the tours as "fellow citizens", although by now, most of the members of SquatSpace have been forced out of the neighbourhood by rising property prices. Speakers on the tour represent

themselves: they are free to be as inflammatory, seductive or rhetorical as they like. Our intention, with this way of making art, was to liberate ourselves from the onerous role of having to represent the opinions and arguments of others, which, we believed, would always be diluted and misconstrued when filtered through our secondary voices.

Thus, the tour offers a series of sharp, angry, sweet or sad speeches. Ray Jackson walks us through the final path taken by TJ Hickey before he died after pursuit by the police. Ray's passionate plea to re-open the inquest is delivered in front of the very fence upon which the young man was impaled, forcing us into the uneasy role of impromptu mourners and amateur crime-scene investigators. Lynn Turnbull welcomes us into The Settlement, a dishevelled neighbourhood community centre. She recounts the tale of a hostile takeover bid by certain local residents, keen to rid the street of the Aboriginal kids whose exuberant and mischievous presence was bringing down property prices. And Ross Smith gently shows us the public housing which defines a large proportion of the area, whose population, he says, "are one of the most studied" in Australia. "Poked and prodded by experts who come and go and never come back", Ross says the public housing tenants carry on bemused, determined not to be intimidated by the academic glare of anthropological and architectural research.

These are just a few of the regular speakers on the Tour. Experientially, the Tour is a strange day out. It is exhausting, both emotionally and physically - it runs for over 4 hours. And we who come along – how should we define ourselves? Tourists? - if so, what kind of tourists are we? We take a risk, leaving our homes and traipsing en masse around a contested suburb like Redfern (even if many of us already live here). It is unsettling: a group in a bus, or on bikes, moving through public space becomes spectacle as much as spectator. Inevitably, something unplanned will happen on the Tour. Recently, an inebriated inhabitant of Redfern Park saw our gathering as a readymade audience - an opportunity to hold forth on some incomprehensible subject of his own. How do tourists respond to such a situation? This encounter foregrounds the paradox inherent in the Tour itself. “If you came out today to experience the real Redfern, well, here it is folks!” Unlike our pre-booked speakers, who while provocative and passionate, are for the most part encouraging of polite dialogical exchange, these random incursions have no predictable behavioural script. Which brave soul will intervene to expell or include this homeless man, so we might continue with our discussion about Redfern?

Such situations bring to the surface the ethics of everyday action – the complexity inherent in the seemingly innocent question of “what to do about Redfern”? There is never any end to this complexity: and precious little in the way of a vocabulary to even speak of it. Yet speak we must, and the tour’s dialogical structure provides a small framework in which difficult questions can be raised and discussed.

The final stop on the *Tour of Beauty* is a place at the eastern edge of Redfern, called Crystal Waters. It is a modern high-rise apartment development on the site of a former glass-works factory. After a day of visiting Aboriginal housing sites, community centres, abandoned government buildings and housing tower-blocks, Crystal Waters is a jarring vision. Our visit is like a trip into the future – or at least, one possible future – in which Redfern’s complex spatial and social tensions have, perhaps, been erased, replaced with a lego-land environment complete with foaming fountains and private security patrols. At this place, unlike all the former sites, we offer no guest speaker. As tourists, we now confront ourselves: the group organically reforms into a circle, and begins to sift through some of the overwhelming complexity of urban design and planning which we have confronted.

Haunting our discussions around the fountain at Crystal Waters is aesthetics. The very look of the place raises the question of taste. Clean and new, in contrast to the layered accretions of grime and history which characterise most

**...the group
organically reforms
into a circle, and be-
gins to sift through
some of the over-
whelming complexity
of urban design and
planning which we
have confronted.**

of the other sites on the Tour, Crystal Waters is generally held by the group to be a sanitised and “artificial” (and therefore failed) attempt at neighbourhood creation. In this, aesthetics and politics are inextricably interwoven. “I wouldn’t want to live here”, one of our tourists mutters. But for others on the Tour, Crystal Waters points a possible way forward: centrally designed apartment complexes are an opportunity to share amenities, services, water and power. They might even allow for community gardens and large-scale solar power generation. The “characterful” but ecologically wasteful terrace houses of Redfern struggle to achieve such design intelligence, embedded as they are in nineteenth century British architectural principles. Another tourist counters that it is unlikely that Crystal Waters has utilised anything but the cheapest and meanest of technologies and materials - it is space parcelled, commodified and alienated at its worst. He casts aspersions on the kind of non-community that such a place is likely to engender: yuppies, driving their cars directly into the underground carpark, taking the lift to their apartments, walking their fluffy dogs in the manicured private park, and never otherwise interacting with the rest of Redfern. He means, without interacting with the real Redfern.

The fact that the discussion reaches this point - that we allow ourselves to make sweeping generalisations about the aesthetics and lifestyle habits of a large segment of the population - is disquieting. After a day of opening our ears to a broad range of voices – believing, that is, in our own open-mindedness - here we are again, struggling to come to terms with difference. While no doubt an understandable response to our sense of helplessness in halting the march of “progress”, the ease with which we can engage in yuppy-bashing reveals a blind spot in our thinking. That blind spot is our own role in the process of gentrification.

When we artists and creative types move into a neighbourhood, it is nearly always because of its affordability. Run-down spaces offer an opportunity to artists that is not visible to other sectors of the property market. We are able to invest energy into architectural waste structures, creating a connection between beauty and utility where there previously seemed to be none. In fact, it is this “authentic” utilitarian beauty of artists’ warehouses, lofts and squats (and which we find lacking in faked-up developments like Crystal Waters) which allows the broader property market to wake up to their potential for intensified commodification.

Artists are thus the avant-garde of gentrification – a fact we never acknowledge when we moan about the “yuppies moving in and changing the face of our suburb”. We loudly declare our abhorrence for gentrification, yet we ourselves are a key step in its onward march. As David Ley has so incisively pointed out, this is how aesthetics is embedded in the property market. Artists (somewhat like real-estate agents) engage in a quasi-magical process of value-creation. We devote attention to worthless and invisible phenomena. Like renovators and do-er-uppers, the attention of artists makes junk special and valuable. It is therefore no surprise that the same occurs to the very neighbour

hoods which we inhabit. As Ley writes, gentrification instigated by artists involves the exact same trajectory as the classic Duchampian transformation of garbage into found objects: ‘the movement of [...] a place, from junk to art and then on to commodity.’ The final step, then, in the gentrification process is the pushing of those same artists out of their homes, which are now too expensive, and onto the next low-rent neighbourhood. And so the cycle continues.

The Tour of Beauty is no doubt playing its own small part in this process. However, it could do more. It could, precisely, begin to cast the spotlight right back onto artists’ spatial transformations of Redfern. In this way, we might begin to see ourselves as intrinsically involved in, rather than victims of, the gentrifying forces of change. In addition, perhaps we could begin to invite those very yuppies we seem to abhor as guest speakers on the Tour. The danger, of course, is that we may be criticised for giving airtime to those who certainly don’t need it, whose “money talks” much more loudly than the clamoring voices of Redfern’s battlers. What’s more, by listening to them, we might dull our oppositional edge, the sharp clear moral high-ground that a partial understanding of any situation enables. But apart from our egotistical (and wrongheaded) attachment to being the noble underdogs of gentrification, there is not much more to lose. To gain? Plenty. A chance to understand yet another aspect of the ever-evolving multifaceted social and spatial equilibrium which is a neighbourhood. The possibility, that is, of moving forward into an ever more complex ecology, which, this time, might be conceived in a more wholistic manner.

Lucas Ihlein is a member of SquatSpace.

NOTES:

For an earlier account of the Tour of Beauty, see Ihlein, L., 2007, “Art as Situated Experience”, published online as part of the exhibition If You See Something, Say Something, curated by Keg de Souza and Zanny Begg: <<http://ifyouseesomethingsaysomething.net/squatspace.htm>>

In 2004, Redfern was in the spotlight as the death of young Aboriginal man TJ Hickey sparked clashes between locals and police at the Block. The Liberal party at the time called for the Block to be bulldozed – perhaps a modern day enactment of the terra nullius clause. Labor, more cannily, responded by putting Redfern on the agenda and creating an independent ministry to “deal with it”, thus enabling a more sweeping programme of urban renewal.

The term “wicked problem” was introduced to us by Redfern resident Jack Barton, an architect and urban researcher. According to Barton, his PhD thesis - centred on spatial decision support systems for suburb planning - would never have been completed if he had continued to use Redfern as his case study: the area was too complex and its problem-set too vast to be tamed by the requirements of the academic system.

Ley, D., 2003, “Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification”, Urban Studies, Vol. 40, No. 12, p. 2528.

‘Our eyes are constantly adjusting’

Tim Wright

This article taken from a blog entry by Tim Wright on www.squatspace.com

The tour bus pulled up near a house that looked about the same as any large terrace in the area. The facade gave no indication of what was inside, though I’d noticed this place before because there are often kids hanging around out the front. One of the workers there, Lyn Turnbull, gave us a short introduction to the centre and then invited us in.

A short corridor covered in paint and posters led into a spacious hall, big enough for a basketball court and a small audience, with a raised stage at the end. Paintings were hung up everywhere, and there were coloured handprints all over the walls. It was like a shearing shed that had been taken over by exuberant inner-city kids. Outside in the yard were an old upright piano and bits and pieces of furniture.

This set the rhythm for the rest of the tour. We would drive for a while, arrive somewhere and, miraculously, our next speaker would be there waiting for us. I felt like we were part of something clandestine.

By this stage the windows of the bus were fogged up and the rain was sloshing against them. We drove to Alexandria to pick up one of the speakers from her house, Jenny Munro, and drive back to The Block so she could talk to us about some of the issues going on there. The rain didn’t look good; she invited us inside. Soon I was hunched in a kitchen listening to the founders of the 1972 Canberra Tent Embassy talk about Black politics. This was the highlight of the tour. It wasn’t just what they said and the careful, intense way they went about saying it, but the fact they’d let fifteen or so strangers bundle into their house for tea and biscuits without a second thought. It was humbling and said so much about them.

We visited the Waterloo housing towers where resident Ross Smith was waiting for us. One of the stories he told was about the group of old people dubbed ‘the jury’ who sat each day in the lobby of one of the buildings and passed comment on whoever walked by. In this way, he explained, they checked up on each other: they knew which person left at 10:15am every morning to go to the club, and if they weren’t there then someone would have to go and see why.

From here we walked across the housing estate to where Ray Jackson was waiting for us against an old fence around an oval. After drily congratulating us for turning up in the bad weather, he started telling a story. Though it took him a long time to say the name, it was soon clear he was talking about TJ Hickey. Ray walked us through a detailed story of his death. His eyes were mostly closed, but they flickered up from time to time to scan the tour group.

The story was complex and detailed and left us aghast, desolate. The couples in the group found each other and started holding.

We got back in the bus and drove to a new development made of plastic and glass in the area renamed ‘East Redfern’ - an example of how language can have real effects by segregating communities - or alternatively, ‘Legoland’. Here Michael King was waiting for us beside a decorative water feature. Because the weather was still bad he climbed in the bus to speak to us about developments of this kind and the impact they have on communities like Redfern and Waterloo. I was glad to hear him criticise the way Redfern-Waterloo is always framed as ‘a problem’. This is true of the public housing towers in Waterloo, which are hidden away as if they’re something shameful. Really these communities are ones to be proud of and to learn from, as Ross Smith had made so clear earlier on. If East Redfern was the future of Redfern the outlook was grim. Michael King refused a lift and walked home.

The Tour of Beauty bus – in a pleasing irony, the same bus that shuttles Sydney Uni students between Fisher Library and Redfern Station precisely so they don’t have to experience Redfern - dropped me off near my house. When I got home I felt overwhelmed by everything I’d seen and heard.

A week later I wonder what it is I took away from the tour. I left feeling so surprised at the quiet, intelligent voices of this suburb. They weren’t the shrill voices of politics, and everywhere else; they were voices that moved back and forth, that knew what it felt like to be spoken over. The tour as a whole took about four hours. It’s rare that I spend four hours on any task these days. I feel I understand a little more of what’s going on in Redfern now, but I definitely don’t know the answers.

The night after the tour, as it was getting dark, my housemate Joel and I took the soccer ball and hopped the fence to the abandoned Sydney Korean Ethnic School behind our house. We’d been doing some work in the garden which had broken off into kicking the soccer ball back and forth. It was one of those just-moved-out-of home capers I hadn’t done for ages, and it felt so good.

I’ve never seen anyone in this school. From what we can tell it closed down years ago and is being allowed to fall apart. From this aspect our own house looked strange and new. It seemed like it was staying light longer, and I said I could feel the long nights coming on. Then I realised if I’d been inside it would be dark now; it was only because we’d stayed out that we could see each other and the white ball flashing across the concrete.

‘Our eyes are constantly adjusting,’ Joel said.

The following contributions for the Redfern School of Displacement on Waterloo are from Ross Smith, local resident and activist for safe and secure housing.

Waterloo Public Housing Estate

The Waterloo Public Housing Estate is located immediately south of the Sydney CBD. It is in the former South Sydney Council area and adjoins the South Sydney Development Corporation area designated by the government as a major redevelopment initiative.

Waterloo is visually dominated by the Endeavour and Cook projects. These projects contain four blocks 17 storeys high and two blocks thirty storeys high. The Estate was originally an existing terrace house neighbourhood that was declared a ‘slum clearance’ area in the mid 1940s. The projects were gradually developed to create walk-up flats and high-rise set in open parkland from 1945 onwards. These Projects were one of the last major redevelopments and was constructed in the early 1970s. It is an easy walk to the CBD and shopping facilities. Early occupation of the area is thought to be by the Eora tribe whose domain extended from Botany Bay to Sydney Harbour.

Unlike the early suburbs to the east (Potts Point) and west (Glebe) the suburb of Waterloo has never been an area for the affluent. It’s modest origins belie the fact that it is better placed than areas such as Woolloomooloo to enjoy the cooling northeasterly breezes on hot summer days.

Despite the 1890s and 1930s depressions the Waterloo area survived although the descent into poverty for many of its residents left an indelible scar. One young resident who did not forget the appalling conditions was William McKell, later a strong Labor Premier who together with Prime Minister Chifley established the Housing Commission which in turn declared the Waterloo Area a ‘slum clearance’ area.

The early redevelopment consisted of demolishing the existing terrace houses and replacing them with two and three storey walk-up flats. Because of the overcrowding and lack of open space associated with the slums much effort was made to create new housing that had plenty of space and open air about it. Thus came the notion of setting the buildings in a park like landscape. The reaction against the terrace houses extended to orientating the buildings at 45 degrees to the street.

The idea was to make a complete break with the past. The emergence of the high rise model of public housing helped to consolidate this contrast of the new with the old. High rise were being used in Britain for public housing and were described as ‘streets in the sky’. Despite growing community concern with high-rise housing the then Housing Commission persisted with the plan for the Endeavour and Cook Projects using the then well known American anthropologist Margaret Mead to endorse a proposal to house the elderly in thirty storey towers.

Waterloo, a potted history

Waterloo is an inner Sydney suburb between Sydney City, Redfern, Erskineville, Alexandria and Zetland. It was originally farm land and then became a high density manufacturing area. With this ‘industrialisation’, which began in 1910, came a massive increase in population to supply the workforce. These people were housed in cheap high density terrace houses, all within walking distance of the factories. As a legacy of the early farming activities in the area there is a large Chinese community predominantly from the Go Yui region to the west of Canton. They built a Chinese temple in 1909 which still stands today in Retreat Street.

The area suffered badly through the series of depressions in the thirties and deteriorated into a typical inner city industrial slum. This social adversity created a very strong community, the remnants of which still exist today. From this period of intense adversity arose many prominent politicians, both state and federal. Their social policies are still referred to today and in many cases are still active.

In 1972 the government of the day announced plans to clear by demolition some twenty six acres of housing in the Waterloo area to build more high rise Housing Commission properties. This caused uproar in the area and the community rose up as one. From this sense of community outrage came a strong alliance with the Builders Labourers Union, many of whose members lived in the area, and a “Green Ban” campaign was mounted. After a long, bitter, and frequently acrimonious campaign, the Commission accepted that the concept of high rise buildings was outdated and a much more desirable course of action was to renovate terraces and build sympathetic low rise infill housing.

Today almost seventy percent of the dwellings in Waterloo are owned by a state housing authority. These properties accommodate a large number of individuals and families with high support needs [including those generated by poorly treated mental health issues and associated experiences]. The tighter targeting of public housing in the Waterloo area has caused a marked shift in the makeup of the “Housing” community. Over sixty percent of all public housing allocations in Waterloo were of a ‘priority’ nature [for people with serious or multiple problems] compared to twenty five percent in Western Sydney. This was identified by Professor Tony Vinson of the University of New South Wales School of Social Science in a paper published in 1999. This trend has increased over the intervening years to date.

Over the period the area has been used by every would be Social Engineering genius as a laboratory for their experiments. When they eventually discovered that the wheel had been successfully invented before their time and decided to move on, each one left behind them a trail of social destruction and shattered hopes.

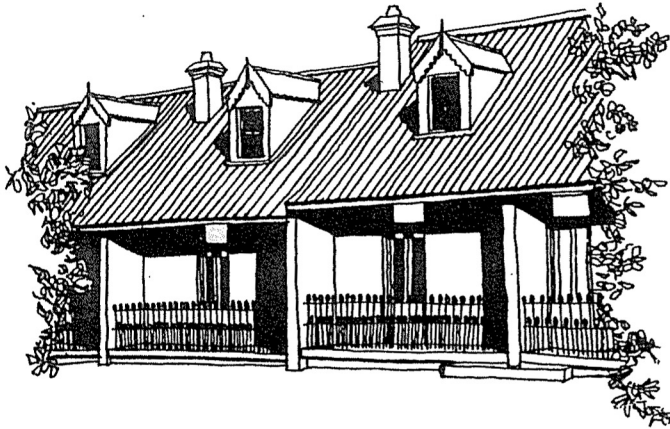
The community had to heal itself after each such occasion. The resultant scar tissue became the predominant skin surface and there was no room left for more “social engineering experiments”. This state of community destruction by the outcome of a long series of failed experiments was finally recognised and declared by the Commonwealth Attorney General’s Department in their presentation to the Community Safety Taskforce as set up by the Premiers Department as part of its Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project. It was identified that the community was “overconsulted” and extremely wary of “Social Engineers” as well as having developed a very high awareness of the damage done by undelivered or broken promises. It was further identified that the surviving community had the ability to recognise a social engineer before their feet hit the ground and would shut down on them as a defence mechanism.

The Department of Housing created a Neighbourhood Advisory Board [NAB] as part of its Tenant Participation programme under the stewardship of Jennifer Westacott and Annette Gallard. It has had a varied path, always rather turbulent, and has survived through to today. It was the prototype or experimental model. Some would tell you it ‘slipped its collar’, others would tell you it was a success story. Housing NSW has ‘showcased’ it as an example of successful Tenant Participation and Community Development.

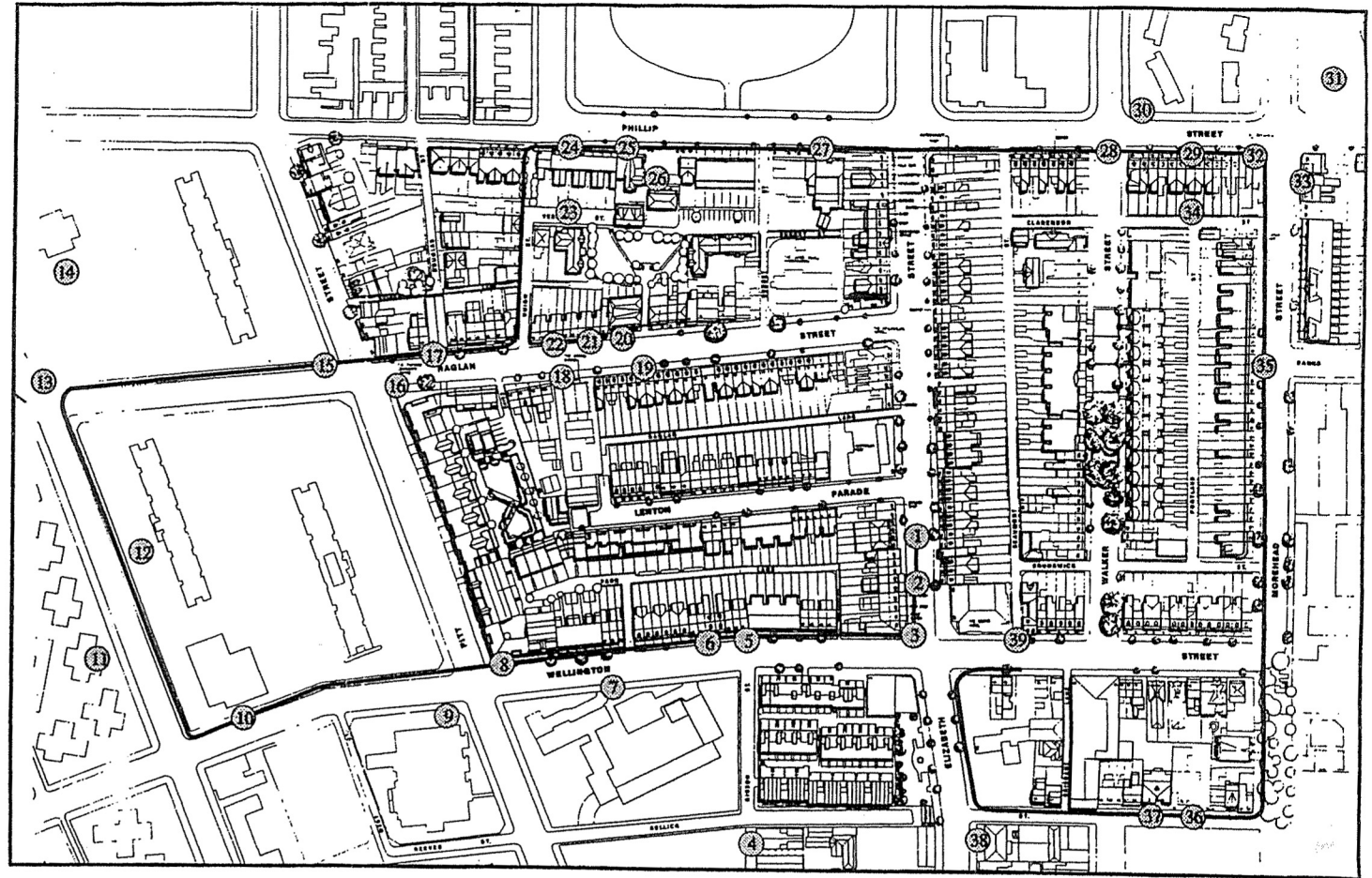
It is fiercely independent and protective of the HNSW tenants of the area, just ask any stuffed shirt on a large white horse who thought that they were going to tell the natives how to behave. They always come out looking like a reject from a concrete mixer. Others, with a genuine concern and interest in the tenants and their lifestyle, such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute [AHURI], the University of New South Wales School of Social Science, Local Government Councillors, the local member, and the odd HNSW staffer, thoroughly enjoy coming along and having a chinwag over a cuppa.

Over the years it is surprising the number of Tenant Participation and Community Development activities that have originated from the activities of both the NAB itself and its individual members. Many of these activities have been showcased around the City, State, Country, and overseas. There is every indication that this process of conception, development and implementation of tenant based community development activity will continue. The hard earned respect that the Waterloo NAB has generated from various local and state government bodies will be used and fostered by the NAB to ensure that it maintains and expands its delivery of service to the tenant community that it serves.

THE WATERLOO WALK



18-24 Raglan Street



① ELIZABETH STREET

A major route linking the city to industrial areas in Botany since the 1860s. Residential development first began on the eastern side in 1873, while the western side was developed in the late 1870s. The existing commercial properties were constructed 1889-1913.

② 693-695 ELIZABETH STREET

Department of Housing on-site planning and design office, established in 1982.

③ 703 ELIZABETH STREET (1886)

Originally a butcher's shop renovated as a youth centre.

④ MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH (1859)

Constructed on land donated by Daniel Cooper, an early settler of Waterloo. Adjacent to Waterloo Park on Mount Carmel, formerly known as Hungry Hill.

⑤ WELLINGTON STREET

Virtually every dwelling in the street was constructed by James Schimmel in the late 1870s.

⑥ 51-63 WELLINGTON STREET

Part of the first group of houses to be rehabilitated in Waterloo in 1982.

⑦ 74 WELLINGTON STREET (1968)

"Camellia Grove" - apartment development containing 65 family and one bedroom apartments.

⑧ CNR PITT & WELLINGTON STS

Site of mixed apartment and terrace development with underground parking.

⑨ 232 PITT STREET (1978)

"Drysdale" apartment development containing 32 family units with large balconies, undercover parking and childcare centre.

⑩ 95 WELLINGTON STREET

Neighbourhood shopping centre opened in conjunction with the "Endeavour" high rise redevelopment project.

⑪ 244 GEORGE STREET (1962)

Typical walkup apartment building of the 1960s containing 9 one bedroom and 3 two bedroom units.

⑫ 249 GEORGE STREET (1971)

"Joseph Banks", a 17 storey apartment building containing 214 one or two bedroom units. Constructed as part of the "Endeavour Project" which included other high rise blocks: "Solander", "James Cook" and "Marton".

⑬ GEORGE STREET

Closed in 1975 between Phillip and Raglan Streets to provide additional open space for the redevelopment area.

⑭ 1 & 3 PHILLIP STREET (1976)

"Matavai" & "Turanga", 30 storey high rise pensioner housing development. Each block contains 222 units, community room, landscaped garden and incorporates special design features for elderly persons.

**PLEASE TAKE CARE
CROSSING THE STREETS**

⑮ RAGLAN STREET

Raglan Street contains several buildings for community purposes and provides access to important pedestrian routes and open space.

Most of the original houses were constructed in the early 1880s. Pat Hogan, one of the first mayors of Waterloo, constructed many of the dwellings on the southern side of the street.

⑯ 64-72 RAGLAN STREET

Site of mixed apartment and terrace housing development including car parking and public open space.

⑰ 67 RAGLAN STREET

"The Factory" Community Centre, renovated in 1984. Originally the site of a builder's workshop.

⑱ 56A RAGLAN STREET (1860)

Mt Lachlan Church constructed on land subdivided from an original land grant to John Campbell in 1823.

⑲ 10-56 RAGLAN STREET (1880)

Group of characteristic attic houses. Rehabilitated and enlarged to 3 bedroom family dwellings in 1984. The row contains some privately owned dwellings.

⑳ 27-33 RAGLAN STREET (1879)

Rehabilitated in 1986 as pensioner housing.

㉑ 35 RAGLAN STREET (1879)

Family terrace used as a temporary fire station during the 1880s.

㉒ 37-53 RAGLAN STREET (1882)

Constructed in two stages. 53 was originally used as a shop. This row of dwellings was renovated in 1984 as two bedroom housing.

㉓ 3-9 VESCEY STREET

Site of pensioner housing development containing 6 units. Designed to complement the architectural character of surrounding dwellings and overlook a new park.



New group home, 109-111 Phillip Street

(24) 63-75 PHILLIP STREET (1882)

Group of Victorian terraces and part of the first group of houses to be rehabilitated in Waterloo (1982).

(25) PHILLIP STREET

Originally known as Boundary Street, Phillip Street formed the border between the former municipalities of Redfern and Waterloo. The area contained a number of small dairy holdings in the 1850s which were subdivided towards the late 1870s to make way for residential development, mainly in the form of terrace housing.

(26) 81-83 PHILLIP STREET (c.1850)

Believed to be the oldest remaining dwelling within this area. Rehabilitated as pensioner units.

(27) 109-111 PHILLIP STREET

Group home containing 10 bedrooms, communal living room and share kitchen completed in 1984.

(28) WALKER STREET

The German name of Hanover Street was changed to Walker Street during World War I (along with Lenton Parade, formerly Schimmel Street). Subdivided in 1879 as part of the "Victoria Town" estate owned by George Whiting, a registered hosier and glove maker. Residences constructed 1880-1888.

(29) CNR. PHILLIP & WALKER STREETS (1954)

Two storey maisonettes.

(30) 131-145 PHILLIP STREET

Attic houses rehabilitated as three bedroom family houses. Original appearance and character from Phillip Street is retained. Rear extensions to the dwelling can be viewed from Clarendon Street (see 34).

(31) 57 MOREHEAD STREET (1966)

"Henry Lawson" apartments, part of high rise "Poets Corner" development of 16 floors containing 189 apartments. The development includes 2 similar blocks, shopping centre, playground and car parking facilities.

(32) MOREHEAD STREET

Originally subdivided as part of the "Victoria Town" estate in 1879. Individual lots within the Estate were purchased at a cost of £3/10/- each. Most dwellings on the eastern side were built between 1881-1884 by Henry Watson. The oldest remaining properties are those now occupied by the TAB.



The National Trust recorded "Grosvenor Terrace" in Morehead Street

(33) 129-141 MOREHEAD STREET

Mixed group of commercial and residential properties constructed between 1881 and 1888, now converted for various uses. 129 and 131 are combined to form one large dwelling. 133 is used as a neighbourhood centre.

(34) 131-145 PHILLIP STREET

View of rear extension to typical attic house. Extension contains bedrooms and bathroom upstairs, kitchen and family room on the ground floor (see 30).

(35) 62-116 MOREHEAD STREET (1881-1883)

"Grosvenor Terrace" one of the longest terrace rows remaining in Sydney. Constructed in 3 stages. Recorded by the National Trust.

(36) 75-77 KELICK STREET

Gordon Ibbett Activity Club, operated by local Council to serve the needs of local aged residents.

(37) 1-73 KELICK STREET

Site of 6 pensioner housing units. This contemporary building has been designed to complement the character and scale of existing buildings.

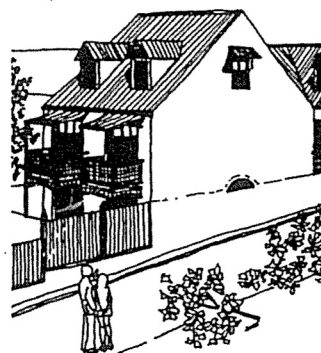
(38) WATERLOO TOWN HALL (1881)

After separating from Redfern in 1860, the council of the new Municipality of Waterloo met in a cottage on Botany Road, later relocating to 79 Wellington Street (in the 1870s) prior to construction of the Town Hall.

In 1949 Waterloo became part of South Sydney Municipality and in 1982 incorporated with the City of Sydney.

(39) 39 WELLINGTON STREET

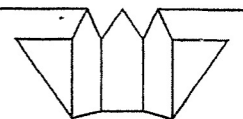
Former grocery shop and residence. Renovation provided 5 separate units and common room to operate as a "group home".



Rehabilitated group home, 39 Wellington Street

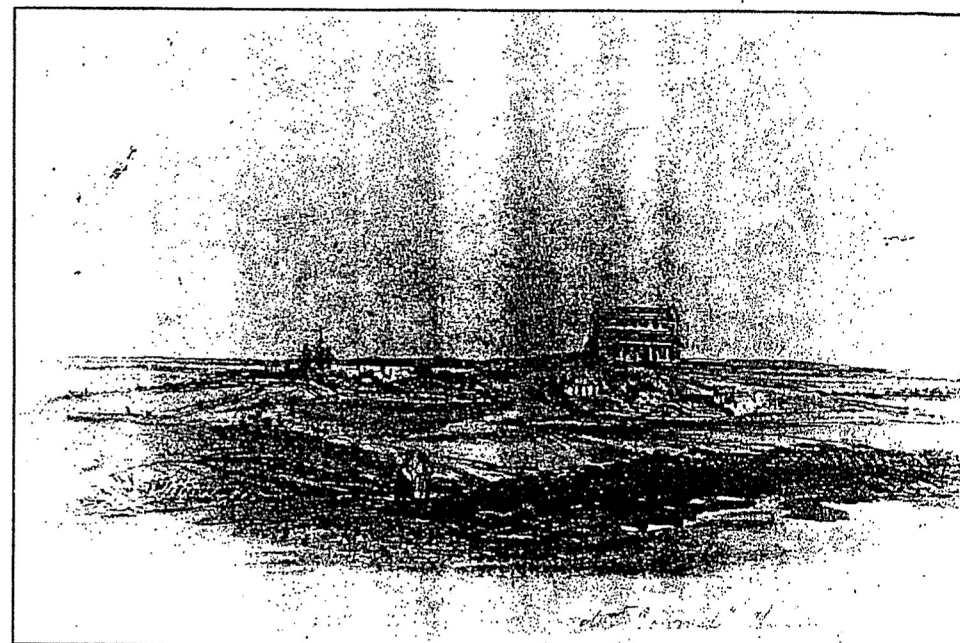
September 1988

Urban Renewal Group
Department of Housing



WATERLOO WALK

A ONE AND A HALF HOUR WALKING TOUR OF THE HISTORIC SUBURB OF WATERLOO



Mt Carmel ("Hungry Hill")
Watercolour by Conrad Martens, circa 1870
Dickson Library

WATERLOO

Waterloo, named by Governor Macquarie, was first used as grazing land and by industries dependent on water from adjacent swampland.

Subdivision for residential development commenced in 1853 and construction peaked in the early 1880s. Terrace houses and workers' cottages were constructed and occupied by local businessmen and skilled labourers who found work in developing industrial areas nearby.

Changes to employment opportunities resulting from industrial restructuring and the deterioration of the housing stock made the area a target for the 'slum clearance' programs of the 1950s.

Successive redevelopments of large precincts by the then Housing Commission has left Waterloo with a unique collection of public housing developments, ranging from two storey maisonettes to thirty storey tower blocks.

Objections by local residents to plans announced in 1972 to redevelop an 11 hectare site, centred on Elizabeth Street, to the imposition of a 'green ban' by sympathetic unionists effectively halting demolition and redevelopment.

Consultation with the community led to a new plan emphasising the rehabilitation of existing dwellings and construction of sympathetically designed new buildings. The objectives of urban consolidation fulfilled by increasing the number of bedrooms in existing houses and by constructing new dwellings.

The Department of Housing's urban renewal scheme to rehabilitate the best of the existing dwellings which together with new construction will provide nearly 550 homes public ownership, while retaining about 120 privately owned dwellings, community facilities and local business premises to increase housing stock close to the city.

Waterloo documentary

In the early 70's the state government initiated a massive scheme to pull down inner city terraces (slums) to build the new public housing estates that the government now wants to redevelop. "Waterloo" sets out to understand the residents fight-back in terms of the history of the suburb itself: The poverty and overcrowding at the turn of the century, and the impractical, idealistic solutions proposed by the planners. It also looks at Waterloo in the context of urban housing struggles in Sydney: the anti-eviction campaigns of the 30's, the rise of the Resident Action movement in the late 60's and the alliance it formed with building unions resulting in the now world famous Green Bans.

Waterloo is an historical account of the 1970's battle by residents of this inner Sydney suburb to save the area from slum clearance and redevelopment by public housing authorities.

"Waterloo" (50 minutes) is available for loan at various local libraries.



Forced Migration and the Future

Event description:

Across the globe we are witnessing an upheaval in the form of mass migration, caused by the instability of economies, conflict and climate. The past year saw the largest displacement of people since World War II. Whilst tent settlements are increasingly taking the place of real housing solutions, these makeshift shelters are also necessarily sites of creativity—spaces in which alternative ways of living are forged. Forced Migration and the Future was an event that asks the public to participate in an ongoing dialogue on migration in order to envision possible futures characterised by: informal economies, self-management, self-education, direct democracy, resourcefulness, tolerance, sites of resilience and resistance.

This conversation is part of the creative collaboration, *The Shape of Things to Come*, with Futurist Kristin Alford, artists Mirabelle Wouters, Keg de Souza and Alicia Talbot that was hosted in the *Redfern School of Displacement* over 10 days. This collaboration was to develop a conversation with children around displacement and what the future may look like. The collaborative process questions hierarchies of teaching and learning as children and artists together discuss a future vision that can counter displacement with belonging.

This event included Uncle Wes Marne, a 94 year old Bigambul Elder and the Loor Latu dance group consisting of a number of young girls from South Sudan with refugee backgrounds, ranging in ages up to 14 years. This pairing of vastly different experiences opened up an interesting and unexpected dialogue about displacement, Uncle Wes paralleling his experiences of being pushed of country to the forced migration of the young girls from South Sudan. Futurist, Kristin Alford brought strategies for the group to think about the future together.

This event was developed in collaboration with Jiva Parthipan, Abaker Athum & St Mary's Dance Group and STARTTS (Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors).

[The following dialogue is a reflection and selection edited from an audio transcript at Redfern School of Displacement, 7th May 2017.]

Kristin Alford: I would like to welcome you on behalf of the future that's developing the Shape of Things. You're here in an early stage of a project which has a purpose to say: land and history bring their own sectors to the future. And it brings a history of this placement of displacement, of conflict, of people's experiences. Yet when we think about the future we also need to start new with the idea that we are sharing, that we are all creating a shared future. And so how do we do that from lots of perspectives? From young peoples perspectives and backgrounds, of historical perspectives, of different knowledge that we bring to this space. I'm Kristen Alford, I'm a futurist I'm working with artists Alicia Talbot, Keg de Souza and Mirabelle Wouters to ask some of these questions. We have

also invited Uncle Wes and thank you Billy Mac for welcoming us to the country. And we have also invited the girls from Loor Latu dance group from St Mary's to join us today. This morning we've been dancing and we've been talking and we have been experiencing the different ways of coming at questions. What I want you to do is start asking questions about the future and then we are going to explore the future through dance - as I said its focus and development, its loose and we invite you all to participate as well.

.....

KA: I've been thinking about the objects we use today that we take for granted that we might not have in the future. Does anyone know what this is? (Holds up a photo of a piggy bank) - I reckon in the future we wont need piggy banks because in the future we wont need coins. All the transactions will be done through electronic means - we will use a card or our phone. I don't think we will need credit cards in the future too because it will all happen through our phone or our device - we might even put it in our body. Trick question - does anybody know what these are? (holds up a photograph)

Participant: Butter knife?

KA: Fish knife. So, you might think if we don't use fish knives anymore that's a ridiculous concept. Why would we need a special knife for a fish? But also I was speaking to a scientist from the University of Adelaide who said that he's noticed the fish on the coast of Sydney are moving south down to Wollongong because the waters are getting warmer due to changes in the climate. And these fish need ecosystems to live off and these ecosystems need land to live off. So as the water warms, the fish move further south and once they get to Tasmania there's really nowhere for them to hang on to. So we are looking at the loss of fish stocks so we might not have fish that are easily available to eat. If we don't have fish what do we stop doing? Stop eating - we also stop doing fun things like diving, fishing. The other thing the climate does across large parts of the world is change weather patterns which makes farming more difficult. So what's this? (holds up a photograph) Chocolate. A lot of our chocolate comes out of the equator band out of South America and South Africa so when the weather warms those places become dryer and its harder to grow the raw ingredient which means it will get hard to grow chocolate and it will become very expensive. It's the sort of thing you'll have maybe once every couple of years. It also means that your regular daily cup of coffee will also have a simliar fate. Here we have a picture of some solar roof panels coming around. When you get to this photo they are really chunky - we will look at those in about 10 years time and think that was crazy that we ever put chunky solar panels on top of everything. The researchers have just worked out how to print out solar panels like you would print out cloth or print out money or print fabric so we could use sails like this whole tent could be energised with solar. We could be collecting energy from the sun and collecting everything we need through the material of the tent itself.

Participant: Sorry Kristen did you just say that solar will power through fabric?

That you could print in fabric form?

KA: Yes so we can actually coat it on things like the sails you get in playgrounds and things. It will actually generate energy from the sun. So technology is actually getting there, its coming. So this one is some plastic - I think plastic will disappear as well because plastic is a product of fossil fuels, pollution and we cant afford to keep making plastic. We cant afford to keep making plastic that's not going to be returned in a sustainable way so some of the newer plastics are being made from bamboo and sugarcane and they recycle them much more easily than those old plastics. I've also got an old fashioned manufacturing plant here making glass bottles - these old sort of factories are disappearing. We are looking at making small items- there's 3D printing. Its a printer than makes stuff so instead of printing a line of ink it prints plastic and layers it to make things. Some of those things can be quite small like a piece of jewellery or a part for your car and some have been quite big in China they have actually printed out a house. And that means you can actually come to a site and print out the whole thing rather than making it in a factory and transporting it. I've got this picture of a farm and I think farming is changing a lot. So in Australia we used to have lots of family farms but now they are being aggregated into big farms that are managed by corporations. But at the same time as that's happening we are getting lots of smaller hobby farms where people are growing smaller, more specialised things. With honey, I am wondering whether we will still have honey in the future. Honey is quite common and quite easy to get and there's lots of research and lots of observation about the decline of bee populations around the world. Maybe because the fertilisers, environmental aspects or maybe because of things we don't understand yet. If bees go and honey goes a lot of the way we fertilise plants naturally goes and we have to rethink how to do that which creates really difficult environmental problems.

.....

There is a break from conversation as the girls from the Loor Latu dance group perform a dance they choreographed as a way to interpret the future.

.....

KA: I want to keep talking about what the future might look like, and the thing I talked about earlier, we were talking about lots of different ways that might shape the way that we live. And so, what I want you to do now is ask you, how do you think we might live in the future - so what are some ways which you think we might live in the future, either as a community, or things that you personally hope for, or things that you think might change?

KA: In the future, there might not be Wi-Fi.

Participants: What?!?
[laughs]

KA: This is really important, because we assume that the future evolves in a

way that keeps expanding, but as we said at the start, the future is actually created and formed by history of disruption and displacement, so it is a possible future that actually, our Wi-Fi and our broadband networks degrade over time and we no longer have access to the internet.

Participant: When you're flying a kite, it might have this type of machinery downstairs, if it liked it, a smiley face, or angry face, if it wants to win or not.

KA: Okay, so you can put technology into everything, but I also like the idea that you've added emoji's and emoticons, so, smiley faces and things to language, because in the future we might not have English and Chinese and any of those languages, we might just use emoji's.

.....

The conversation continues to unpack ideas about the future and displacement. One of the participants remarks that the plaid laundry bags in the structure which are colloquially sometimes known as 'refugee bags' are called "Ghana must go" in Nigeria, referring to the refugees that had fled from Ghana during the political unrest and many carried their belongings in these bags. Kristin continues leading the conversation and asking the children to speculate on the future, what innovations and changes might we see. These speculations range from not using credit cards to clothes changing, to the way we travel to what houses might look like, how fashion will change to be more suitable to a different climate, living in spaceships and on Mars, drinking a shake that replaces food and has all nutritional requirements needed to survive, the way we travel changing to living more nomadically.

.....

Participant: Uncle Wes, what do you think's going to happen in the future?

Uncle Wes: I'm only worried about how I'm going to survive in the future. We have to survive... I see these children here, where they came from, from the country where they came from, forced away from their own country, we see the view in this country here, and my people were forced off their land, brought down to New South Wales. Think of a mission, we lived on the missions. I think of a lot, I think if I haven't got long to go anyway, I, I'm not worried about the future because I'm not going to be around to see anything. But I can remember the past, and I can remember how far we've come, how far we've progressed, since we were long locked up on the missions. When the police used to come and hunt us out of the town, four o'clock of an afternoon, no Aboriginals allowed in town, locked up on the missions. If you didn't get back by five o'clock, you were locked out for the night. And having to form up lines to get rations to live. Whereas before, survival in this country was more trial and error; thousands of years of trial and error. And then you came down to where families were living in one little room on a mission. Not allowed to go anywhere, not allowed to do anything. I'm glad these children are here today. I can - I think of things like nice children for us, Aboriginal children, nice children. And even just, in the last few years, Aboriginal children, when they went to school, recently

when they had to clean up the yards, pick up the paper, that's all they ever done. And I'm glad that you children are looking for the future, but I hope you see there's different ways to see it, because I can tell you, when you're looking forward to the future, it's a long, slow, walk. It's a long, slow walk since I was forced to come down to New South Wales from Queensland. I came down in 1932, I was ten-years old when I started school, I was ten-year-old when they put me out. I was only telling my kids the other day, I worked for eighty years, and I got six cents in the bank but I'm not really worried about the future.

I worry about my people. I worry about where we're going, and where we came. I tell you the honest truth, this is the lucky country. This is the best country on God's Earth. And all the new stuff that we're putting into the future is going to change that around. We're going to be on the tail of everybody else. And I don't think we want to be on the tail of anybody else. I think we're too far, we're in front of the rest of the world, why can't we stay there? This is the lucky country, isn't it? I hope you children get all that you're looking for. I hope you don't have to go through the things that, well, that I went through. Things like being locked up for being on the street after five o'clock. Off the streets, being arrested. Having to wear a tag around your neck when you went to town. And when they let us move uptown, they said 'if you move uptown' - and they gave us a form, they took it home and said 'now that you've moved uptown, you're allowed to leave the mission, or the reserve to go to work. Now that you've moved uptown, you're allowed to walk through town without being arrested. You can enter a hotel or a store, but you will only be served at the discretion of the management.' They said 'Now that you've moved uptown, you have to divorce yourself from all your culture. No more language, no more dancing, no more culture. You can't even address your parents as "mother" or "father".'

Did you know about these laws? There they all are. We've progressed a lot. But we have progressed a lot since then. Let's hope we progress further. Not only my people, everybody. I think we should all be on the same path. We all should be treated as equals. And you children from overseas - I know you come from a terrible place. Now this is your country. And we got to look after it, don't we? Whether it's for these future things that you're putting into my head at the present time. Well, let's hope that we can all come together and make this place, and keep this place, ahead of the rest of the world.

KA: So, I want to say a couple of things, and thank you. A couple of things that I think are really important. So one is about resilience in the face of disruption, and you talked about this experience over a long period of time in survival resistance, and I think that's a really important lesson to think as we go into the future, is what is quite unpredictable. But one of the most important things that I think you spoke about was care - so care for each other, care for the country we live on. One of the girls here mentioned about sharing culture and stories and the idea that we might have a shared culture and I think that those aspects are some of the really important things that we've been thinking about - so thinking about resilience and Uncle Wes said about hope. We bring hope for the future and hope that we can create.

Dispossession and displacement through enforced and prioritised language.

Keg de Souza, Megan Cope, James Oliver

[Edited from an audio transcript at Redfern School of Displacement, 28th May 2017.]

Keg de Souza: Hi everybody, thanks for coming! I'll begin by acknowledging that we're on Gadigal land and we pay our respects to elders past and present. Thinking through what it means to be on Aboriginal land is a big part of the School of Displacement, so a lot of the themes that we've discussed and had events on have been on forced migration, homelessness and housing, and gentrification—and how that's affected this local area and pushed people off the land in a lot of ways.

The way that these discussions run, they're pretty informal, so we will open it up so everyone can just jump in. I thought I'd begin by introducing a couple of people I've invited. Megan Cope, a Quandamooka woman (from North Stradbroke Island in S.E Queensland), who's a visual artist and a lot of her work looks at mapping Aboriginal language onto land as a gesture and form of decolonisation. And James Oliver, who is from the Isle of Skye in the Scottish Hebrides, and his Gàidhlig (Gaelic) identity informs his relationship to language and the way he thinks about land.

Control over language is intrinsically tied to colonial oppression and hierarchical power structures.

I thought I'd read out the description of what we wrote (for this event) and then we can talk about this and shift to a discussion from that: 'Dispossession and displacement through enforced and prioritised language'—Control over language is intrinsically tied to colonial oppression and hierarchical power structures. By the creation of an enforced dominant language certain (often indigenous) voices are marginalised and displaced. This imposed use of language is perpetuated and taught through means such as an imperial school system and causes displacement in broader society. Language isn't used as a medium that maintains hierarchical power structures creating imposed definitions of how someone should behave in a colonial society. How can these power structures be rejected through language as a way to decolonise space?

So there's a lot of elements there that we can start ... language is so complex and nuanced and beautiful and we were just having like some initial conversations this morning about colonisation and thinking about how language does

displace people. I was thinking about weeds as kind of a metaphor for the way that language works, how weeds often colonise space and take over and they're invasive and they can become the dominant sort of form—and you know the importance of having a complex biodiversity of various sorts of plants. So when we lose languages like, if we lose plants, native plants, we lose a lot of these nuances of language and culture, and the way that we communicate and the way that we can have these kind of complex relationships.

Megan Cope: Healthy ecosystems.

Keg: Yes, exactly... the way that things can work in synch with each other.

Megan: I'm interested in this topic, as you mentioned with my art practise and maps, because maps are absolutely tools of dispossession and I started thinking about how do I speak about this colonised experience in a place where denial is the norm? How do I transfer this experience into a physical space that non-Aboriginal people could then also perhaps transfer themselves or see themselves and then perhaps relate somehow? So, yeah, I started looking at maps and first of all looking at parish maps and being quite interested in those because the depiction of topography and land was often quite naïve... I enjoyed that visually, looking at those understandings or representations of our land but what interested me more was that during that time in history in Australia there was a lot of aboriginal language present in those maps and you know that was no accident... and you know you can also then map what was existing socially in the landscape as well. But then I moved on from parish

...there are over two hundred and fifty different languages in Australia.

maps and went to the military maps and by then there was a big difference then in the language. Aboriginal language was barely visible and English place names and the establishment was much more visible. So once I looked at that and reflected on social history as well I started thinking, well, how do I decolonise this? How do I challenge that sense of ownership, how do I put us here in the same space? So I started writing the Aboriginal place names and language groups back into that space and I've just continued that in lots of ways. I think it's important to do that.

Keg: Yeah, I think like even fact that we're on Gadigal land and we're having this conversation in English, that's maybe a good starting point to start to talk about language and our relationship to land and the fact that we don't (like, I personally don't) know words to describe things, and these kind of gestures of reintroducing Indigenous languages back onto maps and these tools that we use in a contemporary context are really important ways of learning language and through things that we use in a day to day experience.

Megan: Well I think it's important because it deepens your connection to the space that you're existing in. A lot of Aboriginal place names relate to specific

resources that are there, so they're called these things so that we know what exists there, what has existed there for millennia, so yeah it is, it's a dream, one day maybe we will. But it's complex, you know people argue about this all the time, even Aboriginal people argue about this, how do we embed this, how do we make it, how do we normalise this? It's difficult because there are over two hundred and fifty different languages in Australia. We often look at Aotearoa and that system and there's dual place names everywhere you go—I was really envious of that, like when I went there for the first time yeah. We can't achieve that on a national level... I think that's where people find it challenging.

Keg: Would you like to say something? (Directed to a participant from the floor)

Participant 1: Do the use of Aboriginal place names like Wollongong and stuff like that or Wagga Wagga, do they reflect indigenous names of these places or are they imposed themselves in some way?

Megan: Well, it depends, and that's why it's always interesting to investigate because some places are an anglicised corruption or even imported names from other places. Coolangatta, for example, is a word from, I think, Victoria but we all know Coolangatta to be a place on the Gold Coast. I know that Wagga Wagga is of that land and a traditional name, Wiradjuri name. I don't know about Wollongong but yeah, they're not all authentic either. I mean when we think about surveyors and pioneer history a lot of surveyors were commissioned by a specific people and according to the amount of money they paid, certain hills or places were named after those people. I know that in some areas all the creeks and rivers had to be the Aboriginal names, but unless those people were making contact and recording things accurately we don't really know.

James Oliver: So maybe I'll come in. I feel very challenged to be a person with a particular accent, sitting on several layers of cultural discourse and story and complexity, even in this space, and I absolutely pay my own respects firstly to Gadigal people and language group here. I grew up in a bicultural space, a bit like Aotearoa, but different. Where I grew up, English is very much a recent, settled language and when I say recent I mean in my lifetime. I'm the first person to have English as a first language in terms of my direct maternal line so I am very much interested in this power dimension of naming practises such as how we construct maps. Language is also how we carry stories, map is one version of the story and then language and intergenerational storytelling is another version of story. For example, as you were talking there Megan about Aboriginal languages and story often being used for continuity of knowledge about resources and place, and that's true where I'm from in terms of genealogical purposes of knowing where you fit within a landscape in terms of continuity of people and culture and place.

Language can also be used as this tool to reduce our understanding and sense of the world—I work in a university, that's an argument one could also lay at the door of abstract theory in the academy, it becomes a tool to not just abstract ideas but to be quite controlling of discourse around the power dynamics of a particular scenario, and it's a particular kind of storytelling and I don't diminish the value of that—I am interested in how I guess over time and through different processes of power such as making a map, people have been alienated from places and or histories and, and made basically obliged to accept another version of story. To come back to what Megan was saying, there is this power of how you name something, there's this tension between memory and forgetting which story has always been very good at bridging. And what's interesting I think about maps is that we try and fix the world, give it a name and then people believe that.

Keg: I guess it's also linked to ownership and I think this ties in with what you're saying with like language and how that is so intrinsically linked to histories...

Megan: Well that's what I was really initially drawn to with the parish maps because you know here we have a time 1800s where basically the church was working with the state and controlling the movement of Aboriginal people through country and so I thought I wanted to work with those maps but, but then realised that the military maps brings it into the now more so, more socially relevant and also into the future as well, if we wanted to think about that. So yeah, I think about roads and listen to the stories of my nana and her aunties, my great grandmothers generation and they speak often about before there were roads on Stradbroke Island—particularly now that we have our native title which was successful in 2011 so community's working very hard at making decisions for us about us, how to look after country but be economically viable, be valuable to Australia, but yeah, you know they talk about the time when there were no roads. All of the roads and infrastructure laid on Minjerribah, Stradbroke Island were made by the mining company, so that in itself has also played a difficult role in the community in terms of who... do we be thankful for this, you know, do we move forward? I mean I love listening to their stories and imaging our country through their eyes cos I would never, I will never have that experience, like we will never be able to change it back to what they grew up with and how they saw our land.

James: I think with infrastructure, I mean roads and churches and schools, they have their qualities of course, they have functions that we've all in different ways experienced I'm sure, but in terms of infrastructure I think there's other things—and to connect back to language issues—like the homogenising power of the English language. The power of language as an abstract and

The power of language as an abstract and dynamic thing is that we also accommodate new ideas very quickly...

dynamic thing is that we also accommodate new ideas very quickly—two ideas in particular come to mind for me, one is ‘ownership’ and one is ‘progress’ and they have what you might call a particular ontology about them, so we believe that progress and ownership are in some ways good things, good ideas, beneficial to society. I’m not saying each individual here necessarily believes that, but these are kind of normative ideas, if you like, progress and ownership.

Keg: For me they’re very capitalist words, you know, they’re really intertwined. So like language, economy and assimilation happening through the name of

...they’re very capitalist words... language, economy and assimilation happening through the name of progress...

progress or the name of a capitalist kind of mentality is really interlinked. But I was also thinking about that kind of forced migration of indigenous people and a lot of that language loss happening through people being moved off their land and centralised into these missions and through that becomes this essential way to communicate right and you’re in a mission and this homogenised

language which you know would have been Englished and enforced English language upon many different language groups as a way to communicate.

Megan: I mean the reason why the missions existed was because it was you know for a source of labour, a source of free labour, essentially.

James: You can see that up at Parramatta where the orphan school is situated right next to the women’s workhouse, right next to the women’s prison, right next to the male prison and its kind of frightening juxtaposition of life expectancy from the colonial perspective towards ‘the other’ and commodifying their lives basically: “Okay we’re going to own you as a child then we’re going to send you to work in this place and then if you’re a little bit naughty we’ll send you to the other one...” kind of scary.

Keg: [to audience] Does anyone have anything on the tip of their tongues – keep going?

Megan: Okay for me when I think about language and the future I’m really excited actually because in a very short space of time a lot of Aboriginal people I know have not only learnt the language and ways of this hegemonic state but have also been able to empower themselves with that language, but then retain their cultural identities—so moving forward it’s actually a very exciting time because we’ve finally learnt the language. When I think of this I think of someone like Uncle William Cooper, a Yorta Yorta man from Barmah on the Murray River in Victoria. I’ve learnt about him because I now live in Wurundjeri

Bunurong country on the Kulin Nation in Victoria, Melbourne and got to know a lot of community down there. William Cooper was an activist and political leader and remarkable man of his time. What’s happening now in Victoria is that his legacy is being celebrated more and more, he staged a protest against the genocide of the Jews in Germany. He walked from Footscray to the German consulate and staged protests and said it’s because he had seen the effects of genocide on his own people. So when I’m thinking about our history and our community and going into the future it’s really exciting because I feel like there’s so many more of us now able to navigate through that space and have the communication and language, the tools to get through and to take it, to challenge it also but to know what we’re challenging and articulate that experience.

James: Another connection there for me is about what you’re talking about imagining the future... in terms of imagining the world we want to see and also the disconnections even though there should be some sort of sense of empathy. Which of course brings us right up to today and statements from people like Peter Dutton about ‘illiterate migrants’ as if that’s not in the history of every single individual probably around this circle here; that lack of empathy is astonishing.

Keg: Yeah, even the way he said they won’t even speak English and English isn’t the national language of Australia, we don’t actually have a national language– do you want to talk a bit about that...

James: ...It’s interesting. Bess Price (MP in NT Parliament), made a plea to speak in her own language (Warlpiri) but anyway she wasn’t allowed. Then she through the process of parliamentary questions asked the Speaker of the House to explain why that wasn’t allowed. The Speaker then, quite amazingly (stupidly?), wrote a letter that is on public record now, commenting that if you don’t speak in English you’re basically creating disorder in the House and therefore you are breaking the law effectively and you can be expelled. And none of that is based in law at all, it’s just his imposing his opinion because English is the de facto language, it’s just become the business language.

English isn’t the national language of Australia, we don’t actually have a national language

Megan: The dominant! ...Yeah, I think that’s a really kind of dangerous space. We talk about law and when I think about law I think about the law of the land and actually that humans don’t decide any of these things really. We’ve learnt everything from our country and developed our languages to articulate our experience and how, and our, our existence within that space which we’ve already talked about. So the law doesn’t really, the British imperial law doesn’t really serve us, or any of us in the end, I don’t believe.

Keg: It really is a way to assert power and homogenise and I was just thinking about one of the previous events in here with young South Sudanese girls from refugee backgrounds. They were talking to the futurists and there was this moment where one of the little girls said there would be a kite that you would fly that would just have emoji's on it and it would express how you were feeling. And then this conversation started happening about how that would be the common language that everyone would use and it would just be emoji's... but then they were like 'this would be amazing, we could communicate with anyone,' you also think that is the kind of essence of when you lose all those nuances of various cultures through language. That you would just only be able to express yourself through emoji's, and to me is quite powerful when you think about language and in an extreme way that is kind of what we're talking about that that's what we'd lose.

Megan: It's a beautiful example of an expectation; I mean algorithms that dominate our life now would be another version of that in a way...

Keg: Yeah, a reduction... Like how we were talking about the weeds and this ecosystem or this biodiversity. That's why I was thinking about weeds and indigenous plants and these kind of ways to look at language because that's a way that you can tangibly imagine that... if we don't have a complex ecosystem or biodiversity then we have monoculture.

...it's central to colonial process this elimination through dispossession. If you can remove language from people then you have more control.

[Keg (to audience/participants): Does anyone want to say anything?]

Megan: Contributions?

Participant 2: Listening to you I've been thinking a lot about when I did a Wurundjeri language class once with Stan Grant. I'm not Aboriginal, my father had died and I was visiting my mum a lot in Falls and this great thing happened (with the lessons) and I was so blown away, just in terms of what I learned about that country that I loved—just by four days with his class. The thing that I thought about the most was there are all these words for Eucalyptus trees and there are all these words for shadow, and the tree shadow, and it was revolutionary in terms of how I saw that country, that place, and it's just one little tiny example of what you're talking about.

James: In Scotland there's over a hundred words for rain, apparently.

[Laughter]

Participant 3: On the subject, I remember hearing on the radio there was a language group in Adelaide area that had basically become extinct, the language was extinct but it was only recorded ironically through the missions and missionaries writing the language down in books. Now indigenous people have gone back to these books to relearn their language and bringing their language back to life but the dictionary's not complete so they have to fill gaps through words from nearby communities. I found that fascinating and also challenging that this colonial construct was the only way they could bring the language back to life.

Megan: Yeah. Well that was part of the plan, it's central to colonial process this elimination through dispossession. If you can remove language from people then you have more control. I think part of that process is that whilst that elimination was happening the people and culture are being transformed into a relic and being collected and becoming a possession of that system. I like that Aboriginal people are able to go back and look and revitalise and revive a lot of this stuff. Either way we have contemporary language and other ways of relating and being indigenous in urban spaces and contemporary spaces. It's an interesting process and I think it's inherent in the colonial process and ideas of possession, to document everything and understand it and define it.

Keg: Should we end it there?

Megan: Yeah, I guess so.

Keg: Lovely

[Clapping]

END