

Walk in Solidarity

If we listen strongly to the Jesus Dreaming law very special Spirit times can occur. The great Creator Spirit sent Jesus to tell us the greatest story of all. It is a simple yet powerful story, one that says that if we believe his law of love and keep it strong, just as we kept the old law, we will not die forever but will live again. Jesus spoke first to the women, telling them to go at once to his close friends and followers with this good news. Of course, some did not believe the women. Then Jesus himself came to his friends, talking and eating with them. Finally, Jesus returned to his own true country with the Creator. He told his friends and followers not to worry. They would not be left alone. The Spirit would come who would stay with them always. Again they waited together till the special ceremony time the Jewish people called Pentecost. This was a time of thanks for good seasons and plenty of food. Mary stayed with the followers of the New Way for many years until it was time for her to go to her true Dreaming place with the Creator and her son Jesus. She is the mother of God.

(Source: Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, 'Dreaming in the City')

We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me?

The Redfern Speech – Delivered in Redfern Park by Prime Minister Paul Keating, 10 December 1992

“... in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the indigenous people of Australia – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be ... Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things. Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure. More I think than most Australians recognise, the plight of Aboriginal Australians affects us all... Nowhere in the world, I would venture, is the message more stark than it is in Australia. We simply cannot sweep injustice aside... However intractable the problems seem, we cannot resign ourselves to failure – any more than we can hide behind the contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that to reach back for the poor and dispossessed is to risk being dragged down.

That seems to me not only morally indefensible, but bad history... Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to

the problems which beset the first Australians – the people to whom the most injustice has been done. And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask – how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us... I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit. All of us.

Perhaps when we recognise what we have in common we will see the things which must be done – the practical things... The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth, or the extension of social justice, or the deepening of Australian social democracy to include indigenous Australians. There is everything to gain. Even the unhappy past speaks for this... And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership. As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years – and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours. Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight. Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books. Imagine if our feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice. Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed. Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it. It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice we can imagine its opposite. And we can have justice."

... if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.

Solidarity is the tenderness of the people (Dr John Falzon)

There is a beautiful saying from the Sandinistas that
Solidarity is the tenderness of the people
Solidarity

Is that profound human tenderness
Profound because it is simple
Human because it is concrete

Anything that is only an idea or an ideal
Can never even remotely be equated with solidarity
In the face of oppression
In the struggle for liberation
It is the locking of arms
Not the sending of wishes
It is expressed in the smallest of gestures
As well as in the grandest of plans
It is what comes of the interconnectedness of things
The intersectionality of the experience of oppression
The recognition of the dialectic
Such as when the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King was shot
Because he named the connection
The structural and historical knot that ties
Oppressive racism
To capitalism
It being no accident that he was in Memphis at the time of his killing
To support striking garbage workers
Something worth remembering in Australia today
As the lowest paid in society
Whether they are in the labour market
On its insecure margins
Or completely excluded from it
Are attacked and punished
Sacrificed on the altar of greater profits and lower corporate taxes

His stance beside them
Was also a recognition of another foundational principle of solidarity
Namely
That solidarity might produce heroes
But it is never individualistic
It is deeply collective

It is a privilege
Not a favour
To stand in solidarity with
People experiencing oppression
If we commit ourselves to the struggle for liberation
Then we take our orders from the
People
The word obedience
Comes from the Latin word meaning
To listen to
Solidarity



Means studying reality
The concrete study of the concrete situation
Cutting through the lies
For the truth told by the people pushed to the margins
Will
In the end
Drown out the lies
Told about them

Sometimes
When I type out the word solidarity I mistakenly type
Soilidarity
I like this typo
Because it reminds me that solidarity Is about the common ground
That must be fought for
Against the commodi cation of everything
And everyone
That human solidarity cannot be disconnected from
The environment in which we live
That we are all made from the most magnificent and magical dust
And that the socially constructed hierarchies
Of power and wealth
Are just that
Produced by socio-economic formations Not nature
And that just as they are made
They can and must
Be unmade
And that the real power for progressive social change
Comes not from above
But from the People
Under the guiding stars of struggle and hope

The feminist movement teaches us that
The personal is political

The refusal to take the side of the oppressed
Is the acquiescence to being taken by the side of the oppressor
As the poet and theorist Audre Lorde reminds us:

*The true focus of revolutionary change
Is never merely the oppressive situations We need to escape
But that piece of the oppressor
Which is planted deep within each of us*

I will leave you with the most beautiful description of solidarity that I know
Which comes from Aunty Lilla Watson
And a group of First Nations activists in
Queensland in the 1970s

*If you have come to help me you are wasting your time
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine
Then let us work together.*