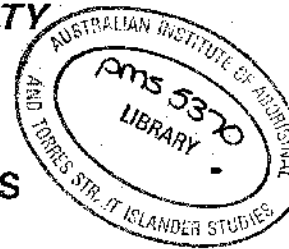


THE END IN THE BEGINNING: RE(DE)FINDING ABORIGINALITY

**THE WENTWORTH LECTURE 1994
THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES**



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-CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY-

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AN OLD MAN SAID:

I DON'T CARE HOW HARD IT IS. YOU BUILD ABORIGINALITY OR YOU GET NOTHING. THERE'S NO CHOICE ABOUT IT. IF OUR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE CANNOT CHANGE HOW IT IS AMONG THEMSELVES, THEN THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WILL NEVER CLIMB BACK OUT OF HELL¹.

BUT THIS TAKES US TOO FAR AHEAD IN THE STORY, TOWARDS THE END, "ALTHOUGH THE END IS IN THE BEGINNING"².

SINCE FIRST CONTACT WITH THE COLONISERS OF THIS COUNTRY, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES HAVE BEEN THE OBJECT OF A CONTINUAL FLOW OF COMMENTARY AND CLASSIFICATION. I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY TAKING YOU THROUGH JUST A SAMPLE OF WHAT THEY SAW AS ABORIGINALITY.

TO THE EARLY VISITORS WE VARIED FROM THE NOBLE SAVAGE TO THE PRE-HISTORIC BEAST. FOR EXAMPLE:

"THE NATIVES OF NEW HOLLAND....MAY APPEAR TO SOME TO BE THE MOST WRETCHED PEOPLE OF EARTH, BUT IN REALITY THEY ARE FAR MORE HAPPIER THAN WE EUROPEANS.... THEY LIVE IN A TRANQUILLITY WHICH IS NOT DISTURB'D BY THE INEQUALITY OF CONDITION"³; "THE POOREST OBJECTS ON THE HABITABLE GLOBE"⁴; "BLOOD THIRSTY, CUNNING, FEROCIOUS, AND MARKED BY BLACK INGRATITUDE AND BASE TREACHERY"⁵; "THE AUSTRALIAN NIGGER IS THE LOWEST TYPE OF HUMAN CREATURE ABOUT....BUT HAVING ONE SPLENDID POINT IN WHICH HE IS FAR AHEAD OF THE CHINKIE. HE'LL DIE OUT AND THE CHINKIE WON'T"⁶.

IN THE LAW WE WERE DEFINED SYSTEMATICALLY, THOUGH VARIABLY ACCORDING TO PROPORTIONS OF BLACK BLOOD. FOR EXAMPLE:

"AN ABORIGINAL NATIVE OF AUSTRALIA OR OF ANY OF THE ISLANDS ADJACENT OR BELONGING THERETO"⁷; "ANY PERSON OF ABORIGINAL DESCENT WHOSE MORAL INTELLECTUAL AND PHYSICAL WELFARE THE BOARD WAS TO PROMOTE WITH A VIEW TO THEIR ASSIMILATION INTO THE GENERAL COMMUNITY"⁸; AND THEN, DEPENDING ON THE YEAR, VARIOUSLY: "A HALF-CASTE CHILD WHOSE AGE DOES NOT APPARENTLY EXCEED EIGHTEEN YEARS"⁹; "A HALF-CASTE MALE CHILD WHOSE AGE DOES NOT APPARENTLY EXCEED 21 YEARS"¹⁰; "EVERY HALF-CASTE AGED 34 HABITUALLY ASSOCIATING AND LIVING WITH AN ABORIGINAL"¹¹; EXCLUDING "A PERSON LESS THAN QUADROON BLOOD WHO WAS BORN PRIOR TO THE THIRTY FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER, 1936"¹².

ABORIGINAL "HALF-CASTES" IN PARTICULAR CAME UNDER THE SCRUTINY OF THE ETHNOLOGISTS. THEY WROTE FOR EXAMPLE:

"THERE IS NO BIOLOGICAL REASON FOR THE REJECTION OF PEOPLE WITH A DILUTE STRAIN OF ABORIGINAL BLOOD. A LOW PERCENTAGE WILL NOT INTRODUCE ANY ABERRANT CHARACTERISTICS AND THERE NEED BE NO FEAR OF REVERSIONS TO THE DARK ABORIGINAL TYPE"¹³; CLASSIFIABLE INTO VARIOUS HYBRID TYPES: "FIRST CROSSES OF TWO TYPES, SECOND GENERATION CROSSES OF THREE TYPES, 1/8, 3/8, F3, FX, 5/8, QUADROON, OCTOROON"¹⁴, AND SO IT WENT ON.

THEIR MEN OF RELIGION WERE ALSO CONCERNED TO DEFINE US. THEY SAW US AS:

"DEGRADED AS TO DIVINE THINGS, ALMOST ON A LEVEL WITH A BRUTE...IN A STATE OF MORAL UNFITNESS FOR HEAVEN..., AND AS INCAPABLE OF ENJOYING ITS PLEASURES AS DARKNESS IS INCAPABLE OF DWELLING WITH LIGHT"¹⁵; "WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD, ENTIRELY LOST TO ALL ORAL AND SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION"¹⁶.

SIMILARLY THEIR HOPEFUL EDUCATORS ASSESSED OUR CAPACITY FOR LEARNING:

ALTERNATIVELY: "HAVING PERFECTLY INFANTILE JUDGEMENTS WHERE COMPASS OF THOUGHT IS REQUIRED"¹⁷; OR,

"MATERIALS, WHICH ALTHOUGH EXTREMELY CRUDE ARE NEVERTHELESS GOOD, THE INTELLECT BURIED IN AUGEAN FILTH, YET WE MAY FIND GEMS OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE AND BRILLIANCE"¹⁸.

THEIR MEN OF SCIENCE SOUGHT TO DEFINE US THROUGH THE STUDY OF OUR BRAINS AND BLOOD, CONCLUDING THAT:

"THEIR ABORIGINAL BLOOD IS REMOTELY THE SAME AS THAT OF THE MAJORITY OF THE WHITE INHABITANTS OF AUSTRALIA, FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL IS RECOGNISED AS BEING THE FORERUNNER OF THE CAUCASIAN RACE"¹⁹; SHOWING ANATOMICAL CHARACTERS VERY RARE IN THE WHITE RACES OF MANKIND, BUT AT THE SAME TIME NORMAL IN APE TYPES²⁰.

AND WE HAVE BEEN AN EVER POPULAR SUBJECT FOR ARTISTS WHO PORTRAYED US IN PAINTINGS OR FILMS. INITIALLY THEY PORTRAYED NOBLE, WELL BUILT NATIVE, HEROIC, BEARDED, LOIN CLOTHED, ONE FOOT UP, VIGILANT WITH BOOMERANG AT THE READY. LATER, AFTER WE HAD FALLEN FROM GRACE WE APPEARED BENT, DISTORTED, OVERWEIGHT, INEBRIATED, WITH BOTTLE IN HAND.

WE EVEN FOUND OUR WAY INTO POETRY:

"FLAT AS REPTILES HUTTED IN THE SCRUB... A BAND OF FIERCE FANTASTIC SAVAGES...STARING LIKE A DREAM OF HELL!"²¹.

EVERY ONE OF THESE STATEMENTS IS DRAWN DIRECTLY FROM THE WORDS WRITTEN ABOUT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THIS COUNTRY.

YES. THEY HAVE HAD A LOT TO SAY ABOUT US.

AND IF YOU ARE OVERWHELMED BY THIS LITANY OF STATEMENTS, MADE WITH A CONFIDENCE ONLY EXCEEDED BY THEIR IGNORANCE, THEY ARE BUT A FRAGMENT OF WHAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE BORN IN BODY AND SPIRIT SINCE WE CAME INTO THE VIEW OF THE COLONISERS.

SINCE THEIR FIRST INTRUSIVE GAZE, COLONISING CULTURES HAVE HAD A PRE-OCCUPATION WITH OBSERVING, ANALYSING, STUDYING, CLASSIFYING AND LABELLING "ABORIGINES" AND ABORIGINALITY. UNDER THAT GAZE ABORIGINALITY CHANGED FROM BEING A DAILY PRACTICE TO BEING "A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED".

AND I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT ANCIENT HISTORY. IN 1988 AT THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE RSL, VICTORIAN STATE PRESIDENT,

MR BRUCE RUXTON, TOGETHER WITH THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT, BRIGADIER ALF GARLAND, LOYAL DISCIPLES OF THE GENETICISTS, CALLED ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO "AMEND THE DEFINITION OF ABORIGINE TO ELIMINATE THE PART-WHITES WHO ARE MAKING A RACKET OUT OF BEING SO-CALLED ABORIGINES AT ENORMOUS COST TO TAXPAYERS²²", AND FOR SOME KIND OF GENEALOGICAL EXAMINATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE APPLICANT FOR BENEFITS WAS A "FULL BLOOD OR A HALF-CASTE OR A QUARTER-CAST OR WHATEVER"²³.

JUST LAST WEEK WE ONCE AGAIN HEARD CALLS FROM CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL PARTY IN QUEENSLAND FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO INSIST THAT ONLY PEOPLE WITH MORE THAN 50% ABORIGINAL BLOOD BE ELIGIBLE TO IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL.²⁴ CLEARLY SUCH VIEWS HAVE NOT GONE AWAY.

SIMILARLY, THE THEORIES OF THE ETHNOLOGISTS EXPOUNDING THE BACKWARD STAGES OF EVOLUTION OF THE ABORIGINAL RACE WERE VIVIDLY BROUGHT TO LIFE ONCE AGAIN JUST LAST YEAR DURING THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER NATIVE TITLE WHEN WE WERE ALL TOLD HOW ABORIGINAL PEOPLE HAD FAILED TO EVEN INVENT THE WHEELED CART²⁵.

AND THE OBSESSION WITH DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE OFFENSIVELY NAMED "FULL BLOODS AND "HYBRIDS", OR "REAL" AND "INAUTHENTIC" ABORIGINES CONTINUES TO BE IMPOSED ON US TODAY. THERE WOULD BE FEW URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN LABELLED AS CULTURALLY BEREFT, "FAKE", "PART-ABORIGINES", AND THEN EXPECTED TO AUTHENTICATE THEIR ABORIGINALITY IN TERMS OF PERCENTAGES OF BLOOD OR CLICHED "TRADITIONAL" EXPERIENCES.

CONSTANT PROCLAMATIONS THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE REMNANTS OF A PAST DOOMED TO EXTINCTION, THAT "*THE OLD ABORIGINAL WORLD IS NOW FACING ITS FINAL TWILIGHT*"²⁶, AND THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE "POWERLESS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST THE FINAL ONSLAUGHT"²⁷ CONTINUE TO CONSTRUCT US AS INNATELY OBSOLETE PEOPLES.

AND IN ALL THESE REPRESENTATIONS, ALL THESE SUPPOSED "TRUTHS" ABOUT US, OUR VOICES, AND OUR VISIONS HAVE BEEN NOTABLY ABSENT. THERE MAY BE AN ENLIGHTENED MINORITY WHO HAVE BEEN WILLING TO OPEN THEIR EYES AND EARS TO ALLOW THE SPACE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO CONVEY OUR ABORIGINALITIES. BUT, AS MY COLLEAGUE MARCIA LANGTON SO POIGNANTLY WROTE: THE MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS, "*DO NOT KNOW AND*

RELATE TO ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. THEY RELATE TO STORIES TOLD BY FORMER COLONISTS."²⁸

SO TODAY, TO EVEN BEGIN TO SPEAK ABOUT ABORIGINALITY IS TO ENTER A LABYRINTH FULL OF OBSCURE PASSAGES, AMBIGUOUS SIGNS AND TRAP DOORS. THE MOMENT YOU ASK THE QUESTION, "WHO OR WHAT IS ABORIGINAL?", YOU ENTER A HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE FULL OF ABSOLUTE AND TIMELESS TRUTHS WHICH HAVE BEEN SET IN PLACE BY SELF-PROFESSED EXPERTS AND AUTHORITIES ALL TOO READY TO TELL US, AND THE WORLD THE MEANING OF ABORIGINALITY.

NEARLY SUFFOCATED WITH IMPOSED LABELS AND STRUCTURES ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE HAD NO CHOICE THAN TO INSIST ON OUR RIGHT TO SPEAK BACK. TO DO AS THE OLD MAN SAID. TO BUILD AND REPRESENT OUR OWN WORLD OF MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE.

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IN THE EARLY 1970'S, THE SITUATION OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BEGAN TO COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IN 1972 THE UNITED NATIONS SUB-COMMISSION ON DISCRIMINATION AND THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES COMMISSIONED *THE STUDY ON THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS*²⁹, LOOKING AT THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE STUDY EXPLICITLY TOOK UP THE QUESTION OF DEFINITION, DETAILING ALL THE CRITERIA WHICH GOVERNMENTS HAVE USED TO DEFINE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

THE MOST FREQUENT WERE THE SO-CALLED 'OBJECTIVE CRITERIA'. THESE WERE FIRSTLY, RACE OR ANSCESTORY AND SECONDLY "CULTURE". THE LATTER INCLUDED RELIGION, LIVING UNDER A TRIBAL SYSTEM, MEMBERSHIP OF AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY, DRESS, LANGUAGE, RESIDENCE IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND LIVELIHOOD, THE LATTER OFTEN CLASSIFIED IN TERMS OF DEVELOPMENT OR BACKWARDNESS. ALSO NOTED WERE SUBJECTIVE CRITERIA: GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS OR SELF IDENTIFICATION, AND ACCEPTANCE BY THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY.

BEFORE PROVIDING ANY CRITIQUE OF THE SO-CALLED "OBJECTIVE CRITERIA", I'D LIKE TO GIVE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES REPORTED IN THE UN STUDY.

IN INDONESIA CRITERIA FOR BEING CLASSIFIED AS INDIGENOUS HAVE INCLUDED "NOT MATCHING UP TO THE STANDARDS OF DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE IDEALS OF ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIAN SOCIETY" OR "HAVING LESS ABILITY TO PERFORM THEIR SOCIAL FUNCTIONS"³⁰.

IN PARAGUAY ONE OF THE CRITERIA USED FOR CLASSIFYING A PERSON AS INDIGENOUS WAS THAT HE/SHE IS "MARGINALISED", "BACKWARD" OR "OUTSIDE OF THE ECONOMIC REALITIES OF THE COUNTRY"³¹.

IN GUATEMALA, WHERE SELF-IDENTIFICATION WAS IN DOUBT QUESTIONS OF INDIGENOUS DRESS, USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND NON-USE OF FOOTWEAR WERE USED TO ASSIST IDENTIFICATION³².

THE BOLIVIAN CENSUS CLASSIFIED PEOPLE ACCORDING TO RACE, WITH THE AVAILABLE CATEGORIES BEING: "WHITE", "CHOLO" (THAT IS, HALF-CASTE) AND "INDIAN". THE CHOLOS WOULD INCLUDE THOSE PERSONS OF AN INDIAN-WHITE MIXTURE PLUS THE MORE OR LESS RACIALLY PURE INDIANS WHO HAVE LEARNED TO SPEAK SPANISH WELL, HAVE MASTERED A SKILLED TRADE AND HAVE ABANDONED INDIGENOUS DRESS. THE INDIAN WAS IDENTIFIED AS USUALLY BEING DARK-SKINNED, ILLITERATE, SPEAKING ONLY A NATIVE TONGUE AND PROVIDING THE UNSKILLED LABOUR IN THE ECONOMY"³³.

YOU COULD HARDLY CALL SUCH CLEARLY IDEOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS OBJECTIVE. THEY WOULD BETTER BE DESCRIBED AS THE STATE'S TOOLS FOR OUR DOMINATION AND ASSIMILATION.

THE STUDY ITSELF RECOGNISED HOW VALUE LADEN THE DEFINITIONS WERE. THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF "INDIGENOUS" WERE FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED IN UNAMBIGUOUSLY LOADED LANGUAGE; INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WERE GENERALLY IDENTIFIED NOT IN TERMS OF OUR POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES, BUT IN TERMS OF WHAT WE LACK: WE WERE "UNDER-DEVELOPED", "PRIMITIVE", UNABLE TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION, UNEDUCATED IN THE WAYS OF THE NON-INDIGENOUS POPULATION, "BACKWARD".

EVEN WHERE THE CRITERIA WERE NOT SO OBVIOUSLY BIAS, THE STUDY REJECTED ANY DEFINITION WHICH RELIED EXCLUSIVELY ON EITHER DESCENT OR CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS.

WITH RESPECT TO CLASSIFICATIONS BASED ON BLOOD PERCENTAGES, IT STATED UNAMBIGUOUSLY THAT THE SCIENTIFIC THEORY THAT THERE IS AN OBJECTIVE BIOLOGICAL OR GENETIC BASIS FOR RACE HAD BEEN WIDELY DISCREDITED³⁴ IN OTHER WORDS, THE RSL'S DREAM OF A GENETIC OR BLOOD TEST WHICH WOULD OFFER SOME TRUE INDICATION AND DISTINCTION WAS A FALLACY.

WITH RESPECT TO CLASSIFICATION ON THE BASIS OF CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS IT RECOGNISED THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF DEFINING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ENTIRELY IN TERMS OF A CULTURE FREE FROM THE INFLUENCE OF NON-INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES. PERVASIVE INFILTRATION AS A RESULT OF COLONISATION MEANT THAT CULTURAL BORROWINGS AND TRANSFORMATIONS WERE ALWAYS PRESENT. THUS, IT CONCLUDED THAT WHILE CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE IMPORTANT, THEY COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED ABSOLUTE.

THE STUDY CONSIDERED THE ENORMOUS BODY OF EVIDENCE IT HAD GATHERED IN THE LIGHT OF THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED HUMAN RIGHTS, AND CONCLUDED THAT: *"THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSERTION (CONCERNING ANY DEFINITION) MUST BE THAT INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS MUST BE RECOGNISED ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN PERCEPTION AND CONCEPTION OF THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO OTHER GROUPS. THERE MUST BE NO ATTEMPT TO DEFINE THEM ACCORDING TO THE PERCEPTION OF OTHERS THROUGH THE VALUES OF FOREIGN SOCIETIES OR OF THE DOMINANT SECTORS IN SUCH SOCIETIES....(AND) ARTIFICIAL, ARBITRARY OR MANIPULATORY DEFINITIONS MUST, IN ANY EVENT, BE REJECTED."*

THE EXPERIENCE OF A HISTORY OF DESCRIPTION, ASCRIPTION, PRESCRIPTION AND SUPPRESSION WOULD PROVIDE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT REASON FOR INSISTING THAT DEFINITIONS OF ABORIGINALITY MUST BE GENERATED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OURSELVES.

BUT WHAT IS SO POWERFUL ABOUT THE UN STUDY IS THAT IT GOES STILL FURTHER, REFERRING NOT MERELY TO A JUST RESPONSE TO OPPRESSION, BUT TO FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND I QUOTE:

"THE (INDIGENOUS) COMMUNITY HAS THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT AND POWER TO DECIDE WHO BELONGS TO IT, WITHOUT EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE. NO STATE MUST TAKE, BY LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS OR OTHER MEANS, MEASURES

THAT INTERFERE WITH THE POWER OF INDIGENOUS NATIONS OR GROUPS TO DEFINE WHO ARE THEIR MEMBERS."³⁵

THE DEFINITION PROVIDED BY THE STUDY REMAINS THE MAJOR REFERENCE POINT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. IT STATES THAT:

*"INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, PEOPLES AND NATIONS ARE THOSE WHICH, HAVING HISTORICAL CONTINUITY WITH PRE-INVASION AND PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES THAT DEVELOPED ON THEIR TERRITORIES, CONSIDER THEMSELVES DISTINCT FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE SOCIETIES NOW PREVAILING ON THOSE TERRITORIES, OR PARTS OF THEM. THEY FORM AT PRESENT NON-DOMINANT SECTORS OF SOCIETY AND ARE DETERMINED TO PRESERVE, DEVELOP AND TRANSMIT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS THEIR ANCESTRAL TERRITORIES, AND THEIR ETHNIC IDENTITY, AS THE BASIS OF THEIR CONTINUED EXISTENCE AS PEOPLES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR OWN CULTURAL PATTERNS, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEGAL SYSTEMS."*³⁶

CONTINUATION WAS DEFINED TO INCLUDE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS INCLUDING ANCESTRY, CULTURE IN GENERAL OR IN SPECIFIC WHICH APPEARED COMMON TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

THESE FINDINGS HAVE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF THE RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS. AND NOT BECAUSE THE DEFINITION CAPTURES THE TRUTH OF OUR IDENTITY, BUT RATHER BECAUSE IT RECOGNISES THAT IDENTITY MUST BE SELF-IDENTITY, AND REJECTS ALL FORMS OF IMPOSED DEFINITION. WHILE IT PROVIDES CHARACTERISTICS WHICH MAY BE PRESENT, IT DOES NOT SEEK TO ESTABLISH AN EXHAUSTIVE OR CLOSED DEFINITION OF BEING "ABORIGINALITY" BUT RATHER TO ESTABLISH THE PROCESS WHEREBY DEFINITIONS MUST BE REACHED.

THIS RIGHT TO CONTROL ONE'S OWN IDENTITY IS PART OF THE BROADER RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, THAT IS THE RIGHT OF A PEOPLE TO DETERMINE ITS POLITICAL STATUS AND TO PURSUE ITS OWN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT³⁷. IT IS A RIGHT GUARANTEED TO ALL PEOPLES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND THE RIGHT AT THE FOREFRONT OF INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS STRUGGLES.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD RECOGNISE THAT AT THE CORE OF THE VIOLATION OF OUR RIGHTS AS PEOPLES LIES THE DESECRATION OF OUR SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO CONTROL OUR

LIVES; TO LIVE ACCORDING TO OUR OWN LAWS AND DETERMINE OUR FUTURES. AND AT THE HEART OF THE VIOLATION HAS BEEN THE DENIAL OF OUR CONTROL OVER OUR IDENTITY AND THE SYMBOLS THROUGH WHICH WE MAKE AND REMAKE OUR CULTURES AND OURSELVES³⁸.

RECOGNITION OF A PEOPLE'S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION MUST INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO SELF-DEFINITION AND TO BE FREE FROM THE CONTROL AND MANIPULATION OF AN ALIEN PEOPLE. IT MUST INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO INHERIT THE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF ONE'S PEOPLE AND TO TRANSFORM THAT IDENTITY CREATIVELY ACCORDING TO THE SELF-DEFINED ASPIRATIONS OF ONE'S PEOPLE AND ONE'S OWN GENERATION. IT MUST INCLUDE THE FREEDOM TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE CAGE CREATED BY OTHER PEOPLES' IMAGES AND PROJECTIONS.

THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY HAS BEEN TAKEN UP EXPLICITLY BY THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, WHERE, DESPITE SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION FROM CERTAIN OF THE WORLD'S GOVERNMENTS, INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES HAVE CONSISTENTLY ASSERTED THAT THERE CAN BE NO CLOSED DEFINITION OF "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES". THE RELEVANT PROVISION IN THE CURRENT DRAFT DECLARATION DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY OBJECTIVE CRITERIA WHATSOEVER. IT SIMPLY PROVIDES THAT:

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE THE COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHT TO MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP THEIR DISTINCT IDENTITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS INDIGENOUS AND BE RECOGNISED AS SUCH³⁹.

SIMILARLY, THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANISATION CONVENTION 169, THE ONLY EXISTING INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENT EXPLICITLY DEALING WITH THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PROVIDES BY WAY OF DEFINITION THAT:

SELF IDENTIFICATION AS INDIGENOUS OR TRIBAL SHALL BE REGARDED AS A FUNDAMENTAL CRITERION FOR DETERMINING THE GROUPS TO WHICH THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION APPLY⁴⁰.

AS I OUTLINED EARLIER, HISTORICALLY, WE THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THIS COUNTRY HAVE BEEN LEGALLY DEFINED IN TERMS OF PROPORTIONS OF BLOOD. LUCKILY, IN THE LAST 30 YEARS, VIRTUALLY ALL SUCH DEFINITIONS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE LEGISLATION. IN THE EARLY 1980s, LARGELY THANKS TO THE WORK

OF W.C. WENTWORTH, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING WORKING DEFINITION:

AN ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER IS A PERSON OF ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DESCENT, WHO IDENTIFIES AS AN ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND IS ACCEPTED AS SUCH BY THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE OR SHE LIVES.

THIS IS NOW THE WORKING DEFINITION USED FOR ESTABLISHING ELIGIBILITY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SPECIFIC PROGRAMS, AND IS USED IN COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATION. IT HAS ALSO BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE HIGH COURT AS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE EXPRESSION "ABORIGINAL RACE" IN THE CONSTITUTION⁴¹.

FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT SELF-DETERMINATION AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION ARE OUR INHERENT AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS. AND IN BOTH IN THIS COUNTRY AND INTERNATIONALLY THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION HAS BEEN ENSHRINED IN THE LAW. I THINK WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SIGNIFICANT WORK OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT US THIS FAR; IT HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT WHEN YOU REFLECT ON THE STARTING POSITION, AND EVEN WHERE WE WERE JUST 30 YEARS AGO.

HOWEVER IN THE WORLD OF THE REAL-POLITIC, NEITHER THE EXISTENCE, NOR EVEN THE LEGAL RECOGNITION OF A RIGHT ARE SUFFICIENT TO GUARANTEE ITS ENJOYMENT.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE SHOULD NOT VIGOROUSLY ASSERT THE RIGHT, NOR THAT WE CANNOT USE ALL AVAILABLE MEANS TO EXERCISE IT RIGHT NOW. HOWEVER, THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT ABORIGINALITY WILL CONTINUE TO BE DEFINED AND CONSTRUCTED FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES REGARDLESS OF THE DECLARATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS OR THE AUSTRALIAN LAW. NEITHER MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS NOR LEGAL GUARANTEE ARE SUFFICIENT TO PREVENT THE ACTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS OF A SYSTEM OF BIGOTRY AND OPPRESSION WHICH CONTINUES TO SERVE THE AGENDAS OF THE WORLD'S POWER BROKERS.

REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINALITY ARE NOT SIMPLY AN ISOLATED PHENOMENA WHICH WE CAN ELIMINATE. THEY ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMPTOMS OF THE OPPRESSIVE RELATIONSHIP

WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND COLONISING STATES.

IN ADDITION, WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE FOR OURSELVES THAT TODAY THE "ENEMY" CANNOT BE NEATLY PLACED ON THE OUTSIDE, NOR SIMPLY ELIMINATED BY CENSORING THOSE REPRESENTATIONS CLEARLY IMPOSED ONTO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. AS MY COLLEAGUE MARCIA LANGTON WROTE, "*BOTH ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE CREATE ABORIGINALITIES*"⁴². THESE CONSTRUCTIONS, HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY WISH TO REJECT THEM, ARE THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WE LIVE. THEY INFORM NOT ONLY THE WAY OTHERS THINK ABOUT AND REACT TO US, BUT ALSO THE LIVED EXPERIENCE THAT WE HAVE OF OURSELVES AND OF EACHOTHER.

THEY HAVE ALSO BECOME THE ENEMY WITHIN.

THUS I SEE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS HAVING TWIN PROJECTS; AT ONE LEVEL WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF ABORIGINALITY, AND UNDERSTAND WHY THEY HAVE HAD SUCH A GRIP OVER COLONISING POPULATIONS; SIMULTANEOUSLY WE MUST CONTINUOUSLY SUBVERT THE HEGEMONY WITH OUR OWN REPRESENTATIONS, AND ALLOW **OUR VISIONS** TO CREATE THE WORLD OF MEANING IN WHICH WE RELATE TO OURSELVES, TO EACHOTHER, AND TO NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

TURNING TO THE FIRST PROJECT, THE QUESTION WE ARE ASKING IS: "IF ABORIGINALITY IS NEITHER A TYPE OF BLOOD, NOR A SET OF CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS, WHY HAVE THESE DEFINITIONS BEEN SO INTERNATIONALLY PERVASIVE?" HOW IS IT THAT IN ONE INSTANCE ABORIGINAL INCLUDES "*HALF-CASTE CHILDREN WHOSE AGE DOES NOT APPARENTLY EXCEED EIGHTEEN YEARS*" IN ANOTHER "*HALF-CASTE MALE CHILDREN WHOSE AGE DOES NOT APPARENTLY EXCEED 21 YEARS*" AND IN YET ANOTHER "*EVERY HALF-CASTE AGED 34 HABITUALLY ASSOCIATING AND LIVING WITH ABORIGINES*"? HOW IS THAT ABORIGINAL IS IN ONE HISTORICAL PERIOD NOBLE AND WORTHY, AND IN ANOTHER IGNOBLE AND CORRUPT?

CLEARLY NO ONE COULD CONTEND THAT THE DEFINITIONS ARE OBJECTIVE. THE MOST DEFINITIVE STATEMENT THAT ONE COULD MAKE ABOUT THEM IS THAT THEY ARE INFINITELY ELASTIC. SO THE QUESTIONS THAT I WOULD ASK IS: "WHY ARE PARTICULAR TYPES OF DEFINITIONS CREATED, REPRODUCED AND EMBRACED BY STATES AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT PARTICULAR TIMES?"; IF THE

IMAGES OF ABORIGINALITY DO NOT ACTUALLY REFLECT US, IT IS NOT ACTUALLY ABOUT US, WHAT PURPOSE HAVE THEY SERVED FOR THOSE WHO CONSTRUCTED AND ADOPTED THEM?

THE SHORT ANSWER IS THAT THEY HAVE SERVED TO MEET THE VARIOUS AND CHANGING INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS OF COLONISING OR "MODERN" STATE. WHETHER THERE IS A NEED TO CREATE A BOUNDARY BETWEEN "PRIMITIVE" AND "MODERN MAN", TO LEGITIMISE "PROGRESS", TO JUSTIFY PARTICULAR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, TO PROMOTE A NATIONAL IDENTITY FOR THE COLONIAL NATION, OR MORE SPECIFICALLY TO CONTROL, MANAGE, OR ASSIMILATE INDIGENOUS CULTURES, "ABORIGINALITY" HAS BEEN MADE TO FIT THE BILL.

IN OTHER WORDS, "ABORIGINALITY" BECOMES PART OF THE IDEOLOGY THAT LEGITIMISES AND SUPPORTS THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF THE STATE.

AT THE MOST IMMEDIATE LEVEL, CONSTRUCTIONS OF ABORIGINALITY ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE POLICIES OF THE "MANAGEMENT" AND CONTROL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. THEY FORM PART OF THE IDEOLOGY WHICH CREATES THE FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THE STATE CAN ACT UPON AND JUSTIFY ITS TREATMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, HOWEVER DISRESPECTFUL OR ABUSIVE OF OUR RIGHTS IT MAY BE.

MANY OF THE POPULAR IMAGES I REFERRED TO EARLIER WERE A CENTRAL TOOL IN THE OVERALL POLICY OF "DE-ABORIGINALISING" AUSTRALIA TO ESTABLISH A NEW NATION WITH A EUROPEAN BASE. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE THE IMAGE OF ABORIGINALITY AS A TIMELESS AND UNCHANGING CULTURE: PRISTINE, EXOTIC, A RELIC OF AN ANCIENT PAST. THIS "TRUE, PURE BLOODED, TRADITIONAL ABORIGINE" IS AT ONCE POSITED AS THE ARBITER OF AUTHENTIC ABORIGINALITY, AND AS A MEMBER OF DOOMED RACE. HENCE ALL OF US WHOSE MOTHERS WERE RAPED BY WHITE MEN, OR WHO WERE FORCED, OR CHOSE TO INCORPORATE OTHER ELEMENTS INTO OUR ABORIGINALITY ARE "NOT REAL ABORIGINES". BY DEFINING ABORIGINALITY IN TERMS OF PURITY OF BLOOD OR PURITY OF CULTURE, THE ASSIMILATION OF THOSE WHO DID NOT FALL WITHIN THE NARROW AMBIT OF THE DEFINITION COULD NOT EVEN BE CONSIDERED CULTURAL GENOCIDE, BECAUSE THEY WERE SEEN AS NOT ACTUALLY BELONGING TO THE CULTURE FROM WHICH THEY WERE BEING TAKEN.

WHERE DESCENDANTS OF THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS COULD NOT BE "DISAPPEARED" AND REMAINED AS CONTINUAL THREAT TO THE

PURITY AND WHITE AUSTRALIA, ETHNOLOGISTS PROVIDED REASSURANCE TO SOCIETY WITH SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AND ELABORATE THEORIES ABOUT "THE HALF-CASTE" AND THE "HYBRID"; THEORIES PROVING THAT SUCH PEOPLE HAD A GENETIC LEANING TOWARDS THEIR WHITE PARENTAGE, AND THUS THAT THEIR ASSIMILATION EVEN HAD A BIOLOGICAL BASIS. FOR EXAMPLE ONE SOCIAL SCIENTIST OBSERVED THAT: "*THE ABORIGINES NOT OF THE FULL BLOOD HAVE BEEN ALL ALONG ASSOCIATES OF THE WHITE MAN RATHER THAN THE BLACK, THE PATRILINEAL AFFINITY SUPERSEDING THE MATRILINEAL, EVEN THOUGH FATHERHOOD HAS SO FREQUENTLY BEEN UNACKNOWLEDGED. REGARDING HIS WHITE ASSOCIATES AS FOLLOWING A SUPERIOR WAY OF LIFE TO THAT OF HIS ABORIGINAL KIN, THE COLOURED MAN HAS CLUNG TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY, WHILE THE ABORIGINAL HAS OSTRACISED HIM...*"⁴³

SIMILARLY, BY REPRESENTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS A BACKWARD REMNANT, THE PREHISTORY OF EUROPEAN MAN, FROZEN IN A DISTANT CONTINENT WHILE PROGRESS TRANSFORMED AND REFINED HUMANITY ELSEWHERE, ACCEPTING THAT ABORIGINALITY WOULD NATURALLY DIE OUT WAS SIMPLY A MATTER OF ACKNOWLEDGING THE INEVITABLE. THUS EXTERMINATION WAS NOT A CRIMINAL ACT, BUT THE EXPEDITION OF NATURE. POLICIES DESIGNED TO DESTROY OR "PHASE OUT" INDIGENOUS CULTURES WERE NOT CULTURAL GENOCIDE, BUT THE GENEROUS ENDOWMENT OF "IMPROVEMENT".

BY EXTENSION, BY REPRESENTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS PEOPLES WITHOUT A SOCIAL ORDER, WITHOUT A LAW, WITH NO SYSTEM OF OWNERSHIP, THE DOCTRINE OF TERRA NULLIUS BECAME A LOGICAL CONCLUSION. A PEOPLE INCAPABLE OF OWNERSHIP CANNOT BE PARTY TO A CONTRACTUAL TRANSFER OR NEGOTIATION; TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE COUNTRY WAS NOT THEFT, BUT ACQUISITION OF AVAILABLE GOODS.

A PARTICULARLY POIGNANT EXAMPLE OF THE MANIPULATION OF AUTHENTIC ABORIGINALITY IS THE MYTHOLOGY OF TRUCANNINI AS THE "LAST TASMANIAN ABORIGINE". HAVING DECLARED THE VERY LAST ABORIGINAL PERSON IN TASMANIA DEAD, HER DESCENDANTS COULD NOT, BY DEFINITION, BE ABORIGINAL. ABORIGINALITY WAS EXTINCT. THE PAST. A CLOSED BOOK. TO ALL THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE THEMSELVES AS ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF TASMANIA, THE OFFICIAL WORD WAS: YOU SIMPLY CANNOT EXIST.

YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE IDEOLOGICAL POWER OF THE DEFINITION IS THE EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE. THE *ABORIGINES'*

PROTECTION ACT 1909-1943 PLACED ALL ABORIGINAL PEOPLES UNDER THE "PROTECTION" OF THE WELFARE BOARD, IN EFFECT, DEPRIVING THEM OF THE BASIC, CIVIL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS WHICH WERE THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL OTHER AUSTRALIANS. WE COULD NOT ENTER PUBLIC PLACES SUCH AS GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS OR PUBS, WE COULD NOT MARRY OR MOVE FREELY WITHOUT PERMISSION, IN MANY CASES WE COULD NOT VOTE.

IN ORDER TO ENJOY THOSE RIGHTS ABORIGINAL PEOPLE COULD HOWEVER APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE. SUCH CERTIFICATES WOULD BE ISSUED IF "IN THE OPINION OF THE BOARD THEY OUGHT NO LONGER BE SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE ACT⁴⁴". THIS REQUIRED THAT THEY SATISFY CERTAIN UNDEFINED CRITERIA OF THE BOARD AND THAT THEY DECLARE THAT:

- (a) THEY HAD NOT BEEN CONVICTED OF DRUNKENNESS IN THE LAST 2 YEARS; OR,
- (b) COMMITTED ANY OFFENCE AGAINST THE *ABORIGINES PROTECTION ACT*, THE *POLICE OFFENCES ACT*, OR THE *CRIMES ACT* IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE BASIC ASSUMPTION WAS THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WERE INCOMPETENT TO LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN AFFAIRS, UNABLE TO FULFIL THEIR STATUS AS SOCIAL SUBJECTS, DEGENERATES, DRUNKS AND CRIMINALS. TO BE OTHERWISE WAS TO BE AN EXCEPTION, AND IN EFFECT TO HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM "ABORIGINALITY". BY LOADING THE DEFINITIONS WITH FIXED AND VALUE LADEN CHARACTERISTICS, AND THEN ATTACHING CERTAIN PRIVILEGES OR PENALTIES TO BEING INDIGENOUS OR NON-INDIGENOUS, ANY INDIGENOUS PERSON WISHING TO GO OUTSIDE THE LIMITED BOUNDS OF THE DEFINITION, NOT TO BE CLASSIFIED AS A DEGENERATE DRUNK AND NOT TO BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR BASIC ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CIVIL, AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, HAD TO EFFECTIVELY GIVE UP THEIR PUBLIC ABORIGINALITY.

THE UNITED NATIONS STUDY SIMILARLY OBSERVED HOW IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES BASIC POLICIES OF ASSIMILATION HAVE BEEN FACILITATED BY SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION. FOR EXAMPLE, IN INDONESIA, A PERSON CONSIDERED A MEMBER OF AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY COULD COME TO BE CONSIDERED A MEMBER OF MAINSTREAM INDONESIAN SOCIETY BY CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY OR ISLAM, ATTAINMENT OF MINIMAL LITERACY, OR BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH A PERSON'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES WERE CAPABLE OF PRODUCING ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF CASH SURPLUS.⁴⁵

LOOKING MORE BROADLY THE DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS HAVE NOT SIMPLY BEEN FOR THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. OUR CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES HAVE SERVED A BROADER PURPOSE OF REFLECTING BACK TO THE COLONISING CULTURE WHAT IT WANTED OR NEEDED TO SEE IN ITSELF. THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF ABORIGINALITY, IN ALL THEIR VARIATIONS, HAVE MARKED THE BOUNDARIES WHICH DEFINE AND EVALUATE THE SO-CALLED MODERN WORLD. WHETHER INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE BEEN PORTRAYED AS "NOBLE" OR "IGNOBLE", HEROIC OR WRETCHED HAS DEPENDED ON WHAT THE COLONISING CULTURE WANTED TO SAY OR THINK ABOUT ITSELF.

AT TIMES WE ARE USED TO AFFIRM THEIR SUPERIORITY, TO PROVIDE CONFIRMATION OF THE VALUE OF PROGRESS. BY EXTENSION THE DESTRUCTION OR ASSIMILATION OF THE INDIGENOUS CULTURES BECOMES A NECESSARY, AND EVEN MORALLY CORRECT PART OF THE BATTLE TO OVERCOME "THE PRIMITIVE", AND THEREBY TO SAVE BOTH US AND THEM FROM A LIFE THAT IS "NASTY BRUTISH AND SHORT". BY OUR LACK WE PROVIDED PROOF OF THEIR ABUNDANCE AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF "PROGRESS"; BY OUR INFERIORITY WE PROVED THEIR SUPERIORITY; BY OUR MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL POVERTY WE PROVED THAT THEY WERE INDEED THE PARAGON OF HUMANITY, THE PRODUCT OF MILLENNIA OF DEVELOPMENT.

AT OTHER TIMES WE ARE USED TO CREATE A COUNTERPOINT AGAINST WHICH THE DOMINANT SOCIETY CAN CRITIQUE ITSELF; WE BECOME LIVING EMBODIMENTS OF THE ROMANTIC IDEAL WHICH OFFERS A DESOLATE SOCIETY THE HOPE OF REDEMPTION AND OF RECAPTURING WHAT IT FEELS IT HAS LOST IN ITS MARCH FORWARD. THOSE WHO WISH TO PRESENT A CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISM POINT OUT THAT ABORIGINALITY IS ABOUT COMMUNITY; THOSE WHO WISH TO HIGHLIGHT THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIALISATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT POINT TO US AS THE ORIGINAL CONSERVATIONISTS. WE PRESENT A REMAINING, THOUGH STRATEGICALLY DISTANT IMAGE OF WHAT HAS BEEN LOST, AND WHAT COULD BE REGAINED.

AGAIN MY POINT IS NOT ABOUT WHETHER THE CONTENT OF THESE IMAGES IS TRUE OR FALSE. THEY IN FACT CONTAIN ELEMENTS OF ACCURATE REPRESENTATION. BUT THE CRITICAL POINT IS THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SELECTED BECAUSE THEY WERE TRUE, BUT RATHER BECAUSE THE COLONISING CULTURE NEEDED TO THINK THEY WERE TRUE. IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF "ABORIGINALITY" WE HAVE BEEN OBJECTS. OBJECTS TO BE MANIPULATED AND USED TO FURTHER THE ASPIRATIONS OF OTHER PEOPLES.

WE ARE CONSTANTLY DEFINED AS "OTHER", BUT WE ARE NEVER PERMITTED TO BE GENUINELY INDEPENDENT, GENUINELY DIFFERENT. IN FACT, FAR FROM BEING RECOGNISED IN OUR DIFFERENCE, IN OUR OWN TERMS, WE ARE ALWAYS DEFINED IN TERMS OF THE COLONISING OR DEFINING CULTURE.

ONE COULD WELL ASK, WHAT IS IT ABOUT GENUINE DIFFERENCE WHICH IS SO THREATENING THAT IT MUST ALWAYS BE TRANSLATED AND SANITISED INTO MORE OF THE SAME? ONE ANSWER MAY BE THAT TO ALLOW OUR DIFFERENCE AND OUR INDEPENDENCE WOULD THREATEN THE BOUNDARIES OF IDENTITY, KNOWLEDGE AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH WHICH GIVE THE SUBJECT A SENSE OF POWER AND CONTROL. IF WE ARE RECLASSIFIED INTO THE ESTABLISHED CATEGORIES WE ARE BROUGHT BACK INTO CHECK. WE MAY BE SEEN AS THE OPPOSITE, THE UNDER-DEVELOPED VERSION, OR EVEN THE UNSPOILED VERSION. BUT IN ALL CASES ABORIGINALITY IS DEFINED IN TERMS OF HOW IT COMPARES WITH THE DOMINANT CULTURE.

BUT BECAUSE ABORIGINALITY HAS BEEN DEFINED AS A RELATION, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE RARELY COME INTO A GENUINE **RELATIONSHIP** WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. BECAUSE A RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES TWO, NOT JUST ONE AND ITS MIRROR.

OUR SUBJECTIVITIES, OUR ASPIRATIONS, OUR WAYS OF SEEING AND OUR LANGUAGES HAVE LARGELY BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE EQUATION, AS THE COLONISING CULTURE "PLAYS WITH ITSELF". IT IS AS IF WE HAVE BEEN USHERED ONTO A STAGE TO PLAY IN A DRAMA WHERE THE PARTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN. CHOOSE FROM THE PART OF THE ANCIENT NOBLE SPIRIT, THE LOST SOUL ESTRANGED FROM HER TRUE NATURE OR THE AGGRESSIVE DRUNK ALTERNATIVELY BUCKING AND LIVING OFF THE SYSTEM. NO OTHER PARTS AVAILABLE FOR "REAL ABORIGINES".

I'D LIKE TO READ YOU SOME WORDS OF OTHER PEOPLES DESCRIBING THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE PROCESSES I HAVE DESCRIBED. VINE DELORIO, A NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN WROTE:

IN 1969, NON-INDIANS BEGAN TO REDISCOVER INDIANS. EVERYONE HAILED US AS THEIR NATURAL ALLIES IN THE ANCIENT STRUGGLE THEY WERE WAGING AGAINST THE "BAD GUYS". CONSERVATIVES EMBRACED US BECAUSE WE DIDN'T ACT UPPITY, REFUSED TO MOVE INTO THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS, AND DIDN'T MARCH IN THEIR STREETS. LIBERALS LOVED US BECAUSE WE WERE THE MOST OPPRESSED OF ALL PEOPLES WHO HAD BEEN OPPRESSED...BLACKS LOVE US BECAUSE WE

OBJECTED TO THE POLICIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIORWHICH INDICATED THAT WE WERE ANOTHER GROUP THEY COULD COUNT ON IN COMING TO THE REVOLUTION....CONSERVATIONISTS SOUGHT OUT INDIANS FOR THEIR MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAND...IT HAS BEEN AN EXCITING YEAR. "46

AND SOMEWHAT MORE TRAGICALLY, RALPH ELLISON, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WROTE:

*I AM AN INVISIBLE MAN.... I AM INVISIBLE, UNDERSTAND, SIMPLY BECAUSE PEOPLE REFUSE TO SEE ME....IT IS AS THOUGH I HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED BY MIRRORS OF HARD, DISTORTING GLASS. WHEN THEY APPROACH ME SEE ONLY MY SURROUNDINGS, THEMSELVES, OR FIGMENTS OF THEIR IMAGINATION - INDEED EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING EXCEPT ME. NOR IS MY INVISIBILITY EXACTLY A MATTER OF BIO-CHEMICAL ACCIDENT TO MY EPIDERMIS. THAT INVISIBILITY TO WHICH I REFER OCCURS BECAUSE OF A PECULIAR DISPOSITION OF THE EYES OF THOSE WITH WHOM I COME IN CONTACT. A MATTER OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR INNER EYES....*⁴⁷

ELLISON'S EXCRUCIATING DISCOVERY OF HIS INVISIBILITY IS THE TRAGEDY OF ALL WHO HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF THE RIGHT TO BE SEEN AS FULL INDEPENDENT HUMAN BEINGS. HOWEVER, AT THE END OF HIS NOVEL, HE HAS A CRUCIAL REALISATION WHICH PROVIDES HIS, AND OUR WAY OUT OF "HELL". HE SAYS QUITE SIMPLY: "I'M INVISIBLE, NOT BLIND"⁴⁸.

NONE OF US HAVE ESCAPED THE EFFECT OF FALSE REPRESENTATION AND INVISIBILITY. WE FEEL IT EVERY DAY WHEN WE COME INTO CONTACT WITH THE DOMINANT SOCIETY. WE EVEN FEEL IT WHEN WE LOOK INTO THE MIRROR. OUR EXPERIENCES OF OUR SELVES, AND OF OUR ABORIGINALITY HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED BY THE REPRESENTATIONS.

BUT TO SAY THAT ABORIGINALITY HAS RARELY BEEN MORE THAN A RELATION FOR NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE THAN A RELATION FOR US. WE MAY HAVE BEEN FORCED TO FEEL THE GAZE OF THE OTHER ALMOST EVERYWHERE WE WENT, WE MAY HAVE EVEN INTERNALISED THAT GAZE, BUT WE HAVE NEVER TOTALLY LOST OURSELVES WITHIN THE OTHER'S REALITY. WE HAVE NEVER FALLEN INTO THE HYPNOSIS TO BELIEVE THAT THOSE REPRESENTATIONS WERE OUR ESSENCE. WE HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN THAT WE HAVE AN IDENTITY WHICH CANNOT BE REDUCED TO A RELATION, AND CANNOT BE DESTROYED

BY MISCONCEPTION. RECALLING ELLISON, WE MAY BE INVISIBLE, BUT WE ARE NOT BLIND.

AS A WOMAN OF THE QUICHE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA SAID, AND I QUOTE:

"IN OUR COMMUNITIES, WE NEVER SAT DOWN TO STUDY OR DISCUSS ISSUES LIKE "LOOK, THIS IS OUR TRADITION, THIS IS OUR LANGUAGE". WE HAVE MAINTAINED OUR CULTURE NOT SO MUCH DUE TO CONSCIOUS EFFORT AS TO DAILY PRACTICE. HOWEVER, THERE IS A MOMENT IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES, IN OUR COMMUNITY... WHEN WE FIND IT NECESSARY TO BECOME CONSCIOUS ABOUT WHO WE ARE.⁴⁹"

IN THE SANITISED HISTORY OF "SETTLEMENT" IT WAS ALWAYS WRITTEN THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THIS COUNTRY DID NOT RESIST. SIMILARLY, TO SAY THAT ABORIGINALITY IS NOTHING MORE THAN A RELATION TO NON-ABORIGINALITY IS TO CREATE ANOTHER REPRESENTATION OF US AS PEOPLES WHO ACCEPTED AND SUBMITTED TO THE IMPOSED STRUCTURES.

ALONG SIDE THE COLONIAL DISCOURSES WE HAVE ALWAYS HAD OUR OWN ABORIGINAL DISCOURSES IN WHICH WE HAVE CONTINUED TO CREATE OUR OWN REPRESENTATIONS, AND TO RECREATE IDENTITIES WHICH ESCAPED THE POLICING OF THE AUTHORISED VERSIONS. THEY ARE ABORIGINALITIES WHICH ARISE FROM OUR EXPERIENCE OF OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES. THEY DRAW CREATIVELY FROM THE PAST, INCLUDING THE EXPERIENCE OF COLONISATION AND FALSE REPRESENTATION. BUT THEY ARE EMBEDDED IN OUR ENTIRE HISTORY, A HISTORY WHICH GOES BACK A LONG TIME BEFORE COLONISATION WAS EVEN AN ISSUE.

THOSE ABORIGINALITIES HAVE BEEN, AND CONTINUE TO BE A PRIVATE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE IN THE FACE OF OTHER'S ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL US. AND THEY ARE ALSO A POLITICAL PROJECT DESIGNED TO CHALLENGE AND SUBVERT THE AUTHORISED VERSIONS ON WHO AND WHAT WE ARE.

SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINALITY ARE ALWAYS ALSO ACTS OF FREEDOM. THE ABORIGINAL WRITER, MOODROORU NARROGIN WROTE OF THE POWER OF OUR ABORIGINALITIES TO:

"HEAL THE RAPE OF THE ABORIGINAL SOUL AND THE WOUND OF BEING REMOVED FROM ONE'S MOTHER TONGUE. ABORIGINALITY WOULD BECOME THE EMERGENCE OF AN ABORIGINAL VOICE TO 'SING OF THE SAD WOUNDS OF THE

*WHOLE PEOPLE, HUNDREDS OF MOUTHS FORCED INTO
SHAPING THE HARSH SOUNDS OF AN ALIEN SPEECH*⁵⁰.

IN MAKING OUR SELF REPRESENTATIONS PUBLIC WE ARE AWARE THAT OUR DIFFERENT VOICES MAY BE HEARD ONCE AGAIN ONLY IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE ALIEN TONGUE; WE ARE AWARE THAT WE RISK THEIR APPROPRIATION AND ABUSE AND OF THE DANGER THAT A SELECTION OF OUR REPRESENTATIONS WILL BE USED TO ONCE AGAIN TO FIX ABORIGINALITY IN ABSOLUTE AND INFLEXIBLE TERMS. THAT ONE CHARACTER OR ONE PAINTING WILL BE PICKED OUT AS THE AUTHORITATIVE ARCHETYPE OF ABORIGINALITY, NOW THE "REAL ABORIGINALITY" BECAUSE IT CAME FROM AN ABORIGINAL PERSON. HOWEVER, WITHOUT OUR OWN VOICES, ABORIGINALITY WILL CONTINUE TO BE A CREATION FOR AND ABOUT US.

BUT THIS IS ALL THE MORE REASON TO INSIST THAT WE HAVE CONTROL OVER BOTH THE FORM AND CONTENT OF REPRESENTATIONS OF OUR ABORIGINALITIES. ALL THE MORE REASON THAT THE VOICES SPEAK OUR LANGUAGES.

IN FACT, THE INSISTENCE ON SPEAKING BACK AND RETAINING CONTROL ARE HIGHLY POLITICAL ACTS. THEY ARE ASSERTIONS OF OUR RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT AND TO PRACTICE OUR DIFFERENCE. THEY REFUSE THE REDUCTION OF ABORIGINALITY AS AN OBJECT, THEY RESIST TRANSLATION INTO THE LANGUAGES AND CATEGORIES OF THE DOMINANT CULTURE.

THEY ARE AT TIMES ANCIENT, AT TIMES SUBVERSIVE, AT TIMES OPPOSITIONAL, AT TIMES SECRET, AT TIMES ESSENTIALIST, AT TIMES SHIFTING.

IT IS FOR THIS VERY REASON THAT I CANNOT STAND HERE, EVEN AS AN ABORIGINAL PERSON AND SAY WHAT ABORIGINALITY IS. TO DO SO WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN IDENTITY. IT WOULD ALSO BE TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF ALLOWING ABORIGINALITY TO BE ANOTHER FIXED CATEGORY. AND MORE THAN ENOUGH "FIXING" HAS ALREADY OCCURRED.

HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ABORIGINALITIES ARE WITHOUT CONTENT. NOR DOES IT MEAN THAT WE ARE NOT INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH OUR PAST. WHAT WE NEED TO RESIST IS AN ESSENTIALISM WHICH CONFINES US TO FIXED, UNCHANGEABLE AND NECESSARY CHARACTERISTICS, AND REFUSES TO ALLOW FOR TRANSFORMATION OR VARIATION.⁵¹ BUT RESISTANCE TO IMPOSED CATEGORIES IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM

FORBIDDING US FROM REPRESENTING OUR CULTURES AND PEOPLES IN TERMS OF OUR PAST, OR OUR DISTINCT WAYS OF BEING AND SEEING THE WORLD. THE RECENT TREND TO CHARGE SELF-REPRESENTATIONS BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WITH THE POLITICALLY INCORRECT CRIME OF "ESSENTIALISM" IS LITTLE MORE THAN A MODERN EXTENSION OF THE POLITICS OF CONTROL OVER KNOWLEDGE THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON SINCE COLONISATION - BLACK PEOPLE BEING TOLD WHAT THEY CAN SAY, AND HOW THEY CAN SAY IT. REDFERN COME TO ACADEMIA. IT IS JUST ANOTHER FORM OF OVER-POLICING.

THE RIGHT TO SELF REPRESENTATION INCLUDES OUR RIGHT TO DRAW ON ALL ASPECTS OF OUR SENSE OF OUR ABORIGINALITY, BE THAT OUR BLOOD, OUR DESCENT, OUR HISTORY, OUR WAYS OF LIVING AND RELATING, OR ANY ELEMENT OF OUR CULTURES. CERTAINLY THE PRACTICE OF FIXING US TO OUR BLOOD OR OUR ROMANTICISED TRADITIONS HAS BEEN A CORNERSTONE OF RACIST PRACTICES. BUT DEPRIVING US OF OUR EXPERIENCED CONNECTION WITH THE PAST IS ANOTHER RACIST PRACTICE.

THE RELATIONSHIP WE DRAW WITH OUR PAST IS NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PAST WHICH HAVE BEEN IMPOSED ON US. ONE IS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE THE, THE OTHER IS A TOOL IN THE POLITICS OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION.⁵²

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT AN ABORIGINALITY BASED ON THE PAST OF OUR PEOPLES, WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT FABRICATING AN IDENTITY BASED ON A PAST WE HAVE RE-DISCOVERED OR DUG UP; RATHER, WE, THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES ARE ALREADY THE RE-TELLING OF THE PAST⁵³. OUR MEMORIES ARE NOT CHEMICALS IN OUR HEADS BUT OUR FLESH AND OUR VOICES AND OUR WAYS OF SEEING.

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE DO NOT FALL INTO DISTINCT LINEAR CATEGORIES. THE PAST CANNOT BE LIMITING BECAUSE WE ARE ALWAYS TRANSFORMING IT. IN ALL EXPRESSIONS OF OUR ABORIGINALITY WE REPOSSESS OUR PAST, AND OURSELVES.

AND IT CANNOT BE DEAD BECAUSE IT IS BUILT INTO THE BEINGS AND BODIES OF THE LIVING. WE DO NOT NEED TO RE-FIND THE PAST, BECAUSE OUR SUBJECTIVITIES, OUR BEING IN THE WORLD ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THE PAST. ABORIGINALITIES OF TODAY ARE REGENERATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE SPIRIT OF THE PAST, NOT LITERAL DUPLICATIONS OF THE PAST; WE RECREATE ABORIGINALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ALL OUR EXPERIENCES,

INCLUDING OUR PRE-COLONIAL PRACTICES, OUR OPPRESSION, AND OUR POLITICAL STRUGGLES. IT IS ONLY A NARROWNESS OF VISION, OR A MISCONCEPTION OF CULTURE AS A FROZEN STATE WHICH LEADS PEOPLE TO LIMIT EXPRESSIONS OF ESSENTIAL ABORIGINALITY TO THE STEREOTYPED PRISTINE.

THE SAME GUATAMALAN WOMAN I QUOTED ABOVE SAID OF HER PEOPLE'S IDENTITY:

ONE CAN STILL BE A QUICHE ALTHOUGH ONE LIVES IN A BETTER HOUSE OR HAS A VIDEO, OR EVEN GOES TO UNIVERSITY.....I GET VERY DISTURBED WHEN WE OURSELVES PROMOTE AN IMAGE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AS SOMETHING VERY POETIC, VERY ROMANTIC, AS SOMETHING IDEAL. NO! RATHER IT IS SOMETHING REAL....THERE IS A PART WHICH IS FOLKLORIC... BUT IT IS NOT THE BASE OF THE CULTURE....IT'S AN ELEMENT OF OUR LIVES. IT'S AN ELEMENT WHICH HAS DETERMINED MOMENTS.... RATHER, IT'S THE DAILY LIFE WHICH YOU CAN'T SEE HERE, THE DAILY LIFE WHICH ISN'T REPRESENTED HERE, WHICH MAKES US INDIGENOUS.....

*...MANY THINGS ARE CHANGING IN THIS TIME. BUT WE REMAIN INDIGENOUS... ALTHOUGH CERTAIN THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN OUR THOUGHTS, IN OUR STATEMENTS, IN OUR TRADITIONS....WE DID NOT QUIT BEING WHAT WE ARE. THERE ARE ALWAYS THESE ROOTS THAT MAKE YOU WHO YOU ARE. THAT MAKE YOU DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS."*⁵⁴

THE ROOTS WHICH MAKE US WHAT WE ARE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT.

FAR FROM BEING DEAD, PASSIVE, OR CONSERVATIVE, THE PAST IS DYNAMIC, ACTIVE AND POTENTIALLY REVOLUTIONARY. IT HAS BEEN, AND CONTINUES TO BE A POWERFUL REALITY IN WHICH WE CAN ROOT OUR AUTONOMY OUR SENSE OF OWNERSHIP OF OURSELVES AND OUR RESISTANCE AGAINST ASSIMILATION.

TO PARAPHRASE THE PHILOSOPHER MARCUSE "*THERE IS A LIBERATING POWER IN REMEMBRANCE*"⁵⁵. AND IN FACT WHAT WE ARE RE-DISCOVERING IS THAT OUR PAST, FAR FROM BEING A SOURCE OF CONSTRICTION, CAN A SOURCE FREEDOM.

IN THIS SENSE, THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES IS A RESOURCE OF FREEDOM. IT HOLDS MANY OF THE MEMORIES AND STORIES FROM WHICH THE

CONTEMPORARY AND FUTURE VOICES OF ABORIGINALITY WILL EMERGE.

IT HAS ALSO ITSELF BEEN A SITE AT WHICH THE POLITICS AND POWER OF KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN CHALLENGED AND REVOLUTIONISED.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION ABOUT ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WAS CLEARLY PART OF THE POLITICS OF COLONIAL CONTROL. WHEN IT SERVED TO FIX ABORIGINALITY AS A PRISTINE CULTURE ROOTED IN A DISTANT TIME AND PLACE INACCESSIBLE TO AND DISCONNECTED FROM THE MAJORITY OF LIVING ABORIGINAL PEOPLES. COLLECTING MATERIAL ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WAS A PROJECT DESIGNED TO PRESERVE THE DEAD PAST AND TO PROVIDE FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK BACK AT PRE-HISTORY SAFELY BOUND IN BOOKS AND SEALED BEHIND GLASS. WE COULD BE PACIFIED BY BEING TRANSFORMED FROM LIVING PEOPLES INTO BLOCKS OF INTELLECTUAL REAL ESTATE; REAMS OF CLASSIFICATIONS AND ETHNOGRAPHIC CURIOSITIES. THEIR KNOWLEDGE GAVE THEM A FEELING OF OWNERSHIP AND ALLAYED THE FEARS THAT WE COULD NOT ACTUALLY BE CONTROLLED.

THIS KNOWLEDGE ENSURED THAT THE PAST WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS OVER, AND THAT WITH IT HAD GONE AUTHENTIC ABORIGINALITY. THIS "PAST ABORIGINALITY" WAS NEVER MORE THAN A MEMORY OR A STORY FOR LIVING PEOPLE, BUT SEPARATE FROM THEIR LIVED REALITY.

BUT IF THE PAST WAS ONCE USED AS A TRAP FOR ABORIGINALITY, WE HAVE SEEN A TRANSFORMATION, WHEREBY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAVE RECLAIMED THE KEY TO THE TRAP AND HAVE FOUND THE "*LIBERATING POWER OF REMEMBERANCE*". THE CONTROL WHICH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES NOW HAVE OVER THE INSTITUTE IS BOTH A SYMBOL AND AN EXPRESSION OF THE SHIFT IN THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE WHICH WE HAVE ACHIEVED OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS.

IN 1971, W.C. WENTWORTH GAVE A SPEECH ENTITLED "ABORIGINAL IDENTITY, GOVERNMENT AND THE LAW". IN IT HE LOOKED AT THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES HAD WITH OUR OWN IDENTITY, AND THE PRIDE OR SHAME WHICH WAS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING AN INDIGENOUS PERSON IN A HISTORICALLY RACIST SOCIETY. HE LOOKED FORWARD OPTIMISTICALLY TO A TIME WHEN ALL INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS WOULD VALUE AND RESPECT ABORIGINALITY. HE NOTED THAT A

SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN OUR ATTITUDE TO OUR ABORIGINALITY WAS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PAST, AND THAT PRIDE IN OUR PAST WAS A KEY TO PRIDE IN OURSELVES.

THE REPOSSESSION OF OUR PAST IS THE REPOSSESSION OF OURSELVES.

W.C. WENTWORTH HIMSELF IS A MAN WHO HAS BOTH POSSESSED AND TRANSFORMED HIS PAST. HE IS OF THE STOCK OF A PEOPLE WHICH COLONISED THIS COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE, AND IN FACT A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION, A DOCUMENT IN WHICH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WERE INVISIBLE. IT WAS HIS CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM THE PAST TO WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO BECOME A SOURCE OF LIBERATION FOR THE FUTURE. AND WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED TODAY OWES MUCH TO HIS COURAGE AND WILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE AND TRANSCEND THE STEREOTYPES WHICH DOMINATED HIS GENERATION.

UNFORTUNATELY, PROGRESS AND ENLIGHTENMENT DO NOT ALWAYS OCCUR IN A LINEAR MANNER, AS INDICATED BY THE RECENT ELECTION OF THE CURRENT ENCUMBANT OF W.C. WENTWORTH'S FORMER SEAT OF MACKELLAR, THE HONOURABLE MRS BISHOP.

NEVERTHELESS, THE PAST AND PRESENT WORK OF THE LIKES OF W.C. WENTWORTH, AND MANY OTHERS, HAS BUILT A GROUND CONCENTRATED WITH THE RESOURCES WHICH WILL ALLOW INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE FUTURE TO EXERCISE OUR RIGHT TO DEFINE AND CREATE OURSELVES AND OUR LIVES. TO WRITE AND SING AND PAINT AND TELL OURSELVES FROM THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE.

OUR PEOPLES HAVE LEFT US DEEP ROOTS WHICH EMPOWERED US TO ENDURE THE VIOLENCE OF OPPRESSION. THEY ARE THE ROOTS OF SURVIVAL BUT NOT OF CONSTRICTION. THEY ARE ROOTS FROM WHICH ALL GROWTH IS POSSIBLE.

THEY ARE THE ROOTS WHICH PROTECTED OUR END FROM THE BEGINNING.

Endnotes

1. Kevin Gilbert in *Living Black: Blacks Talk to Kevin Gilbert*, pp.304-305.
2. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Penguin Books, 1952, p.9.
3. Jame's Cook's Journal, 1770, quoted in Smith, B., *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850*, p.126.
4. George Clark, 1823, Reported in the C.M.S. *Missionary Registrar*, London, 1825, p.100.
5. Boyd, A, *The Old Colonialists*, (1882), pp218-221;
6. Inson, G. & Ward, R., "The Glorious Years", in *Boomerang*, 17 December 1887.
7. This definition appeared in various Acts of the States and Territories from early legislation through to the 1960s, fro example, the *Aboriginals Ordinance Act 1918 (NT)*.
8. *Aborigines Act 1957*.
9. *Aboriginal Ordinance Act 1918 (NT)*.
10. *Native Administration Ordinance 1940*.
11. *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*.
12. *Aborigines Amendment Act 1936*.
13. Norman B. Tindale, "Survey of the Half-Caste Problem in South Australia" from the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*, Vol. XLII, Session 1940-41, p.67.
14. *ibid*, pp.38-86.
15. John Harper, investigating the establishment of a mission station at Bateman's Bay, in Woolmington, Jean, *Aboriginals in Colonial Society: 1788-1850*, Cassell Australia, p.18.
16. James Dredge, *Brief Notices of the Aborigines of NSW*, Geelong, 1845, p.11.
17. Harris, A. *Settlers and Convicts*, p.214.
18. Rev. Robert Cartwright to Macquarie, 6 December 1819, in Woolmington, *op cit.*, p.17.
19. Tindale, *op. cit*, p.67.
20. W.L.H. Duckworth, "On the Brains of Aboriginal Natives of Australia in the Anatomy School, Cambridge University", *Journal of Anatomy*, Vol.42, 1907, p.69.
21. Henry Kendall, "The Glen of Arrawatta", in Elliott, B. & Mitchell, A. *Bards in the Wilderness*, p.70.
22. Reported in *The Australian*, 9 September 1988,

23. Slee, J. 'Definition of an Aboriginal', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1988.
24. A Resolution was put up by the National Party council in the electorate of Maryborough Queensland stating that: "a claim to be Aboriginal cannot be made unless the claimant has 50% Aboriginal blood".
25. Comment made by Tim Fisher, leader of the National Party, 1993.
26. Strewlow, T.G.H., "Anthropological and Ethnological Research", in Shiels (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.456
27. Bennett, G., *Aboriginal Rights in International Law*, 1978, p.67.
28. Marcia Langton, *Well I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television*, Australian Film Commission, 1993, p.33.
29. Report Submitted to the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities by the Special Rapporteur, Mr Jose R. Martinez Cobo, and hereafter referred to as the "Cobo Study".
30. Cobo, Chapter V, para. 168.
31. *ibid*, para. 170.
32. *op. cit.*, para 220, criteria used in the 1964 census.
33. *op cit.*, para 57, 1950 census.
34. *ibid*. paras 30-36.
35. Cobo, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1983/21/Add.8, pp.49-51.
36. Cobo, *op cit.*, p.50, para 379.
37. The right to self determination is guaranteed by the *International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights*, Article 1.
38. See Richard Broome, "Shall We Call a Koori a "Koori"?", *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, No.68, September 1991, p.45.: "*The most sacred right of humanity is to be ourselves and be in control of the making of ourselves. Our group identity and control over our lives is symbolised by the name we associate with ourselves.*"
39. Article 8 of the *Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as at the Eleventh Session of the WGIP, 1993.
40. *International Labor Organisation Convention 169*, Article 1(2).
41. Australian Constitution, Section 51(xxvi).
42. Langton, M., p.34.
43. A. O. Neville, former Commissioner of Native Affairs for Western Australia, "The Half-Caste in Australia", in *Mankind*, Vol.4, No.7, September 1951, p.275.
44. *Aborigines Protection Act 1943*, Section 18.

45. Cobo, op cit., para 328.
46. Vine Delorio Jr., *We Talk, You Listen*, Macmillan, 1970, pp.14-15.
47. *Invisible Man*, op cit, p.7.
48. ibid, p.464.
49. Maria del Rosario a Quiche of Guatemala, speaking to Heidi Moksnes, "Culture is how we survive", IWGIA Newsletter 3, July-september 1992.
50. Narrogin, Mudrooroo , *Writings From the Fringe*, Melbourne, Highland House, p.51.
51. Cowlinshaw defines essentialism as: "*the error of imputing essences, fixed and necessary characteristics to a category of people*", see Cowlinshaw, G., "Introduction: Representing Racial Issues", *Oceania* , Vol. 63, No.3, March 1993, p.187.
52. Lattas makes this point; "*The essentialising by Aborigines is not the same as the biological racism of the white group- the latter is part of the structure of domination, the former part of the structure of resistance*".
53. Hall makes this point when he says: "Not an identity grounded in archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past." Halls, S. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in J. Rutherford (ed) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, London" Lawrence and Wishart, p.224.
54. Maria del Rosario a Quiche of Guatemala, speaking to Heidi Moksnes, "Culture is how we survive", IWGIA Newsletter 3, July-september 1992.
55. Marcuse's actual phrase was "*the liberating power of remembrance*", quoted in Jay, M. (1988) "Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance" in Pippin et al. (eds), *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, London Macmillan 1988.

Michael Dodson, Wentworth Lecture 1994

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