Master of Arts by Project

Title: The Art, Freedom and Responsibility of Voice: Multiple Narratives of a Gunditjimara Man, Father, Artist, Activist and Warrior

Candidate's name: Richard Frankland

Name of School: School of Education
RMIT University

Date submitted: 30 August 2007

Declaration by the candidate

I certify that:

- This thesis is entirely my own work
- Due acknowledgement has been made where appropriate
- The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award
- The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program

Candidate’s signature:
Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Artefacts

1. Overview of Research
   1.1 Introduction
   1.2 Research Focus
   1.3 Rationale
   1.4 Methodology
   1.5 Privileging of Written Text

2. Who I am: A Gunditjmara Man
   2.1 Scarring of the soul
   2.2 Acknowledging My Cultural Heritage
   2.3 Convergence of two cultures
   2.4 Dealing with the suffering

3. Stories of Family
   3.1 My mother
   3.2 Grandfather and Uncles
   3.3 Being a Man

4. The Role of Art and Voice in Cultural Healing
   4.1 Multiple Narratives
   4.2 Responsibilities of Indigenous Artists

5. Cultural and Historical Context
   5.1 A Perceived History of Australian Indigenous people
   5.2 The Fighting Gunditjmara
   5.3 Eumeralla Wars
   5.4 Strategic exclusion
   5.5 Massacres

6. Impact of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
   6.1 Making meaning of my experience
   6.2 Conversations With the Dead
   6.3 Commonality of Grief
   6.4 Searching for My Sister
   6.5 Honouring the Dead
7. Gunditjmara Warriors Giving Voice Through the Arts
   7.1 Contemporary Wars
   7.2 Humanising the Dehumanised
   7.3 Growing up With Song
   7.4 Giving voice to suffering
   7.5 Giving voice to social and political issues
   7.6 Hard hitting voices

8. Film, Theatre and Song
   8.1 Film as voice
   8.2 Theatre as voice
   8.3 Song as Voice

9. The Story of the Charcoal Club
   9.1 Forming the band
   9.2 The Charcoal Club in theatrical context
   9.3 The Charcoal Club at the Melbourne International festival
   9.4 The eight structural components of The Charcoal Club Performances

10. Findings and Analysis
    10.1 Post-production Reflections
    10.2 Drawing from Life Experience
    10.3 Perspectives on the Charcoal Club
    10.4 Performance as catharsis
    10.5 Beyond Catharsis: Making a difference
    10.6 Impact of Performance
    10.7 Reliving Our Stories

11. Conclusion
    11.1 Voices for Change
    11.2 Handing on Knowledge
    11.3 Passing on Voice to the Future

Bibliography

Appendices
Massacre Map
The Charcoal Club Text
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and dedicate this MA by project to the following people:

The stolen generation. To those who have died in custody and the family members of the deceased. To the resistance fighters who have fought since our cultures have clashed. To the many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who have fought to preserve culture, for justice and equity and to redress the wrongs. To the many people who facilitate the voice of those who are unable to have their voice heard.

My family

My partner Steph and daughter Nakaya and son Taram
My grandparents Walter Christopher Saunders and Phyllis Saunders
All of my Uncles and Aunties
My mum Christina Saunders
My dad Richard Frankland
My brother Walter Saunders
My sister Molly Radford
My deceased family members
Stuart Macfarlane
Laura Brearley
My friend and Supervisor Kipps Horn
My Djaambli's John Foss, Andy Baylor, Andrew O'Grady, Harry I.ye, Jon Staley and my Tidda's Monica Weightman and Aurora Kurth

Marcia Langton, Kev Carmody, Douglas Horton to all those who assisted in forming the interviews for The Charcoal Club performance

And to all of the frontline Indigenous and non-Indigenous warriors who have opened doors so that I could achieve the things I have achieved
Abstract

This Masters by Project is a multi-perspectival reflection and analysis on my life as a Gunditjmara man. In particular I examine who I am as a Gunditjmara man and my roles in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. I explore differences and convergences between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous cultures and focus on how I, and others, make meaning from our dreaming paths.

A key element in my research relates to the way we make meaning from the grief and suffering of my people. Central to this aspect of the research is the reflection on my role as an officer of the 1988-1991 Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC).

My reflections and analysis are made through both the project elements of my research, (The filmed Charcoal Club performance in the 2004 Melbourne International festival and filmed post-production interviews) and an Exegesis. The Charcoal Club is a series of performed snapshots of my life presented on stage in a multimedia theatre piece.

Within the Exegesis I explore notions about the suppression of Australian Indigenous ‘voices’ and the re-empowering of their voices through the Arts, a process facilitated by Indigenous artists. This process is described in terms of warrior activism.

I conclude by acknowledging the significance of my warrior activism, my role in facilitating the ‘voice’ of others and the potential warrior role of the young, emerging generation of Australian Indigenous people.
Artefacts

1. DVD of filmed performance of The Charcoal Club at the 2004 Melbourne International festival

2. DVD of filmed recording of Post-Production Interviews
1. Overview of Research

1.1 Introduction

Sometimes I wonder about all the people around me going on with their day to day lives and I wonder what they would do if they knew what I knew and what most Kooris know. We live in a storm, a storm that rages all around us, in us. This storm that rages all around me I wonder if I can possibly match the storm inside me. I wonder if anyone can see the tears on my face or will they just think it’s the rain. I wonder if the storm will ever end.

(An excerpt from the play ‘Conversations with the Dead’, Frankland, 2002: 264)

The storm referred to from my play ‘Conversations With The Dead’ (Frankland, 2002) rages around the lives of almost every Indigenous Australian I know. I am an Indigenous Australian of the Gunditjmara people. I too live in this storm. In September 2004, I wrote and performed in a show called ‘The Charcoal Club’ at the 2004 International Melbourne Festival. The text of this show was constructed as an autobiographical narrative which showed aspects of ‘the storm’. Through my engagement and experience as an activist, musician, film-maker, politician, play-write, author and Field Officer in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1988-91) I believe my narratives embody meanings for Indigenous and non-indigenous people. I facilitate the voicing of perceptions about real human experience – especially about racism, love, human suffering and the will to fight injustice and educate for justice.

1.2 Research Focus

My central research question is ‘In what ways do my lived experiences inform the multiple narratives of being a Gunditjmara man, father, artist, activist and warrior?’
The key word of the title of this exegesis is ‘voice.’ I shall discuss notions of voice below but at this point it is important to note that both the performance of The Charcoal Club, and this exegesis about the work, refer to the voices of a Gunditjmara man, warrior, father and activist; analytical, reflective, and narrative voices; a musical voice; voices of despair, hope and anger; and voices of post-production interviewees. My written style of presentation sets out to differentiate these voices by written and visual style variations. In particular I differentiate the critical and analytical texts and texts derived from narratives taken from the performance of The Charcoal Club.

The Charcoal Club was performed as part of the 2004 International Melbourne Festival. It was comprised of the following eight entitled sections:

1. Nakaya  
2. First experience of racism  
3. Growing Up  
4. The Girl- Inspiration  
5. Power of Poetry  
6. Setting up ‘Your Voice’  
7. Motel Room and Pub/Royal Commission  
8. Tasmania and Freedom: Who am I/Are We

These eight sections of written text, songs and films form the central part the performance element of my research project. The project element of my work is presented in three parts: 1) the 2004 Melbourne International festival performances of ‘The Charcoal Club’, 2) a filmed record of one performance, and 3) a filmed account of post-production interviews.

1.3 Rationale

This research is significant because it is such a major part of my dreaming, my life and my walk. My research is motivated by my life’s work which has been to facilitate the voice of my people or other peoples who have been rendered voiceless by social
circumstance and negative attitudes towards them. I believe that you cannot choose your
dreaming path or life path. You can only choose how you conduct yourself on it. The
arts are my chosen media to facilitate these voices. I have worked extensively in music,
film and video, theatre and writing and produced texts and performances in all of these
media. As an Indigenous Australian I often work with people who have been rendered
voiceless.

This voicelessness I refer to is echoed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005:1115). They argue
that

There has been a critical turn, an interpretive turn, a post-modern
turn and a narrative or rhetorical turn. There has been a turn
towards a rising tide of voices, voices formerly disenfranchised (Denzin and
Lincoln 2005:1115)

Whilst this is a hopeful view in terms of the future of Australian Indigenous voices I note
that similar views were expounded by Stanner in his 1968 Boyer lecture 'The Great
Australian Silence' (see below for a more detailed reference). The “turn” referred to may
be evident within small circles of academia and elements of broader society and industry
but there is much to be done to re-empower the Indigenous voice.

I have learned so much about myself in looking at grief. I believe there has to be some
type of healing process involved in facing grief. This is particularly relevant to individual
Indigenous workers bearing in mind the massive pressures and responsibilities they
shoulder. Indeed, the level and mantle of responsibility for Indigenous workers is too big
sometimes and it kills people on a regular basis.

In much of my work I use grief as a channel for artistic creation. I use it to examine my
own grief and to examine the grief of those who have died. I use it to examine the grief
of Aboriginal families, the individual and collective grief. I also use it to examine the
grief of a nation, the scarring of the soul of a nation. I use it to give myself a voice, to
give the dead a voice and to give grief a voice and ultimately, if the foundation of grief is love, then to give voice to love. To reflect and write about these different processes in this exegesis necessitates a multi-layered textual approach. This multi–layered approach will include critical analysis, song text, poems, filmed performance, extracts from play texts, other peoples’ views about Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, post-production reflections and interviews. The latter conversations were recorded, transcribed and presented in digital form as one of my research outcomes.

In many ways my texts are about the journey of Indigenous Australia and the silence and lack of voice that we have been and are forced to live with. My texts also relate to the story of how, through art and activism, Indigenous Australians have tried to break this silence, preserve culture and educate each other and the broader community. In this journey we will meet people I perceive as heroes and warriors and perhaps gain a new understanding of contemporary warriors and their forms of activism.

I will show some of what my people have lost, some of what we have gained and some of the things we have all learned along the way. I will reflect on how we Indigenous Australians are forced to justify our existence and the cost of retrieval and maintenance of culture, language, dignity, land and waters. I will argue how the onus of responsibility for our tragic happenings has in many instances been placed upon us as a people in a ‘blame the victims’ mentality and how that onus of responsibility should be the responsibility of all Australians irrespective of race, creed or colour.

Later I shall refer to how an ‘inherent national blindness’ has shaped the lives, fate and fortune of Indigenous Australians.

My hope is that this work will contribute to a healing process for our nation and our people - to help humanise what has largely been dehumanised. My work is about showing Australia and the world what has happened, what is happening now and how fundamentally important it is to treat each other as human beings.
My work is also about honouring the dead. It is about recognising the past, planting seeds here in the present for future generations and using the arts as a voice to do that.

1.4 Methodology
The Charcoal Club performance explores my life experiences and reveals facets of myself and my people. My methodology focuses on 1) Autoethnography, 2) An Indigenous Methodology known as Dadirri, 3) Narrative Inquiry and 4) Performative Methodology. By performance methodology I refer to a way of making meaning and a medium for the transmission of cultural knowledge.

Autoethnography is a qualitative social research method through which the researcher documents her or his ethnic background and social history. Ellis describes autoethnographic writing as writing which

conveys the meanings you attach to experience. You’d want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel a part of. You’d write in a way to evoke readers to feel and think about your life and their lives in relation to yours, you’d want them to experience your experience as if it was happening to them (Ellis, 2004:24)

In this exegesis it is my intent to invite readers to “enter and feel” (Ellis, 2004) part of my experiences. If my research enables others, particularly non-Indigenous Australians, to reflect on their lives in relation to mine I shall have contributed to the world-wide discourse on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships.

Russell (1999), discussing film making observes:

A common feature of Autoethnography is the first person voice-over that is intently and unambiguously subjective. …the multiple possible permutations of [voices] generate the richness and diversity of autobiographical film making (Russell, 1999: 9)
Following Russell, I acknowledge that my texts are ‘unambiguously subjective’ but note that they are contextualised in evidenced and documented events.

Dadirri (Atkinson, 2001:1; Ungunmerr-Baumann, 1988 in Brundell [ed.], 2003) is an Australian Indigenous term which refers to quiet and respectful deep listening. It also involves a symbiotic joining of the sacred and the secular, the metaphysical and the mundane, which coexist in everyday human experience. In this exegesis Dadirri is used in this context and in the context of giving the gift of sharing my pain and other experiences with others - a common Indigenous gesture.

Narrative Inquiry makes use of narrative as “a way to give contour to experience and life, conceptualize and preserve memories, or hand down experience, tradition, and values to future generations” (Bamberg, 1998: http://www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/narrativeLQ/index.htm, 2007, August 1.)

It also involves “…the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling” (Bamberg, loc.cit.). The researcher then writes a narrative of the experience. Connelly and Clandinin note that, "Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative involves the study of the ways humans experience the world." (1990, http://colostate.edu/guides/research/observe/com3a2.cfm, 2007, August 1)

In this way, human experience can be voiced through narrative exposition.

The notion and practice of conceptualising and preserving memories, or handing down experience, tradition, and values to future generations is central to Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing. It is certainly central to my professional and personal pathways and to the creation of my research.

Much of my work and the artistic work of other Indigenous Australians, is often perceived as ‘only’ political or ‘only’ cathartic. Whereas, often it is both or even more multifaceted. Performance is a method for the revelation of human experience and
transmission of cultural knowledge. Thus, performance involves more than mere entertainment and a ‘feel good’ factor. In terms of performative methodology, Denzin notes “A good performance text must be more than cathartic – it must be political, moving people to action, reflection, or both” (Denzin, 2003: xi). The idea of making meaning through the performing arts is central to my role as a Gunditjmarra man. As I go on to discuss, my multiple narratives as performed in The Charcoal Club tell of political activism, warrior activism, as well as healing processes.

Artistic performances inevitably involve a relationship between performers and audiences. Performances as locations for the creation and transmission of knowledge between participants are often the focus of “a relational epistemology that views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other” (Thayer-Bacon, 1997:239 – 260).

However, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) caution “How do we move the current generation of critical, interpretive thought and inquiry beyond rage to progressive political action, to theory and method that connect politics, pedagogy, and ethics to action in the world? (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:x) My performance and associated research work take into account the difficulty of moving forward against the kind of fear, ignorance and discrimination referred to by Denzin above.

1.5 Privileging of Written Text
One of the issues I explore in my exegesis focuses on the question ‘Why does the Western-Eurocentric academy not value orally embodied and transmitted knowledge as much as knowledge embodied and transmitted through the literary means?’ I ask this as a man inhabiting the world of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Australian Indigenous culture and knowledge is transmitted primarily through non-literary means - oral and aural transmission. Non-Indigenous culture and knowledge is transmitted primarily through literary means. Despite an increased acknowledgment in the value of oral/aural transmission in the last few decades Academia still seems to value literary
transmission and embodiment of knowledge over oral/aural transmission and embodiment of knowledge. I share hooks (2003) concern that

our institutions are conservative and they confine our voices and our imaginations more than we know. Unwittingly we become our own gatekeepers, representatives of an institution, and not devotees to the sacred world of the imagination.’ (hooks, 2003:169)

My performance and research work involves a collaborative effort in the sense that it is not achieved through physical and intellectual engagement alone, it is inclusive of the spiritual, the animal world, with mother earth and diverse human cultures.

As Dei (2000) commented “For those of us who wish to work with, learn from, and interact with Indigenous knowledges while based in dominant institutions… we must transform our way of understanding knowledge, learning and teaching (Dei, 2000:7)
2. Who I am: A Gunditjmara Man

2.1 Scarring of the Soul
My name is Richard Joseph Frankland. I am Djaambi Kilcarer Gilga of the Kilcarer clan and the Gunditjmara tribe, I am a Gunditjmara man, father, artist, activist and warrior. I am also a former Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Officer and as such have seen a great deal of death and trauma, and subsequent grief. The amount of trauma I have seen has had an eternal impact on me. My soul is scarred for life. Many people often ask how I got through it and how I got over it. I reply in many different ways – different voices - music, storytelling, poetry and film have all helped heal me. I do not believe I will ever be completely healed. For to be healed from such a journey would be in some ways be a betrayal to the dead and the relatives of the dead.

At one stage in my life I only saw sadness in my writings and films. I did not realise that there was also an intrinsic beauty. I could not see this. It took others to point this out to me. When I realised this, I began to look at my art in a different way. Art began to have a different meaning and healing qualities.

I often say to my audiences when you have art you have voice, when you have voice you have freedom, when you have freedom you have responsibility.

2.2 Acknowledging My Cultural Heritage
Some people call me Djaambi which means brother in my language. I am an Australian Aboriginal man of the Gunditjmara people. I also enjoy having many other cultures in my heritage.

My father (a non-Indigenous man of English and Welsh extraction) passed away when I was young. I was about six years of age. I have learnt in past years of the importance of celebrating all of the cultures that I have: to deny one for the other would not be wise. All of these cultures are part of who I am.
My mother is a Gunditjmara woman and as such I have been bought up as a Gunditjmara person. My tribe is matriarchal. I have been fortunate enough to have been many things in my life, a soldier, fisherman, a writer, an activist, a television director, a musician, a general laborer, but through it all I am Gunditjmara. Always I have been Gunditjmara. My research is motivated by my life’s work which has been to facilitate the voice of my people or other peoples who have been rendered voiceless by social circumstance and attitude. It is my belief that you cannot choose your dreaming path or life path. You can only choose how you conduct yourself on it. The arts are my chosen media to facilitate these voices. I have worked extensively in music, film and video, theatre and writing. I have produced texts and performed in all these media from my experience as an Indigenous Australian and from observations of the happenings of other Indigenous peoples and other peoples who have been rendered voiceless.

My primary beliefs are about language, family, education, spirituality, voice and children. For me this begins with the land which I regard as the mother of all living beings. I am a conduit to my culture for my children and others. I am a warrior and hence a protector of my culture. Later I shall discuss further my role, and others, as warrior.

2.3 Convergence of Two Cultures
I am a man living at the convergence of two cultures and when two different systems converge, things change. What changes, how it changes and the effects of the changes are questions too broad for this exegesis. However, I note that a written element to my Masters project is, on the one hand, a result of converging systems of knowledge transmission and on the other hand, a means to an end – that is, contribute to the discourse about what counts as knowledge and to help broaden dominant Western-European-centric views of knowledge. (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001; Sefa Dei, Hall & Rosenberg, 2000; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997; Jipson & Paley, 1997; Barone & Eisner, 1997).
Ways of transmitting cultural practices are adaptable but if cultural practices are threatened by, for example, assimilation agendas of a dominant culture, the action of the minority culture may need to resort to alternative forms of cultural maintenance.

Cultural practices depend on the liveliness of cultural practitioners. In the case of Australia, Indigenous culture cannot be extinguished despite negative legislations and policies that include, but are not exclusive to, the forced removal of children, the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands, the many massacres and the denial of historical events which colour received perceptions of Indigenous history.

2.4 Dealing with the Suffering
How do the stories of the suffering and killing of my people make me feel? I feel angry, sad, confused, lost, displaced, frustrated, tearful, dehumanised and many other emotions that I cannot always place. In many ways these feelings marked the beginning of the journey that I undertook into the arts - my journey in search of recognition for the voice of my people.

I have heard these stories since I was a boy and as such they have been part of my 'dreaming path' - my life path - and have helped create who I have become as a man. During my life time I have witnessed the actions and repercussions of the assimilation policies, the degradation of my people and the 'inherent national blindness' that, in my view, Australia seems to have towards the suffering of our people and towards true versions of events hidden in Australia’s history. This suffering is commonplace and made worse by our ability to see the world’s problems whilst very few see ours. This is what I refer to as ‘the inherent national blindness’, the blindness of a nation toward the suffering of my people.

I argue that the ‘national blindness’ began in Europe prior to the setting out of the first fleet. That is, the Australian-bound English fleets brought with them a belief in their superiority over all other races especially those which were non-white. Henry Reynolds (2002) states in his book Why Weren't We Told? that "The equality so exalted [by the
English] was the equality of white men of British descent” (Reynolds, 2002:20).
Reynolds refers of course to British belief in their racial superiority. In my life in almost every manner and regard I have experienced the continuance of this attitude.
3. Stories of Family

3.1 My Mother

My mother Christina Saunders had six children, two of whom are now deceased. I recall as a boy watching her, a single mother of six children dealing with the non-Indigenous authorities as they came into our home and judged how we lived, judging whether they would remove her children as they had removed some of her sisters’ children. The assimilation policies were rampant as were the broader societal attitudes that perpetuated them. This was the late sixties and early seventies. When the policies ended in the seventies the attitude that perpetuated them remained and many Indigenous Australians were still a target. Many children were still removed from their families and traditional lands. With the small societal voice she somehow maintained, my mother kept us together and instilled in all of us the pride of clan, tribe and nation that still exists within me today, and which I instill in my children.

In the early 1980s, when the Indigenous voice was beginning to be heard on a larger scale, my mother, along with her cousin Sandra Onus, fought Alcoa, a large mining smelter that wanted to, and eventually did, build on part of our traditional land. She fought using the courts and eventually won the case. The basis of the case was to prevent Alcoa of Australia Ltd (Alcoa) from carrying out on-land occupation works which would disturb Aboriginal relics on that land. The hearings were in March and September of 1981.

My mother and her cousin Sandra Onus won this case at great personal cost to us all. My mother making such a stand meant that many non-Indigenous people in the small town of Portland shunned her and other Indigenous people of that area. This meant that an already ostracized people were further removed from mainstream. We were not wanted or welcome in many places in Portland. We were in essence once again outcasts on our own land.
My mother as a warrior has made a stand in many ways, maintaining her culture, fighting Alcoa, becoming a Native Title claimant, being a respected Elder of the courts, keeping her children together. I recall during the time I was employed at the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (1987-1990). I was researching a particular case, which involved ongoing harassment and attacks on a particular Indigenous family by the welfare authorities. Some of the members of this family told how the visits of the welfare increased until eventually the children were taken. One of them died in custody later in life.

Within the statements I could clearly see the negative attitude of the authorities and how the family was not seen as a family to be healed and supported, but rather as a problem to be solved. The answer in the eyes and policy of the welfare was to remove the children. This was the attitude of the time. It dawned on me at that moment that my mother had fought this very same attitude as a single black mother. The resilience she showed was nothing short of heroic. She had kept her children, maintained her culture and given voice to the same against seemingly insurmountable odds. She had stood against these odds as a warrior and her survival and the survival of her children and culture had meant she had won. She had gone from victim, to survivor and then to achiever.

3.2 Grandfather and Uncles
During my time at the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody, my extended family Uncle Banjo Clark, a wonderful Elder now deceased, took me to the tree under which my Uncle Reg Saunders was born. My Uncle Reg was dying in hospital at the time and I cut two pieces of the tree he was born under and made two canes. It was my way of paying respect to his life and achievements.

Uncle Reg’s grandfather, my great-grandfather, was a Jamaican slave on a ship. When the ship came to Australia, he escaped slavery and then went and lived with Indigenous Australians of a tribe in the southern states. He met my great grandmother and began a family. His son, my grandfather, Christopher Walter Saunders, fought as a soldier in the first World War. His eldest son, my Uncle Reg, became the first Indigenous
commissioned officer in the history of the Australian military and he fought in the second world war and in Korea. His younger brother Harry Saunders fought in the second world war and died on the Kokoda trail. To pay respect to him I made the film ‘Harry’s War’ (Frankland, 1996). The film assisted voicing the contribution made by Indigenous servicemen and women in the Second World War. I believe that until this film was made, many non-Indigenous Australians did not know or believe that Indigenous peoples had served at all in Australia’s theatres of war. We were (and in many cases are) seen as a problem to society not as contributors. The film went on to win many awards around the world, including an award for ‘Best Short Australian Film promoting Human Values’ at the Melbourne International Film Festival (1999, Melbourne).

None of the three generations of my family who served as soldiers were complete citizens when we were born. The two generations before me were in combat situations, my grandfather was subjected to the laws and attitude of the time and upon return as a veteran of World War I he was never eligible for soldier settlement as non-Indigenous soldiers were. That is, the giving of land to former servicemen.

I also became a soldier but fortunately never saw combat. One day I woke up and I was a soldier - ECN 343, infantry soldier with the first platoon of A Company of the First Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment. I had a reputation for being ‘good on the knuckle.’ That is, not bad in a fight. I was full of family pride and now I was a soldier like my grandfather and my Uncles.

One night I went out with a group of men, all non-Indigenous, all soldiers, it was one man’s twenty first birthday. We sat at a pub in Townsville wondering what to do. One of them said “let’s go boong bashing.” I stood up and hit him on the chin and the fight lasted with these men and some of their mates for the remainder of my time in the army. Another man who I thought was a close mate - we’d shared ‘Hoochies’ (tents), ration packs, beer and our last quid together - never mentioned race to me at all until the day I spoke to him about his girlfriend who had gone out with my cousin. He said, “Nah she’d never fuck a coon”.

21
The Bigot in the Mate

Through jungle we patroled
And shared tucker and our last quid
He stayed at my family's home
And laughed and drank we did

We shared a tent
And stories too
Mates through and through
Until he told me
Of his girl
and how she would
never sleep with a coon

His words not hers
History proved him wrong
For she went out with my cousin
I heard they'll be married before too long

I haven't seen him since we finished
Wearing jungle greens
I try to treasure the memories
and the things our mateship seen
But underneath all the friendship | was so sad to see
A lonely bitter hateful man
Filled with bigotry.
(Frankland, 1990: unpublished)

3.3 Being a Man
I recall sitting with my grandfather and cooking eels that we had caught, his hands were large and his whole manner seemed timeless. His back was straight and at that time in my life I thought that he was so tall he could touch the very stars themselves. He told me that the world was hard and that I should take care as I was half black and half white. He said being accepted as a man is difficult when you are black. Not that I ever doubted him, but my experience since has told me he was right. Being accepted in Australia as an equal man when you are Indigenous is difficult. This quest for equitable acceptance is a type of war itself.
4. The Role of Art and Voice in Cultural Healing

4.1 Multiple Narratives

The title of my thesis ‘The Art, Freedom and Responsibility of Voice: Multiple narratives of a Gunditjmara man, father, artist, activist and warrior’ refers to the voice I have been given and the responsibility that goes with it. This voice is a gift from not only my peers, but also my Elders, others who have stood before and those whom I research now. When I utilise this voice I realise that I am facilitating the voices of many peoples across the ages and that my voice is joined with these voices. A Wiradjeri warrior once said “I see so far because I stand on the shoulders of others” - meaning that because of the contribution of others I get to contribute as well.

The voice of Australian Indigenous culture is alive and dynamic. This is so despite the colonisation of Australia by Europeans over two hundred years ago: a colonization which began with cultural conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and led inevitably to further cultural conflict. Since the late 18th century the voices of many Indigenous people have been suppressed or even lost and now artists have a responsibility to re-voice what has been suppressed, ignored and dismissed. This has to be done whilst recognising both the traditional and the contemporary.

4.2 Responsibilities of Indigenous Artists

Further, Indigenous artists have an obligation to represent and facilitate what is perceived as traditional voice whilst embracing new methods of facilitating voice. We must do this without losing the integrity of our voice. We must do this within the complex context of merging cultures. The voice of the artist not only records, but shapes attitudes, plants seeds and facilitates change. The voice of the artist facilitates the voice of others.

These are important tasks and they raise the huge question ‘how is cultural meaning found and made across or between the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous cultures?’ This question is ongoing. However I believe that the role of the arts in voicing the seed
for social change is as important today as it ever has been. In recent times I believe there has been a positive change in attitude towards Indigenous arts: a change involving an increasing, social recognition of the cultural value of the Indigenous artist.

4.3 Importance of the Arts

The arts are about more than mere aesthetic valuing. How the arts function in peoples’ lives is part of a constant global discourse – far too broad to outline in this exegesis. I propose that the arts function as media for giving voice. Giving voice is about having a sense of freedom. Whilst the arts are also about enjoyment and/or release they are also in many cases about responsibility: the kind of responsibility embodied in significant ceremony, ritual, healing, political and social discourse.

Aaron Pederson, the Indigenous lead actor of my play ‘Conversations with the Dead’ (Frankland, 2002) commented about the ceremonial quality of the arts as follows:

It actually brings all of their [Indigenous Australians] past to the surface and helps us put it into perspective in the future and you can’t ask for more. I had no idea when I took this role on two years ago that we’d end up in America and we’d be doing it at the United Nations with Native American people involved in it. And just speaking to them and them being a part of rehearsal process, they love it. They see this as a ceremony as much as we do, they don’t see it [merely] as a theatre piece (Pederson, 2004, pers. com)

In creative performance we recognise and explore the past for meaning by the action of writing it and performing it – an act of voicing powerful emotions. As Andy Baylor (musician and colleague) observed during shared performances: ‘Sometimes, you know Richard, we sat backstage, and there would be tears everywhere, and I did that every night, listening to people cry, and crying to myself in the dark’ (Baylor, 2001, pers. com).
My performances are a journey of cultural discovery and re-discovery. They are also about a journey of humanity. How do you communicate profound sadness to the world so that it will not happen again?
5. Cultural and Historical Context

5.1 A Perceived History of Australian Indigenous People

The place and recognition of Australian Indigenous peoples in Australian history amounts to all intents and purposes, to a dismissal of an entire peoples and their culture. In addition to atrocities such as the Convincing Ground massacre of 1833 or 1834, Indigenous people experienced a suppression of voice that has echoed throughout the last two hundred plus years. Referring to observations made as far back as the 1890s Reynolds quotes:

…it was the intense racism of the 1890s that I most significantly and conspicuously failed to notice. And it was obvious in many of the texts I read that year. The equality so exalted was the equality of white men of British descent. Non-Europeans – Asians, Pacific Islanders, Aboriginals – had no place in the radical utopia. They couldn’t aspire to equality and had to be excluded. They could be vilified, denigrated and abused. Non-Europeans threatened to corrupt society, undermine democracy and pollute the pure blood of the white master race. The fact that these ideas had real, dramatic and damaging impact on Aborigines, Chinese and Pacific Islanders in Australia at the turn of the century was lost on me (quoted in Reynolds, 2000:20)

Referring to a perception of Indigenous history in Australia in the 1960s noted by Stanner (1968), Manne observed that only forty years ago

…[Australian] scholars and citizens had, thus far, failed to integrate the story of the Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath into their understanding of the course of Australian history, reducing the whole tragic and complex story to what one historian had called ‘a melancholy footnote’ and another a mere ‘codicil’. ((Stanner, 1968, cited Manne, 2003:1).
Concurring, Clendinnen’s view is that if we live.

It is important to make explicit where we Indigenous people fit in Australian society past and present – our historical place. It is a story told in this research project through different narratives. For non-Indigenous people the story began some sixty thousand years ago. For my people the story began with the beginning of time and our creation stories. If we do not make explicit the place of Indigenous history in the general history of Australia we risk, as Clendinnen noted (1999 in McDonald [ed.], 2003:525), living with a nursery version of history which means subsequently we have a people that cannot grapple with contemporary happenings.

5.2 The Fighting Gunditjmara

Part of this history is embodied in the role of Indigenous warriors. Before discussing these warriors I must first further explain about the Gunditjmara, my people. My Gunditjmara culture is rich and vibrant and practiced in many ways on a day to day basis. Our culture is practiced in song, meetings, conversation, dance and the way in which we relate to and fight for our traditional land and waters. Unlike the legalistic view of the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth) which places Indigenous culture in a static state, our culture is in fact a living breathing entity that evolves, adapts, lives and breathes whilst our people live and breathe. Like other cultures whilst maintaining the core of our cultural practices and beliefs we encompass new things within our culture. Gunditjmara culture is practiced in how we relate to each other and how we relate to non-Indigenous peoples’ views, values, laws, systems and culture. Below are two maps representing the Tribal or Nation boundaries and also the language groups of my people.
5.3 Eumeralla Wars

My people are known as the fighting Gunditjmara. We fought the Eumeralla wars not long after first contact with the colonizing forces. These wars are referred to in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) article on land and sea rights and government legislation as follows:

Gunditjmara ("Belonging to the human race") is the name of the Aboriginal peoples who live in western Victoria between Discovery Bay and Heywood in the west, Warrnambool in the east, Portland in the south and Hamilton in the north. For thousands of years Gunditjmara people built extensive water channels, fish traps and round stone huts from the basalt rocks which erupted from Budjbin (Mt Eccles) 27,000 thousand years ago. Through George Robinson, James Dawson and others who have written about their elaborate traditions, laws, technology,
leisure and ceremonial life, they have made themselves known to other Australians and the community of nations.

The Hentys and other white squatters began grazing sheep at Portland on Gunditjmara lands between 1834 and 1838, but the settlement, or invasion, was resisted with full force. The squatters who lived between Framlingham and Lake Condah in 1842 appealed to Governor La Trobe for protection and described the Gunditjmara thus: 'their numbers, their ferocity, and their cunning, render them peculiarly formidable.' Over two months during 1842, two Europeans were killed, and eight horses, three guns, almost 2,500 sheep and 180 cattle were taken. In the war which followed 158 Aboriginal people are known to have been killed. It is likely many more deaths went unreported (Critchett 1980:2-3). From this time the owners of the lands and waters bounded by Warnambool, Portland, Heywood and Hamilton became known as "the fighting Gunditjmara," and the sustained fighting as the "Eumeralla war". The Europeans by themselves were unable to defeat the Gunditjmara. They recruited Aboriginal men from the Bunwurrung and Woiwurrung who lived near Melbourne, and used them as a Native Police Corps between 1842 and 1846 with devastating results (Lovett-Gardiner 1993:8).

The wars are further referred to in Justice North's comments at the recent Federal Court Determination of Native Title to the Gunditjmara people (North, 2007, pers. comm), a claim which I had the honour of leading the lodgement of when I was Chief Executive Officer of Mirimbiak Nations Aboriginal Corporation.

Historical accounts record that the wars were bloody and hard fought. In the early eighties my brother Walter Saunders told me about the physical wars between white settlers and the Gunditjmara people - the 'First Wars'. He said that in about 1843 The Argus newspaper - the local paper of Portland - reported that the Eumeralla wars were finally over. Referring to family history and material such as the ATSIC material noted above, my brother referred to the fact that a lot of Gunditjmara people had been killed in battle, some poisoned and some shot. Further, he noted that places like the 'Convincing
Grounds' and 'Murderers Flats' were killing fields, that men, women and children were killed, hunted down like animals and killed. My brother’s source for this information included stories from our Elders and material archive at the Institute of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra.

See Appendix 1 for a map outlining some of the known massacre sites in Victoria and indicating the Eumeralla massacre (see no. 51)

5.4 Strategic Exclusion
I was born into a country where the constitution, legislation and received perceptions regarded myself and all of my people as second class citizens or, in many cases, as subhuman or as animals. I grew up in a social environment in which the attitude that perpetuated these laws was prevalent in the symbols, images and art of the day. The following references about the nature of Australian federal and state legislation in the mid-20th century illustrate the degree to which, prior to the 1966 readdressing of the ‘White Australia’ policy, Indigenous people were actively and strategically kept out of Australia’s national consciousness.

In 1966 three great steps towards the referendum were made. Firstly was the Wave Hill strike. The Gurindji people, who worked as labour on the Vestey station in the Northern Territory, went on strike. They set up their own community and demanded that their lands be returned to them. This started the push for land rights. Secondly, on the 16 December, the United Nations’ General Assembly approved two Covenants. They were the second stage of the International Bill of Rights, first was the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the second was the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Thirdly, in January 1966 Sir Harold Holt succeeded Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister. As Prime Minister of Australia he signed the United Nations International Accord for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This meant that he was compelled to redress the ‘White Australia’ policy. With the mounting public support and pressure for a referendum, Prime
Minister Holt finally gave it to Australians to vote on. An overwhelming 90.7% voted yes. This was a huge victory and meant that the Council for Aboriginal Affairs was set up. The Council had Ministers from all States and Territories discussing policies and programs, to recommend to the Government. The Referendum was a fantastic win for the Aboriginal movement – the movement for equality. This win gave citizenship, which meant Aboriginal people were able to move around freely, have a choice in governments and finally have policy made by the Commonwealth government, which would mean uniform laws, instead of different ones depending on which state they were in. Having the Council of Aboriginal Affairs meant Aboriginals had a political voice for the first time and some influence over the policies that governed them (Dawkins, 2004)

...white Australia believed that the Aborigines were a dying race and the Constitution made only two references to them. Section 127 excluded Aborigines from the census (although heads of cattle were counted) and Section 51 (Part 26) gave power over Aborigines to the States rather than to the Federal Government.

(Sydney City Council, 2002)

In reckoning the numbers of the people of the commonwealth, or of a state or other part of the commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted (Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act:45).

Implicit in the assimilation policy was the idea current among non-Indigenous people that there was nothing of value in Indigenous culture. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

The impact of any law, legislation, policy or societal attitude ultimately has a profound affect on those which it is directed to. My family was and is no exception. These attitudes, policies and laws helped shaped who and what we are today.
5.5 Massacres

When my brother told me about the wars it had a profound affect on me. I remember standing on the shores of our land and looking at the island of Denmaar (Isle of the Dead) which non-Indigenous people call 'Lady Julia Percy Island' and reflecting on what my he had told me and also what an Uncle told me when a cousin of ours died. He said that when he heard of the death he went into the night and saw a shooting star go south. My Uncle said it was our cousin's soul going home and that he knew at that moment everything was alright: our cousin was safe and had gone home. He said that this was the way of our people. I looked out at that island over the sea and I thought of all those souls from the killing fields going home. I thought: as a nation why do we not honour them? What is the place of our people in this society? Where is our voice, our symbols and images? Where does a Gunditjmara man fit in this world in which we appear to be invisible in almost every regard?

Other stories came flooding back to me. My Aunty Iris, whose soul has now gone to Denmaar, told me of her Aunty telling her of how when she was a little girl a massacre was happening and that this Aunty was taken to the reeds by her Aunty and hidden. She said her Aunty's hand was held over her mouth so hard it hurt but she witnessed the killings of her family and friends.

The knowledge of a massacre referred to as ‘Murderers Flat’ has survived through Aboriginal oral history. From oral records we estimate that the massacre probably occurred in the early 1850s. Clark (1995:52) notes that others date the massacre as late as 1875 or as early as 1842. The massacre occurred at a site known to the Kerrup Gunditj (more commonly known as the Kerrupjmara) as Murderers Flat. Aunty Rose Donker (nee Lovett) gave an account of the massacre as follows:

My grandmother was Hannah MacDonald (later Lovett). When she was small she walked with her brother Alfred and her mother from Macarthur to Condah Swamp. My Grandmother was carried on her mother’s back. They were looking for some place to live. They came to the Condah Swamp and there they found other
Aboriginal people and families living there. There was a massacre there and they hid with their mother in the reeds until the fighting was over and then they headed off looking for somewhere safe. We were always told that Murderers Flat was where the fighting was. They were taken in and lived on the Condah Mission. I then understood they lived there as children, then as time went on they grew up there (Clark, 1995: 52).

Clark also notes (1995:52) that ‘Massola (1969) refers to this event as “the massacre of Lake Condah” and notes that the Aborigines were given a bag of flour containing arsenic and about twenty people were poisoned and that others including Joe Sharrock, Saville and other elders confirm the massacre.

Condah Mission

The following poem refers to events located in part of my people’s land.

Have you heard of Condah mission
Have you heard of my homeland
There were killings there was blood
Blood that flowed into the land

Yes they came with hatred in their hearts
Slaughtering my people was an art
And then they'd pray we'd be saved
To soothe the guilt in their hearts

In the sixties there were some changes
We were allowed to vote
Become citizens of our country
Even began to hope

And our people began to strive
For survival and for our pride
And we struggled for the children
We struggled just to survive

In the seventies we searched for the children
Thinking humanity
Could not have gone
And we found some, some were broken
Some were never to return

In the jails we numbered like cattle
In the hospitals we died like flies
In the streets we are shunned
They only want us to hide

Sometimes I wake up crying
Wondering what it’s all about
And I cry for the children
I cry for this future without

For we are the keepers of the land

We are the children of the sun

And we loved and we laughed

They came here with their guns (Frankland, 2001, track 3)
6. Impact of the Royal Commission into
Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

6.1 Making Meaning of My Experience
One of the greatest influences on my life - my role in the Royal Commission Into
Aboriginal Deaths In Custody as an Investigator Field Officer with the Commission,
1988 – 1991. For a long time I was the only Indigenous employee for some two and a
half states. I received no training and at the end of it no de-briefing. This part of my life
had a profound affect on me as a man and as an Aboriginal man. My role was to locate
witnesses, take statements from both black and white people and to talk to other
interested parties to the Commission proceedings. It was at this stage of my life that I
learnt to listen deeply and with respect – in a Dadirri sense.

Dadirri has been called the Aboriginal gift. It is a special quality, a unique gift of the
Aboriginal people. It is inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness – something like
what you call ‘contemplation’ (Atkinson, 2001:7)

To what extent did I learn to listen and hear? When you investigate a death in custody
for a Royal Commission, you know how much a person weighed when they were born.
You know their traditional lands, and language. You know their family members. You
read every report available and sometimes see the horrific negative and biased attitude
perpetuated against them. You read a diary if they had one. You see their paintings. You
hold their family members while they cry and they hold you while you cry. You learn the
rhythm of their life. You see the scars on their soul and being. All the while you hold a
mirror up to yourself and wonder what is the difference between them and you. This is
how I learnt to hear and listen - listening to how actors deliver lines, hearing what the
words on the page say - listening deeply to songs, poems and stories. Reading between
the words to hear the emotion.
Listen

Listen

Listen to me,

Listen, can you hear their cry, can you
Listen can you hear their anger,
Listen to their families they can hear them,
Listen,

They speak in the winds
Which blow over their traditional lands
And their places of death
Listen to them cry out from their dreaming,
I know, I hear,

They cry out for justice.

Listen,

They know who is to blame,
Listen,

Shhh, Listen

(Frankland, 1990; The Charcoal Club, 2002, track 11)

6.2 Conversations With the Dead
The above song and poem was used in my play Conversations with the Dead (2002). It was used in the context of asking the audience to listen to the grief of Aboriginal Australia and the voice of the living and the dead. It was used to ask the audience to practice Dadirri.
One of the Royal Commission cases concerned a young boy called Malcolm Charles Smith. He was eleven when his family became victims of the assimilation policies. He and his five brothers were taken and were never to all be together again. I was with Malcolm’s friend Kevin Williams when he was told that Malcolm was dead in early 1983. Kevin was cutting my hair at the time. My Uncle helped arrange take Malcolm’s body home. Six years later I ended up investigating Malcolm’s death with the Royal Commission. Kevin was a big man, he spoke intelligently and gently. He spoke of Malcolm in a gentle way and with an acceptance of death that was common to me even though I was only young.

Later a film was made about Malcolm, called Who Killed Malcolm Smith? (Adler & Sherwood, 1992). The title is a good question in itself. In the film, Kevin Williams speaks of Malcolm as an intelligent man who, although he couldn’t read or write, “spoke of things in an intelligent way”. Williams felt that Malcolm’s death was a tragedy and “an example of what had happened to the black man in this country” (Adler & Sherwood, 1992).

I remember writing the song ‘Malcolm Smith’ in the kitchen of my home in Richmond, Melbourne. Later Tiddas put it on their album and later still my brother heard the song whilst walking through a subway in London - buskers were singing it. A few years later I went as a film-maker to the Dournanez film festival in West France. Here people had learnt and performed the song for me. Malcolm’s death gave voice to many, and to the issue of deaths in custody at a level that no government report could ever do.

Malcolm Smith

Was a Koorie was Malcolm Smith

Was a reason did what he did

Was a boy who took a bike

Was a system that took his life
How did he die
Did he hear the mopoke cry
No guilt no shame
Just got locked up again

Black boy pedals a bike
Laughs cause he loves his life
Policeman come and say he bad
Lock him up and now he's dead

How did he die
Did he hear the mopoke cry
No guilt no shame
Just got locked up again

Deaths in jail become an issue
Wipe the tears here use my tissue
We will help you if we can
Remember all those years again

How did he die
Did he hear the mopoke cry
No guilt no shame
Just got locked up again

Tears fallin' years gone by
Don't want to hear you cry
It's hurting me so bad
I knew Malcolm; Malcolm's dead

How did he die
Did he hear the mopoke cry
No guilt no shame
Just got locked up again (Frankland, 1990; Tiddas, 1995, track 7)

6.3 Commonality of Grief
I learnt of grief and the universal commonality of grief and I learnt to become sensitive to this universal experience of grief. As Jack, one of the characters in my play ‘Conversations With the Dead’, observes:

I see the faces of the dead, and I see the world through a mother’s tears all the time. I can see sadness in the streets, pain in people’s faces, grief in their hands and the way they walk. I can see loneliness like a man sees a long lost brother. I do see hope sometimes...and love, I see love, from pain and grief, this is what hurts most of all. (Frankland, 2002)

Some of the people involved in Royal Commission cases I worked on became extended family to me; fathers of women who had changed my nappies as a child; others who were related by marriage to my family. Other cases involved young men who had had similar lives to mine. All of them found a place in me. All of them painted a scar on my soul.
All of them taught me to hear, to listen and, in many ways, to love. I discovered that the true foundation and essence of grief is love and this became a catalyst for me to discover the historical and present grief that Aboriginal and Islander Australia face - that all of us face. I recall in the late 1980s sitting in the Royal Commission Office whilst sifting through files of the dead. I became aware of the horror that my mother lived through. A single black woman, subjected to foreign laws, attitude, religion and an archaic attitude of assimilation policies.

**As I Read Your File**

Sometimes I can feel you there

As I read your file

Looking over my shoulder

As I read your file

I know you, I know you

As I read your file

I know you and cry for you

As I read your file

Mothers, fathers, lovers, brothers & sisters

As I read your file

Give me rest you cry
As I read your file

And I realise that you and me
As I read your file

Are no different except for luck
As I read your file
As I read your file (Frankland, 1990)

6.4 Searching for My Sister
During my time at the commission I began trying to locate my youngest sister who had been removed, whether by the assimilation legislation or by attitude I am not sure. The end result was that she did not grow up with her family or with her culture. After a mountain of phone calls, a lot of research by Koorie Link Up and a variety of obstacles including her being told I was dead, we found each other.

Mama
Mama they took my land away
Mama don't know what to say
But I picked up my gun this morning
Loaded bullets too
It's time I took a stand
Gonna fight for me and for you

Gonna fight for me and you
I'll fight for me and you

Mama I found my sister
They had taken her away
I found my baby sister
Didn't know what to say
It's time I took a stand
Fight til judgement day

Gonna fight
Til judgement day

Mama wish I could say
All the things I've hid inside
How come I feel so old
I feel too young to die
It's time I took a stand
I'll try not to cry

Gonna fight
Try not to cry

Mama my spirits flying
And I am drifting away
My dreams calling from so far away
I feel at peace today
I stood for the people
In my dreaming we are free

We are free, yes we are free
In my dreaming (Frankland, 1997)

6.5 Honouring the Dead

At the time of the Royal Commission the amount of grief, sadness and the profound amount of love I experienced needed a form of deep recognition. Would a sorry scar be enough? What is a sorry scar? A sorry scar is a cut on the body, depending on tribal or national practice, on your arm, legs or both. It is a cut to recognize the hurt, to honour the dead, to honour someone’s grief, or loss. It is a way of showing respect and in some cases a way of penance. It is done in ceremony that may involve many or may only involve one or two. Thus there are, in most cases, witnesses to the taking of the scar. The scar echoes the scar on the soul that life has placed upon you. Would a sorry scar be enough? No.

I was filled with a need to tell these stories, to keep alive the futility of these deaths and the grief that I had encountered. The sadness that I am still meeting on a day to day basis as an Aboriginal Australian.
7. Gunditjmara Warriors Giving Voice Through the Arts

7.1 Contemporary Wars

I argue that the wars of the Fighting Gunditjmara are still fought today. Now they are fought in the courts, in the struggle for land rights and native title, for the acceptance, maintenance, retrieval and development of the Gunditjmara language and culture and in the changing of attitudes of non-Indigenous peoples. The war is also fought around the social justice arena for equity and justice and access to our lands and waters and acceptance of our culture and cultural beliefs within non-Indigenous society.

These wars are fought with art, poetry, plays, films, music and dance as well as in the Courts, Indigenous organisations, the halls of parliament and education Institutions. There are many examples of Indigenous artists, performers and arts administrators who are engaged in the wars. Among them is Archie Roach, a Gunditjmara songman. He is the author of the profound song ‘Took the Children Away’ (Roach, 1990: track 6) about the Australian Assimilation policies and his experience with them. Assimilation was officially agreed to by the heads of State and Territory Aboriginal affairs authorities in 1937, with a common definition agreed upon in 1961. Policies continued into the 1970s (Australian Legal Information Institute).

My sister, Amy Saunders, who sang with the bands Djaambi and Tiddas, vocalised positive notions about Indigenous status through the humane lyrics of their songs. Through his songs Andy Alberts documented stories of elders, Gunditjmara tradition and contemporary Gunditjmara events in Gunditjmara country. Other warriors include my brother Walter Saunders with his arts administration role and Vicki Couzens who has revitalized the cultural practice of making possum skin cloaks.

In essence Indigenous artists such as the people above maintain our visibility in the broader community by their representation of Indigenous Australia in song or within their
practiced art form. Their practice as artists maintains and retrieves culture through the voice they create within the arts.

7.2 Humanising the Dehumanised
I make films, music, poetry, song and plays to humanise what has been dehumanised. To make the stories of my people palatable to non-Indigenous Australians so that we might be seen as contributors as opposed to a problem, to realize the humanity within each other so that we can make a better world. There is a dual purpose to the ‘watering-down’ of our issues and stories. John Harding stated in an interview for the Charcoal Club show ‘I don’t know how many times I have seen Aboriginal people going out of their way to make white people comfortable. (Harding, 2004: pers.com). In essence he means that many non-Indigenous Australians shut down when Indigenous issues and concerns are presented, we are perceived as angry and even volatile and over-emotional with our issues.

Social and political developments in my life and the lives of my people mean the responsibility that I bear does not allow me the luxury of ‘making a film, poem, song or play’ without reference to who and what I am. It is this that is the foundation of my research question. I must make a statement with my work with regard to the preservation of my culture and the furtherance of my people and subsequently the betterment of Australia.

7.3 Growing up With Song
I have grown up around music. Country music was prevalent in our house. There were no Indigenous artists on the television nor on the commercial radio stations. Lionel Rose the World Champion Boxer had released a couple of songs. These 45 vinyl recordings were played until almost worn out on our record player. A common cry was ‘don’t scratch that record you kids’. On Sunday mornings I recall my mother singing in the kitchen and the sunlight streaming through. Sometimes our extended family Uncles would visit and bring their guitars and songs would go on through the night. I was given a guitar at a young age and wrote my first song Gypsy Jane (Frankland, 1976; The
Charcoal Club, 2002, track 5) which features in the 2004 Charcoal Club performance. Later whilst in the military I learnt to play flute and saxophone.

In the late eighties I joined an all-Indigenous band ‘Interaction’ headed up by Grant Hansen, the current CEO of Songlines Aboriginal Music Corporation (an organisation that I co-founded). We mainly played rock and roll and played at the Eastern Hill Hotel on the corner of Brunswick Street and Victoria Parade in Fitzroy. After Interaction I established Djaambi (brother in Gunditjmara) a band comprising of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We played contemporary rock and ballads, songs such as ‘Malcolm Smith’ and ‘Freedom’. Tiddas, an all female group, was born from Djaambi and went on to international acclaim.

I founded several other musical line-ups: Richard Frankland’s New Senate, and more recently The Charcoal Club. The Charcoal Club performed the self-titled theatre piece upon which this Master’s research project focuses.

Song plays a powerful role in many Indigenous funerals. I recall someone who had lost their mother asking me if they could use a song authored by myself and composed by Andy Baylor at their mother’s funeral. The song (see lyrics below, The Charcoal Club, 2002, track 12) has been used several times in this manner and also featured in the play ‘Conversations With The Dead’ (Frankland, 2002).

Another song regularly heard at funerals is the hymn ‘The Old Rugged Cross’. Uncle Emmanuel Cooper (now deceased) would regularly sing this hymn. We would all join in and sing with him at the grave site. Uncle Herb Patten (a Gunnai Elder) also plays this song at funerals on the gum-leaf.
Story 1: the importance of singing songs

Sometimes we’d eat at home, and people from other houses would call in.

They’d sing on their way to us, so we would know they were coming as friends, with a good heart and with good stories to tell . . .

On special nights the young men from the camps would make a bonfire outside and we’d have a proper sing-song around it. We’d also have a sing-song every Wednesday night in the mission church. People would come from all around for it. The Old People was all good musicians. I remember that they could pick up any musical instrument and play it, even if they’d never seen it before. It was marvelous the way they were gifted in music. Old Uncle Billy Austin was great on the organ. And we would sit and sing around the campfire together, all helping each other by harmonizing with each other’s voices. Looking into the bonfire, our mothers and fathers used to make up their own songs about recent history. And our grandparents would stand up to sing tribal songs what had been passed down, and explain to us kids what they meant.

When my mates and I started to get sleepy, we’d head for bed along the bush tracks to our huts. We never had a proper bedtime. Older kids would come with us to settle us in bed. From our bush huts we’d still hear the voices singing – secret songs. But after a while they’d quieten down. We knew then that the Old People would be telling stories, about great Aboriginal hunters and sportsmen. And about hardships and massacres. They were wonderful
singers, and their music filled our dreams. I miss them now. When at last they went through the night to their camps, we’d hear their voices in the distance, singing all the way. (Uncle Patterson quoted Clarke, 2003: 22-3).

Story 2: Singing to the land
I once met a man - we were traveling through the desert. We were thirsty and he’d drive for a bit and then stop and sing, and then he’d drive for a bit more and then stop and get out and he’d sing again. He did this for awhile and then we stopped and he dug a bit and water flowed out of the ground. I seen a man sing to the land for water. (Saunders, 1991, pers. com)

Look For Me
Richard Frankland

Look for me
In my dreaming,
In your heart
In the winds

Look for me
In the storms at night
In the clouds over the sea

Look for me
In the lands of which I am part

Look for me
In my children
In my family

Look for me
Look for me
I am there
I am there

Look for me

7.4 Giving Voice to Suffering

The use of song to give voice to the sufferings of oppressed people has been an established practice for hundreds of years. The song Strange Fruit originally written as a poem by Abel Meeropol in the 1930s, is a strong example of its kind. Famously recorded by Billie Holliday, Strange Fruit became an anthem for the anti-lynching movement of the forties and went on to become the bastion of political protest songs of the sixties and seventies. Strange Fruit became a vehicle in creating awareness of the oppression of peoples and giving and facilitating the voice of the voiceless.

Strange Fruit
Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop. (Meeropol, 1937)

7.5 Giving Voice to Social and Political Issues

We have examples of Australian Indigenous songs which have given voice to social and political issues such as Kev Carmody’s From Little Things Big Things Grow (Carmody/Kelly, 1993) a song about the fight (generally against Lord Vesty) of the Gurindji people for the rights to the land, equal wages and equality. Archie Roach’s Took The Children Away (Roach, 1992) has become an anthem of the Stolen Generation. Bart Willoughby’s Message for Young and Old and We Have Survived (Willoughby and No Fixed Address, 1982) are other examples. These songs have not only etched their place within Australian musical history but have also helped shape Australian cultural relations, high-lighted and facilitated the plight and voice of Indigenous Australians. People are shaped by how others see them. It is with Indigenous art that we have maintained,
retrieved and developed ourselves as a people. In every play that I have written or directed I have used music as a tool or vehicle to express more emotion.

7.6 Hard Hitting Voices


I had not seen any plays until the mid 1990s. I had heard of Indigenous plays and even met actors. But I did not know it was a world that I could engage in, let alone be accepted in. I approached Liz Jones CEO of La Mama Theatre about adapting two films which I had written and directed - *Harry’s War* (Frankland, 1999) and *No Way To Forget* (Frankland, 1996) - as plays for the Melbourne International Festival. These became my first Victorian Indigenous plays.
8. Film, Theatre and Song

8.1 Film as Voice

Potentially the medium of film is a powerful tool for making people and issues visible: hence the filmed recording of The Charcoal Club show. Over forty years ago my Uncle Reg Saunders commented:

If I had plenty of money, I’d try to wake up people to what’s happening with the Aboriginal race. I reckon the average Australian has some feeling of sympathy for the black man, but he doesn’t do anything about it. What would I do? I’d show films to white people, of the way Aboriginals are living in this Australia of ours . . . (Gordon, 1962:172)

Walter Saunders, among many other achievements, founded the Indigenous Branch of the Australian Film Commission (AFC), which resulted in many great and wonderful films. For the first time at an unprecedented scale, Indigenous stories began to be told through Indigenous eyes. In the early 1990s, at the time he got the branch going, there were some ten thousand hours of film footage with Indigenous subject or content matter. This footage was stored at the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait and Islander Studies in Canberra. In excess of ninety percent of these films had been written, directed and produced by Non-Indigenous Australians.

At the time of making these films with Indigenous content or subject matter, in the majority of cases, all of the power positions of film-making - producer, writer and director - were controlled by people of another culture. Indigenous peoples at the time of this filmmaking were commonly hired as consultants with no real power, but were expected to handle a lot of cultural responsibility in this voicing process and they contributed to script content and other facets of the film-making process. The end result of a situation such as this cannot be anything but a perception of Indigenous Australians by non-Indigenous filmmakers.
These filmed non-Indigenous perceptions contributed to the national blindness that Australia in many ways still lives with. My brother recognised the need to use film both as a pivotal voice in the war against inappropriate attitudes about Indigenous Australians and our way of life, and out of a need to have some control of societal perceptions of us. He maintained the facilitation, resourcing and fostering of film was imperative to enable Indigenous people the ability to tell Indigenous stories through Indigenous eyes. In essence we needed to skill up Indigenous peoples to tell their stories.

My grandfather was right in so many ways. I have found that despite all the accolades, the awards, the festivals, the applause and the honouring I have received, I have only ever been requested to view film scripts with Indigenous content or subject matter.

At the time of writing I have only twice been employed as a director (and not as a specifically Indigenous director): on the television show Blue Heelers and on a corporate film. This is an indicator of the broad societal attitude that places Indigenous artists within the ‘undifferentiated other’ (Langton, 2003:113) category.

The placing of Indigenous artists in the category of ‘black artist’ can be disempowering to the Indigenous artist and places us in a category of the ‘undifferentiated other’. Whilst we live as Indigenous people our expertise within the respective fields of our art is often ignored.

Walter Saunders helped Australia experience a renaissance of Indigenous writers, directors, and producers who presented individual views, and diverse cultural voices and film-making practices. In establishing the AFC branch and fostering these filmmakers Walter Saunders was part of the war for equity in representation which is still being fought. Indigenous artists still need to tell their stories through their eyes or in close collaboration with non-Indigenous film practitioners. The work of the Indigenous branch of the AFC dealt a blow to the western view that all Indigenous people were the same.
In 1997 I was the executive producer of a film called *After Mabo-The Amendments* (Frankland, 1997). This film analysed the Native Title debate and the role of the Howard Government in the debate. We forwarded copies to the United Nations and people such as Les Malezer, the then General Manager of the Foundation for Aboriginal & Islander Research Action (FAIRA) and Deputy Chairperson National Indigenous Working Group on Native Title (NIWG) who used the film to lobby the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). CERD investigated and brought findings against Australia for breaching International Human Rights Conventions. Australia under the Howard Government has never adequately answered these findings. Without the creation and development of the branch such a film would never have been possible. The film was a powerful voice for Indigenous people and their rights.

8.2 Theatre as Voice

I shall now discuss the role of theatre in voicing Indigenous culture in Australia and begin by referring to the emergence of the Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre (CAT) in 1968.

At the forefront of cultural, social and political change Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre appeared on the horizon of Australian Theatre in 1968—just one year after the Australian government awarded citizenship rights for Aboriginal Australians. Historically, Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre was a catalyst for cultural, political and social change in Australia, challenging existing assumptions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture, politics and theatre. Negotiating change became a consequence of creating and developing this new theatre experience in Australia. Contact with a Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre experience created a space where both intercultural and intersubjective experiences took place. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal theatre performance practitioners were required to negotiate cultural and social differences as well as allow artistic process for Aboriginal actors and writers to develop. The overall consideration for working with Aboriginal themes or content in a play is respect. Respect for difference in

Here Syron notes how in the process of establishing the CAT both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous participants had to "negotiate social and cultural" space (a mutual and respectful negotiation) in order to effect political and social change in the second half of the twentieth century: Theatre has continued to play an important role in Indigenous cultural and social negotiations.

I have authored a number of plays. Without doubt Conversations With the Dead (Frankland, 2002) was the most challenging. The play dealt with the psychological and spiritual backlash-affect I suffered after my employment in the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (1988 - 1991). The play has been staged in Melbourne at the Playbox (now known as the Malthouse), The Carlton Courthouse and also at Sydney’s Belvoir. The play was a success. Significantly the Victorian Justice Department commissioned a season to show their staff. This resulted in several politicians using the play as a point of reference in parliament in support of the Magistrates Court (Koori Court) Bill (2002). Below is an extract from a Hansard transcript that mentions ‘Conversations With the Dead’.

Magistrates' Court (Koori Court) Bill

Second reading 28 May 2002 ASSEMBLY

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) -- I rise to support this important measure, the Magistrates' Court (Koori Court) Bill, and I sincerely thank the honourable member for Berwick and the Leader of the National Party for their contributions and their fulsome support for this excellent piece of legislation, which comes on for debate on the first day of Reconciliation Week in Australia.
Along with a number of colleagues, on the weekend I went along and saw Conversations with the Dead, a powerful play by Richard Frankland. It is running for a week in Melbourne. Richard Frankland lays bare the hurt and anguish he endured as an investigator with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and also the hurt and anguish of his community. It was extraordinarily powerful. The performance was also attended by the Chief Commissioner of Police and senior police officers, the Chief Magistrate, a number of senior members of the judiciary and senior officers of the Department of Justice.

Perhaps the message of the play was to give non-indigenous people some insight into the pain the Aboriginal community carries, both individually and collectively, because of the wrongs that have been so systematically done to it over generations. I recommend that play. Clearly it is not possible for members of Parliament to attend because the house will be sitting through the week, but when the play -- as I am sure it will -- does another round, I recommend it. Conversations with the Dead, directed by Richard Frankland, is a most powerful insight into the Koori community.

On behalf of the government I am delighted to lead the debate on this bill. The establishment of a Koori court is connected with the concept of empowerment for Aboriginal people and is consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The above reference examples the potential power of theatre as a voice of cultural negotiation not only in the theatre space, but as a voice that can resonate even into important political decision-making processes.

8.3 Song as Voice
There are many people in the world who sing to the land and waters, who sing to navigate, who sing to hurt, to heal, who sing in praise of the creators, who sing for love, who sing to find water, to protect sacred areas, who sing to teach, or to announce their presence,
who sing for or with their children or sing just for the joy of singing and who see the power of song as a gift. Some people even sing for money.

In many Indigenous Australian nations and tribes people who sing are called and regarded as song-men or song-women. One aspect of Aboriginal principles is to use your gifts (such as song) in a responsible manner. Uncle Banjo refers to this idea in his book *Wisdom Man* (Clarke, 2003:233-34). Most song-men and song-women I have met practice their song responsibly.

In a conversation I had with Archie Roach many years ago he said to me, ‘We are song-men Djaambi, you and I, we sing to change the world. We know the pain of songs’ (Roach, 1997, pers. com). It was a moment in my life which began to shape who I was and who I was to become as a song-man. Archie Roach and I recorded the Wiradjuri lullaby song ‘Warinor’ which was released on my album *Down Three Waterholes Road* (Frankland, 1997).

Archie’s words, the manner in which he spoke and the tone of his soul in that conversation resonated in me. He referred to something which had been within our people since the beginning. A recognition of the power and responsibility of song and subsequently of voice.
9. The Story of the Charcoal Club

9.1 Forming the Band

I am the man I am today because of what I have been given and learnt from others. I am the warrior I am because my mother and elders taught me of compassion and my brother taught me of voice and its ability to change the world. In 2001 the voicing of Indigenous issues took another step with the formation of a band named The Charcoal Club.

The band The Charcoal Club was formed by Andy Baylor (one of Australia’s leading Country musicians) and myself. We had run into each other at Office Works a year or so earlier and I had promised to give him some of my poetry. Andy went off with a swag of my poems and came back with fifteen or so songs. Baylor recalls

Seemed like I’d always known about Djaambi. Even when I was a skinny little kid running scared through the bush on the way home from school, I always had this feeling that he was there, hiding out behind some old gum tree, ready to jump out and scare off the Eastend bullies with his spear and his magic. One day, many years later, I actually ran into him.

We were just waiting in a queue somewhere, as you do these days, and we started talking. “I’m looking for poetry that I can make songs out of. I’m good at it.” I confidently bragged to him “Yeah, I got a few poems lyin’ round at home.” he said. “Come over for a cup of tea sometime and have a look”.

We chatted in the queue, catching up on whole lifetimes in five minutes, as you do these days.

Some weeks after our meeting, I went and had that cup of tea, I think I probably had two or three and we talked a fair bit. I guess I was being sussed out. I didn’t think about it at the time, but maybe old Djaambi had a whole council of elders
hiding away in the back room with state of the art listening devices, you know like “24” or the FBI - maybe the tea-cup was bugged. Who knows, but I left that little suburban house, with a bundle of paper - enough poetry to last me a lifetime. (Baylor, 2005: paras 1-5

We had a bit of a play together and I told him about the unofficial club that Kooris spoke about - The Charcoal Club for burnt out blacks and singed whites. So we formed The Charcoal Club. A band for burnt out blacks and singed whites.

Andy Baylor and I are the original core members, although in recent times Monica Weightman, Andrew O’Grady, Harry Lye and Aurora Kurth have become key members. We are managed by John Foss who we regard as a core member of the band as well.

9.2 The Charcoal Club in Theatrical Context
In 2003 Douglas Horton of Chambermade Opera Theatre Company, Melbourne, asked me to direct an Indigenous interpretation of a workshop theatre presentation of the famous Nicolas Roeg film Walkabout. It was challenging. In eight days we rewrote parts of Jane Harrison’s script, set a stage, rehearsed some wonderful actors and put on the show.

Douglas Horton and I had many conversations in this time and we went on to speak of developing another show together. During the Australian Federal Election of 2004 (during which time I was running for the Senate and forming a political community group known as Your Voice) we started to rehearse the music-theatre show The Charcoal Club.

9.3 The Charcoal Club at the Melbourne International Festival
The show opened at the Famous Spiegeltent in October 2004 as part of the Melbourne International Festival. This year the Festival theme was ‘Voice.’ For The Charcoal Club (TCC) to be a part of the Festival was considered a coup. John Foss observed:
‘I’ve always... thought that the Melbourne International Festival is a very prestigious event. It’s one of the largest arts events in the Southern Hemisphere, and I think to have the opportunity to be involved with an event, as part of the Festival, is always a great honour. I know it’s also a privilege because it’s actually very hard to actually have the opportunity to have an event staged, so just to be able to be involved I think’s wonderful. And I think too, with the weight of the prestige that the event carries, that also brings prestige to the work itself as well. So it means that for people who are interested in coming along and seeing the Charcoal Club, they knew they were gonna get something interesting, they knew they were gonna get something of a very, very high quality, high standard, and I think that’s really important, the fact that, the Festival took the project on, and that it went ahead. I think it’s great.’
(Foss, 2005, pers. com.)

Foss goes on to say that the prestige of the Spiegeltent venue gives prestige to the work being performed there. This combination means that you attract a different type of audience that would not normally go to an Indigenous event that was not part of the Festival.

Andy Baylor also felt that it was important for TCC to be a part of the Festival. He commented:

‘...the show we did for the festival was very autobiographical. It was a difficult show to put on because it was a series of the songs... in an autobiographical context, so that they were drawn from Mr Frankland’s life, and it dealt with a lot of stuff that is difficult. Racism, artistic struggle, cultural struggle, voice, all sorts of things came up, and to be part of the Melbourne International Festival was really important...the Festival had that kind of cultural component in it, because it was a story about here, and it was a story about the history of Indigenous people, and a lot of struggles. (Baylor, 2005, pers. com.)
9.4 The eight structural components of The Charcoal Club Performances

The eight structural components of The Charcoal Club Performances were:

1. NAKAYA: an extended version of the story about the birth of my daughter. The song ‘Asunder’ and a discussion about the rationale behind the placing of this song at the beginning of the work which relates to the function of song at birth. In particular I explore the idea referred to in the song about how “I blew my spirit onto her” and how this connects to the idea of ‘blowing of spirit’ on other people/groups/communities. Here I comment on the connection between breath, spirit and voice.

2. FIRST EXPERIENCE OF RACISM: In this section I refer to personal experiences of racism, the nature of racism in Australia and the power of voice in responding against racism.

3. GROWING UP: This section includes the song GYPSY JANE, discussion on the centrality of a family unit, forced break-down of family units, the continuing affects of the stolen generation policy in Australia, the contribution of globalization to the break-down of the significance of family kinship and associated problems arising from corporate commoditisation.

4. THE GIRL – INSPIRATION: Here I explore the significance of beauty and hope in human experience. I also introduce my work as a Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody linking it with ideas about the phenomenology of grief.

5. POWER OF POETRY: In this section I refer directly to the song ‘Malcolm Smith’ which voices the tragic story of the death in prison of Malcolm Smith. This is followed by a video which gives voice to a number of views about what and who constitutes a hero to the contemporary Indigenous eye. Associated issues expressed are further discussed on camera.
6. SETTING UP ‘YOUR VOICE’: Here I explore the background to the setting-up of the political party Your Voice in the 2004 federal election. This is related to the video clip for the song ‘Cry Freedom’ shown as part of the Charcoal Club.

7. MOTEL ROOM AND PUB /ROYAL COMMISSION: In this section I discuss the juxtaposition of human suffering with its portrayal in entertainment industries. I further reflect on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and refer to the song ‘Law breaker’, and video clips entitled ‘Heads Up’, ‘Sorry Business’, ‘Sorry’ and ‘Freedom’. These songs and clips are about negative social perceptions imposed on Indigenous Australians.

8. TASMANIA AND FREEDOM: WHO AM I/WHO ARE WE: In this final section the song ‘Walked into My Memories’ refers to notions of ‘the soul blown clean’ and directly links to ‘I blew my spirit into her’ from section one. The final song text poses the question ‘Yay… Who Made Me What I am?’ which leads into the voicing of a video ‘Message to the World’ since artists have a responsibility to voice their perceptions of the world as they find it. The full transcription of the filmed performance is provided in Appendix 2.
10. Findings and Analysis

10.1 Post-production Reflections
Part of this critical reflection occurred in a number of post-production interviews with cast members of The Charcoal Club. These can be seen and heard in full in the project DVD of the interviews. Interview themes include: art, voice and freedom; awareness of individual, collective and national grief; and how these issues are placed within the Australian cultural landscape and in some cases the universal landscape.

Grief was identified as a central theme. My grief resonated with the grief of performers and audience through song and narratives. This was one way in which TCC became a conduit for cross-cultural awareness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships and issues – a healing process. The performance helped put performers and audience members in contact with their own grief.

10.2 Drawing from Life Experience
Indigenous lecturers, performers and artists draw from their life experience in an attempt to bring about greater understanding of the cultural conflict that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. In some cases this comes about at great personal cost. The reliving, by the retelling, of sometimes horrific events occurs at a personal cost. Often the situations are deeply personal experiences to do with assimilation policies (stolen generation), racist policies, legislative experience, physical and racial violence, observations of violence, trans-generational trauma, direct trauma, displacement and received negative perceptions. Whilst observers of such lectures sometimes comment that this process is cathartic, the process can also have a negative affect that is not recognized by people largely bound-up with the Western Euro-centric Australian psyche.

Reflecting on his performance experience in ‘Conversations With the Dead’ Baylor described how:
‘It was dark, but you could still see. It was dead quiet and you could hear everything….all the things you didn’t want to hear. I huddled in blackness nursing a guitar, the deep-grained wood was stained by tears-my bloody tears. LB sat there adorned with a traditional emu-feather cape like a proud Yorta Yorta queen. She sat quietly in the shadows with tears rolling down her brown cheeks….Mr. PR, old before his time, slumped on the cold slab ground breathin’ heavy, cryin’ and waitin’. Out front Jack was screaming out. He was possessed. His voice thundered and echoed with anger, fear, pain and disbelief all rolled into one. Malcolm Smith was sitting there too, feverishly painting his last tortured picture and trying to get someone to understand what was going on….no one, it seemed, ever really would…. I was there too. I was right in the middle of it all, waiting to sing the songs. I was part of this story too.’ (Baylor, 2007, pers. com.)

I wrote ‘Conversations with the Dead’ to facilitate the voices of the dead and the family members of the deceased. Baylor illustrates that this responsibility no longer belonged just to me, but to all concerned in this particular production.

10.3 Perspectives on the Charcoal Club

Baylor states that the involvement of TCC in the Festival was important for several reasons: the autobiographical nature of the show, the content of the show and subsequently the need for the Festival to have a cultural component within it that addressed stories of Indigenous Australia and their struggles. Further, Baylor’s comments refer to the lack of historical Indigenous representation within the arts world in mainstream Australia.

The Charcoal Club format, content and the way in which it was presented were key to presenting hard-hitting issues such as stolen generation and deaths in custody to a mostly Non-Indigenous audience who had for the most part been indoctrinated with the myths of Australia’s history. The danger of any issue-based Indigenous theatre piece is that you are preaching to the converted or the content is perceived as didactic. Being part of the Melbourne Festival resolved in some ways the issue of preaching to the converted and
allowed us not to have to ‘water down’ our performance content by having to be careful on behalf of the audience. We could say what we felt was needed to be said.

Tamsin Channing observed in her review of the show that:

‘The Melbourne International Arts Festival exists to bring us the best of music, dance and movement from around the globe. Sitting listening to Richard Frankland sing about his childhood, his family, the stolen generation, black deaths in custody, and Australia’s indigenous history, I suddenly became aware how much more I know about French, Chinese or Belgian culture than I do about the original culture of the land I live in. The image of Kathy (sic) Freeman running a victory lap carrying two flags came to mind; we are two co-existing nations, and this is a very beautiful voice from the other side. Frankland’s songs and stories are straight from the heart. Listening to him talk about his mother’s life had me in tears, only to be soothed soon after with a gorgeous ballad complete with double bass and violin. His musicality is evident, and his passion for having his stories heard infectious. He is humorous, down to earth, and extraordinarily moving as a performer. The Charcoal Club received a rauous standing ovation at the end of what seemed an all too short set, and I felt blessed to be amongst it. This show has been the highlight of MIAF 04 so far for me.’ (Channing, 2004:3)

Xenia Hanusiak in her review observed:

‘Richard Frankland’s The Charcoal Club mirrors the format of a TV variety talk shows. But in this talk show, the subjects are not trivial. This is the story of the relationship between indigenous and white Australians. It is also the story of Frankland: raconteur, singer, filmmaker, indigenous activist and humanist. He invites us into his world through songs and anecdotes. Issues of deaths in custody and racism aren’t the ideal cabaret themes. But under Douglas Horton’s deft direction and sympathetic nuance, the material never crosses to a didactic level. This careful modulation creates an open-hearted and inviting feeling. Trina
Parker's minimal set suggests a retro loungeroom/bar. There is dinky television set, a box-pleat curtain, a standing lamp and a projector screen. In true talk show style, Frankland invites a new guest to his gathering every evening.

At the show I saw, Jacob Rumbiak, a West Papua New Guinea resistance leader, was the guest. He was jailed for ten years for protesting against the Indonesian government. His story gave a glimpse of a humble yet overwhelmingly powerful freedom fighter. Throughout the evening, songs by a six-piece band are interspersed with flashback interviews with identities such as Germaine Greer, Peter Phelps and Wesley Enoch. The edits and rhythm of these inclusions are well crafted. This is an important contribution by Chamber Made Opera’. (Hanusiaik, 2004: 9)

I have had the hard duty of investigating the lives and deaths of many people. This changed me immeasurably. This job taught me of the need to facilitate the voice of those who cannot speak, or who have had their voice removed or oppressed.

10.4 Performance as Catharsis
Performance can be a cathartic experience. TCC performers Monica Weightman, Andy Baylor and Harry Lye commented on this process, along with TCC stage manager Kevin Fregon. They observed:

‘…opening himself [Richard Frankland] up to that pain. And allowing us to see the pain that he felt as a human being, as a humane person, you know, it is essential for us all to feel that, and that’s why art is so important, because we get that opportunity, to feel as opposed to thinking logically. You know, we can’t escape from that, and that’s why there’s people in the audience crying, because they’re feeling this for the first time, a lot of them, you know?’ (Monica Weightman, 2005, pers. com.)
‘It’s very confronting. You walk out of the performance and you see Australia in a different light. You see it from the other side’. (Baylor, 2005, pers. com)

‘There’s a lot of very personal stories in there. It was another step in an introduction to basically a whole new world to me. It started me asking a lot of questions about my identity, and my history, and many other things. It was also the first time I’d done something with such serious subject matter. I would say the show had a lot of political content so it changed my views in regards to a lot of the things that I’d done previously. To do such serious subject matter makes you reflect on a lot of other things, and some of it seems like fluff.’ (Lye, 2005, pers. com.)

‘I think in one sense it was very obvious that it was very draining - that there was that personal story, and reliving that personal story for you (Richard Frankland) was a hard journey to ride, and with that, we were all dragged along in it, so to watch you (Richard Frankland) come off that stage, and to realise how much energy that you’ve expelled within that performance. What actually you’d feel, you know I’d be there giving you energy, Monica would be, Andy, we’d all be there pushing on, because we all wanted this story to be told, but I think it was very draining, and I think it’s a really, really hard story to tell, a personal story from anybody’s point of view with that sort of detail about those sorts of emotions.’ (Fregon, 2005, pers. com.)

10.5 Beyond Catharsis: Making a Difference
The necessity of delivering such personal experience publicly is seen by many Indigenous people as an integral way of changing the indoctrinated attitude of many non-Indigenous Australians and Australian institutions. Affirmative policy or legislation is useless if not supported by a supportive action and attitude.

Whilst there were many positive responses to TCC there were also negative, even responses of disbelief from non-Indigenous people. The ‘This doesn’t happen in
Australia’ type of attitude was also demonstrated. This disbelief or non-recognition of the often tumultuous events that occur in Indigenous lives is part of the indoctrinated attitude that Stanner refers to in the opening of my exegesis.

Perhaps this attitude of disbelief is to do with what Stanner (1968) calls “a cult of forgetfulness.” In his Boyer Lecture of that year entitled ‘The Great Australian Silence’, Stanner comments:

…it inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over a time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale. We have been able for so long to disremember the Aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so (Stanner, 1968 in McDonald [ed.] 119-120)

TCC was certainly about remembering. Commenting on her first real experience with Indigenous Australians Kurth observed:

‘...it was really my first, my first experience with Indigenous culture in a way that wasn’t just a sort of textbook reading, or maybe an art exhibition, or you know, something in a museum, this was kind of living, breathing Indigenous culture, in my face, immersed, you know, and at the time Richard was also doing his political party stuff and there was an election coming up and I was, you know, bombarded with facts and meeting different people, strong, beautiful Indigenous people in this country, and it opened my eyes in ways I never imagined.’ (Kurth, 2005, pers. com.)

Here Kurth describes the access she formerly had to Indigenous Australians prior to TCC and the manner in which broader society has placed Indigenous peoples and culture. She
then compares what was accessible and what she accessed through performing with TCC. During the rehearsals with TCC I founded the political party which campaigned under the banner of the ‘Your Voice’. I was running for the Senate as an Independent at the time.

The performers all refer to the fundamental content of the show as being about freedom, personal freedom and freedom from Australia’s dominant tunnel vision view of Indigenous past and present. Kurth observed:

‘... the content of the performance was a one-man story but it encompassed so much of the history of this country that I didn’t really know about in much sort of depth, so the significance and the relevance and the whole experience of hearing the show and being part of the show was amazing, because it just opened my mind. Every night I felt like that, I was on the journey with the audience as well, because there was so much to absorb, because the show was so intense and so layered, really it took me the whole season to even feel like I kind of fathomed what it was about, essentially what it meant to me, and what I want to do now because I know these different stories, and type of Australian that I want to be, I feel like it helped me gain an integrity as someone living on this island.’ (Kurth, 2005, pers. com.)

10.6 Impact of Performance
Below TCC performers comment on how they perceived the impact of the performance

‘The story that impacted me most actually was the story when Richard was out on the deep sea trawlers, and just talking about the freedom and the sense of being on the ocean, and I suppose on the ocean ...they say all men are brothers on the seven seas, it’s that thing about leaving behind what he’d been living with, and stepping into the world of the ocean, and being cleansed by the wind and watching the birds and their different activities and just having this kind of intense realisation about who he was, and for some reason that part of the show, was just
so beautiful ... I don’t know whether I can talk about this, but the performance of
the way that Richard actually dropped into that place, it transported me, and the
audience, you know, to this beautiful place where we are free and we can be
anything that we want to be. . . . Yeah, voice is freedom, but it depends on what
you know. I mean you can speak and have the loudest voice in the world, but if
you don’t know anything it doesn’t really matter what you say.’ (Kurth, 2005,
pers. com.)

‘. . . we need to see it, people need to see it, and it’s through his pain and his vision
that we see. We can go to shows that are all happy, happy, you know, and fine
but it’s not . . . we’re all aching for something real . . . , it really takes somebody like
Richard, or yourself, to stand up and we start to feel. We start to feel, and feel
like we’re actually in a big community. We do have control over community.
We’re not totally controlled by the masses, by the corporates, by the government.
You know, we do have freedom’. (Weightman, 2005, pers. com.)

‘. . . I’ve seen people who, in the shows, the audience members who I don’t know,
but you can see that they’re affected by it. It creates discussion, it creates the
wheels of thought turning. It sets about all these things and that affects a lot of
people. Even though a lot of the subject matter is very sad, and very hard, I’ve
actually only found that a positive effect in my life in a lot of ways. There’s a lot
of hard stuff there, but also it’s good to know the truth. I remember my folks had
a poster when I was a kid and it said . . . had a little rag doll being drawn through a
wring, an old washing wringer, and it said, the truth may make you miserable
but it will set you free, and it does, so the truth can be hard but it’s also, it does set
you free.’ (Lye 2005, pers. com.)

‘. . . It’s about the freedom to be who you are. And with freedom, it’s not given
away, it’s freedom you must fight for, and this is what this story . . . one of the
basic contents of this story is about fighting. So fight for your freedom, and you
will be free.’ (Fregon, 2005, pers. com.)
10.7 Reliving Our Stories

Andy Baylor felt that we have to re-live our stories.

There’s a group of people that come together, and we have to kind of re-live the story, or help live, make the story live, so we have to relate to it on a very personal level. It’s not just like strumming this chord, or whatever, you have to get inside the story, and you can’t help being touched by it. So you’re totally immersed in the story being told, the songs and the anecdotes, and you know, the autobiographical material touches you, and because it makes you think of your own upbringing in Australia, and like when you were at school, or you know, Aboriginal people that maybe you grew up with, or that you went to school with, or people that you knew, if you came from a country town, and it makes you think of the kind of political struggles that you’ve witnessed and been maybe a part of over the years, in the seventies and the eighties, and it just makes you re-live, you know twenty or thirty years of Australian history.

I mean, if you spend a lot of time doing things like the Charcoal Club, you hear a lot of stories about Indigenous struggle, people’s lives, not only that but you get to know people really well and you, you know, not only this show but many other shows, it colours your whole view of Australian society, where we live, the history of the place, and you can’t help being affected, you start living in two worlds in a way. You start… you have your white middle class world, and you have your Indigenous or black friends, and your black reality, and you know, it becomes quite complicated because quite often they don’t meet. Well [TCC] deepens my understanding of a lot of things. Firstly it deepens your understanding of what kind of country we live in, what are some of the issues facing us, our sense-of identity, who we are, where we’re headed. It certainly informs you about, you know the way Aboriginal people sort of have to cope with a whole set of problems that, you know the white population is virtually unaware of, and very unsympathetic to, so it informs you in a lot of ways, and it informs you, it help you find your own identity too, as an Australian musician, and you
know, in a lot of ways it’s a great honour and privilege to be able to be part of telling these stories, one that’s not afforded to a lot of people, a lot of white people.’ (Baylor, 2005, pers. com.)

Baylor felt that the content of TCC and his involvement in its performance provoked issues of narrative and place in the context of an International arts festival.

Weightman recalled how:

‘…one of the most beautiful things was, I remember my Mum said to me, in one of the beginning scenes, you know where Richard’s blowing on Nakaya, he’s blowing his spirit onto her, and he drew that breath in and just sort of did the action of what he did to his beautiful daughter…Mum said it felt like he was blowing the spirit of the Aboriginal culture on to her, and allowing her an inroad to that incredible culture that I’ve always been so in awe of but felt so outside, and I didn’t know how to even broach the subject with people or even talk in a beautiful sort of straightforward way to an Indigenous person.

I felt like I was treading on people’s toes or I didn’t want to be an awful white person, interfering saying the wrong thing and you know that’s a racism that I didn’t even really realise that I had because we’re all the same…David Gulpilil says, you know it’s like we’ve got one red blood, and the more we kind of skirt around each other and think we’re so incredibly different, we’re not going to actually get any further… this country that we’re living in, Australia, is many different things, now, you know in 2005, but it’s only what it is because of the history that it has, and that we need to look at that history and we need to embrace that history, before we can kind of forge a, you know, a beautiful future for this country, because there’s a lot of shit in the back, you know, in the back yard.’ (Weightman, 2005, pers. com.)
In revisiting my story and the perceptions that others have of my story and the story of Indigenous Australia, I have learnt many things. I have learnt that the more I tell my story the more I discover different levels of knowledge, other truths, other perceptions of the story. I began my research questioning the value of Western Eurocentric-academy values to an Australian Indigenous man.

I have learnt that the gateway to academia is only limited by those who feel threatened by others’ experiences. I have learnt to listen more deeply and to learn from that degree of listening. In this way I have had confirmed that culture and story are alive and dynamic and as such cannot be relegated to static perceptions. Importantly, I have learnt that the narrative voice in academe is not to be denied nor marginalised.

I have learnt that voice is the most sacred of all things.
11. Conclusion

11.1 Voices for Change
In this project I have explored my writings, poetry, songs and films and what they mean to me and to others. Through critical reflection of my own experience and through interviewing other individuals, both black and white, I have investigated how my works have helped heal me and others.

I believe art is a voice that can instigate great change. Many Indigenous and some non-Indigenous artists sing, paint, make films, write poetry, plays and generally perform about these issues; the responsibility of these issues; the pressure of living with these issues and in some cases the ideas the artist has about the healing of these issues. In such roles artists can be provocative.

In The Soul of Man Under Socialism (1919: para 9), Oscar Wilde said that:

Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community, and sow the seeds of discontent amongst them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary.


That is, when one plants seeds of change it assists in the evolution of civilisation and humanity. I see this as the role of the artist. Instigating change, provoking thought and planting seeds that may bear fruit in years to come.

I believe that voices of song and story are powerful channels for the expression of heightened reality in performance. Who, apart from myself, the victims of deaths in custody and their families, could possibly understand the depth of feelings attached to the real experience of Malcolm Smith? Who, indeed, would want to? Nevertheless there are
messages to be learnt from the telling of his story – tragic and painful as it is. We cannot use the trick of cultural/national blindness to avoid being aware and having a response to the victims of injustice.

Malcolm Smith’s story and the story of my involvement in his tragedy situates an audience in real places and time - Australia, in custody, in the 1990s, surrounded by non-Indigenous laws and applications of justice, all of which are embedded in an Australian version of history which denies equity and justice for most Australian Indigenous people.

11.2 Handing on Knowledge
I conclude this exegesis with the knowledge that my role is similar to that of other Australian Indigenous men and women. That is, to hand on knowledge, to hand on the use of knowledge and most important, to hand on the roles I have undertaken in my life. It is clear that there are many young Indigenous boys and girls who will one day be men and women with voice. They will become mothers, fathers, elders in their own right. They may choose to become artists. They may be warriors in their chosen fields. They may be activists for their people or for many other causes. Irrespective of what they become they will hand on knowledge as has been done in my cultural since time began. This is what it is, this is what it will always be, this is voice.

I repeat what the Wiradjuri Elder said (see above) : “We see so far because we stand on the shoulders of others.” His words reminded me of what Desmond Tutu (former Anglican Archbishop of South Africa) said when he stated that “We shine because others make us shine.” My research project began with the question ‘In what ways do my lived experiences inform the multiple narratives of being a Gunditjmara man, father, artist, activist and warrior?’ To what extent has my research revealed answers to my question?

I believe that we cannot choose our dreaming path. We can only choose how we can conduct ourselves on it. I hope that in the life I have lived so far I have conducted my
self well. I know from the journey that I am informed by all actions and people if I have the courage to listen and the wisdom to realise I know very little.

In acquiring this knowledge I also know that I must continue to act upon it. So I go on and mentor others in film making, music and the arts in general, as a voice. I continue to facilitate voice. I continue to make films and songs and plays and books. I have learnt that this is my journey. Just recently I had the great honour of working with Victorian Indigenous children in care. I was employed by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency to mentor them and to make a film with them. The project was called Ngaweeyan Thookayngat, - Voice of Children. In analyzing what it was we were actually doing I came to understand that it was far more than just making a film. My role involved becoming a conduit for something far bigger than all of us - something that together we made up. It was, and is, our culture.

11.3 Passing on Voice to the Future
In making the film we went on a journey of discovery. We discovered Indigenous resistance fighters from the last two hundred years. We discovered contemporary heroes, community leaders, good men and women. We discovered that together we were, and are, a collective voice as well as being individual voices. Thus, as part of the process of making the film, the technical, learning about sound and camera, about set design, we also learnt about our flag, and our people. We started our classes by saying hello in language - “Natangwa.” We created a chant that is now used by many Indigenous youth across the country. The chant is “What are you?” to which they reply “Warriors.” “What have you got in your hand? They reply “A spear.” “What have you got in your hand?” They reply “A shield.” “What are you going to do?” and they say with full meaning “Change the world.”

As part of the film-making the process we learnt two songs and recorded them with the Charcoal Club and the ACES (Aboriginal Community Elders Services Elders) choir. We filmed the process. As I watched the elders welcome the children to the stage and hug
them and love them, I realized that a full circle was complete. The children had taken a step to becoming warriors of voice. They were being guided by elders of the Indigenous community and the guiding was subtle yet so deep. The children sang with a particular pride that day, as did the elders. I watched them smile, not just with their faces, but with their whole body and soul. I watched as two young boy-men and two young girls danced a traditional dance for the first time in their lives. I saw them become what they always were, but now visible because they owned their voice.

A voice that was always, and will always be, made up of the oldest living culture in the world.
Bibliography

Books, journals and other text references


Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act,


Ellis, C, (2004), The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, California, USA.


Frankland, R. (1999), No Way to Forget, (unpublished, performed at La Mama, Carlton)

Frankland, R. (1999), Harry’s War, (unpublished, performed at La Mama, Carlton)


Langton, M. (1993), “Well, I Heard it on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television”: An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things, Australian Film Commission, North Sydney, NSW.


Melbourne International Film Festival, (1999), ‘Best Short Australian Film promoting Human Values’, Melbourne, Australia.

*Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth)*,  


Sydney City Council, (2002),  

Syron, Liza-Mare, (2005), ‘Artistic practice in contemporary Indigenous theatre’, University of Wollongong,  

Thayer-Bacon, B. (1997), The nurturing of a relational epistemology,  


Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages 2007,  

Wilde, O. (1919), *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, A.L. Humphreys, London,  

**Audio**


Holliday, B. (1939), *Strange Fruit*, Commodore Records, New York, USA.


Tiddas (1993), *Sing about Life*, Phonogram Recordings, Australia.


Willoughby, B. (1982), *We Have Survived*, Rough Diamond, Australia.

**Film**

Adler, N. and Sherwood, C. (1992), *Who Killed Malcolm Smith?* Film Australia, Lindfield, NSW.

Frankland, R. (1996), *No Way to Forget*, Film Australia,


Roeg, N. (1971), *Walkabout*, Twentieth Century Fox, Los Angeles, USA.
Appendix 1

Massacre Map

Massacre map, Victoria 1836–1850

This map shows the locations of known killings of Aborigines by Europeans for the 18 years between 1836 and 1853. The deaths of several thousand people are represented. Many thousands more died beyond prying eyes.
This map shows the locations of known killings of Aborigines by Europeans for the 18 years between 1836 and 1853. The deaths of several thousand people are represented. Many thousands more died beyond prying eyes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 24 1836</td>
<td>Mt Dispersion, near Euston</td>
<td>Several shot by Major Mitchell and his party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1836</td>
<td>Werribee River</td>
<td>10 shot by Henry Batman and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Geelong area</td>
<td>4 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Western Victoria</td>
<td>3 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838-1841</td>
<td>Western Victoria</td>
<td>43 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1839</td>
<td>Campaspe Plains</td>
<td>40 or more shot by Mounted Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1839</td>
<td>Mt Alexander</td>
<td>13 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11 1839</td>
<td>Western district</td>
<td>15 killed by Mr Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Pyrenees</td>
<td>5 or more shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Western district</td>
<td>Group shot or poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Western district</td>
<td>Almost all Tantgort people ‘butchered’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1840s</td>
<td>Wangaratta</td>
<td>20 or more shot by George Faithfull and his men in a 6-Hour battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10 1840</td>
<td>Konong-Wootong Station</td>
<td>Between 20 and 40 shot by the Whyte brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1840</td>
<td>Western district</td>
<td>3 or 4 shot by party led by Foster Pyans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Dec 1840</td>
<td>Nuntin, Gippsland</td>
<td>Unknown number killed by Angus McMillan’s men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 21 1840</td>
<td>Pyrenees</td>
<td>3 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22 1840</td>
<td>Boney Point, Gippsland</td>
<td>Angus McMillan and his men took a ‘‘heavy toll’’ of Aboriginal lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Grampians</td>
<td>1 killed by J.F. Francis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Mt Bainbridge</td>
<td>3 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Port Fairy</td>
<td>1 killed by George Bolden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Near Lake Lonsdale</td>
<td>20 shot by station owners, cooks and shepherds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>7 poisoned on Henty brothers’ property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Casualty Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 1841</td>
<td>Glenormiston Station</td>
<td>35 - 40 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 1841</td>
<td>Junction of Wannon and Glenelg Rivers</td>
<td>15 - 17 poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 1841</td>
<td>Butcher’s Creek, Gippsland</td>
<td>30 - 35 shot by Angus McMillan’s men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 1841</td>
<td>Maffra</td>
<td>Unknown number shot by Angus McMillan’s men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 August 25 1841</td>
<td>Murray River</td>
<td>30 shot by government troops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 August 1841</td>
<td>Mt Emu</td>
<td>3 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 August 1841</td>
<td>Mt William</td>
<td>1 shot by station storekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 1841</td>
<td>Leighton Station, Hopkins River</td>
<td>2 beaten and shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 December 1841</td>
<td>Port Fairy</td>
<td>20 or more shot by Mr Taylor, station overseer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 1842</td>
<td>Skull Creek, Gippsland</td>
<td>Unknown number killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 February 1842</td>
<td>Caramut</td>
<td>Several killed by station hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 February 24 1842</td>
<td>Mustons Creek</td>
<td>4 shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 February 1842</td>
<td>Port Fairy</td>
<td>10 or more shot by station hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 October 1842</td>
<td>Mt Rouse</td>
<td>9 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 December 10 1842</td>
<td>Port Fairy</td>
<td>9 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 1842</td>
<td>Bruthen Creek, Gippsland</td>
<td>‘Hundreds’ killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 pre-1843</td>
<td>Grampians</td>
<td>5 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 pre-1843</td>
<td>Grampians</td>
<td>2 or 3 Killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 pre-1843</td>
<td>Darlot</td>
<td>3 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 pre-1843</td>
<td>Lake Colac</td>
<td>1 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 June 1843</td>
<td>Warrigal Creek</td>
<td>Between 60 and 180 shot by Angus McMillan and his men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 August 1843</td>
<td>Wannon River</td>
<td>17 shot by Captain Dana and the Aboriginal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 August 1843</td>
<td>Koroite Station, Wannon River</td>
<td>7 - 8 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 1843</td>
<td>Grampians</td>
<td>4 killed by Captain Dana and the Aboriginal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 1843</td>
<td>Fitzroy River</td>
<td>8 - 9 killed by Captain Dana and the Aboriginal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 1843</td>
<td>Portland Bay area</td>
<td>4 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 1843</td>
<td>Western District</td>
<td>7 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 1842-44</td>
<td>Eumeralla River area</td>
<td>200 or more Gunditjmara people shot and poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 1844</td>
<td>Maffra</td>
<td>Unknown number killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 January 1845</td>
<td>Wimmera district</td>
<td>2 shot by Troopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 July 1845</td>
<td>Mt Arapiles</td>
<td>3 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 December 1845</td>
<td>Westernport</td>
<td>7 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 1845</td>
<td>Grampians</td>
<td>1 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 November 1846</td>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>14 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 December 1846</td>
<td>Snowy River</td>
<td>8 killed by Captain Dana and the Aboriginal Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 1846-47</td>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>50 or more shot by armed party hunting for white woman supposedly held by Aborigines. No such woman ever found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 1847</td>
<td>Mt Talbot</td>
<td>1 killed by Mr Stokell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 February 1848</td>
<td>Murrumbidgee Station, Murray area</td>
<td>7 - 8 poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 pre - 1848</td>
<td>Cape Otway</td>
<td>20 killed by government survey party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 1850</td>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>15 - 20 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 1850</td>
<td>Murundal, near Orbost</td>
<td>16 poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 1850</td>
<td>Brodribb River, near Orbost</td>
<td>15 - 20 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 1853</td>
<td>Kangaratta</td>
<td>2 killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 1840s</td>
<td>Port Fairy/Portland area</td>
<td>3 or more killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 unknown</td>
<td>Mt Eccles</td>
<td>30 or more killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Site v51  1842-44 Eumeralla River Area two hundred or more Gundjimara people shot or poisoned (n.d. http://www.korriweb.org/foley/images/history/pre50s/masmap.html, July, 2006)
Appendix 2

The Charcoal Club Text

Germaine Greer: To my mind we had no cultural identity, nothing. And the thing is, of course, that if I say Aboriginality is our identity, then that’s a new thing, because that didn’t exist before. Before this was a commonwealth, this was a huge international society of 400, 450 disparate groups, speaking distinct languages, and three or four of each, so they could deal with each other with their sophisticated system of message sticks and negotiations, and marrying hither and not marrying yon, and so on. So we go from that, which is shattered by now, and we make a new thing. But the Aboriginal people make that new thing for us. And they’ve already done it, because our art is now Aboriginal art, the rest, forget Streeton and Roberts and all that stuff, it was pretty low grade, pseudo-European art anyway, so now we’ve got this whole new graphic language, and Aboriginal people didn’t make that, before they’d made it for us, these are trade objects, these were part of a negotiation, these were like black people holding up *** boards to teach us the dance, you know? We never learnt the dance, of course. Then my idea is, it’s time to learn the dance.

Richard Frankland: I wrote this lullaby on the day that my daughter was born. When she was born, she wasn’t breathing, and she was grey, and the midwife and the nurse were working furiously, and my partner was saying, what’s she like, is she beautiful? And I was saying, yes, she’s wonderful. And after a while she began breathing again. I quickly stole a moment. I peeled the blankets off, and I blew my spirit on to her. Then I whispered her name to her, Nakaya, it means Birdsong in my language. They took my partner to surgery straight away, and then they said to me, Nakaya’s breathing 160 breaths per minute, and we need to take her to special care. So I sat beside her in the special care nursery, and I started to sing this lullaby.
When she came good, I walked with her upstairs, me and my mother-in-law, and I sang the lullaby all the way up, 'til I gave her to her mother. If a man's lucky in this life, he falls in love once. If he's truly blessed he gets to fall in love a few times. I fell in love with my little Birdsong that day.

Would you tear my heart asunder? Just a Fitzroy boy's sweet song for you.
Please hide this needless plunder, and I would sing my song to you. And I will sing my song to you.
Midst all this misery, there's a light that shines for you and me.
And a story can be true, well this love I have won't grow old. Yes this love I have won't grow old.
Well there's a rainbow in the city tonight, that's shining hard, it's shining bright.
And something special's going on this night, 'cause this feeling I've got is feeling right. Well this feeling I've got is feeling right.
Could have written you a letter, oh but my words won't sing on paper.
And I can show you my love much better with these songs I would sing for you.
With these songs I would sing for you.
Would you tear my heart asunder? Just a Fitzroy boy's sweet song for you.
And please hide this heedless plunder, and I would sing my songs to you. And I will sing my songs to you.
Oh can't you see that I cry for you? Don't you know I would die for you?
Don't you know I would die for you?

Richard Frankland: Discrimination can be this big, or sometimes it's about that big. At the end of the day it's all really the same size. Discrimination can be a legislation or a
High Court finding, like one that was recent, where it said, the tide of history has washed away your culture. Or discrimination can be like the change being put on the counter instead of in your hand. Discrimination is a nasty thing. When I was nine, this woman screamed at me, “get out of my house you black prick!” I’d rescued her son at school, from the bullies. They were going to beat him up, so I protected him at recess, and then at lunchtime, and then at afternoon recess, and then after school I walked him home, watching out for the bullies, knowing that they wouldn’t come for him because I was there. We got to his house and his mother gave us biscuits and milk, then she turned around and she looked at me, and she said, “are you that black kid from ‘round the corner, are ya? Are you that black kid from ‘round the corner? Are ya? You look at me when I’m talking to you. You answer me. Are you that black kid from ‘round the corner? Are you that black kid from ‘round the corner? I’m telling you to answer me. Get out of my house, you black prick. Get out!”

Speakers filmed for the live performance echoed my experiences of discrimination and racism. They observed variously:

Speaker 1: People don’t speak to us as human beings.
Speaker 2: Most Australians still believe...
Speaker 1: They speak to us as Aborigines...
Speaker 2: That Aboriginal people are lazy...
Speaker 1: Whatever they think that means.
Speaker 2: Won’t work...
Speaker 1: Horrible things that people used to say...
Speaker 2: Criminal by nature...
Speaker 1: Gin jockey...
Speaker 3: What’s a coconut boy?
Speaker 1: Enjoying the black velvet.
Speaker 3: You may be black, but you’re white on the inside.
Speaker 1: Alcoholics, the boong, drug abusers, the witchetty grub eater, the women being prostitutes...
Speaker 3: A lot of people out there with good will...
Speaker 1: If I had of known you were Aboriginal...
Speaker 3: They basically know nothing about Indigenous Australia.
Speaker 4: In a police station...
Speaker 1: I wouldn’t have served you either.
Speaker 4: I got bashed throughout the evening.
Speaker 2: It’s like they visit Australia like tourists.
Speaker 3: They’ve got this picture of this red headed racist...
Speaker 2: Out of their suburbs...
Speaker 3: But where are the pictures of the Indigenous people?
Speaker 2: And they go in to the interior...
Speaker 1: When I watch telly these days...
Speaker 2: Like tourists, because they know it’s a foreign land.
Speaker 1: You know, I sort of think of McLeod’s Daughters...
Speaker 2: Why do white people all build houses staring out to sea?
Speaker 1: Non-white Australians are just slipping out of public representation...
Speaker 2: Because they’re trying to pretend they’re not here.
Speaker 1: The Indigenous Programs Unit where I made that story is almost invisible within the ABC.
Speaker 3: Well you’re not Aboriginal.
Speaker 5: Marginalised...
Speaker 2: Yeah it’s like a charter.
Speaker 3: You can’t be Aboriginal...
Speaker 2: Give them a crap time slot.
Speaker 3: You don’t drink...
Speaker 2: I’m like...
Speaker 3: You’ve got a career...
Speaker 2: The Aboriginal Yellow Pages...
Speaker 3: You travel...
Speaker 2: Identity...
Speaker 3: How many Indigenous people...
Speaker 5: Loyalty to the nation…
Speaker 3: I’ve seen, gotta make white people feel comfortable…
Speaker 5: It’s just ridiculous…
Speaker 3: When they’re not comfortable. You kind of get organised, there’s an incredible pressure to turn up on time, it’s a silent pressure that you don’t often hear people talk about.
Speaker 5: Barrage of this neurotic white identity problem.

From the age of seven or eight you know discrimination is there. You know that society regards you as a second class citizen, regards you as a problem to society as opposed to a contributor, so you’re placed in a basket, in a category, in a pigeon hole, and you have to learn how to deal with it somehow, so you watch your older cousins, your older brothers and sisters, and your mothers and fathers, your aunties and uncles. You try to make a stand somehow. You try to… what I did was I never took the dole, so I can go to Rotary Clubs and I can say, I’m an Aboriginal Australian and I’ve never taken the dole in my life. They don’t like that for some reason, but I do.

When I was a boy, my dad died. He was a good man. He was a non-Aboriginal man. I was about six years old. He used to say to have a good sense of right and wrong. We lived in South Yarra. When he died, the welfare became more prominent in my life, the assimilation policies were in full swing. I saw my cousins get taken away, and my mother, a wonderful, strong black woman. It was hard for a woman in the sixties and seventies - for a black woman it must have been almost impossible - but she somehow dragged us through, brought us up, made us strong, instilled in us my father’s words, a good sense of right and wrong. Along the way, I lost a brother, on a Good Friday. Four hundred miles away, and fifteen years later, I lost a sister. My mum lost two children. We lived everywhere; Moe., Morwell, Alice Springs a bit, and we knocked about, and it was hard. We lived with this non-Aboriginal family when I was about eleven. They were good people. They had an old nylon string guitar which I used to horse around on. And one day I was sitting in the back, and it was early evening and this non-Aboriginal woman came out. She gave me the guitar. I wrote my first song.
You can give and love once again. You can give and love once again. You can give and love once again.

Running through the darkness, searching for your lies, Gypsy Jane.

And peering in the shadows, and searching for your lies, Gypsy Jane.

Where you gonna hide when the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane?

And where you gonna run when the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane?

When the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane.

When the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane.

When the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane.

When the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane.

(Whisper) Where you gonna run?

So I was seventeen years old, I had an apprenticeship as a glazier and I was in the Army Reserve, and I was living in Orange in NSW, and like any seventeen year old I thought my... I thought I was flash. She was nineteen, had long black hair, a full body, really dark skin and eyes that could touch my soul. She was the type of woman that could dress in a hessian bag and look good. We never even kissed or held hands, but my heart was gone. They were the days when you were an Aboriginal person, you could not dream of being an astronaut, or you could not dream of being a lawyer, or an architect or doctor, because society just didn’t open those doors. Only the selected few got through. But she said, not so much in words or deeds or even actions, just by her very persona, she said I could be anything I wanted. One day, I went away with the Army Reserve and she went to Sydney with some mates. At the time I was the Chairperson of the Orange Aboriginal Corporation, but we had to change the name because there’s no such thing as Orange Aboriginals. So one weekend she went away with her mates and I went to the bush with the Army Reserve, and on a Monday morning, when the sunlight touches your soul, over sweet white cups of tea, and gentle hands and gentle voices, they told me that she was
dead, and I ran all day, and somewhere I found the night, or the night found me, and I was looking for her, in the clouds and in the stars, and I think I worked out that I wasn’t looking for her so much as looking at the things that she said I could be.

Flashes ‘cross the sky, the moon lights up the night.
And branches reaching out for her, scratching at her body in her flight.
(Whisper) Where you gonna hide?
Where you gonna hide, when the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane?
And where you gonna run, when the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane?
When the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane.
When the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane.
When the fires burn so brightly, Gypsy Jane.
When the rain starts to fall, Gypsy Jane.

I used to work in a job, it was the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and I worked there from about 1988 until about 1992. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was established because so many Aboriginal and Islander people were dying in prison cells, police cells and in jails.

It was a bloody hard job. I was the only black fella employed for two and a half states. The first wage they offered me was $18,000 per annum. The second was at $28,000. The white lawyers were paid $43,000. My job was to talk to family members of the deceased, and I talked to lots of mums and aunties and uncles. As a man I think I got to see the world through a mother’s tears, which is a strange but an incredibly beautiful sight for a man to see. About eighteen months after the Commission I was laying on the lounge room floor of my house, and it was like a wall of sadness inside me, and I started writing all these poems, and I wrote them in big letters, like I was trying to understand myself, the sadness. And I wrote and I wrote, and in twenty minutes I must have written
twenty poems, like they’d been sitting there waiting. I think, you know, sometimes you hit a wall in your life, life slaps you down, you’ve got to get up and slap it back. So I wrote this stuff and I showed it to some friends, and they said, oh… one friend, she said, oh it’s not just sad, it’s about hope, and it’s about beauty, and it’s about life, and I kept writing. I ended up having a lot of nightmares for a while. I’d close my eyes and I’d see the faces of the dead, the bodies in the morgue. Most of all I’d see the mothers’ tears, or the grief, the sadness, and it sort of echoed across society in a strange way, for me. So I’m sitting there one day, about a few years after the Royal Commission, and I realised that every morning I’d been waking up and seeing hanging points in my house. I’d wake up and I’d see these hanging points in my bedroom, and I’d see them in my lounge room, and the kitchen, and in the back yard, and I’d fight every one of them, because they’d call out to you. Not that you’d ever do anything, but they’d call out to you.

Brother, come on.

You’d fight every one of these hanging points every day. And every day you’d have to find another reason to beat these hanging points. So I wrote this poem.

When I wake up in the morning, I say to myself, when the sunlight’s golden on your soul, when I wake up in the morning I say to myself, don’t pick up the rope!

In the morning.

When I wake up in the morning I say to myself, when the children are going to school and there’s hope in the air, when I wake up in the morning I say, don’t you touch that gun!

Because you might change just one today, who might touch ten next week, who might touch ten thousand a month after, who might change one, who might be the one to change.
There was one Koorie guy. He was eleven years old when he was taken. They took him and all his brothers. Ten years later they came back and they took, not the sisters, but the sons of the sisters. So two generations of men in the one family are gone, by the one welfare body. I was with his best mate in 1982 when they told him that he was dead. He went really quiet, and he was cutting my hair at the time, and he said, that’s what life is, isn’t it Rich? And I said, yeah Kev, that’s the way it is. Six years later I ended up investigating Malcolm’s death. Malcolm was locked up for the next seventeen years for stealing a pushbike, and only let out for seventeen months of that entire time.

Was a Koorie was Malcolm Smith. Was a reason did what he did.
Was a boy who took a bike. Was a system that took his life.

**How did he die? Did he hear the mopoke cry? No guilt, no shame, just got locked up again.**

Black boy, pedals a bike, laughs ‘cause he loves his life.
Policeman come and say he bad, lock him up and now he’s dead.

**How did he die? Did he hear the mopoke cry? No guilt, no shame, just got locked up again.**

So Malcolm’s a little bit of a tortured soul, and he gets up and he asks this priest for a tape from the Bible. Father, can you give me a tape of the Bible? The police gives him a tape and he listens to it, because Malcolm can’t learn to... he hasn’t learned to read or write, and the parable from the Bible that he listens to most of all says, if thy left hand offends thee, cut it off. Better to be limbless than cast into the fires of hell. So Malcolm cuts off his eye, he starts trying to pluck it out, and beats his head against the cell wall. Eventually they put him into the Malabar Assessment Unit, where he learns to paint, and he paints the Madonna, and he paints all these beautiful paintings, incredibly emotional paintings. His last sketch, however, was a hill with a cross on it, and a pathway leading
up to it, and two gates. Then he puts a paintbrush up his sleeve, and he walks down a hallway, past the prison guard. Goes into the toilet, and slams the paintbrush into his left eye. And he dies not long after that. I've asked often, who killed Malcolm Smith?

Deaths in jail become an issue. Wipe the tears, here use my tissue.

We will help you if we can. Remember all those years again.

How did he die? Did he hear the mopoke cry? No guilt, no shame, just got locked up again.

Tears fallin', years gone by. Don't want to hear you cry.

It's hurtin' me so bad. I knew Malcolm, Malcolm's dead.

How did he die? Did he hear the mopoke cry? No guilt, no shame, just got locked up again.

Ooooh, locked up again. Ooooh, locked up again.

During the filmed performance of TCC one of Australia's brightest athletic stars was my guest – Cathy Freeman. We talked about who and what constitutes a hero.

**Cathy:** My hero was first and foremost my mother.

**Richard:** Why, tell us why.

**Cathy:** Why? Because she loves me unconditionally. She's my mother.

**Richard:** Yeah, of course, yeah.

**Cathy:** Um, she's tough, she's spirited, she's one of the most compassionate people I know.

**Richard:** And what was it like for Aboriginal women in her generation?

**Cathy:** Mmm, not as, different to mine, different to mine. I get a little bit annoyed at my mother because she doesn’t share with me enough of her stories, and I think it's always a little bit of being ashamed, being a little bit embarrassed. I mean because her daughter’s
Cathy Freeman, who lives quite a different life to the life she lived. So we’re kind of from completely different worlds.

**Richard:** And what about... have you just come back from up north, yeah?

**Cathy:** Oh, I was in a little place called Halifax, north of Townsville ...

**Richard:** I know Halifax. I know a cab driver who was a sergeant in the army from Halifax. But that’s another story. So tell us about Halifax.

**Cathy:** (laughter) I um... no, it was fun. I got a letter from this local school principal, from the primary school, who said, ah Cathy, we’d like to invite you up here to spend time with a grade seven student, an Aboriginal little girl, who... yeah, you know, come on up and sit with her and talk with her, and so I said, yeah I’ll do that, provided I can spend time with everybody! I mean...

**Richard:** So you just hung out with them?

**Cathy:** Yeah, yeah, we had a good time!

**Richard:** I had... have you heard of Prince? The man who’s got no name? Well he got up to me once, I was doing an opening act for him, and he sent a message down that he wanted to meet the Aboriginal members of the band, and in particular the didgeridoo player, and we had some white fellas in the band, so I sent a message back, you can meet the white fellas as well, or you’re not going to meet anyone. Well, I lost the recording contract, and me hair, and we got sacked from the gig!

**Richard:** Now um, more heroes.

**Cathy:** Oh heroes?

**Richard:** Grant Hanson, was he one of your heroes?

**Cathy:** Grant, where is Grant? Is he... oh there he is!

Richard: Could you stand up please Grant Hanson, please, stand up, come on, you ’re Cathy Freeman’s hero, come on!

**Cathy:** Oh, just for those of you looking for a little bit of a distraction... no, Grant was one of my early... one of my first friends when I moved to Melbourne in 1991.

**Richard:** Okay. Alright, and another hero?

**Cathy:** Oh, my nana.

**Richard:** Your nana? Oh. Tell us about Nana.

**Cathy:** Oh nana, Alice S...
Richard: Oh okay!

Cathy: She’s um… her father’s from Syria, um but at the age of three she was taken away from her full blooded Aboriginal mother.

Richard: Why did they take her away?

Cathy: And you wonder why I’m so… Why?

Richard: Mmm?

Cathy: Because she was half-caste, yeah.

Richard: Oh, did they do that? John Howard told me they never did that!

Cathy: Oh stop it, stop it!

Richard: Hold on, John Howard said that… John Howard wouldn’t lie would he? And what about that woman that went down on the sub? She wouldn’t lie either, would she? Bronwyn whatsername.

Cathy: No, but I’m really serious! My mother, my nana, and all of the womenfolk in my family, are people I look up to.

Richard: So is your tribe a matriarchal tribe like mine?

Cathy: Yes.

I have been talking about it [meeting Cathy Freeman] for weeks. Not only is she good looking, she’s got hair and she can run. And comes from a matriarchal tribe, I mean that’s destiny, isn’t it? I asked some friends about some heroes on the TV here in Australia.

Naming heroes: Various speakers:

Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

The Cathy Freemans and the Michaels Longs.

Faith Bandler.

People like Sir Douglas Nicholls.

People like Uncle Banjo Clark.
Koiki Mabo.
Aaron Pederson.
My grandfather.
There’s people like Kev Carmody.
Noel Pearson.
Gary Foley.
Lowitja O'Donoghue.
George Rosendale.
Richard Frankland.
(laughter)
Lisa Belair.
Pat Dobson.
Captain Saunders.
Boniface
I know Pat Dodson, I know Mick Dodson, I admire them greatly.
Aunty Margaret Tucker.
Hissing Swan.
My own mother.
Stephen Page.
My dad.
My young nephew.
Bonita Mabo.
Ah, my father, my grandmother, my Aunty Cath Walker.
Pemulwuy.
People like Lowitja O'Donoghue.
Yeah, any Aboriginal person who puts up with me is my hero.

So I had a bit of a plan. I had this job lined up where I was plantin’ trees and pullin’ out weeds. I was going to finish off a PhD, and be an educated Aboriginal, or as a woman said to me once, how are things with the Aboro-ginals? So, a couple of years passed and John Howard comes on the television, with a woman called Amanda Vanstone, and she’s
not the one that went down on the sub. And he said he's gonna get rid of ATSIC. Now I'm not really an ATSIC type of Aboriginal, but nevertheless, ATSIC to me was a venue of political dialogue between black and white, it offered a bit of a direction. And it was a little bit democratic, for the most part. So, I looked at my daughter, who was eight months old at the time, and I said, in twenty years time she's gonna still be justifying her culture, and her cultural depth. So there's two things I had to do. As a father I had to protect her in her family environment, and the other thing I had to do was change the world. So I thought, I'll go out and I'll change the world for my Birdsong, my little Nakaya. So I rang up a couple of mates and we spoke of big things, we said, how come the national identity of Australia doesn't include the five hundred different Indigenous nations and tribes and many other cultures, and it should, it should be all of us together. We spoke about facilitating the voice of the maligned, and we spoke about hope. We spoke about things like courage, and freedom, and integrity and compassion. We spoke about honour. We spoke about being contemporary warriors. Well, we talked and we talked, we drank a little bit of red wine, and one morning I woke up and lo and behold, I was standing for the Senate. Well, he shouldn't have picked a fight with me!

Freedom!

Well they don't like it when I'm marching down the street. I'm only fighting for our rights.

Well how they like to judge the things we say and do, from the safety of their ivory heights.

They say we talk too loud, making trouble all the time. I'm only fighting for what is right, what is right.

Well how they'd like to sit me quietly in the corner, while they tell us all our wrongs from our rights.
And we say, we say, you can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Won’t you cry freedom with me?

Cry freedom.

So there we were, we started up a political movement called Your Voice. And they came from everywhere, radio announcers, part time teachers, CEOs of Songlines organisations, mechanics, house husbands. Not one Coalition member joined though, can’t understand it! My Uncle said to me in the midst of it all, he said, you’ve got to fight hate with love, you’ve got to fight hate with love, he said.

Met a man with time in his eyes, he was so tired all the time.

He laughed at life as he picked up his flag and he said, gonna fight for the world just one more time. He said that choices come your way when you’re marchin’ down the street. You come to the cross roads of your life.

Well follow your heart and follow your feet. Sometimes you gotta stand and sometimes you gotta fight.

Ehhhh, you can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Won’t you cry freedom with me?

Cry freedom.

Sing along if you want.

You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Ehhhh. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Won’t you cry freedom with me?

Cry freedom.

You can’t be wrong if you’re right.
No no no no no no no no.
Can’t be wrong if you’re right.
No, not if you’re right.
Can’t be wrong if you’re right. Oh, won’t you cry freedom with me?
Cry freedom.
Can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Won’t you cry freedom with me?
Cry freedom.
You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Ehhhh. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. You can’t be wrong if you’re right. Won’t you cry freedom with me?
Cry freedom.
Ehhhhhhhhhh, freedom!

Voices of anger
Speaker 1: They’ve done about as much damage as they can.
Speaker 2: John Howard.
Speaker 1: They’ve reached ground zero.
Speaker 2: A man who couldn’t grow into the role of Prime Minister so he shrunk the country.
Speaker 3: Few social skills…
Speaker 2: His ability to manipulate us as a country…
Speaker 3: Little social awareness…
Speaker 2: By doing small acts of …
Speaker 3: Has led to very cloistered existence…
Speaker 2: Herding us into a way of collective thinking.
Speaker 3: Has no understanding of social realities.
Speaker 2: He’s amazing.
Speaker 4: He’s a jerk...
Speaker 2: The consummate politician.
Speaker 4: He’s small...
Speaker 2: Too bad he’s a fucked leader.
Speaker 4: He’s got a... you know, he’s a little, small man.
Speaker 5: They removed...
Speaker 6: People are dying...
Speaker 5: The Chairman of ATSIC...
Speaker 6: Of third world diseases...
Speaker 5: Geoff Clarke.
Speaker 6: And who are living in conditions...
Speaker 5: They removed Dawn Casey...
Speaker 6: That are not above those in some of the poorest...
Speaker 5: From the National Museum of Australia.
Speaker 6: Third world countries.
Speaker 7: I think that any Indigenous person that makes it into their forties...
Speaker 5: They removed Mick Dodson...
Speaker 7: And actually has achieved things in their life, is a miracle in this country.
Speaker 5: From the position of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.
Speaker 8: Having delivered my second child...
Speaker 9: We’ve always had to do things under...
Speaker 8: Waking up in hospital screaming...
Speaker 9: Their guidelines...
Speaker 8: Because I’d had this nightmare...
Speaker 9: Under their way...
Speaker 8: That they’d taken my kids from me.
Speaker 9: Or Aborigines couldn’t do anything right.
Speaker 10: Diversity has kind of... has been a... is a dirty word.
Speaker 9: Our organisations weren’t working...
Speaker 6: In some sense Terra Nullis still continues...
Speaker 9: And we weren’t fixing our own problems...
Speaker 6: In a cultural and social sense.
Speaker 9: There were personal attacks on people.
Speaker 10: Little kids...
Speaker 9: Particular people were corrupted...
Speaker 10: In New Zealand tell little stories...
Speaker 9: Particular people were liars...
Speaker 10: From Maori culture...
Speaker 9: Particular people were misrepresenting history...
Speaker 10: But they can’t do it here in Australia.
Speaker 9: Nine year period of vilification of Aborigines.

The TV’s blarin’. In some fantasy world where some guy, not only looks like he stepped out of a magazine, but they’re tellin’ me that he’s so smart that he could solve... that he could get a doctorate in physics and mathematics, psychology. He’s solvin’ forty five murders an hour. He’s got the girl and he’s drivin’ a Porsche, all on a cop’s wage. It’s 1988, and I’m sittin’ in this dingy little motel room in this dingy little town, and my job is to investigate the deaths of my people in jail, and I’m shit scared. I stand up and I look around the motel. I look at the phone, there’s no-one that I could ring to dump my business on. I look at the newspapers and the deaths of my people are all across the front page, but there’s no point in reading it because they miss the point. I look at Mr Beautiful on TV and I laugh, grab hold of my briefcase, and I start flicking through statements. Mildura, Swan Hill, Echuca, Morwell, Melbourne. And all of a sudden CondaH, CondaH Mission. And I can hear ... all of a sudden I can hear my Aunty’s voice again:

Aunty: He was a great horseman, and a drover. He was very well known in Moama and Echuca, and everyone liked him. Men like him were really great men. The way they’ve been coming across in the Royal Commissions hearings, it’s as if nobody wants them, as if they are just nobodies, that they are unloved; that’s not true! They were dignified men. He was a gentleman.
I closed me eyes, let my imagination take me. And all of a sudden, I seemed to be flyin’ across the land and I can hear... I can feel a horse beneath me. I look to my right and there’s this young black fella, and he’s ridin’ as if he’s born to the saddle. He’s cuttin’ out cattle. He wheels his horse around with great skill and he cuts another one out and he pulls up beside me and he flashes me this big grin, and I think he’s gonna talk to me. But the bloke on TV drags me back to the motel room. He solved another murder and killed everyone. Got himself another girl and a flasher car. Then he went off and became the Governor of California. Me, I just keep lying on my back and thinkin’ of an old man who took a train ride to death.

Speaker: This old man had committed no crime, other than to yell out that he’d missed his station. So why was he locked away? Why was he placed in a prison cell? He’d served his country. Once this old man had been young, and a soldier.

I’d been a soldier. I usually pull back through time and I see another young black man, and this time he’s in uniform. He’s laughing with all his mates, he’s got ‘em all laughing at something. They’re playing two up behind a shed. One of his mates flips the coins in the air, and our bloke looks at me and he points and laughs, then he points at the coins, and I put me head up, and me eyes get burnt by the sun and I find out I’m layin’ back in that motel, and I’m lookin’ at the naked fluorescent light. I look at all the videos that I’ve picked. All of them are kill, maim, disfigure, they’re all escape ones, ones you watch when you wanna escape from the world, and I grab one at random and whack it into the machine, it starts playing automatically, and I stand up and I look out the window at the dark, trying to lose myself or find myself, I’m not sure which, and the phone rings. It’s the woman at reception. Have you put in your brekky order, love? What does she want? I’m thinking. Bit paranoid now. What does she want? Is she doing this out of kindness, or what? Nah, don’t be paranoid Richard, she’s just being kind. Very cooperative and well-mannered, for an Abo.

Speaker: Very cooperative and well-mannered, for an Abo.
Very cooperative and well-mannered, for an Abo, I’m reading this in a police watch house book. An old man’s died in jail, at this jail, and in this police watch house book they’d written about him, very cooperative and well-mannered, for an Abo. Nah, they don’t all hate us, it’s not like that. The theme song from the movie starts playing loud and all of a sudden I’m flashing back, and it’s a beautiful day. I’m standin’ at the front door of a house and I’m knockin’. There’s rock music playing loudly inside and I can hear the sound of a kid’s laughter, the way that only kids can laugh, and a flustered young mum answers my knockin’. We’re inside, sittin’ down and we’re talking. She’s got a photo album open. There’s a young man in the photograph in front of a truck, proudly showin’ it to the world. He’s got strong eyes and a clear look, and she’s telling me the purpose of the truck, and I’m looking at a single tear form on her face, as her dreams are shattered all through her memory. And then this young kid bursts into the room and I can’t believe how much he looks like his dad. The hero on TV bursts into the room and he kills everybody, and solves another murder, and not a hair out of place, and I’d say to myself, what would you do mate, if you were in my shoes? Would you be able to solve the murder? Would you know who killed Malcolm Smith? I light up a cigarette and fill out the brekky order, put my jacket on because it’s cold outside, and walk outside, the cold air dives into my lungs, the stars look really bright, and my countryman Archie Roach starts singin’ in my head.

You took the children away. You took the children away. You took the children away.

You took the children away. You took the children away.

Oowah hah! Oowah hah! Oowah hah! Oowah hah!

Aaaaaaaahhhhh.

Agitators and stirrers are a meddling bunch of people who go down to perfectly content levels of society, and sow seeds of discontent, thereby shaping a better civilisation and humanity.

Heyheyhey.
Agitators and stirrers are a meddling bunch of people who go down to perfectly content levels of society, and sow seeds of discontent, thereby shaping a better civilisation and humanity.

Heyheyhey.

Agitators and stirrers are a meddling bunch of people who go down to perfectly content levels of society, and sow seeds of discontent, thereby shaping a better civilisation and humanity.

Heyheyhey.

Agitators and stirrers are a meddling bunch of people who go down to perfectly content levels of society, and sow seeds of discontent, thereby shaping a better civilisation and humanity.

Law breaker, what laws have you broken?
Law breaker, yeah yeah, laws have they been.
Do they call you people of dispossession?
Are you a hero born, soldier soldier man?
Do they call you people of dispossession, with these laws they made?
Are you a hero born, soldier soldier man?

Oowah hah! It's a long, long time.
Oowah hah! Two hundred years I've been crying all the time.
Oowah hah! Two hundred years, what is yours what is mine?
Oowah hah! Two hundred years, freedom will be mine.
Aaaaahhhhhhh.

**Voice of healing** Various speakers:
Freedom.
Equity.
Future.
Voice.
Integrity.
Courage.
Culture.
Compassion.
Justice.
Identity.
Love.
Integrity.
Spirituality.
Compassion.
Courage.

Down on Conda Mission, we dig our own graves. There’s something special about doing that. Holding that shovel, talking to your countrymen while you’re doing it, sometimes to a non-Aboriginal friend, smelling and honouring the dead. There’s so much death in the Aboriginal community, this… this show wouldn’t be complete without me asking some people about their dead. We call it Sorry Business.

**Sorry business:** various speakers:
I’ve been to more funerals than dinner parties.
I could go to more funerals than I’d care to count.
Oh, we’re going all the time, you know that.
We’ve already lost two Elders.
You hear about one or two deaths a month.
Numerous young people.
One every fortnight.
See this year alone I could have gone to ten, twenty.
I’d say on average I probably go to about four a year, at least.
We can read statistics and then you just see them enacted everywhere around you.
My grandfather died on a park bench.
I had a lot of relatives die as well.
At young age.
Like through diabetes…
Alcohol related.
Or through heart attacks…
My father also died…
Poor health…
At a young age…
Alcoholism…
Alcohol related.
There are lots of Indigenous suicides.
That kind of thing.
So there’s always death.
There’s a lot of suicides.
Half of the funerals that I go to would be young people.
I’m so horrified at what’s happening to young people.
A cousin who took his own life.
There’s all of this traditional explanation.
He basically hung himself under the house.
It’s a cry for help.
Needless, pointless deaths in the community.
They’re emotionally confused.
A lot of pain in the families.
Under the family house, he just hung himself.
The hurt.
He was seventeen.
The question of why.
Well why? What makes them lose hope?
People are dying.
What was it that was said to them that made them lose hope?
Guilt too.
What exactly was said, and who said it and when?
We are not really tackling it.
I think we have to be called to account.
Children are homeless…
Still living under fourth world conditions.
And yet we are not prepared to spend the money we have.


**Voices of Freedom:** various speakers:

Freedom is…

Freedom is being able to feel the wind in your hair.

Freedom of expression.

To be who I am.

To have my say, and be able to have it counted.

To be able to fish without getting a licence.

There’s only one place we find true freedom.

It means that you are not stopped.

It’s in your own mind.

Having the courage of your convictions and being able to act them out.

Freedom to be treated as an equal.

To teach my daughter…

You have to be able to think freely.
Teachings that I was taught by my Uncles and Aunties.  
To own and belong in my own country and culture.  
Freedom to not have to be the same as everyone else.  
And choosing when to do things and when not to do things.  
It’s a responsibility.  
To have a voice.  
Something that we have to be sure that we never take for granted.  
Accept the responsibilities that go with that freedom.  
Not about saying, cutting things off...  
With that stability...  
But opening things up.  
With the affluence that we enjoy.  
Be able to move across this country too.  
We have to fight for other people’s freedoms.  
To do the things that they’ve been doing in this land for thousands of years.  
To be able to speak my own language.  
To be able to determine the future for our children.  

The most free that I ever felt, the most complete I ever felt, I was a deep sea fisherman off the west coast of Tassie. We’d ship out of Corio Quay, and steam for twenty four hours due south, and down there there were storms. These little birds would come and eat all the tidbits of fish around your boat, and they would dive under the water and then they’d disappear, and you would know a storm was coming. And you’d be in this eighty six foot trawler, and it was made small. You’d go down and down and down into this dark hole, and you’d think you were going to go to the very bottom of the sea. You’d be really scared. And then you’d burst through the wave and you’d start climbing this mountain, and you’d go up and up and up, and you’d think you were gonna touch the very sky itself. You get to the top of the mountain and you look out and there’s mountains as far as you can see, and willy willies, dancing from mountaintop to mountaintop, and albatross like gods, flyin’ through the storm. And a wind so cold, and so fierce, I swear to God, it blew the death off my soul.
Walked into my memories, seen a photo of you
engraved so deep in my heart.
The laughter we shared, we came running home,
pushed aside all the cobwebs of the past.

Do you remember, yeah, yeah,
the laughter the love that you gave?
Dreams that kept us together
And all the games that we played.

And I'm standing alone and crying,
just pretending, doesn't matter any more.
And I wonder yeah, yeah, maybe
Will the touch of your love.
Bring me peace forevermore.
And don't you know, and how you touch me, yeah.
And I may have to die...
I may have to die.
But my love won't go away.
Yes I may have to die...
I may have to die.
But my love won't go away.
Walked into my memories,
seen a photo of you,
engraved so deep in my heart.

So life chugs along as it does, and days go into weeks and weeks go into months and months go into years and before you know it, you’ve got no hair and you’re a Greek looking Aboriginal that’s worked as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant owned by a white bloke who happened to be gay. Not that there’s anything wrong with being white. I mean, I grew up with white people, I know what they like. True! I’ve met lots of them. One day I woke up and found out I was in the newspaper all the time, for music or film or fighting the good fight, or something. Not for stealing me brother’s car, or nothing. And one day I was in Cannes, not Cairns, not in Queensland, but in the south of France.

There was these people lined up around the corner, coming to see my film… oh, a film I’d made, and I was feeling pretty flash. They all came in and they played the film, and everyone stood on their feet clapping, and I had this… you know, thinking I was pretty special, and I was trying to remember something Desmond Tutu said. He said that when you shine - when a person shines - they only shine because other people make ‘em shine, and next thing you know that speech I had flew straight out of my head, just as I was walking onto the stage, and all I could think of was my mum, what it was like for a woman in the sixties and seventies, but for a single black woman with a heap of kids, the Assimilation Policy’s going, and the White Australia Policy, how she kept us together, and seen her own sister’s kids taken, and… So I stood there in front of all that mob and when they stopped clappin’, they were all lookin’ at me and I was lookin’ at them. So I said, my name’s Richard Frankland and I’m Gunditjmara, which means Family of Man in my language, and I had a flash speech in my head and all I can think of is my mum, and what she gave up for me to be here, and the next thing you know they’re all on their feet clappin’ again. So they finished clappin’ and I looked at them and they looked at me and I said, you got any questions? And no-one had any questions and I thought, geez I’ve stuffed up here, so I started lookin’ at them quiet, and they were lookin’ at me quiet, and I
thought, I’ll take the fight to them, like my mum always said, and I walked straight down the aisle. As I was going down the aisle this young woman turned around to me and she said, excuse me monsieur, we have no questions because your film answered all the questions. Well they all started clappin’ again, and then they all started crying around, then a few of them come up and started touching me and I put me hand on me wallet, ‘cause that’s what you do when you’re in a foreign country. I know what white people are like. And so they cried around, and I started cryin’ around, ‘cause they were cryin’, and then I got into the foyer and there was more people cryin’, and more touchin’ and stuff, and... yeah. And I sung a song.

See the winter in her eyes, they say she tells no lies.

Old woman in your autumn years, do they listen, do they hear?

When you walk this land, helping us to understand.

When you walk this land, help me to be a man.

So when I came home from the Army, after being in the regular Army for a few years, I went to Condah Mission, which is a bit inland, near Hamilton, and there was my mum walking with her sister, and her cousin’s sister, across the land. And there was a big sea mist that rolled in, and it was strange because it was inland, and I could taste the salt from it on my lips, and that wind was healing my soul a bit, and these women walkin’ where their grandmothers had walked, and where their grandmothers had walked, and where their grandmothers had walked. Where they’d made love, and where a birthing tree was. Where children had laughed and people had been buried, for thousands and thousands of years, these women walked. And I never seen anythin’ before or since that was so natural. And this song, the song fell out of me on that day. I think that sometimes you don’t write a song, it just falls out of you.

Now many years have come and gone, she is standing there alone.

But all these children by your side, wipe the tears from your eyes.
When you walk this land, helping us to understand.

When you walk this land, help me to be a man.

*Sweet ... Sweet ...*

Well, I finally got to that time in my life where, when you get over a certain age, for men, hair starts growing out of your ears. Your knees are really sore and you can no longer do page 127 of the Kama Sutra. It’s just a reality fellas, face it. (laughter) It hurts. And I had no idea who I was. Was I the writer, the director, the activist? The Greek-looking Aboriginal that worked as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant? Where did I fit in the world?

Well, I packed up my swag and I thought I’d better go home. So I left the land of the Kulin Nation, drove out of Wurundjeri country, and started heading west. Went over Boonerong country. To my right was Wadjabuluk and Dja Dja Warrung, to their north were those tribes that are so good you’ve gotta say their name twice: Wadiwadi, Tatitati, Wembawemba, Yortayorta, Wadiwadi, Tatitati, Wembawemba, Yortayorta. Any Yortayorta people here tonight? Stand up brother. Give us a round of applause for this Yortayorta warrior! Get on your feet, you blokes, come on, yay! Wadiwadi, Yorta Yorta hehey! To my left was Wathaurung country and I drove straight through there, didn’t bat an eyelid. Stopped to borrow fifty bucks off me cousin, I was gonna borrow his car, but I had more petrol. Kept heading west. To my left was Denmaar. Now Denmaar means Isle of the Dead in my language. When I die, you fellas’ll be able to go outside at night, see a shooting star going south and you’ll say, Richard J Frankland’s gone home to his people, and you’ll either cry or you’ll say, thank God! You might cry ’cause I owe you money, ha ha. To the right again was Garriwerd, a place where many tribes and nations had met for thousands of years to talk about all sorts of things. In the last two hundred years we talked about important things like the war, the invasion... hair fusion. Kept heading west, through Tjaperong country, then through the country of the Kurai Wurrung people. My countryman Archie Roach, he sung in my head, going home. I’m heading to my land where the cold wind blows up from the south and the whales play in the harbour. Over the Gunditjmara border, into the family of man. Over the Eumeralla River, where the Eumeralla Wars were fought, and in *The Argus* newspaper in 1843, they said, *The
Argus: the Aboriginal Wars are finally over. Feeling good, that wind, the salt touching
my lips, hit Portland, turn right at the roundabout, go down the hill and up the hill, turn
right at the basketball stadium, head down the street. My heart singing, my palms are
sweaty and I’m thinking of my family. And I pull into my mum’s driveway, and I’m
home, and I know exactly who I am.

Who made me who I am. I am, I am an angry man. Hey!

Young girl sits on a train and wonders if she’s insane, when she thinks of the way her
father’s hands touched her body the night before. So she plunges the needle into a
vein and tries to ease the pain. Something I reckon’s been done a million million times
before. As she slips off into the everlasting dark, I’m sure I heard her whisper,
Who made me who I am? I am, I am an angry woman. Well I’m a girl, I’m a girl, I’m a girl,
I’m a girl, I’m a girl, I’m a girl, I’m a girl from the streets. Rrrrrrr:

Young boy walks through the park with a knife in his pocket and they tell me, they tell
me he’s gone huntin’. And a business man leaves a business lunch, way out of
business hours and walks through the park in a business type of way, becomes the
hunted. Later in the night you hear an ambulance siren screaming out as the police
sergeant locks up the boy with blood on his hands and the young boy’s eyes, seem to
whisper, whisper,

Who made me who I am? I am, I am an angry man. Well I’m a boy, huh, I’m a boy from
the streets.

Rrrrrrrrrrr, ahhhh, huh huh, rrrrrrr, huh huh, rrrrrrr, huh huh, rrrrrrr, huh huh, rrrrrrr,
huh huh, rrrrrrr, huh huh, rrrrrrr, huh huh, rrrrrrr.
The lawyer sits in his lawyer office, contemplating his one charity case for the month, and looks at his Rolex and picks up the phone and calls his wife, well hello darlin', how are ya? How are the fifteen houses going? That’s good. Did you collect the rent? Did you throw out that nasty young couple? The pregnant one, you know, wouldn’t pay their rent? Couldn’t pay their rent, ha ha, yeah sure they couldn’t! Aren’t you so glad we voted for interest rates instead of humanity? Oh God yes! What’s that darling? The red Ferrari’s got a flat? Don’t worry about it, just take the blue one. Uh huh?

Who made me who I am? I am, I am a wealthy man. Well I’m a man of the law, I’m a man of the law.

The poor man goes to court seeking justice under law, he says, I must be blind, there ain’t no justice here at all.
The politician sits in his politician office doing those politician type of things, and sees a photograph of himself from some long dead street march and says, where did the idealistic youth in me go? Well hell I don’t know, and hell I don’t know, and hell I don’t know, and hell I don’t know. Huh?

Who made me who I am? I am, I am an honest man. Well I’m a politician, baby.

Who made me who I am? I am, I am an honest man. Well I’m a politician, baby.
Eeeeeehh huh huh, hhhhhhhhh, huh huh, hhhhhhhhh, huh huh, hhhhhhhhh, huh huh, hhhhhhhhh, huh huh, hhhhhhhhh, huh huh.

And somewhere, in one of those treeless overnight suburbs sits a single mother reading a two day old newspaper and she cries for the young girl found dead on the train, and sheds a tear for the businessman’s family, and reads a statement from the lawyer which says, the young boy was locked up by some kind of politician laws, well hell I think of those kids in refugee camps, under barbed wire, coming here for safety, and coming here to be locked up for months and years, and I think of deaths in custody, and Aboriginal children being locked up, and mandatory sentencing, and I think of homeless children. I mean hell, here in Victoria, we’ve got 36,000 homeless and we’ve got money in the bank. I think of equity and justice and the meaning of freedom for me is, equity. I think of voice. And I think of the identity of Australia being five hundred different Indigenous nations and tribes, and the many different cultures that are here now, not some people in Canberra, middle aged men in suits. I think of you and me and us, and who we are, and who we can be, and who we’re gonna be. I think of freedom. Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who made me? Who maaaaaaaade...

Who made me who I am? I am, I am an angry man.

Messages to the world: Various speakers:
My message for the world is tolerance of diversity, peace at all costs, and look after the children.

I guess my message for the world, for the whole world, would be that, um I guess I live for the day when Aboriginal perspectives are going to be taught right across the curriculum in the schools.

My message for the world is, be happy.

My message for the world is really about look inside before you look outside. Look inside to what everyone’s given you in all of your life, before you start looking outside of yourself for answers, or for blame.

My message for the world is that we should respect all human being on this earth, as human beings. Give them respect, and give them justice.

My message to the world is to embrace difference, and to have compassion and understanding, and not just judge people on face value, but find out their stories.

My message to the world is that every single person should treat another human being with respect, dignity and give… allow them to have the right to choose how they will live, according to their own culture.

My message for the world is just to… just to get along.

Oh look, if I have a message for the world, I think it’s stop fighting.

My message for the world is freedom.

My message for the world is that to be truly free, we need to respect each other and love each other.

My message for the world is to appreciate difference, rather than trying to shut it out.

My message for the world is that if we want to actually have true freedom, then we have to accept the responsibilities that go with that right.

My message for the world is, we have all the answers here, we have them in our hearts.

My message for the world is, well, is compassion.

The Aboriginal Republic of Australia, I think that sounds pretty groovy.