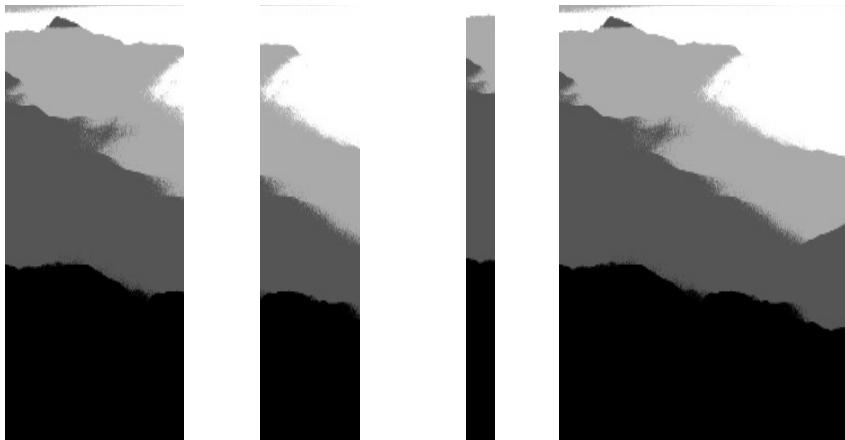


# **NO COMFORT IN A COLONISED COUNTRY.**

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**RESISTANCE TO  
RACISM AND  
WHITE SUPREMACY IN  
AUSTRALIA, 2015.**

**From the occupied territory of Australia.  
Stolen land, never ceded.**



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# FROM INVASION TO NOW: AN INTRODUCTION

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It has never been enough to simply say racism is endemic in Australia. Instead we recognise that Australia only continues to exist in its current nation-state form because of violent histories of racism, colonialism and nationalism. The stench exudes from every pore of this society. The dispossession and genocide of First Nations people was the original setting, and it still remains the principle load-bearer of the white-supremacist society we have in 2015. But the machinations of colonialism and racism are ever more complex. The focus of these systems of oppression simultaneously turned towards the interior and towards the outside - the exclusion that occurs at the geographical borders of the nation replicated in processes of inclusion/exclusion, filtering, and outright subjugation that occurs within those borders.

Yet from within the belly of the beast people and crews have always struck back - trying to resist and overthrow the nature of racial hierarchies. Part of working out how we fight back is writing, reading and talking with each other and over the years many have contributed their experiences in different forms. In 2015 racism and racial politics is typically at the forefront of everything happening in this country. From the ongoing colonisation of Indigenous land (through mining and the forced closures of remote communities), to the racist fear directed at asylum seekers and turned into government policy, to Islamophobia and far-right demonstrations on the streets. And these are just the macro-level examples. Just as crucially (or even more so) are the daily, street-level experiences of racism, nationalism and colonisation that pervade so many people's lives.

So we figured to put together this zine as a further contribution that gives voice to experiences of race, colonisation, identity and resistance and from the context of things happening now in Australia. The following articles and interviews come from a few different perspectives and experiences and in publishing this zine we aim to help further a resistance to white supremacy and colonialism that attacks these institutions from a variety of different bases and standpoints. And in part, it seems necessary in the current context to initiate complex conversations around these issues, conversations that do not over-simplify the problems and instead come from a position of questioning and which welcome the possible discomfort involved in upturning racial hierarchies.

# **INTERVIEW W/ ROBBIE THORPE OF FIRST NATIONS LIBERATION: CONDUCTED BY ATS ON WURUNDJERI LAND OF THE KULIN NATION, JULY 2015**

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*ATS: What is First Nations Liberation for you?*

R: First Nations Liberation is pretty self-defined. We're the Original people of this land, Straya. We already had an identity, law, history, language, all those things. We've been colonised illegally and the people who were part of that colonisation I believe know what the real issue is. There's no consent. Consent was never given by our people for this occupation, it was never sought even. So obviously there is a problem there for our people. We're subject to this criminality and that's been going on for 200 years and more, so we're determined as Indigenous people to liberate ourselves from this colonisation process.

We do actions involving issues that will liberate us. Ultimately, you know, we don't need to be controlled by invaders and foreigners. We're going to change that situation by hook or by crook, by any means necessary, and we're calling on all conscientious non-Aboriginal Australians to support us in our interests like land rights. Land rights is in the interests of all people. Human rights is in the interests of all people and so is being free of this demonic thing called colonialism and all the deluded notions and vile ways of operating that come with that that have been foisted upon our people. Its not our style here. Like I said we've already got a precedent law that needs to be respected, acknowledged and adhered to and the crimes against our humanity over 200 years needs to be redressed and we need assurances that it will never happen again. So they're the sorts of things that we promote.

We're embryonic at the present time. We're separate from the system, the way the system is operating, we're something other than that. That's what we're offering people. We've grown out of what Viv was saying, a community that was thriving, a political force in the community. Like Redfern, you know. They were rare communities in Black Australia back in the day you know, Fitzroy and Redfern.

Basically its a right. We're making people aware that these are our rights over and above whatever is here... We've got rights over and above all that as First Nations people.

*ATS: It's interesting a lot of the stuff you guys have said because often in Australia people are quick to categorise "resistance" or "activism" into very single issue campaigns when what you are talking about is colonialism and a history that does encompass everything and everyone in different ways. Working out how to actually engage with that is really challenging.*

R: But also its the answer to all the other forms of resistance too. Its Indigenous peoples' law that should be what's recognised, not the criminals' law because everyone is a party to this criminal law. Step out of that. Its a falsehood, its a lie, its a crime against humanity. Step away. That's the best thing you can do with the system, not partake. Deny it. If you can't prevent the crime of genocide you're hardly a civilised society. You haven't got treaty. People should step away on a human rights basis.

I believe that human rights connects us all, whether its same sex marriage, your right to choice... All these things are all human rights and we've been looking at human rights since the day the white man stepped onto this land and imposed his backwards dark age way on our people. We've been fighting for our human rights and resisting this thing called colonialism. We know what it is, we're not stupid. We've been around, And you know, we've had international trade going on for a long time before Europeans turned up here. So you know its from the dreaming to a nightmare in a short time and we're just about over this nightmare.

So what I believe is gonna happen is that the thing that's gonna shape the coloniser is the ecocide. He's raping the mother so much that its gonna turn on him, or it has turned on him. The air, the climate and all those things, they're coming back and that's probably the only thing that's gonna shift this greedy mindset of colonialism. It sort of destroys itself at the end of the day. So I feel like we're just witnesses of this catastrophe. But you know, we're great survivors. We've survived ice ages, so who knows what's gonna happen but you have to be in the mix if you're gonna survive. We're saying that recognising the lore is the revolution here, that's the revelation and yeah that's it. If they really wanna recognise something, recognise the pre-existing ancient lore, that's the blueprint of how to survive on this land successfully. And if you have a look at our lore its very fair and it empowers women, children and men and elders, far beyond what we've been forced to assimilate into. That's the problem but you know our day will come and that's why we're standing up for First Nations Liberation. We got a right to be free. Its not up to Europeans to determine our destiny.

I pay my respect to the resilience and resistance of my people since day one... Its a mighty effort by the Indigenous people. We haven't ceded sovereignty, we haven't given consent, we haven't treated. They are trying to force us all the time. Despite being an "empty" land they made a lot of laws for us specifically, all oppressive.



# **INTERVIEW W/ VIV MALO OF FIRST NATIONS LIBERATION: CONDUCTED BY ATS ON WURUNDJERI LAND OF THE KULIN NATION, JULY 2015.**

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*ATS: What is First Nations Liberation?*

V: Basically its a verb. So we do stuff and we do it taking all account of our history of struggle. Its an evolving definition I suppose but primarily we're ground based at the grass roots and we work at the grass roots. We work at a local level. We want to empower people I suppose. That's how I see it. And its an evolving definition, which is something I take from Bruce McGuiness's work that Robbie [Thorpe] has sort of taught me, because I think its important to take the changing times into account using information that's from history with our gift of twenty twenty hindsight vision.

We've actually done lots but its hard to define because its not easy for someone on the outside to look in and say, this is an organisation that has meetings and agendas and mah mah and all this stuff, cos its not. Our meetings are on the street and in my kitchen sorta thing and the stuff done is organic and it comes from magic, you know. There is spirit involved here.

*ATS: What do you mean by working on the local level?*

V: Basically by working with the Aboriginal community here. I live in the guts of it you know, the belly of the beast you could call it. The housing party [housing commission flats in Fitzroy], I been here two years and there is a beautiful Aboriginal community here. And its really unique I think, that's what I've seen. And it's got strong history, politically. Struggle. And I try and soak it all up, I can feel it here, the spirit of struggle. And you know, having Robbie around to tell stories I suppose... This is an important area here you know... there is something here. There is a real cross class here, plus all nations. We got it all. There's something about it. I like being here and I love the people here. I believe we're all levels of damaged and I just see the gold. Other people might not necessarily see it that way, you know, the mainstream. But the world is literally upside down so... its people that need empowerment here. And I feel like I've empowered myself over the last few years so all I can do is just be a demonstration more than anything else. My life is gonna be just that, and more than anything I love my mob here. There is nowhere else to look really, there's lots going on right here. Lots to fight for. And acting locally,

thinking globally. I think that's the best part I feel that you can do for the whole issue cos then it kinda ripples...

*ATS: Its interesting because lately we've seen so much stuff here, massive rallies, thousands of people coming out. A bit of mixed messaging what its about but primarily about Western Australia with Stop the Closures [of communities] and stuff. How do you feel about that being the main focus of public resistance given your focus on local level struggle?*

V: Well its been a real issue for me in my mind because I am Gooniyandi and Gooniyandi is in the Kimberly and all my family are on remote community or on country and still speak their language and are at threat of closure, so that's an immediate threat to me. But at the same time I was born and live here so I've got

**“It’s a few bubbles where you can breathe, you know, here [in Fitzroy]. When you walk down the street and bump into a blackfella every fifty metres, you know, its gold.”**

this perspective as well so while we're kind of focusing on Western Australia its really important that we keep the language right, that we're focusing, because otherwise you miss the whole picture... And I know there's lots going on but I wanna sort of go bat for both you know... We got a triage I suppose, we're just trying to make sure its got that whole overall focus, touching on everything...

*ATS: What kind of experiences have led you to being involved in First Nations Liberation now?*

V: Well what happened, I was living in Central Victoria and I had my kids with me and I was married, working, just doing it normal you know. So called normal stuff, mainstream. And I dunno, something triggered me. I was just compelled to speak up... I dunno what else to say I was just compelled so I kind of just threw myself into the abyss I say and see if I'd end up where I needed to be. And its been incredible, the people I've met and the self learning and ...I dunno, everything. I didn't know what the world was... I might not have had children if I knew what I know then hahaha.... So now I feel like if I see it that way I need to at least attempt to do something... as futile as it may appear.

*ATS: I'm interested, I guess when we're talking about colonialism it's difficult, you're talking about how you find inspiration in people you are around but at the same time sometimes things seem so overwhelming. How do you find strength to keep going?*

V: Just being around people who know where you're at I suppose. I couldn't imagine having noone to bounce off, you know. So just being around people you know, real people.

*ATS: And you found that in Fitzroy?*

V: Yeah. First thing I did was I inboxed [Gary] Foley and was like, look all this stuff is happening, I got all these ideas. And he met me for a coffee and listened to me blab on for a while and then said, you sound very much like Robbie Thorpe, I suggest you link up with him. Not long after that was 2012, the 40th anniversary of the Tent Embassy in Canberra. And that was amazing. And then just meeting the people of struggle and learning all about stuff I kinda knew but didn't. Just more depth to everything since this thing happened, just everything you know, music, people, the world. So when you see that depth you know... I just feel like it could be so much more than it is.

*ATS: This year in Melbourne these Stop the Closures rallies and stuff have been huge, probably bigger than any rallies at least that I remember for a long time. There seems to have been a huge increase in public presence of Indigenous resistance. How do you feel about that?*

V: Many things. One is, well its incredibly empowering to be marching with people, dancing and things. That's new for here, you know, [traditional] dancing [at protests]. That sort of came back with G20 I think from Brisbane [with the Decolonisation Before Profit convergence], so that's incredibly empowering. And then the wider community coming, I suppose, well, they're all compelled you know. It seems fairly obvious, you know, you don't kick people off communities. so they're just coming, I dunno, I am just assuming here, there are a broad range of people coming of course but to account for the numbers... Maybe people coming cos it seems like, well, der, of course we're gonna get in the street to stop people being kicked out of their homes. But maybe not looking into the reasoning why. But maybe beginning to? Because you know we have to, at this time, start looking into things and questioning everything more.

*ATS: You mentioned the wider community and a lot of non-Aboriginal people getting involved in protests and solidarity movements... Have you encountered difficulties working with non-Aboriginal people?*

V: YES haahahaha. Well, its a thing about, I dunno if its white privilege or just a habit of colonialism or I dunno. You always gotta be... Well I dunno, as a black woman, even though I got my own show on the air [3cr radio] hahaha.... I always feel talked over and that sort of shit. Its hard to describe but it is fairly constant... You just have to be so patient. And that's hard too. I don't automatically wanna bite someone's head off every time because it gets fucking annoying ha, so gotta just bite my tongue I suppose. And it's incredibly stark the racism here you know. Even though its always been here. You know, taxis will pull up have one look at ya, see you're Aboriginal and drive off, that sort of thing. And in the shops you know... And I was from a little country town ha.

*ATS: And so you have found some space from that working with other Indigenous people locally?*

V: Well yeah. It's a few bubbles where you can breathe, you know, here [in Fitzroy]. When you walk down the street and bump into a blackfella every fifty metres, you know, its gold. Where else can you do that in an urban area? I love it. We've got a real community here, so when they do talk about closing communities and that or anything, you know, its here. You wanna see what happens to baby's mums when their kids are taken, its here. You know there's lots of stuff that goes on... Its a crazy place. Or when someone gets out of prison and there's nowhere to go, a lot of the time they come here.

*ATS: I saw a photo of the solidarity protest you guys organised after the Melbourne prison riot last week, do you wanna tell me about that?*

V: Well I was just sitting at home and I saw this thing come up [the news about the riot in a Melbourne prison] and like I said there's lots of people in this community that go in and out [of prison]. I've witnessed it myself, living in the heart you know, people getting arrested in the stairwell, so its really obvious down here. So I thought well we better do something in solidarity cos who else is gonna? Basically so we sat up here on the corner for a couple of hours just letting people know what was happening and everyone was supportive of course. We still operate on our system of respecting elders and stuff like that you know so yeah... We just had Robbie smoke the area off and I dunno, its rough as guts, it really is, but its there... We're just trying to clear off the two centuries of shit that's been piled on top of everything you know... and its a big task but its cool haha.

One day when this shit is, you know... everyone will know. I'd like to see that. That's justice to me, its in the people on the ground. Cos everything else is its bullshit and time wasting. And when we're talking about the closure of communities I wanna hear the people on the grounds' voice. So I'll just be the little foot stomper and the mozzie in the ear in the meantime. You know, go around to rallies and... you know in one breath people say, we recognise that this land was never ceded, and then talk about what a lucky country this is and how its so "unAustralian" to do these things to refugees and you know, no its not. I'm there in the background going, hello, hello, its very Australian. Very Australian. Its a perfect Australian thing to do.

*ATS: I suppose when you talked about some of the challenges of working with non-Indigenous people before, that's another of those examples... failing to think about what it actually even means to be "Australian" or how offensive some of those concepts are.*

V: Yeah. Though I always try to look at the bright side, at least people wanna... At least they're seeking. If they're open to being pulled up, you know, cos its hard too, I don't wanna be the hard arse all the time, cos it comes across that way but I'm really not.

*ATS: In terms of a way forward for First Nations Liberation and what you wanna do, what do you see that as being?*

V: Well, directed by the people. No point me saying, we want this, this and that, when noone else does. So we're talking about doing little actions, like we had the second Sovereign Tea party [an action and community gathering on the so-called "Queen's Birthday"] and we're gonna have a "Day at the Racists" on Melbourne Cup day outside the betting shop. Robbie's gonna do a race call and we're gonna dress up and have fascists on the field and haha, you know, just agitate here and there cos its easy to do... But yeah everyone has some amazing ideas but cos our worlds are so intense as well, you know, catching people at the right time is important... and I wouldn't be anywhere else. That's why I'm glad Foley pointed me towards Robbie.

So future for First Nations Liberation, hopefully as the weather warms up and the earth turns back towards the sun we can get a bit more active cos we are talking at least. We're gonna gee up Smith St here. For example at the Smith St Dreaming festival [a council organised festival supposed to celebrate Indigenous cultures]. Because so many things are done to us here, so this is where we can start. There are more services here than people, they don't talk to us. Its insulting. We get some crappy old breakfast and rotten fruit... and all this money being spent on Aboriginal affairs. At [the services-organised] Christmas they had an animal farm. There's no kids there. You know? For adults. An animal farm. Its disgusting.

*ATS: What do you see as ways of countering the ways people have been pushed into being dependent on services for certain things or for events and gatherings?*

V: We see First Nations Liberation as being able to combat that. You know what we did? We had a beautiful self determination act at Christmas here. The community here, we did our own Christmas. You know, sitting around the day before and someone said, what's everyone doing? A few people were sitting around saying, nothing, and he says, nothing? And pulled out all these vouchers, \$300 worth of vouchers and we went shopping. We fed about 30 people and everyone come back to my home and cooked up in the kitchen you know... No services, just us. Someone made a speech. And not everyone can know the beauty of that. You know ,just give us a couple hundred bucks, we can feed ourselves. A kitchen, some space. We don't need these overseers. So yeah, little things like that. I mean it happens anyway, really. The presence itself is resistance, all these years.

*ATS: Especially around here, trying to move people on you know, Local Law 8 banning drinking on the street [an effort to move on gatherings of Indigenous*

**"It's all false division to me, all that. At the end, what really matters is relationships, experiences and the rest, the top down shit, is bullshit."**

*people from the area from Smith St] and actually they failed. So yeah, people's continued existence here is a testament to everyone's strength and resistance.*

V: And the resilience you know... diversity breeds resistance. You got some fucken hard core people here that know what's going on but can't necessarily articulate it. I figure that's where I can come in. I'm the middle man. I can walk that world and I chose, you know, free will and all that. That's where I wanna be.

*ATS: And so you see yourself because you share that experience but you are at a point where you can articulate how you feel...*

V: Well, yeah. I've had a broad experience myself. I didn't know who I was. Took me a long time. I thought I was Fijian until I was ten, you know. Spoke French before English. I've got an amazing eclectic family. My uncle became Muslim years ago and it was no biggie to us, Catholic family, raised Catholic. My grandfather was a nazi... but he loved us all ahahaha.

*ATS: Crazy.*

V I reckon. I was actually looking at the structure of my dad's side of the family and how it relates to everything... Dad's one of all boys, nazi father. My grandfather. He had no ideology or anything but coming here and then having not one white grandchild... None of my dad or his brothers married a white woman. And then my uncle became Muslim. And now the next generation, they've all hooked up with white women. Except me hahaha...

*ATS: How do you think having such a confusing family history has influenced your own views on race and colonialism?*

V: It's all false division to me, all that. At the end, what really matters is relationships, experiences and the rest, the top down shit, is bullshit. Its all bullshit. As well as, I can see... I've been lied to for so long. I suppose I never really believed anything unless I proved it, me. Although I was always somewhat quiet, I wasn't always so forthcoming. But now ill say it out loud, trust myself. Yeah.

*ATS: Well thanks so much for the interview. Did you have any final comments?*

V: Just... Don't forget the people on the ground. That's it.





# **SOME REFLECTIONS ON: AUSTRALIA & INTERNALISED COLONIALISM, RACISM & WHITE SUPREMACY.**

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Reclaim Australia, the United Patriots Front and the recent public protests and counter protests were an example of the boldness of Australian nationalism, racism and the “Islam v the West” idea that has been created by western militarism, capitalism, colonialism and the media. But they also brought up some interesting reflections about the lack of analysis or self-reflection in terms of nationalism, race and identity in the “counter protest” or “antifa”, or in non-Indigenous, and particularly white, activism and anarchism in general.

Many people have written and commented about the irony of protests against Australian nationalism having banners like “real aussies say welcome” or chanting slogans like “whose streets, our streets” in the breath after “always was, always will be Aboriginal land”. That somehow despite our critique of some versions of Australian nationalism, we still have the right or ability to “welcome” people, to feel comfortable and entitled to owning or being present in these streets or these lands and proclaim it loudly and arrogantly.

This idea that Australia used to be a land of the “fair go” is pretty dominant, that somehow this form of Australian nationalism is “new” or “more fucked” than before. That somehow, Australia’s views on refugees, on Islam, on people from “outside” the European colonial world in general, have *changed* or gotten worse since, I don’t know, September 11 or something. That racism or xenophobia is somehow “un-Australian”. When as Viv pointed out in her interview, it is very Australian. In fact, this is exactly what “Australia” or being “Australian” means. The entire concept of “Australia” is based on a white supremacist colonialism. A view of European superiority, entitlement to land (or “streets”), a denial of Indigenous land ownership and usage and the intentional construction of a race-based cultural and national identity influenced strongly by eugenics.

Underneath this stuff though, something else about the whole scene made me feel uneasy, at least as a white woman from Australia. Something about the concept of “good guys” vs “bad guys” that created a form of “heroism” in being able to make a claim of victory over the “evil nazis”. The oversimplification in calling everyone at Reclaim Australia “nazis” and therefore “evil”, so that everyone who was against them, the “antifa”, the “counter protest” are the heroes, saving the day, defeating the bad guys in the battle for “our streets”. The language and labelling of the day as if it was a football match (on slackbastard site for example, the “post match report”),

the endless claims of “we won” and “victory” (which by the way the “bad guys” did too). When, what is a victory? What is winning? And do we have no issue with this heroism, the self-congratulation and celebration and “good on you everyone, we did so well!” sentiment? Especially given a large proportion of counter protesters were white. In what way do these ideas tie into the socialised concept of the white knight, the white saviour? That white people are the protagonists in the story, there to save the day and rescue the vulnerable from evil? Who was being saved? And from what?

Us, from our own guilt and responsibility?

I don’t know. Who felt good after Reclaim? Who felt elated? And why?

I do think it is important to confront protests like Reclaim, and to confront and challenge neo-nazis as well when they demonstrate and show power and force. And of course I think all people, and *especially* other white people who benefit most from this racism and nationalism should be responsible for confronting these ideas.

**“It’s easy in the face of feeling overwhelmed by everything around you to fall back into a simplistic life view of good vs evil.”**

But I also think that sometimes we forget our own analysis, that these people and these actions are a result of the systems of white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism that control the world and of which we also are a part. The relationship of class in the whole experience. That Reclaim Australia is saying exactly what the Prime Minister is saying about Islam, that they are the predominantly far less educated

and less wealthy people who essentially serve that purpose, responding to pushes for heightened nationalism by the elite while at the same time making that elite seem less racist and less nationalist in contrast to the wild and blatantly ridiculous claims of Reclaim and the UPF. Kind of like Pauline Hanson being ridiculed by John Howard while he stole all her “stop the boats” policies.

How do we have a more complicated understanding or relationship with examples of nationalism like Reclaim or the United Patriots Front and at the same time remembering that actually the Islamophobia and militarism of the Australian nation-state poses far more of a threat than these people and is far more normalised and accepted? I guess there is something about feeling kind of like an idiot wandering around the streets in masks aimlessly yelling ‘always was, always will be Aboriginal land’ with few or no Aboriginal people present and a very unclear aim to make you question yourself and what is going on. What is the aim? What does a “win” look like and who actually feels comforted or supported or ANYTHING about this group? And do we want people to feel comforted or supported by us? Do we want them to feel saved by us? Where do these feelings come from?

It’s easy in the face of feeling overwhelmed by everything around you to fall back

into a simplistic life view of good vs evil. It is easier to confront a public protest than to have any idea how to challenge the idea of the Australian state or its actions. And of course I obviously do think intentional racist attitudes like those of Reclaim or the nazis, are actually “evil”. And fucked. So in that way I guess I do have a sense of superiority, regardless of whether or not that too is a gross feeling or thought. I do think their views and actions are wrong and need to be confronted. I guess the question is in what way do I also feel that my own actions and thoughts are wrong, or at least cringe worthy, or demonstrate all of this internalised colonialism, nationalism and racism and need to be confronted?

Sometimes though I think other internalised nationalist myths like that of the ‘lucky country’ influence our thinking in the opposite direction. I believe an interrogation of privilege and our positions within these global systems is important to undo the ways we unconsciously perpetuate oppression even as we try to undo it, as well as to struggle in a way that is from a position of genuine passion and desire for liberation. Or something like that. But sometimes in arguments or debates about recognising privilege, there is the implication that if someone is “privileged” (which in Australia, most people are, at least to some degree, excluding Indigenous peoples) that they should be somehow thankful for their privilege and therefore not struggle or complain. That because they are privileged they cannot own struggle – those with less privilege are the ones who can and should resist. Essentially that they are lucky, that we live in a “lucky country”. That whatever we are complaining about is just not that bad and so we should sit down and shut up. That to protest or resist is not only ignorant, it is *offensive* to those in the world who are *really oppressed*. So that if someone acknowledges themselves as being a position of privilege they have only two options: to be acting “on behalf of” others who are oppressed, thus being a colonial “saviour” type character; or to sit back and do nothing and not only accept but *appreciate* that you are “lucky” and that everyone wants what you have.

And what that leaves behind as the acceptable emotion is not anger or frustration, but guilt. Guilt over having privilege, over being positioned in a privileged class, a wealthy country, a colonial identity and so on. But the assumption that any feelings regarding this are inherently selfish – that to struggle for something it has to be your own struggle and that means your own oppression, with an easily identifiable “oppressor”. Thus “the oppressed” are the people responsible for and able to fight for liberation. All you are left with is an endless competition to then prove that, while you too are “fucked”, at least you are not as “fucked” as those other people – this mainstream and dominant way the world works, in getting esteem or privilege or benefits by having them over others.

**“Is there a position between selfishness and selflessness that is a collective identity and belief in freedom from oppressive systems?”**

Again we are stuck in good vs evil, “fucked” vs “not so bad”. Whether it is in a call out contest over who has said the most shit thing or a poster depicting a beefed out white dude beating up a nazi with a smile on his face. Or alternatively a conception of “solidarity” that just involves being an unseen actor in “someone else”s struggle, “supporting” without owning and often therefore hiding the ways colonial mindsets influence the way many non-Indigenous people have learned to have “solidarity”.

The question then is: isn’t there something else? A different way to look at your identity, your position, your beliefs, your struggle? Can you not be deeply passionate about the desire to not be an oppressor? Can you not be passionate about wanting not to be near the top of a hierarchical society? Can you not be motivated by that guilt into anger and frustration at your own lack of choice to live equally alongside others who you respect and genuinely care about? Is there a position between selfishness and selflessness that is a collective identity and belief in freedom from oppressive systems?

Regardless of what is right and wrong in my context in this place I think a “class consciousness” that is more complicated than “burn the rich” is required. The rich in what context? Australia is rich. Most people are rich, in some form of comparison to something. How can we not perpetuate this “hero” complex, that we are the righteous, the “not fucked” or whatever and interrogate ourselves, our views, our actions, the way we are a product of these systems, while at the same time not sitting aside waiting for the “poor” or “people of colour” or whatever generic category we might assign this subconscious belief to rise up alone and “overthrow”? And overthrow who? Does everyone not face some form of conflict of identity and conflicting position within the multiple overlapping systems of power and oppression that exist in the world?

How can we have ownership of our positions, our privilege, our experiences yet still genuinely and completely reject systems of oppression? How can we try to get rid of simplistic categories of “good” and “bad” people, especially that are often at least subconsciously tied into racialised concepts of self and other, while still believing in choice and accountability for actions? I guess it is a hard question – how do you actually change all these systems that create us and our relationships and our experiences? But I don’t think we will really get anywhere (at all, maybe, but especially) without talking more about this kind of stuff.





# 1000 PAPER CUTS: RESISTING THE DAMAGE OF WHITE SUPREMACY.

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## A precursor, a warning...

Australia has a race problem. Racism is everywhere. And I'm not sure what to write because I want to write about it all. Because the various elements can't easily be separated. We might have read stinging rebukes of Australia's racist border policy, theoretical academic pieces on the nature of 'whiteness', histories of genocide, personal accounts in zines about growing up non-white. I want this to be relevant to the current situation we find ourselves in but I also want to describe what, to me, are the lines of continuity between my personal history and experiences of racism and the broader social context. And I don't know how to write because I want to be able to be usefully analytical at the same time as emotional: sad and angry.

I also want to explain to anarcho-crew that I don't go in for suggestions that 'our spaces' are racist. If I thought they were I wouldn't be around. At the same time they aren't just apart from the rest of society and all manner of problematic shit passes. And for my most trusted people, I'm happy to point and laugh (or be outraged) with you about the various forms of ridiculous racist shit that goes on around us, but I also need folk to be constantly aware that while I respect that you can see and recognise that stuff, it's never the same as feeling and living it. Racism in this country is so often not the overt, extreme stuff, but an overall insidiousness – an emotional trauma, slowly being broken down by thousands of paper cuts inflicted upon your skin.

Really, I want this article to be bipolar, to be schizophrenic (note1), to reflect all the conditions and affects of racism in Australia. And so that's what I'm going to aim for and this is the warning: what follows will jump all over the place. To try and tie it all together i've been trying to think about all this stuff in relation to ideas of comfort and discomfort. Not just material comfort, but also emotional, psychological and ideological comfort. And to be clear, in a country built on racism and colonisation a tendency to these types of comfort is a tendency to white-supremacist conservatism. One further warning: my starting point will be an outline of how racism plays out in broader society. But to try and provide something different, I'm going to use sport to talk about this stuff.

## Why discomfort is necessary.

Race is everywhere. And racism stalks it like a parole officer waiting to put it back in its place - white anglos in the predominant position with all shades of others

placed in order underneath them, based on a series of material, historical and white-supremacist factors. Think of it like painting words on a white banner, colour is added within specific outlines that form letters and it all looks a bit brighter. But the formative background is still there and it is still entirely white. Should the colours leak beyond their prescribed outline, discomfort.

Loud, angry and uppity black or non-white people upset the sensibilities of white Australia. Any refusal to simply perform our difference within the specific, accepted terms of cultural identity (food, costume, entertainment) in such a way that does not service the need of white Australia's sense of self-satisfaction is considered an improper leakage of colour. Such a leakage has occurred recently on a couple of occasions in the sporting arena with great levels of discomfort occurring for the sports- viewing public. In the AFL's 'Indigenous Round', Adam Goodes, a proud indigenous athlete, celebrated kicking a goal with a traditional dance towards a hostile section of the crowd that had been targeting him during the game. The final moment of the dance involved the performance of throwing a spear at the crowd. Outrage ensued.

I'm not interested in making Adam Goodes out to be some icon of radical, anti-racist struggle. Goodes is entirely mainstream, named Australian of the Year in 2014. However, his recent history has involved pointing out someone amongst a football crowd that had called him an 'ape' and making the point that Australia Day would always be Invasion Day for himself and other Indigenous folk. Since these incidents he has been continuously booed whenever he goes near the ball at any game outside Sydney. And this is the point, within the confines of mainstream Australia it is a radical, uncomfortable act for any non-white person (and most especially indigenous people) to be loud, to wear their heritage and skin colour with pride and in ways that do not just fit into the manner of "keep your head down boy, and be glad that we're allowing you to be here at all". It is a radical act to loudly call out racism when we have been told to come up through this society by just ignoring it. The discomfort for white people that doing any of these things creates, very quickly becomes a reason for their underlying racism to become overt – you will be made an example of.

A couple of further things about the Goodes situation stand out to me. When the spear throwing celebration first occurred, it was noticeable that many white people who wanted to consider themselves anti-racist, saw it as an unnecessarily provocative act. This was a repeat of the scenario we see all the time (yeah, i'm looking at you lefty, activist fundraiser in Sydney... [note2](#)) where white anti-racists will seek to reign in the fury ([note3](#)) of a non-white response to racism into forms that they deem acceptable, ie are comfortable to them. As this issue became bigger news and positions became more polarised these liberal, anti-racists performed a backflip. The dance was now never a hostile performance, it was a celebration of his cultural pride. You know what, I hope it was both. Cultural pride and rage mixed together, charging at the racist crowd with a threat – fuck with me anymore and i'll

launch myself over that fence and kungfu kick all your heads off, a la Eric Cantona.

I'm going to finish this sports section with another Australian athlete, Nick Kyrgios – a half-Malaysian, half-Greek, 20 year old tennis player – who came under fire from the white sporting establishment for not displaying enough Aussie-ness when he plays. He's brash, loud, arrogant, questions calls and doesn't respect the elders of the white sporting establishment. Kyrgios may be a bit interesting or he may just be annoying – it doesn't matter – but because he is brown and doesn't display the values that white Australia deem best to represent Australia he has regularly been called 'unAustralian' and told to go back to where his parents came from (as he was born here) by swimming 'legend' Dawn Fraser.

The qualities Kyrgios has displayed means he will never be as respected or defended as Goodes, but I see them both as indicative of how non-white folk confront the effects of growing up and living in a white-supremacist society. We clearly aren't all the same, and we experience and respond to racism differently, but just as clearly our psychological and mental capacities – a toughness, empathy, awareness and out-of-the-box ability to survive this racist society – are always going to be different to that of white folk and therefore seen as uncomfortable. We aren't just different to white people because of skin-colour or having a different cultural background, we are different because the entire way we have experienced this society, and so the way we engage with it mentally and physically, is different. When white people get an inkling of the depth of this difference, that we aren't 'all just the same underneath', it is generally unsettling for them.

And so it makes no sense for Kyrgios to act in similar ways as a white athlete when performing/ playing. It means non-white feminists have had to make ongoing interventions into mainstream feminism based on its failure to understand that differences manifest in a much greater way than is often acknowledged. And it is so often a cause of my frustration when I can see that close comrades, crew, friends, lovers kind of get something but never quite 'get it'. This is ultimately where this article is going – radical, anti-racists need to get the extent of this difference because we need to be spreading and increasing that source of discomfort. I am making an argument for the strength of the different mental capacities that we (non-white folk) have developed, that they aren't a reflection of 'damage', but instead are more likely to be hardened and resistant to the tendencies of white supremacist society. We shouldn't reduce ourselves to 'we're all just the same' just so people can feel good about themselves. We need to increase the discomfort through all parts of white Australia. But i'll come back to pushing that line after...

## Uncomfortable differences.

Taking a step back and bringing in some of my personal experience. Because it needs to be clear that in using 'we' or a more generic 'non-white folk' i'm not suggesting an equivalence between all of our different experiences. There are many ways to experience being non-white in this country and the effects play out differently for

disparate individuals AND groups of people. Being Muslim at the moment has its own particular set of circumstances. And of course, being Aboriginal will always carry its own set of meanings and experiences. But at the same time some of our experiences of how racism plays out will crossover – this might often have more to do with white racists' un-nuanced application of their racism.

I grew up a brown migrant in the western suburbs of Sydney in the 80's and 90's. Back then there were already significant pockets of migrant communities, but nothing like it is today. Growing up there involved unconsciously having to prepare myself to exist within white, westie culture. The questions now swirl around my mind – what extent was this assimilation, what extent was I choosing and what extent was it not really either – just the complex machinations of socialisation and trying to fit in so I could find enjoyment? Being into a lot of sport (never cricket though, confounding many people who wanted to jump to easy cultural assumptions) was one avenue that made things easier for me, gave me fun times and even provided some back up when overt racist shit happened – there'd be fights and friends would have your back. Overt racism was almost a relief, an outlet from everything else, where literally everything else – the entire experience of living and growing up – was about navigating through a minefield of hidden race politics.

My sister recently moved back to western Sydney from the inner-city. She was over the elite smugness of white, liberal inner-city folk. She preferred to choose the likelihood of facing a little more casual racism in a direct form. She was also choosing an area where there were large communities of recently arrived migrants from similar parts of the world as we are. But these sort of communities actually raise some degree of discomfort for us. Me and my sis never developed our defensive capacities against racism within the context of a closely-bonded migrant community. There weren't enough of 'our type' around. So we had to adapt in other ways. A difference of 20 years of having lived in and experienced Australia means we have developed in certain ways that means we couldn't simply integrate into the sort of community she now lives near (and nor would we necessarily want to).

All this is to come back to my point that there are many ways of experiencing race in this country. Me and my sister would experience it very differently to even people from our general racial background because we have decades more experience of adapting. On the other hand many of these recent migrants have the advantage of adapting and dealing with racism within the context of a larger community. A few years ago when Indian students were being targeted on public transport there were demos organised. My position within these sort of demos felt uncomfortable. There would possibly be assumptions that I am part of the affected community and could have something to say, but I knew that my position within it was purely one of solidarity – sure I could be beat up on public transport for being brown but the circumstances would look different. Me and my sis have acknowledged this – due to assimilation or adaptation, but really neither a negative or positive, just how things are – we carry ourselves differently. We are individually less of a target. It

can be unsettling to recognise these small differences. They make enacting anti-racism seem so much harder, but we need to embrace that discomfort so we don't fall into traps of over-simplification. Which leads me too...

## **Solidarity and a messy banner.**

It took me a long time to really feel capable of throwing myself into solidarity with Indigenous struggles' with the urgency they deserve. While white friends and crew were all over it, I was stand-offish. This wasn't because I didn't recognise colonisation and genocide as the most significant founding reasons for everything that is fucked in this country. It was more because I've felt uncomfortable not knowing how to place myself as a brown person who had my own experiences of racism in this country, in solidarity alongside a struggle that was more crucial and based in a totally different experience of race to my own. I think for white folk it is easier. For you lot solidarity with Indigenous struggle and sovereignty was the obvious way to be anti-racist and confront the racist shit that exists in this country. For me, I already had a lifetime of confronting that racist shit and it felt disconcerting to me that potentially those experiences would have no relevance.

But it has become more obvious to me that the strongest bonds of solidarity will involve embracing discomfort. This doesn't mean having to let go of my own experiences of racism – I think true solidarity really does need to be based in finding crossovers in all our experiences of resistance and struggle. I don't want to enter into solidarity with other struggles purely as an ally, an empty vessel there to take on someone else's cause. But the point of allowing for discomfort, is a recognition that all that is 'comfortable' about racial politics in Australia is there to uphold white-supremacist hierarchies. Going back to the banner-painting analogy, I think we should be open to drops of paint falling outside the lines, smudges and colours mixing in unintended ways. If the banner is taking up too much floorspace and we have to keep crossing over it, don't be afraid to dip a toe into a painted bit – the sensation of discomfort might be somewhat nice (yes, I know that the final banner wouldn't be so effective and so the analogy falls down, but it's all I got). Resistance to the racist, colonial Australian state will need to come from numerous angles and the solidarity we aim for will at times look like a messy banner, but letting ourselves be unsettled opens new ground to view potential connections.

## **Spread the discomfort.\***

Australia is having a very uncomfortable race 'moment' right now. Whether it is Reclaim Australia, the forced closure of remote communities, boat turnbacks or the booing of Adam Goodes, white Australia seems to be having out some very unsettled discussions in deciding how best to hold its predominant position. I hope this moment in broader society doesn't pass by in radical, anti-racist spaces where we really need discussion about new ways of fighting back that aren't always reactive. My argument in this article is that our role (but especially the role of white

anti-racists) is to spread the discomfort and challenge all the load-bearers of racial comfort in this country.

When liberals (white or non-white – I haven't gone into it in this article, but certainly there will be non-white people who are happy enough with whatever space they have been prescribed that they won't want it to be unsettled – we call them race traitors) are suggesting we should just ignore the far-right mobilisations of Reclaim Australia we should know that our physical presence makes them as uncomfortable as the presence of Nazis. They will want to hold onto a belief that really this is a 'tolerant' and 'accepting' society. We want to trash that 'tolerance' because it immediately bestows upon them a 'right' to tolerate. They blame the Abbott government for the current state of things because they don't want to slightly recognise that their white brethren enact racism daily on a street-level (overtly or not) and have done so for centuries. White Australia aren't sheep following the governments' racist lead – the interaction is two-way and it is all about ensuring the continuation of the material, psychological and emotional comforts they enjoy.

Liberal anti-racism merely falls into this framework, not doing anything to upturn it, but merely wanting to insert a little more 'diversity' within. But diversity and multiculturalism are nothing but a ruse to allow white Australia to push aside the discomfort of acknowledging that racism is the predominant factor in the comfort of its existence and to allow it to enjoy the superficial 'fruits' of other cultures. All radical, anti-racist acts now must be about smashing the foundations of this framework. We must create disorder and discomfort for white supremacy in as many ways as possible – emotional, psychological, ideological and physical.

\* Let me be clear, I consider this strategy of spreading discomfort only relevant to the racial politics i'm writing about here and possibly not useful in resisting other forms of oppression? And also I don't consider a generalised call for spreading discomfort to be the same as suggesting that no-one should ever have places of emotional, psychological, material comfort. We will need those spaces if we are to be able to keep fighting.

**Note 1** – At some point I want write more around Frantz Fanon's work on race and colonisation and mental health.

**Note 2** – about this incident see article at: <https://goldenbarleyschool.wordpress.com/2015/06/10/discomfort-non-violence-and-race/#more-185>

**Note 3** – While it's problematic to always assume fury as a response to racism, it is one possible reaction, but even it can take different forms. It can unleash in the moment on the perpetrator but it can also be turned inwards in damaging ways. bell hooks had a book called 'Killing Rage, Ending Racism'. The 'killing' in the title wasn't a verb, as in 'stopping rage'. It was an adjective to describe a particular form of rage that non-white people can feel when one incident provokes a lifetime of dealing with racism to be unleashed.



# WHACK AUSTRALIA!

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So far my experience in Australia as a person of colour from London, has been a roller-coaster ride of emotions, frustrations and developments. We all hear about how racist Australia is-my first encounter with racist Australians was in Thailand before I even stepped foot on these stolen lands, I was called a mongrel!- but nothing could prepare me for what I have seen and experienced since being here!

It's pretty clear that the Australian government and the majority of its people have absolutely no shame in their blatant racism and mistreatment of black and brown people, it seems the White Australia policy didn't actually end in the 70's. From the continuous incarceration of Aboriginal people and insane legislation such as "The Intervention" that clearly targets Aboriginal people to "Operation Sovereign Borders" - the turn back the boats policy that the Australian Navy enforces. Fuck knows what they do to Asylum Seekers out on the open waters! Then we have the disturbing rise of right wing neo-fascist groups such as The United Patriots and Reclaim Australia rallying and claiming the streets are theirs, oh wait we also have the 'radical left' claiming the streets are theirs too!! I mean really who's streets are these? I seem to remember this being Aboriginal land or did everyone forget that! So yeah, thanks Trotskyists for welcoming all us foreigners to these stolen lands!! Yeah its a bloody mess; a smorgasbord of frustrations for Indigenous people and non-indigenous people of colour to feed on!!

My personal journey and development as a person of colour has really been a bit of a head fuckery, but also very valuable in that I have learnt a lot this last year and a half. Firstly I have really started to understand my own skin privilege as a mixed race person and think about shadism. Its a strange experience to have white people go on racist rant to you about 'lazy abbos' and 'filthy lebbos'; literally every time I hitch-hike here in Australia I get picked up by racist truckers, that always seem to think its alright to bang on about how lazy black people are. Of course I argue with them, but it just makes me think what the fuck do you see me as? Why did you pick me up if you hate black people so much?? I realise my light skin tone acts as a disguise for these racist pigs; I am constantly involuntarily going undercover into the world of racist dickheads!! I can see how the shade of my skin offers me privilege over darker people in this white supremacist society, however I find it hard to keep this in mind when I have to sit through those onslaugths of bullshit.

Most of my workplaces here have been doing labouring on construction sites which always seem to be a fantastic melting pot of bigotry such as racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia. What a lovely place for a brown queer to be working at. And again people on sites seem to think its totally okay to be really fucking racist in front of me or even try to involve me in their conversations. Generally on

sites the hate seems to be directed towards Indigenous people and Indian people, little do they know that I too am Indian! It kind of boggles the mind to think about how stupid these people must be, I can't even try to comprehend what they think when they look me in the eye and try to engage me in these conversations. It's a strange feeling to have white people talk to you as if you're not a person of colour!

The most intense time I've had here was when I lived in Darwin in the Northern Territory where it is blatantly obvious there is an apartheid happening. It is hard for any person of colour to exist in that area but especially if you are indigenous. Every non-indigenous P.O.C that I have spoken to about their experience in the N.T. has been very similar. You really get thrown into a state of mental limbo and confusion because on the one hand you experience every day micro-aggressions because of your colour, but you also have a shit tonne of privilege because you are not an indigenous person living in the Top End. For example, being able to shoplift and squat freely around Darwin would barely be possible if you were indigenous.

Another perplexing thing I've noticed whilst spending time in the Top end was how white people would often refer to you as one of them. So many times I heard people say "life is so easy up here because we are white". Hang on a minute, I don't remember being white and damn there's so many things wrong with this sentence. I mean it's all good to acknowledge your privilege but to joyously bask in it seems just so wrong!! What are you doing to combat these inequalities as a white person in the top end? I had many arguments with supposedly radical white people up there. In Alice Springs I was ranting about how disgusting the racism is there and I was basically told "just deal with it, this is Alice Springs". Fucking outrage!!

I think everything that's happening to First Nations people in the top end is happening to them everywhere in Australia, it's just not as visible in places like Melbourne. After my time in Darwin I really started to think about my colour and the part it plays in the colonisation of Australia; it's not just white folks that perpetuate colonisation. I'm really trying to make decolonisation be the forefront of most of my thoughts and actions. Australia so far has been an eye opening experience for me in regards to my own skin colour and my own experience of racism, where as before I wouldn't have been so bothered by certain things. Australia has made me think about race constantly; I guess this is a good thing for me to be thinking about all the time.

- Marcarcass

