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Time to break from Gaza reruns

INTERNATIONAL

Raff Piccolo



The Palestinians in Gaza are unable to seek refuge. Unlike international visitors they have no route of escape. They must hide, run, survive the barrage of attacks from the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).

The reason for their predicament is simple: they are Palestinians. It is a status that they cannot escape, a label they are burdened to carry through no fault of their own, but which nevertheless threatens their lives.

The latest round of attacks on Gaza is not an isolated incident or bout of violence. It is part of a larger ongoing trend that has persisted for over 60 years. Thus it will come to an end soon, and the Palestinians (of Gaza) will begin the process of rebuilding their lives. Like the violence, it is a process to which they have unfortunately grown unaccustomed.

This is not all that Palestinians have grown accustomed to. For those living in the West Bank there are also the regular interruptions to water, electricity and telecommunication services. There's the incursions of the IDF into Palestinian cities, cities which are notionally under the full authority of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Then there are the travel restrictions placed upon Palestinians. As noted above, from Gaza, there is no leaving (unless the need for emergency health care arises). From the West Bank, only those in possession of the requisite Jerusalem residency ID card or a special permit are allowed to leave. The official reason for these impositions upon the lives of the Palestinians is 'national security'.

It is a rationale that has been repeatedly invoked by Israel during the latest conflict. While security concerns have their place, and national security provides (but one) *raison d'être* for the existence of the state, it has its limits. The mass arrests that have occurred (totalling more than 1000) and deaths in Gaza are but the most recent examples of how Israel has crossed the line of actions permitted under the pretence of national security.

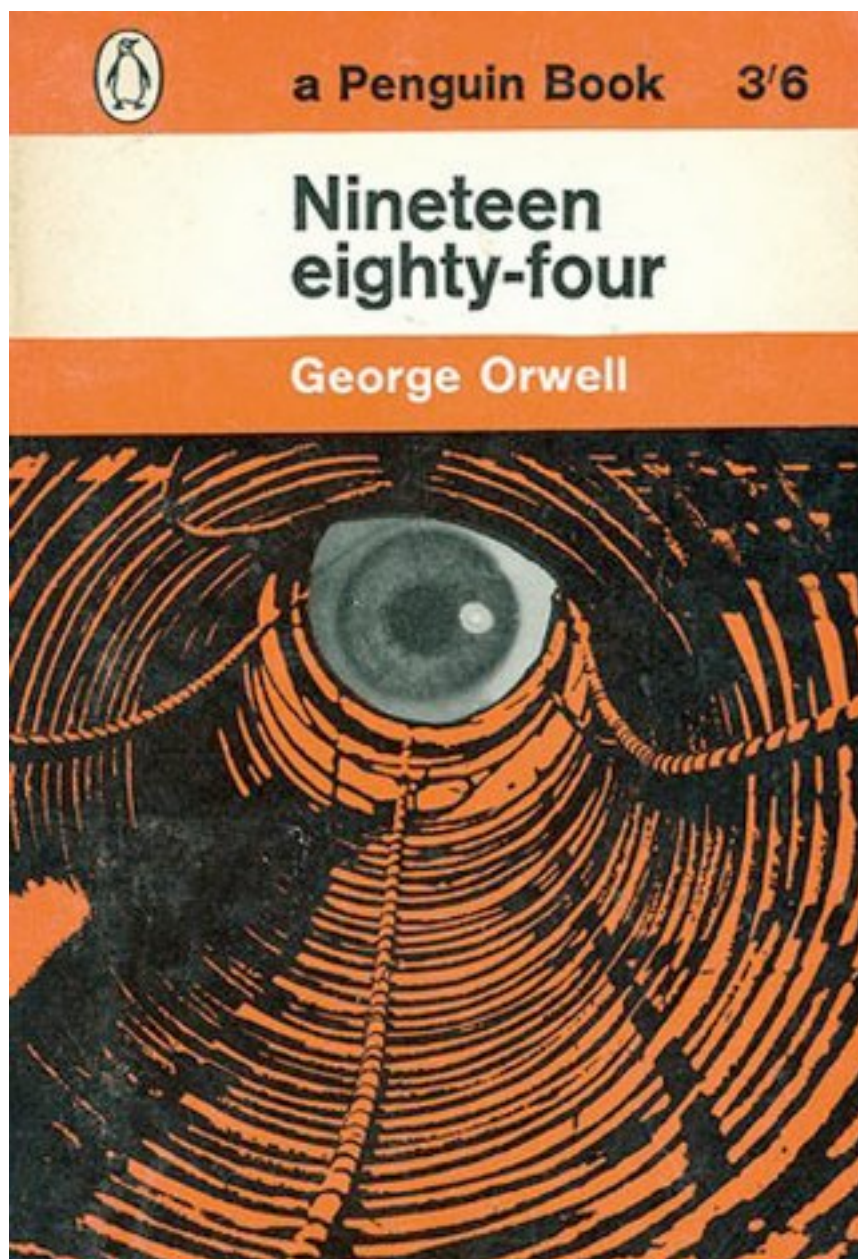
Such actions cannot be justified on these grounds indefinitely. It seems clear that the real goal is not national security but to weaken the PA and the morale of Palestinian people in preparation for the next round of peace talks that will inevitably take place. Weakened, the PA will have little choice but to accept what it is offered. Israel may obtain what it seeks, a weakened negotiating partner. This will not be an entirely new development. The PA has been battling a crisis of legitimacy vis-à-vis the Palestinian people for some time. In the eyes of many Palestinians, the PA simply kowtows to the demands of the international community, seeking to appease the demands of donors rather than the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. As long as Israel invokes national security for its actions, and the international community concurs with its judgements, the PA will continue to be weakened both at home and abroad. But this eventuality should not be welcomed either in Israel or abroad. It may actually undermine genuine efforts to resolve the conflict. With the PA unable to act, hamstrung by the competing demands placed upon it both locally and abroad, and the international community pacified by Israel's invocation of national security, the Palestinians have been left abandoned. This too is something to which Palestinians have grown accustomed. It is just more of the same. What is needed is a circuit breaker, something that will change the dynamics of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. This could take the form of a new approach by Israel that sees them abandon the national security rationale and the associated actions; an approach that recognises the great majority of Palestinians, their national aspirations and desire for peace. To act otherwise may just lead to more of the same.

Raff Piccolo is an Australian living in Ramallah, Palestine, and working in Beit Hanina (East Jerusalem).

Abbott and co. working from Orwell's playbook

REVIEWS

Brian Matthews



Three decades ago the

year 1984 attracted an intensity of noting, analysing and explication rarely devoted to other years. Some new expressions entered the language: 'Big Brother', 'Newspeak', 'Orwellian', 'thoughtcrime'; even the year itself, 1984, took on an enduring weight of meaning rarely granted in the march of time.

Of all the spin-offs from George Orwell's great novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother might be the best known, thanks to reality television. But the Big Brother whose diminishing presence loomed over those tawdry episodes owed little more than his name to the Orwellian original.

In the world of Airstrip One - the 1984 England of Orwell's anti-hero Winston Smith - Big Brother's 'enormous face' gazed from posters on every wall. 'It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.'

Whether he really was watching, no one was sure; he might not even exist. But in a society where in every room and public building the telescreen - 'an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror' flush with the wall, a 'flat screen' in 21st century parlance - followed every move, every word, every changing facial expression, the mere idea of Big Brother was enough.

The aim of the regime in Oceania, of which Airstrip One is a part, is not merely to hunt down, uncover and punish dissident ideas, but also to make dissident thinking actually impossible. To do this, the regime invents Newspeak, a version of English which when complete will be so pared back, so stripped, that it will fulfil its aim of narrowing 'the range of thought'. 'In the end,' Winston's colleague Syme explains to him, 'we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.'

'It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words,' Syme says, '... there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of ... It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms ... what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself.'

'Take 'good' for instance. If you have a word like 'good' what need is there for a word like 'bad'? 'Ungood' will do just as well ... if you want a stronger version of 'good' ... 'Plusgood' covers the meaning; or 'doubleplusgood' [for] something stronger still ... Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year', and that way the possibility of deviant or anti-authoritarian thought is relentlessly narrowed.

An essential element in the diminution of linguistic options is 'doublethink', the capacity to hold or cite contradictory positions without recognition of their mutual exclusivity. During Hate Week, Winston is stunned but reluctantly impressed by a speaker's seamless adoption of conflicting propositions. 'A little Rumpelstiltskin figure, contorted with hatred' was detailing the evils of the enemy, Eurasia, with whom Oceania was at war. As he spoke, 'a messenger hurried on to the platform and a scrap of paper was slipped into the speaker's hand'.

'He unrolled and read it without pausing in his speech. Nothing altered in his voice or manner, or in the content of what he was saying, but suddenly the names were different. Without words said, a wave of understanding rippled through the crowd. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Eurasia was an ally.'

In Airstrip One, it is not just language that is being diminished, not just people's sense of reality and history being shaken when contradictions are denied, promises inverted, and assurances effortlessly manipulated. The capacity for compassion is also undermined so that a quality of cruel disregard enters into the fabric of daily life.

Winston records in his diary - in itself a forbidden act - a cinema newsreel of 'a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean' and how the 'audience was much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away ... then you saw a lifeboat full of children with a helicopter hovering over it [and] a middle-aged woman ... sitting up in the bow with a little boy ... screaming with fright ... and there was a lot of applause from the Party seats ...'

So life in Airstrip One is graceless, demeaning and inhumane for all but those entitled to preferment. Surveillance is increasing, ruling-party secrecy and monopoly on information is rigid, refugees are demonised and language is reduced to sound bites and slogans. The leadership is disjoined from and cynical about the natural world.

When Winston argues that scientific evidence and the universe itself dwarf the Party, O'Brien, a senior operator in the Ministry of Truth, replies that scientists 'invented [the evidence] ... what are the stars? ... They're bits of fire a few kilometres away ... the earth is the centre of the universe. The sun and the stars go round it.'

Just as well it's fiction because it sounds awful doesn't it?

Doubleplusungood.

Brian Matthews is honorary professor of English at Flinders University and an award winning columnist and biographer.

Film compounds real life drugs tragedy

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

All This Mayhem (MA). Director: Eddie Martin. Starring: Tas Pappas, Ben Pappas. 104 minutes.

The story of the Pappas brothers is a tragedy, and not only in the ways that the makers of *All This Mayhem* would have you see it.

Ben and Tas Pappas, from Melbourne's working-class north, took the skating world by storm in the 1990s. Martin, the director of this documentary, knew them as audacious teenagers when they were busy re-invigorating the discipline of vert skateboarding at a suburban skate ramp.

He clips together amateur video footage from those heady early years, with archival footage from the pro circuit, and talking head interviews with Tas and the brothers' peers, to chart their journey to America, the skating mecca, and their erstwhile global domination of the sport. Among other entertaining subplots, the film portrays their fiery rivalry with skating superstar Tony Hawk.

And it doesn't skimp on the drugs-and-sex-addled reality in which they found themselves, fuelled by massive sponsorship dollars and the anarchic skating culture. But this is a cautionary tale, and it makes no bones about the role this lifestyle played in the downfall that both Tas and Ben eventually experienced.

Taken at face value, this is an excellent film; frank, frenetic and compelling. However its treatment of some of the details of Ben's 'downfall', in particular, is deeply problematic. While these are on the public record, the film is best enjoyed with little prior knowledge. For that reason, consider this a **SPOILER ALERT**.

In 2007, eight years after a conviction for drug smuggling had put an end to his professional career, Ben committed suicide. Eight days earlier, his girlfriend, Lynette Phillips, had suffered a violent death. Drugs, and Ben's deep depression, were factors in both deaths.

Meanwhile, Tas' own professional career was severely impeded by a conviction and prison sentence for drug related offences. Despite this, for Tas, *All This Mayhem* ends on a note of fragile hope and possibly even redemption.

Herein lies the problem. After scuppering another filmmaker's previous attempt at telling Ben's story, the Pappas family authorised this version and retained some control over the content. This may account for its questionable treatment of some of the material, notably its sketchy treatment of the figure of Phillips.

Phillips was reportedly a recovering addict who had suffered violence from Ben, and had an intervention order against him. At the time of her death she was studying to become a drug and alcohol counsellor. These attributes suggest a person who was trying to escape, even atone for, a regrettable period in her life.

In 2012, a coroner's inquest found that Ben was guilty of Phillips' murder. But these facts are glossed over in the film. Phillips is presented as alien and inscrutable; a destructive influence in Ben's orbit who, intentionally or not, aided and abetted his downfall.

In this regard the makers of *All This Mayhem* render Lynette as little more than a footnote in Ben's undeniably sad story. While the film does imply that Ben was responsible for her death, this fact seems little more than another stepping-stone on his own inevitable trek towards self-destruction.

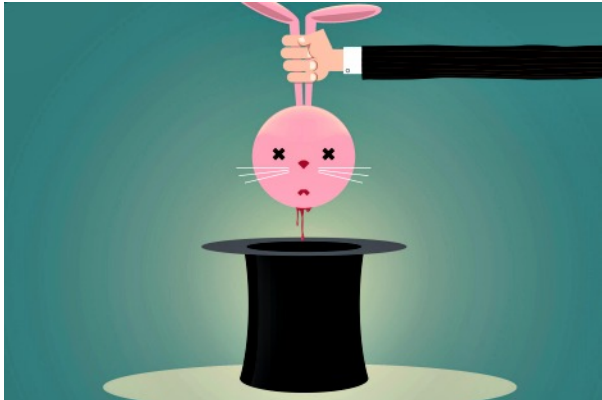
That the film asks for - and skilfully elicits - sympathy for the addicted and clearly mentally ill Ben and, conversely, joy for Tas' chance at redemption, its virtual sidelining of the violence suffered by Phillips tacitly promotes an agenda that would be right at home in the manosphere. This is its greatest tragedy.

Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.

The false bottom of the magician's hat

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton



After reading reports commissioned by Government, my response is often like that of a small boy watching a magician. Everything is presented so reasonably, so logically. You know that an unwanted rabbit will be produced out of the hat, but you can't quite work out how it will be done.

The McClure Review of Australia's Welfare System reads reasonably and pleasantly, commends a variety of initiatives, good and bad, states solid principles, and proceeds logically from a diagnosis to suggested cures. Yet you sense that things may turn out badly for the objects of the report: people who rely on income support. As is usual in magic the secret will lie in the false bottom of the magician's hat. It will have a financial bottom line, but no human bottom line.

The report criticises the present welfare system for being expensive, too complex, not well fitted to a modern economy, and for discouraging people from seeking work. Its suggested remedies are designed to make the provision of welfare sustainable, to encourage people to move from welfare to work, to encourage employers to enable people to work, and to enable the community sector to smooth the path to work.

The dominant concern and strategy of the Report are to move people from dependence to be self-supporting through work. That will both benefit those relying on welfare and reduce the welfare budget. So the Report proposes limiting disability payments to those with a permanent disability, demanding that young people either study or apply for work, ensuring that it will be more advantageous to work than to live off welfare, enlarging the scope of mutual obligation and income management and encouraging social enterprises to facilitate employment.

The Report recognises the need for programs to help disadvantaged people find work. It considers early childhood intervention to ensure that children have access to education, the improvement of service delivery to those with many needs and the adaptation of requirements for participation in study and work to individual need.

This report has many attractive features and others that raise concern. That people should be encouraged to learn and work, that welfare payments should regularly be simplified and targeted to the most needy, that the services provided to people should be delivered in a way from which they can benefit, that business and the community should be involved in enhancing the lives and opportunities of people: these are all worthy ideals.

Some of these proposals may save government expenditure. Others will demand further

expenditure if they are to be effective. If young people are to find work, for example, work must be available. If participation is to be adapted to individuals, people must be employed to monitor their condition. If community groups are to be involved they must be resourced and preferred as tenderers to large corporations that promise economy of scale.

At the same time, large savings may not be easy to find. The Report fails to mention that the percentage of people receiving income support from the Government has dropped by about a third since 1997. This reflects tighter targeting of support to the most needy. It is likely that a high proportion of those receiving support will need intensive support if they are to find work.

So the Government may be forced to name what matters most deeply in the revision of welfare: the flourishing of the people involved - of which education and employment are a part but not the only part - or the cutting of the welfare budget. Its response will show whether it defines people by the economic contribution they can make through working, or by the broader claim they make on society by their naked humanity.

The shape of the Report may encourage a narrow focus on economic considerations. It certainly presupposes a thin account of human flourishing when it urges measures like income management and mutual obligation. Looked at from a broader human perspective they make vulnerable people, whom a poor sense of their own worth already makes dependent and apathetic, even less self-reliant and capable of taking initiative. The savings that increased demands for compliance produce will come from vulnerable people's despair at meeting them.

The Report also encourages a narrow economic focus by attending in some detail to measures that will cut costs, but leaving vague the ways in which disadvantaged people may be helped to connect with society through education and work. The examples given of programs that might be expanded, too, are often deal with relatively advantaged people, not with the most disadvantaged.

For a Government set on cutting costs this Report will be easy to cherry pick by further depriving the already deprived. The risk is that it will not pull a white rabbit out of the hat, but a ferret.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Rabbit out of hat image by Shutterstock.

Wagging the dog

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

My father's reign of mathematical precision

CREATIVE

Nick Gadd



My father didn't like to be taken by surprise.

As a civil engineer, his professional life was a matter of mathematics and rules. Driving over a bridge, he'd quote the equations that ensured it was safe and stable.

'To be at equilibrium, the horizontal forces and the vertical forces must be equal to what?'

This went straight over my head, which was usually buried in a book, probably a novel about an eccentric family in the Greek islands. 'Whatever you say, Dad.'

There were formulae in his domestic life too. Strict rules about stacking the dishwasher. Knives and forks pointed downwards, to avoid careless stabbings.

As for family holidays: the Apollo space missions that put a man on the moon were not planned with more attention to detail. Dossiers were prepared, detailed itineraries drawn up, budgets, timetables, maps marked with multi-coloured dots. Once the trip started, every event was documented in slides to be sorted, boxed and filed away for the years to come.

Dad kept his monthly accounts in notebooks detailing expenditure, bank balances, and cash in hand. He wrote out the figures with a fountain pen, double-checking everything on his old calculator. He never owned a credit card, because they deceive you into spending money you don't have. He regarded the stock market as a casino and never invested in shares.

After dad died, I went through his desk and found a much-used leather blotter, frayed at the edges; lots of spare batteries; two sets of small precision screwdrivers; a Swiss Army knife; seven rulers; two metal tape measures and two ribbon tape measures; ten rolls of sticky tape; six packets of adhesive labels; squared notebooks containing plans of the house and garden drawn from various elevations; numbered lists of household tasks; a small compass on a chain.

There was also a box full of keys, all carefully labeled. 'Greenhouse.' 'Large case.' 'Small

case'. 'Shed.' 'Shed-spare.' Because God forbid that you're caught without a spare shed key.

Dad died on a winter day in 2012. He was shopping with my mother when his heart gave out and he collapsed pushing a trolley outside the supermarket. They called an ambulance but nothing could be done.

The obvious moral, like a Dutch painting depicting the figure of Death at someone's door, would be: 'All your planning can never prevent the final, unexpected event.'

But Dad knew that life was unpredictable, and had his wild moments when young. He led a jazz band at 15, playing professional gigs. He got paid in bunches of notes which he stuffed into a tin, never bothering to count them.

A few years later, World War II pulled him out of university, put him into uniform, sent him overseas. At 21 he was in charge of a train hurtling through the Malayan jungle, hoping there were no mines on the track. Soon after the war, his parents died of cancer in quick succession. Still a very young man, he had a wife and a young family. Life forced responsibility on him. Everyone relied on him.

Perhaps his faith in equations, plans and measurements was his way of eliminating as much of the random as possible. He wanted life to be as stable as a well-made bridge. In some respects I'm not much like Dad. I don't understand maths, and I don't know what makes a bridge stand up. I don't organise my holidays carefully; in fact I migrated across the world without really planning it. I lose tickets. I don't keep monthly accounts, I have a credit card but no Swiss Army knife, and I can't find my shed key.

Maybe it's just not in me to have those qualities-some quirk of brain chemistry sends me to novels instead of equations.

On the other hand, it could be learned behaviour. I grew up in a world so predictable I chafed against it. Dad did all the planning, so I never had to. I put my faith in the spontaneous, the serendipitous, the music of chance. At 21 I stood in front of a notice board of overseas teaching jobs and picked the first one that appealed.

We imitate and rebel in unintentional ways. I had the benefit of a childhood so risk-averse that I've loved surprises ever since. Maybe that was Dad's gift to me.

Nick Gadd is a Melbourne writer whose novel Ghostlines won a Victorian Premier's Literary Award and a Ned Kelly Award. His Twitter handle is @nickowriter

Civil engineer image by Shutterstock.

In defence of judges

AUSTRALIA

John Ellison Davies



Judge Garry

Neilson is in a spot of bother. He is not the first judge to find himself in this situation and he will not be the last.

Judges enjoy a life of privilege and status. In their own courtroom they are feudal masters. They have a private dining room. They get free and secure parking. Discreet security measures envelop them. They live quietly and do not draw attention to themselves.

When one of them makes a mistake, the media jumps all over them. Politicians rant. The controversy is always out of proportion to the alleged error. It may be damaging to a career, even deadly. Judges do not deserve to be treated in this way.

Take the case of a judge who fell asleep briefly during a trial. I accept that he did fall asleep, though I was not there. I have seen many barristers and solicitors fall asleep. I have been close to it on many occasions myself. The air conditioning in courtrooms is universally bad - alternately freezing or stuffy and suffocating. Put into that situation a judge with a certain medical condition and it is not surprising if he nodded off a few times in a long and distinguished career.

The case of Jeff Shaw was equally trivial, though more embarrassing to the judge. What did he do? He was drunk. He walked out of a hospital with *both* blood samples, went home, tried to move his car a few yards down the road to a better parking spot, and pranged it. There were only two sane reactions to this story at the time: 1. privately, a roar of laughter from Phillip to Goulburn Street (haven't we all had a night on the town that got a little out of hand?) 2. publicly, pity for him in that he waited too long to come forward to return the second blood sample to police. As a former politician he should have known better.

Jeff Shaw resigned. He preserved his own dignity and that of his office. What would you have done? Let's get personal. Know thyself.

Why should I defend judges? Because they will not defend themselves. They can't. Their

life of privilege leaves them strangely vulnerable. They are perhaps the last people alive who take an oath of office seriously. They will protect the dignity of their office before their own. They will cop it sweet when a newspaper screams SACK HIM. Thank God they do. Someone has to. That is one reason why I find them interesting human beings. Judges are human. Surprise. Sometimes they doodle while listening to evidence. One does rather beautiful abstract miniatures. Some make shopping lists. Some like to tell jokes or reminisce about other cases. They, like us, try to find ways to make their working day bearable. (Don't forget the air-conditioning problem.) But they are always listening and making notes.

I have seen them depressed, petulant, arrogant, mischievous, jovial, high on the theatre of it all, tired, and sometimes just plain bored. Their job is to make serious decisions that affect other people's lives. They have mood swings, like you and me.

I recall one judge who behaved atrociously in court, abusing witnesses and barristers alike, shouting over them and saying things that frankly made no sense. He had a bad 'flu. During a short adjournment he admitted 'I shouldn't be here.' He knew it. He reined himself in with pure willpower. He still felt terrible, but he recovered his self-control to finish the court case. Judgments take a while to write. He had plenty of time to refer to his notes or the transcript for anything he had missed when not feeling well.

What are judges like? Some general comments can be made. They are logical people. They are mentally quick. They mostly have a fine sense of humour, as you would expect from people of above average intelligence, though their humour often runs on the dry side.

They are not especially creative or imaginative. Some have an educated, dutiful interest in the arts and theatre and keep up with the latest novels. Others are content to play golf or be spectators of other sports. Some have hobbies, like photography.

In court some are gentle, orderly, meticulous. Another is whimsical, as if surprised to be there. Several are crisply efficient in a Captain-of-the-ship style. One seems chronically depressed. One has a jaunty Franklin Roosevelt manner. Others have a wilder temperament, revelling in verbal stoush and aggro - one of these admits that it helps him to stay awake.

They come in all shapes and sizes.

Judges are acutely conscious of their power and do not use it lightly. In civil cases I have seen them agonize over decisions they had to make in favour of people they instinctively dislike, against people they felt to be decent but wrong in law.

Sometimes in a criminal case a judge's hands will tremble when passing sentence. It's a good thing they are up on the bench where no one can see. They feel deeply the responsibility of what they are doing. Only their voices remain firm and unflinching. They are actors when they need to be.

Sometimes they speak of loneliness in their job. I am betraying no secret or confidence when I tell you that one judge delighted in introducing himself with the words: '&'I'm Les. They call me Les the miserable.&'

Sometimes you hear it said that judges are out of touch with community standards, attitudes, expectations. Of course they are. So are you. So is your plumber and your doctor. We are all locked in our daily familiarities and view the world through our narrow prism. It takes an effort of empathy to grasp the way other people live, and to try to understand them. Judges make the effort. Do you?

No doubt judges accept their judicial appointment with a healthy mix of vanity, professional pride, and a sense of duty. They aim to do their best. They plod away until retirement, serving the Law as it functions to hold our society together in some kind of order. You rarely hear any more about them until they fall asleep or make a mistake.

Whatever their mistakes, logic never plays much part in the following controversy.

The State funeral for Judge Bob Belleair in 2005 illustrated how the fairy-tale should end: surrounded and fondly remembered by friends and family, honoured by colleagues. A busy and hearty life celebrated. A nudge and a wink from the media because he was

known to enjoy a bet at the TAB. Public admiration for a man who mixed it with the best and toughest and rose to become a judge. We said farewell to him with the same words he often used to court staff: '&'Good on you!&'

As for the others… perhaps we should simply remember that judges are human. Let's not judge them too quickly, or harshly.

*John Ellison Davies lives in Gosford, NSW. He worked for many years in courts administration. Four of his poems appeared recently in [Eureka Street](#).
Judge image by Shutterstock.*

He taught me how to somersault

CREATIVE

Susan Fealy



The Balance Beam *Balance is noticed most when almost failed of* -Jane Hirshfield, 'Balance' He taught me how to somersault, Shamed me with his arithmetic, Built me a balance beam: Measured out its length, width And depth, planed the Oregon Exact and smooth and safe. He set it above the ground, Let me practise, practise, practise: My body weighted all its edges, Open to his eyes, the air, the sun. **Poppies** for Jan Owen Action beyond their scent-they walk on air, gesture in every direction. Orange, cream, pink and red, they are girls in women's dresses, running-their eyes have no time to blink, each centre wreathed in spiked gold lashes as if while inside their insect bud they learnt to sketch the sun. **Discovered in 1977: Petrogale persephone** *But I prefer Hades where I am more than just a pretty girl …* -Ron Koertge, 'Persephone' Her pelt is mauve-grey: uncombed as smoke. The moment her young empty her milk pouch, a foetus grips her fur. Her paths engrave the understorey--she flirts with gardens. But pink flowers are a threat and blindness infests the slipstreams of cats. Once she dissolved into rainforest, invisible (to science) until the year we discovered how a bomb preserves urban habitat, and a satellite transported a filigree of stars to prove Miss Universe was black. **Instructions for Weaning a Baby** Tell her it's overrated. Tell her she will learn to love the taste of salt-salt on her tongue, grit of the ocean. Tell her, in the morning the sea is milk. Tell her about the sea-line-where the sea and the sky seem to meet. Tell her, in full summer, naked on a beach, the sun drenching her skin is not unlike a flood of milk. Tell her many things are warm and silky in spring. Tell her to drink an armful of roses. Tell her to slice a peach from its skin, let it melt on her tongue, find a way to that room- amber-lit as a jar of peach jam just cooling in a pantry. **The Price of Honey** Her jewelled head lies low in this gold-tessellated chamber. Everywhere she looks, she sees the sisterhood; there's no way out-her wings have forgotten flight. She pulses with eggs at the heart of this strangemasonry of molten flowers. One of her royal daughters wakes, stings her

sisters while they sleep;shrill with treason,the maiden bees mob and butt their ancient queen- until her body explodes with heat



Susan Fealy is a Melbourne-based poet and clinical psychologist. Her poems appear in many journals and anthologies including The Best Australian Poems 2009, 2010 and 2013. She is developing her first full-length collection.

Somersault image by Shutterstock.

Thorpe comes out but homophobia is alive and well

AUSTRALIA

Peter Maher



One of the most astounding outcomes of Ian Thorpe's interview with Michael Parkinson on Sunday night was the self silencing that Thorpe thought was needed to protect his integrity, his sporting career, his relationship with friends, family and fans and his economic future.

Today we imagine discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in Australia is only in the past. Why would anyone need to hide their sexual orientation? The first Mardi Gras Parade in Sydney was in 1978, four years before Thorpe was born.

But Sunday's interview demonstrated that homophobia is far from over in Australia. Thorpe stated 'I don't want people to feel the same way I did. You can grow up, you can be comfortable and you can be gay.' He added: 'I am telling the world that I am gay … and I hope this makes it easier for others now, and even if you've held it in for years, it feels easier to get it out.'

Only after years of painful denial, for a myriad of reasons to do with what others would think of him, or how they would ridicule him, was he able to reveal to Parkinson: 'I'm comfortable saying I'm a gay man.' And, as I saw it, I suspect that there was a little discomfort in saying that.

I have the privilege of supporting young men and women coming out through a ministry to LGBTIQ Catholics and their families and friends at Newtown Catholic church in Sydney. It did not surprise me to hear Thorpe's story. I still hear it from 18 and 19 year olds. They are afraid to tell their parents. Some parents still blame their children for 'insisting on being gay'. Some priests still seem to be advising young people coming out to seek medical and psychological help for their 'problem'.

For many young men and women, it is a struggle to be comfortable with their sexual orientation, and there are still many reasons why they need to plan the timing of their coming out as gay. Family, social, career, religious and financial considerations are all very reasonable concerns, even in post Mardi Gras Australia.

Thorpe recalls the taunts of the school yard and the fears around being different. He was a sporting icon at 15 years of age and had plenty on his plate dealing in the school yard with all that entails. He was certainly different. It is much better in schools these days, but it is still a difficult place to be different.

The Thorpe interview is a media event, but within this story of a man who is still young coming out, there are important lessons for Australian society. Brian Taylor, commenting before an AFL football match just last week, referred to a player he perceived as using an effeminate gesture as a 'poofter'. It seems these kinds of comments are not reserved to boy banter on the school playground. Boys in particular are very vulnerable in their peer groups to such taunts if they in any way exhibit any traits presumed to be 'gay'.

It is still a challenge to be open about sexual orientation. LGBTIQ people still have legitimate fears about how they will be accepted amongst family, friends and various groups to which they belong. People's futures are affected socially and economically, and it sometimes affects their chosen career path.

Thorpe's coming out reminds us that we need to be particularly aware of the pressures on young people who are becoming aware that their sexuality is other than heterosexual. This group is still in danger of depression and suicide, either for this reason alone, or combined with other pressures young people feel. There is still significant pressure on young LGBTIQ people from ignorance and lack of understanding in their peer, social, family and religious groups. More compassion and gentle accompaniment is needed as we find ways to live the comment by Pope Francis on LGBTIQ people: 'Who am I to judge?'

Ian Thorpe should be proud of coming out and let's hope it provides another step in the ongoing struggle against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Australian society.

Fr Peter Maher was recently awarded an Order of Australia medal for his community service promoting acceptance and diversity, including the mass he celebrates at his Newtown, Sydney, parish at 8 pm each Friday specifically welcoming LGBTIQ Catholics.

Clive Palmer's world of surprises

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



Former BBC Australian correspondent Nick Bryant has just published a book titled *The Rise and Fall of Australia: How a great nation lost its way*. He documents the Hawke-Keating policy reforms that continued under John Howard. The reforms got us through the GFC, but their impetus didn't last. For a decade or more, populist politics and vacuous policy have been the norm.

We needed a circuit breaker and got Clive Palmer. He is demonstrating an ability to thwart some of the inequities in the Coalition's Budget and legislative program. But he appears to stand for policy that is confused and inconsistent and lacking in the depth and long-term vision that is sorely needed. Moreover he is perhaps motivated more by self-interest and vengeance than social inclusion.

On the one hand Palmer is effectively performing the 'keep the bastards honest' role that was identified by Don Chipp when he founded the Australian Democrats back in 1977. Palmer is succeeding in his attempt to force the Abbott Government to embrace the tricky challenge of producing legislation that will ensure big business passes on to ordinary Australians the savings it will make from the abolition of the price on carbon. But on the other he plays hardball when there are attempts to scrutinise his own business dealings, as we saw in his instantly famous walk out from Thursday evening's ABC 7.30 [interview](#).

Palmer is nothing if he's not a man of surprises. Nobody expected that he would share a platform with Al Gore, advocating action on climate change. We don't yet know whether this was merely a stunt, or if it will amount to something. If he sets his mind to it, anything is possible, and it might not matter what his motivation is if he is able to make a positive difference. In Twiggy Forrest, we have seen another wealthy and sometimes controversial mining magnate, join forces with world religious leaders including Pope Francis to support a network that aims to end slavery.

It's unlikely that Palmer will do anything to facilitate the serious policy development that we need, and that is probably the role of others. There's the recently established Melbourne Economic Forum, which Professors Ross Garnaut and Peter Dawkins are [promoting](#). It aims to bring together leading economists to analyse policy 'in the public

interest' in a way that is 'independent of vested interests and partisan political connections'.

But while the Melbourne Forum will advocate for a basic fairness that was lacking in the May Budget, their input will only go a certain distance in that it will regard the human person as an economic unit. They are experts in rationality but compassion is not part of their remit. To satisfy the broader human and spiritual needs of the population, it is necessary to pay attention to the vision of leaders like Pope Francis, who has a strong regard for both economic policy and common humanity.

The pope and other religious leaders need to forge partnerships with high profile and entrepreneurial personalities from spheres of influence such as business and entertainment. In joining hands with Al Gore, Clive Palmer showed us that he is capable of forging unlikely alliances that could sidestep certain vested interests in order to make a better world. Clearly he has a mind to cultivate others, and Pope Francis could be on his list.



Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.

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A case of the Ramadan blues

AUSTRALIA

Irfan Yusuf



Well folks, it's that time of year again. The time when your Muslim work colleagues probably aren't inviting you out for a coffee or lunch. When they're yawning incessantly for much of the day and not just for having stayed up late to watch the World Cup. And when they either leave early or scoffing down dates and water just as the sun goes down.

We're in Ramadan. For me, this month couldn't have come any sooner. It's a time of relief, a time when you can add more spiritual currency to your otherwise dwindling heavenly bank account. It's also a time when you're supposed to be nicer than you normally are, not just at times when people are nice to you.

In recent times my mob hasn't received much niceness from certain quarters. Some of the nasties have been inspired by hysteria related to a proposal to build a mosque in Bendigo. What really shocked me about the project wasn't so much the opposition. Heck, we're used to such antics by now.

No, what really amazed me is that all fund raising was done locally. Unlike mosques built yesteryear, this project didn't involve a delegation heading off to Saudi Arabia and prostrating before a prince for oil money in return for naming the place His Eminence Abdul Garbage bin al-Recycled Mosque.

In fact, the only people relying on outside funds were the anti-mosque brigade. The self-styled Restore Australia is based on the Sunshine Coast, and one of its leaders told the *Bendigo Advertiser* that the group shares its ideology with the rather violent far-Right English Defence League (EDL). An anti-mosque 'jihad'. How nice.

I'm not quite sure what Bendigo's largely university-based Muslim community did to deserve so much vitriol. And in this World Cup season, I'm also not sure what Muslims across Australia did to deserve the own-goal kicked very deftly kicked by the fringe group calling itself Hizb-ut-Tahrir (or 'Party of Liberation').

The Festival of Dangerous Ideas is an annual event co-hosted by the St James Ethics Centre and the Sydney Opera House. For years, FODI had been wanting to find someone silly enough to argue the case for honour killings, a rather gruesome form of domestic violence often associated with people associated with violent jihad (no, not the Gold

Coast mob referred to above).

In previous years, FODI managed to get Keysar Trad, prominent self-appointed spokesman for all things Islamic in Australia, to spruik the case for blokes marrying more than one sheila at once. Now that is surely controversial in a country like Australia where blokes wouldn't dream of cheating on their partners. FODI asked me to chair the talk, perhaps hoping they could get two Muslims for the price of one. I refused, preferring to introduce Cardinal Pell.

But I doubt even Keysar would have been silly enough to agree to defend honour killings. And neither was Uthman Badar, the young Sydney-based spokesman for Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT). He agreed for the moral justification for honour killings to be his headline much like I agreed to 'SEX' being the headline for my poster when I once ran on a ticket for a student election.

(I mean, I had to find some way to get apathetic students to read the poster.)

Undergrad antics aren't the best way to get the attention of even the cosmopolitan FODI audience, especially if you aren't the same colour as them and have a name they'd rather not put any effort in to pronouncing. (OK, is that Ootmaarn? Or Ottoman? And who is that bloke writing about you? Is he Earphone of Eefarn or iPhone?)

It's also an awesome way to unite the ABC/Fairfax/Guardian Australia/Black Inc brigade with the Newscorp/IPA/CIS/Quadrant mob. It gives them an awesome opportunity to pretend this kind of thing is only a brown Muslim problem (when it isn't an Aboriginal problem) whilst ignoring the large number of white nominally Christian men who kill their partners.

At the same time, it provides a minority of fringe allegedly radical Muslims an opportunity to channel Malcolm X (before he went to Mecca and realise that black or white shouldn't really matter) and remind us we are all victims of a vicious 'whitey' conspiracy. This crowd want me to believe that the country I live in is a greater enemy of Muslims than, say, Bachar al-Assad.

Seriously, if I want to see oppressed coloured people in Australia, I don't need to visit Broadmeadows or Lakemba. I can see far more oppressed coloured people in Cherbourg or Palm Island. And I can see oppressed people of all colours by working in a regional or metropolitan office of Anglicare or St Vincent de Paul. At a Magistrates Court, I can see victims of domestic violence of all colours and shapes and sizes.

Anyway, enough from me. It's the middle of the day and I have started yawning. Have a happy Ramadan and be nice.

Irfan Yusuf is a Sydney based lawyer and blogger.

Soccer as a Jesuit plot

EDUCATION

Andrew Hamilton



One of the more unlikely pieces of speculation to emerge from the recent World Cup concerned the origins of soccer in Brazil. A historian of the game claimed that it had been introduced by Jesuits.

According to his account, the Jesuits in St Louis School in Itu, near São Paulo, wanted to introduce sport into the college during the 1870's. They thought that the students would derive many benefits from this: 'all the muscles will work harmoniously, and the moral lessons imbibed from sportsmanship will be assimilated by the students through enjoyable and recreational games.'

So between 1879 and 1881 Jesuits from Brazil visited Europe. They visited the school at Vannes where soccer was played. They also consulted Fr Stanislas du Lac, a Jesuit headmaster and a strong proponent of introducing English football into French schools. He believed that football 'promoted the right balance between virility and morality, and was an effective way of forming healthy young people and good citizens.'

From France, the Brazilian Jesuits went to England and particularly to Harrow school. They also visited Germany where soccer and gymnastics were common in Jesuit schools. When they returned they introduced soccer to all Jesuit schools in Brazil. And from there it spread through the whole nation.

Or so the story goes. Jesuits and Australians might find in it many cultural resonances and questions. It seems odd that the Jesuits would have gone to Harrow to see soccer played in schools. The game of football played there was distinctive, and has been seen as an influence on the development of Australian rules. It was played with a large, heavy ball shaped like a pork pie and allowed players to catch the ball and to shirtfront one another. But there is also an early photo of a Harrow soccer team (above) looking suitably lordly and languid. Soccer may or not have meant soccer, and the photo may or may not have had something to do with the school.

Fr du Lac was an exceptionally competent Jesuit educationalist who became a controversial figure in the Dreyfus affair. His father was of noble birth, and Stanislas' first appointment was as Headmaster of the Jesuit school in Le Mans. It was during the Franco Prussian war; the school was requisitioned for use as a military hospital; Fr du Lac administered it.

He was subsequently Headmaster at the Ecole Sainte-Geneviève, a preparatory school for the scientific and military academies. Many of the students graduated to Saint-Cyr, and Stanislas formed friendship with many high ranking military officers. When the Jesuits were expelled from France in 1880, he was the founder and headmaster of a French boarding school in Canterbury.

After the wrongful conviction as a spy of Alfred Dreyfus and its later cover up by the French military, France was bitterly divided between his mainly republican supporters and the monarchists who thought him guilty. Dreyfus was an Alsatian of Jewish descent, and in the aftermath of defeat in the Franco-Prussian war both factors contributed to his conviction and to the later concealment of evidence that cleared him.

Catholics were regarded as monarchists, and in the controversy Jesuits were accused of plotting to overthrow the Republic. Fr du Lac, with his aristocratic descent and association with the French officer class, was portrayed as the archetypical conniving and scheming Jesuit. The plot and the caricature were fictitious, but brought Fr du Lac unwanted notoriety.

Later in his Jesuit life he gave retreats and spiritual direction in rural France, and established credit unions to support poor women workers in the textile trade.

Altogether an ideal person, we might think, to manage a national team at the World Cup. In hindsight, though, Brazil might have benefited even more if he had advised the visiting Jesuits to spend more time in Germany.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Inside the women's lit gender ghetto

EDUCATION

Ellena Savage



I was recently invited to a conference about contemporary women writers. One of my favourite American authors was delivering the keynote, and I jumped at the chance to attend.

This author delivered a lecture about the changing face of the publishing landscape in terms of gender representation, asserting that there was what she termed a 'new universality' in the world of letters. The (masculine) old guard, she said, is on the decline, and is being replaced by a younger, and more gender-balanced type of media comprised of mastheads like *n+1*, *The New Inquiry*, and *Jezebel*, many of which are edited by, and regularly feature, young female journos and essayists, as well as their male peers.

'No one reads *Harpers* any more except for people in doctors' waiting rooms,' she added. And it was a heartening to hear. Except when you began to consider how *Harpers* still pays per word, and *The New Inquiry*, and independent DIY magazines like it, pay a \$100 flat-rate for their long-form essays, and can therefore only really afford to employ young people and women. But that's perhaps another conversation.

VIDA is a literary organisation interested in the issue of female representation in top-tier magazines and literary prizes. They publish an annual report on women's representation in the literary pages of magazines like *Harpers* and *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*: the old guard. By critiquing the inequitable representation, they've urged publications to consider that employing female writers costs magazines neither quality nor profitability. But, the keynote speaker said, women ought to stop beating down the doors of powerful institutions like those, because they are losing tract of their own accord: women should instead recognise that the most interesting and important conversations are taking place in the margins.

I felt emboldened. 'I work for, and contribute to, marginal publications,' I remembered. 'Maybe our conversations really *are* the important ones.' And then the conference ended,

and I returned to the real world.

In the real world, I began a short course in French literary theory and politics. I thought it would be useful for me to better understand the context some of my favourite critics were writing in. I soon discovered that just two of the 20 scholars and authors we would look at in the class were women, and gender would not be addressed at all.

When I politely questioned if there happened to be more women scholars talking at the time, and if gender was something that might benefit the analysis, the lecturer, an otherwise generous and thorough academic, noted the misogyny of the period (the '60s) and said the feminist critics I mentioned would need an entire course of their own.

'Women's lit' needs a course of its own - how original. To segment women's work into a category of its own is to say that it has no bearing on the mainstream. Men's work is universal, and women's work is specific to women. Sixty-five years later, and Simone de Beauvoir still nails it: 'man represents both the positive and the neutral ... whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity'.

When courses about women thinkers and authors do come up, their lectures tend to be populated by women, queer men, and a few sympathetic others. Inside that world, the world I inhabit, it's easy to forget about the real world beyond, where it's very uncommon to hear questions about how gender affects the ways we consume, study, and monetise culture.

Knocking down barriers to access is one way of going about things; the VIDA count has pushed publications like *The Paris Review* to reach a near-equal gender representation in their pages. VIDA's concerns also stimulated the creation of our very own Stella Prize, which is the other way of going about things. That is, recognising the powers operating at the centre, and starting new projects in spite of them.

So how ought we to address this? Feminise the mainstream? Or continue to participate at the margins, and hope that the old guard takes notice of our endeavours?

On the one hand, to begin a project at the margins is to forgo the money and power that is contained at the centre: to write for DIY journals is to sacrifice the per-word rate of the established press. On the other hand, the margins are shifting, and that means the centre is as well: perhaps it is worth holding on to the edge a few more decades, and then find that the edge is the centre and money and power will flow freely, and all courses will consider how women's voices have been marginalised in the history of letters.

Until then, I'll see you at the next women's writers conference.

Ellena Savage is an Australian journalist and editor who edits an entertainment and pop culture magazine in Ho Chi Minh City. She tweets as @RarrSavage

Australia supplying alleged refugee persecutors

AUSTRALIA

Kerry Murphy



While Immigration Minister Scott Morrison sits with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and hands over customs vessels to the Sri Lankan Government for use in preventing people escaping Sri Lanka, the High Court is deciding whether a group of 158 Sri Lankans can be returned to the Sri Lankan Government. How did we get to the stage where we are supplying the alleged persecutors with the means of stopping people from escaping and seeking our protection?

The fundamentalist approach to enforcing the slogan 'stop the boats' avoids addressing what are some of the key humanitarian issues - protection of refugees and treating asylum seekers with dignity. You can save lives at sea and not set up a system that punishes those you have just saved, the two issues are only connected because of the Government has so demonised asylum seekers arriving by boat, that punishing them seems acceptable to the public.

The militarisation of the process allows secrecy to prevail and a complete lack of accountability. It is only because of the High Court that we have any idea what is happening to those intercepted at sea. Labor introduced the flawed enhanced screening process, which was undertaken onshore. Thanks to the Coalition we have the new simplified version, which can be done at sea, all trying to avoid the risk that the asylum seekers might actually somehow get some advice about their rights and have a chance to better present their claims. Even the UNHCR has criticised the process, of enhanced screening at sea.

Since the High Court ruled invalid the declaration by the Minister limiting the number of visas to be granted, the Minister responded by stating he would apply the 'national interest' test in the regulations. This regulation has existed for a long time, but is rarely used. I have not heard of a single case in 17 years of practice. There is little if any law on it, and even fewer policy guidelines.

Asylum seekers will be invited to argue why their receiving a permanent visa is in the

national interest. Given that the Minister has consistently said that no-one arriving by boat would ever get a permanent visa, how genuine and unbiased is the process? Meanwhile applicants are in a limbo, where no visas are being issued, some are kept in detention to move them to Nauru or Manus, others exist in a subsistence way in the community without permission to work and without having their cases processed. Serious mental health concerns are clearly noticed by those working with the asylum seekers. Levels of stress and anxiety are very high, and even worse in detention. In January 2010, the newly announced Australian of the year, Professor Patrick McGorry, mental health specialist stated: "Detention centres ... you could almost describe them as factories for producing mental illness and mental disorder ... it's an absolute disaster,". That was four years ago before Manus and Nauru were re-opened. Now the situation is much worse.

Now a leaked report from SERCO, the company managing the detention centres reports a six-fold increase in incidents of self-harm in detention from July 2013 to January 2014. When it was reported that several women from countries like Syria and Iraq even spoke of extreme self-harm to save their children, the Prime Minister retorts that we will not be held to moral blackmail. This is not moral blackmail, people are being forced to extremes because the pressure on them is so intense and their only way of protest is self harm. Our response is to punish them and vilify them further.

How did we get this far? The obsession with the stop the boats chant ignores the complexity of the situation of people fleeing and claiming asylum. The Refugee Convention does not protect everyone in fear of persecution or ill-harm, just a limited class of people, which is still more than 15 million internationally. An estimated further 35 million may be 'persons of concern' but not strictly within the narrow definition. Australia is not being asked to deal with all of these people, just a small number are seeking our protection. Our obsession with people arriving by boats means we are blinded to the genuine human rights and humanitarian issues. In our bid to 'stop the boats' we have a punishment model that is breaking people.

Kerry Murphy is a partner with the specialist immigration law firm D'Ambra Murphy Lawyers. He is a student of Arabic, former Jesuit Refugee Service coordinator, teaches at ANU, an IARC ambassador, and was recognised by AFR best lawyers survey as one of Australia's top immigration lawyers.

The devastated face of Aboriginal disempowerment

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Charlie's Country (M). Director: Rolf de Heer. Starring: David Gulpilil, Luke Ford. 108 minutes

Charlie (Gulpilil) is a man divided: both a hero and a victim of White Australia, he yearns for a more traditional lifestyle but limited by the boundaries that mark out his existence in the remote community where he lives.

On the one hand, he savours the memory of having danced for the Queen at the opening of the Sydney Opera House nearly half a century ago, and may be found gazing longingly upon a much-perused photograph of the occasion. On the other hand, he lives within the shadow of the Intervention, incarnate in the form of stern if affable white coppers, who confiscate first a gun and then a finely made spear, both held by Charlie with the intention of hunting game. He harbours stoic fury at the presence of these lawmen who reside on stolen land.

Charlie's Country charts, in part, his variously successful, belated attempts to escape his oppression. He is disempowered, but not powerless, not yet. He has quit smoking, and ritualistically burns cigarettes he bums from a younger man in the community. He'd prefer to hunt and forage rather than consume the 'whitefella junk' peddled at the local kiosk, though his emaciated body and persistent cough reveal that he has already suffered much from the 'poisons' introduced to Aboriginal culture since the arrival of Europeans.

One of the police officers, Luke (Ford), is friendly, but can't suppress his latent racism. 'You blackfellas are smart when you want to be,' he opines. Charlie is amenable as far as Luke's good graces serve him. At one point he assists Luke by 'tracking' two shady drug dealers who have come to town, and whose hiding place Charlie himself helped them find. His betrayal of the drug dealers is not unfounded; they've been jacking up the price of the ganja that is one of Charlie's few vices. Charlie may be disempowered, but he's nobody's fool.

One segment in the film is dedicated to Charlie's attempts to abandon White society altogether, to return to his mother's country and live off the land. He spends a night in a cave where the paintings, the stories of his ancestors, invade his dreams, first inspiring then disheartening him with their transience. His rapture at hunting and devouring a feast of fish is soon dampened, literally, by the savage elements, and by the rigours of isolation, which inflame his ill health. He winds up in hospital in Darwin, sick and morally deflated.

Despite his efforts to resist, Charlie is worn down by the strictures of White Australia, epitomised by the Intervention. He has a spell in prison, and we watch in real-time as his resplendent silver mane is shaved to the skin, revealing the gaunt, devastated visage beneath. This is the nadir of his disempowerment, as well as the basis of his eventual

renewal. Later, back among his own people, he realises his obligation to impart cultural knowledge to the next generations. For Charlie, there is affirmation in knowing that the line won't be broken.

This is de Heer's third collaboration with Gulpilil (see also *The Tracker* and *Ten Canoes*), whose participation as co-screenwriter ensures the film provides a genuine Indigenous perspective, rather than just a white man's soapbox. At times it lacks momentum, although its laconic but dogged pace is well in keeping with the character of Charlie. Gulpilil himself possesses a great deal of strength within his wiry frame, and brings a weight of both sorrow and determination to his portrayal. *Charlie's Country* is Gulpilil's film, and it's powerful.

Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.

Stopping the boats at any cost

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton



The last weeks have shown how far the Australian Government is prepared to go in order to deny the claim for protection made by people who come to Australia by boat.

The Government has acted to nullify the effect of the June High Court decision that declared unlawful the cap imposed by the Government on permanent protection visas. The cap, which had been set so low that it effectively excluded all current applications, was designed to nullify an earlier Senate vote that disallowed Government regulations reintroducing temporary protection visas.

The Government responded to the High Court decision by reserving all decisions on permanent protection to the Minister. His decisions, based on a National Interest Test, would not be open to review by the Refugee Review Tribunal. Minister Scott Morrison indicated that he would reject all applications made by unlawful maritime arrivals. Under the National Interest test, no visa would be allowed if the grant would erode the confidence of the community in Australia's Immigration Policy, would offer a product that people smugglers could market, would favour people who arrived unlawfully in Australia over other applicants, or would affect negatively Australia's relationships with other nations.

Like the Dictation Test devised to enforce the White Australia Policy, the National Interest Test would allow the Minister to exclude anyone he wanted. It was also calculated to thwart the expressed will of Parliament and to deny effect to a ruling by the High Court. It was an expression of untrammelled executive power.

The Government's determination to do whatever it takes was also shown in the legislation it has introduced to redefine the interpretation of the duty to protect refugees. Signatories to the United Nations High Commission Convention on the Status of Refugees commit themselves to treat as refugees those with a well founded fear of persecution. The fear of persecution has been taken to be well founded if there is a real chance of persecution. The new legislation redefines a well founded fear as demanding a more than

50% chance of persecution.

This change may seem quibbling with words. But you can appreciate the difference if you imagine taking your sick child to a hospital and being turned away because, although there was only a real chance of her being seriously ill, it could not be said to be more likely than not. Or imagine a woman calling the police to a situation where she feared sexual violence, only to be told that they accepted there a real risk, but that they could not attend unless she could show that it was more likely than not that she would be raped. The change licenses a reduction in the duty of care to vulnerable people.

The third sign of the government's determination to deal with people who claim protection from Australia has been the affair of the Tamil boats. The secrecy with the business has been shrouded is itself a mark of the militarisation of the response to asylum seekers. But the Minister has now disclosed that a boatload of Tamil people was intercepted by the Australian navy, that 41 people and a dog were transferred to a Sri Lankan naval vessel without any proper opportunity to claim protection or have their claims assessed, and were handed over to the Sri Lankan police on arrival. This conduct struck at the heart of Australia's commitments, and was strongly criticised by the UNHCR. A High Court injunction was obtained to prevent the transfer of asylum seekers on other boats.

Taken together these actions spell out what doing what it takes to stop the boats means both for the Government that stops and for the people who are stopped. For people who claim protection it means that they will not receive it from Australia. They can be confident that the Australian Government will not have them or their dogs killed, but they will have no confidence that they will not be placed in dangerous situations or returned to places where they fear for their lives.

For the Government, doing what it takes involves circumventing the will of parliament, ensuring that the decisions of courts will not be given effect and neutering the conventions to which it is a signatory. It sees these things as essential to deter people from boarding the boats.

Many Australians will approve its determination to stop the boats at any cost, and see the suffering of those affected as an acceptable cost. Others will grieve for people whose sufferings are inflicted on them as part of what it takes, and worry for the public life of a nation in which Parliament and the courts are of no account when they interfere with the will of the Government.

And no doubt there will be some with a more partisan spirit who would like the Government to show equal creativity and determination in getting its budget through. And still others who will be quietly satisfied to see a Government set on doing whatever it takes dig its own grave.

When people do whatever it takes the one sure thing is that decency and respect are lost, first for their victims, but later for themselves.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Why Tamils flee Sri Lanka

AUSTRALIA

David Feith



Why do asylum seekers continue to leave Sri Lanka? Why does the Australian government uncritically support the Sri Lankan government? Why has the UN Human Rights Council decided to investigate allegations of war crimes in Sri Lanka? And how are these questions linked?

Systematic discrimination against Tamils exists in Sri Lanka, and has done so since soon after the country gained independence from Britain in 1948.

Tamils are a minority (approximately 18 per cent of the population), and are systematically and routinely treated as second-class citizens by the majority Sinhalese community. The two major political parties are Sinhalese, and both major parties have used anti-Tamil rhetoric and practices to gain Sinhalese political support.

The extreme Sinhalese nationalist view regards Sri Lanka as an island sacred to Buddhism, in which non-Sinhalese have no place. This makes it very difficult for the (predominantly Hindu) Tamil and Muslim minorities to be regarded as equal citizens. Tamils advocated politically to have equal rights for decades following independence, but without success.

This led to young Tamils taking up arms in the 1970s, and many believed that they would only achieve equal rights and justice if they could have their own separate state, Tamil Eelam. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) took control of areas in the north and east of the island, and fought for the separate state of Tamil Eelam, which explains the civil war from 1983 to 2009.

Because of the discrimination against Tamils, they have been leaving Sri Lanka since the 1960s. Many left on migrant visas, travelling by plane to Europe, Canada, USA, Australia, and other places. Many others, particularly from the mid-1980s onwards, left by boat as asylum seekers.

Many thousands of Tamils have fled by boat to India where some live in the community, and some in refugee camps. In more recent years, some have decided to travel to

Australia by boat and seek asylum here.

In Sri Lanka a culture of impunity exists whereby people who criticise the government may be killed. No one is held accountable and no one is punished. This has been a common occurrence for many decades.

A common pattern is that a person who has publicly criticised the government is seen being taken into a white van, with no number plates, and is then never seen again.

Relatives and friends can find no information about the person's whereabouts, or whether they are alive or dead. These disappearances are one example of the outrageous abuse of human rights that are common in Sri Lanka.

The civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE ended in May 2009. In the last months of the war, thousands of civilians were killed, with reliable estimates ranging upwards of 40,000 people.

Since that time there continues to be a heavy military presence in the Tamil-majority Northern Province, and ongoing discrimination against Tamils and Muslims.

Dr. Jehan Perera, the (Sinhalese) Executive Director of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka recently wrote:

The (Sri Lankan) government has made plans to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the end of the war with a ''Victory Day' celebration &hellip; in the Southern Province. But at the opposite side of the country there will be no such celebration. The government has prohibited any public commemoration of the war's end in the Northern Province. &hellip; The disparity between the government's treatment of the North and South shows that the ethnic and political conflict remains, despite the end of the war. The country is geographically and administratively unified but remains politically and ethnically divided and in a state of conflict.

The Sri Lankan government has done very little to encourage or promote reconciliation, and has not implemented many of the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (appointed by this same Sri Lankan Government). Human rights abuses continue. This is why many organisations and countries welcomed the resolution on Sri Lanka passed at the UN Human Rights Council in March 2014, to open an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by both sides during the conflict. Australia did not vote in favour of this resolution, which was a change in approach. In the two previous UN Human Rights Council resolutions Australia supported moves to encourage Sri Lanka to investigate allegations of war crimes. The change in the Australian position is because the Australian government wants to bribe the Sri Lankan government to stop allowing asylum seekers from leaving by boat. The Australian government's simplistic obsession with stopping the boats means it is prepared to overlook the history of persecution of Tamils, and the serious allegations of war crimes, torture, and continuing widespread human rights abuses. This is morally repugnant.

David Feith is a teacher at Monash College in Melbourne and chairperson of Australia-Tamil Solidarity, an organization made up of Tamil and non-Tamil Australians working together to achieve peace through justice for Tamil people in Sri Lanka. This article was first published at Asylum Insight. The image is from sangam.org

Delma's big wide sigh of pain

RELIGION

Steve Sinn

DELMA
JOY YOUNG



*Please join us to remember
& celebrate Delma's life*

Funeral: Friday, 1pm 27 June
The Wayside Chapel
29 Hughes Street
POTTS POINT 2011



When Delma Joy Young prayed she poured her heart out. Her heart was as wide as the pain and anguish that lies deep inside her and our world. On Sunday nights at St Canice's, King's Cross, Christians, Jews and Muslims used to gather to offer hospitality to street people: cheese on toast, hot tea and coffee, cakes.

Before we began serving, we used to sit outside with the street people to pray. I have been schooled to pray in the Christian way, others in the Muslim and Jewish way.

Delma's prayer lifted us to another place. She was untamed and fierce and all the pain and suffering in her and around us and in our world came tumbling out. If God is, as Rowan Williams has said, the 'sigh of compassion' at the heart of our world, then Delma is the big, wide sigh of pain that God responds to.

On 27 June we farewelled Delma in a service at the Wayside Chapel. She was 48. There were hundreds of her friends there, the chapel was packed, people were outside, on the footpath. Her mother and foster mother were in the front seat, her brothers and sisters and their families, her partners and children. Her mother was a 'Cootamundra girl', taken when she was eight, together with all her siblings.

Ricky, her brother, had taken his life some years before. Nathaniel, her son, could not get permission from the prison authorities to be there: 'Will you visit him when you are in Bathurst? Tell him you were here. We are worried about him.'

Mostly the service was people getting up to speak. 'Love' was the word most used. There is not much else in life for the people there, not much they have left except one another and love. It was flowing, as were the tears. Sally looked up from her knitting and said as I passed her on my way in: 'There are too many deaths.' I remembered the words of my friend, Greg Thompson, when he was Bishop of Darwin: 'Aboriginals here don't have leaders. They die too young.'

Once when I was the priest at St Canice's, Delma was distraught. She was walking up and down the middle of Roslyn Street, wailing. People were leaning out of their windows, calling out for someone to do something. Delma kept on wailing, cars swerved to avoid her. She sat down on the steps of an apartment building and I sat next to her.

I put my arms over her shoulders: 'It's all-right Delma, its okay.' She turned and looked at me: 'Don't tell me it's all-right. It's not all-right. My grandmother is being buried today.' I understood. It wasn't just for her grandmother, it was for all the wrongs, all the anguish, the suffering, the pain, the separation from her family, land, culture, her children.

All the neglect, the well-meaning hypocrisy, the disempowerment, the silencing. All her self-recrimination, anger, fear, struggle. It was pouring out and I was not comfortable. I thought perhaps if I could get her to the presbytery she would settle down. Instead she went into the bathroom, sat on the floor and wailed all the louder. What was I to do? I couldn't stay with her.

She could keep this up all day and I had things to do. I couldn't leave her there. She would disturb Elizabeth and others in the office. I called an ambulance. As she was carted out, she looked up from the stretcher: 'You betrayed me.'

I have often thought of that day. When those Aboriginal tent embassy activists in Canberra attacked Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott, I understood their anger, even as I was disturbed by it. I had Delma carted off to hospital and sedated. If I had been in the desert, with no one else around to worry about and nothing to do, maybe I could have heard her grief. Allowed it. Let it have its day and natural span. I had her grief anaesthetised. If we let it all come out there would be a real shake up and righting of wrongs. Is that what prayer is, letting it all come out?

Delma never held that day against me. In her deep way, she understood I was the one who needed her compassion, her love. She gave it in spades. I was a father to her and she poured out her life and trust to me. To many. We all remembered her hugs. Her spirit was so big and wide and strong, so given to us. All of us in that chapel know she is still alive.

I am glad she has been released from her suffering. Gilbert, the father of her two

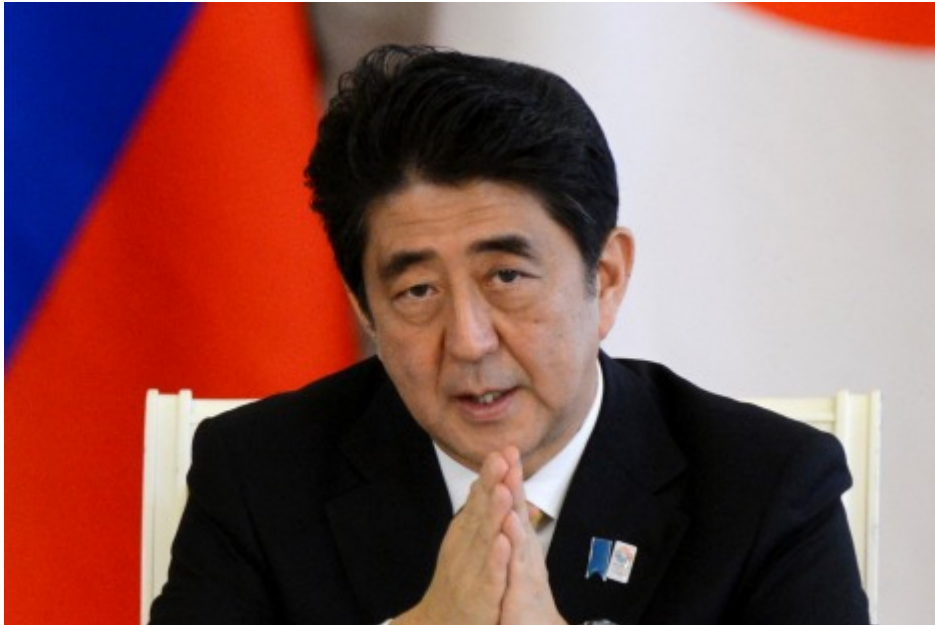
children, pointed to his heart: 'She lives there.' Her extended aboriginal family sang and danced her from the chapel. Those beautiful young people, those haunting sounds; the whip lash sounding conclusion. They were proud and together. I am remembering it all, Delma's last word to us, to me.

Steve Sinn SJ is the long time former parish priest of St Canice's, King's Cross, and now works in retreat ministry in rural NSW.

Abe here to spruik his invigorated Japan

AUSTRALIA

Walter Hamilton



23 years ago I published a book called *Serendipity City* about a Japanese proposal to build a 'multifunction polis' in Australia: an urban development combining work and leisure, with the highest environmental values and modern amenities. The MFP was attacked from pillar to post. Critics on the Left likened it to Japan's Manchurian adventure; critics on the Right warned of a flood of Asian immigration.

I mention this bit of history to highlight the contrast between the hysteria then, when Japan came offering us a different sort of relationship, and the general complacency today when Australia and Japan are entering into economic and security commitments of greater consequence than any multifunction polis.

In recent years this has produced a Security Co-operation Agreement, an Acquisition and Joint-Serving Agreement (facilitating joint military exercises and exchanges of military technology and hardware) and an Economic Partnership (aka 'free trade') Agreement. At a political level, especially since the return to power of conservative governments in both countries, relations have never been closer.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, while in Canberra this week, is joining a meeting of the National Security Committee and address Parliament - the first Japanese leader to do so. Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, who came this way in 1957, would describe Japan's relationship with Australia as 'the next closest' after the United States. It seems we have come full circle, and the emergence of China has counted for nothing.

Without wishing to be ungracious, however, what is Australia buying into with Abe? On the plus side, he has undoubtedly lifted Japanese spirits after decades of economic malaise: industrial output is ticking up, deflation is receding and nominal wages are rising. But the economy is not out of the woods yet (energy imports have risen enormously since the nuclear reactors were shut down), and numerous structural impediments remain.

On the negative side, Abe has done nothing to repair relations with China and South

Korea damaged prior to his taking office. Indeed, he has made things worse. Abe is an unabashed nationalist who believes the pacifist constitution Japan adopted during the Allied Occupation has outlived its usefulness. His Cabinet's recent decision to 'reinterpret' the constitution in order to embrace the right of 'collective defence', i.e. the right to fight alongside other powers to defend the nation, was taken despite majority public opposition. Abe could have put forward a constitutional amendment, but knowing this would fail he chose the less democratic route. Australia and the United States have both welcomed the change despite its legal fragility.

Abe's perspective on modern history would also offend most Australians. He sits in the camp that believes Japan fought a defensive war and that the younger generation should be taught to admire past achievements rather than dwell on errors. Though his government has backed away from revising the Kono Statement of 1993, which admitted that the Imperial Japanese Army forced women (mainly Korean women) to work in military-run brothels, few would doubt that Abe disagrees.

Another worrying aspect is his assiduous cultivation of senior news editors. He wines and dines them much more than his predecessors, ensuring his administration receives a softer ride than the former centre-left government. The national broadcaster, NHK, where Abe has installed a tame president, is conspicuous for its uncritical handling of contentious issues: another subject on which Shinzo and Tony might enjoy exchanging views.

While he is here, Abe is seeking to reassure Australians that a more assertive Japan will be better at keeping the peace than one hobbled by an outdated dependence on others for security - he has said so to his own people. Perhaps he is right. Canberra, on the whole, thinks he is. Abe and Abbott will adopt a series of measures for strengthening joint military exercises, enhancing people-to-people exchanges, deepening co-operation on humanitarian support and disaster relief, maritime security, peacekeeping operations and capacity building, as well as stronger trilateral security co-operation. The first specific areas suitable for transfer of defence equipment and technology will be discussed (despite speculation, it is too early for anything substantial to be agreed, such as a joint submarine project), and an announcement is possible on the first use by the Japanese military of training facilities on the Australian mainland. The formal signing of the 'free trade' agreement, and television news coverage of the two leaders touring the iron ore-rich Pilbara will provide suitably grand images of new bonanzas ahead.

It promises to be a full-course meal that Australians would be advised to chew over well.

Walter Hamilton reported from Japan for the ABC for eleven years.

The Caliphate before the ISIS blitzkrieg

EUREKA STREET TV

Peter Kirkwood

Over the last three weeks we've witnessed a shocking blitzkrieg in Iraq as the forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) swept through the north of the country. A little over a week ago ISIS announced the establishment of a Caliphate straddling both countries. With it came the implementation of a hard-line version of Islamic law and the declaration of its reclusive leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as Caliph.

On Saturday a bearded man dressed in black robes, purportedly the new Caliph, stepped out of the shadows. Video was released of him addressing men attending a mosque in Mosul in the north of Iraq. In his sermon he called on all Muslims to obey him.

For most of its history since the death of the Prophet Mohammed in 632CE the Muslim world was ruled by a Caliph. This is the Anglicised version of the Arabic word 'khalifa' which means successor or representative.

The last Caliphal dynasty, the Ottomans, ruled over their empire from Istanbul till the Caliphate was abolished by Kemal Ataturk in 1924 when he established the modern secular state of Turkey. Since then Muslims have been without a supreme leader.

What is the significance of the declaration of a Caliphate now, and the emergence of a new Caliph? [Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf](#) who is featured in this interview is well qualified to discuss these questions. He spoke to Eureka Street TV via Skype from his home in New Jersey, just across the Hudson River from New York City where he is based.

Imam Feisal is one of the most eminent Muslim leaders and scholars in America today.

Amongst other concerns, he's spent much of the last decade grappling with the issues surrounding what might constitute a positive Islamic state in the contemporary world.

He was born in Kuwait of Egyptian parents, raised in England and Malaysia, and for a short time in Egypt before settling with his family at the age of seventeen in the USA.

His father and grandfather were imams at mosques and Islamic centres around the world, and some ancestors were Sufi Masters, belonging to the mystical stream of Islam. After studying science at university to Master's level, Imam Feisal succumbed to what he calls 'genetic momentum', began Islamic studies and became an imam himself.

He was imam at al-Farah Mosque very close to Ground Zero in New York at the time of 9/11. This thrust him into the limelight as he sought to allay fears about the Muslim community and build bridges into broader American society.

Before the tragedy of the attacks on the Twin Towers he was already one of the founders of the [American Society for Muslim Advancement](#) and subsequently began the Cordoba Initiative to further these aims.

One of the projects of the [Cordoba Initiative](#) is developing the Islamic Rule of Law Index. This involves an international group of scholars from all the major Muslim traditions trying to come up with guidelines and a way of evaluating Muslim countries and societies in terms of how they measure up to good Islamic governance. A book summarising the results of this project is due to be published in 2015.

Imam Feisal is much in demand as a speaker and is a prolific writer for a range of publications. His books include *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America*; *Islam: A Sacred Law*; *What is Islamic Law?*; *Justification and Theory of Sharia Law: How the American Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights and Constitution are Consistent with Islamic Jurisprudence*; and *Moving the Mountain: Beyond Gound Zero to a New Vision of Islam in America*.

In this continuation of the interview with Imam Feisal he talks about the [Islamic Rule of Law Index](#) and in general what constitutes a good Islamic state.

This interview is in two parts - Part 1 (12 mins) above, and Part 2 (9 mins) below:

Peter Kirkwood is a freelance writer and video consultant with a master's degree from the Sydney College of Divinity.

Political magic

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

Two state solution does not depend on words

INTERNATIONAL

John Kilcullen



The recent controversy about whether the Australian government regards East Jerusalem as Occupied, occupied, or disputed, at least made it clear that the Australian government still supports the 'two state solution'. Now is the time to do something positive to bring the second state into existence. Mahmoud Abbas has announced that the Palestinian unity government has begun the process that will lead to Parliamentary and Presidential elections before the end of this year.

The US and Israel should welcome the opportunity that Palestinian elections will preaffsent. Instead of pausing, the US government should redouble its efforts. As is clear from their efforts to join UN agencies and other international bodies, the Palestinians want international recognition of their state. Under US law, the President by himself, without needing the concurrence of Congress, has power recognise a foreign state. President Obama should announce that as soon as certain reasonable conditions are met the US will recognise a state of Palestine and sponsor its admission to the United Nations. Australia and other countries should urge the President to make this offer and should make the same offer themselves. The conditions should be such as to encourage the Palestinians to do what is needed to give Israel a reasonable assurance of security, in the hope that the remaining points of difference would then be easier to resolve.

What should the conditions be? First, that the proposed elections actually take place. Second, that the newly-elected government undertake to abide by the obligations that international law imposes on all states equally, including the obligation not to make attacks on other recognised states, including explicitly Israel. Third, that the new government produce a credible plan (credible in the judgment of the countries making the offer) for achieving control over its territory; for this they may require external assistance. No other conditions should be imposed. The Palestinians should not be asked to affirm that Israel is a Jewish state.

The offer needs to be made as soon as possible. If the US simply pauses, an important

opportunity will be lost. An offer made before the elections would encourage the emergence of candidates in favour of meeting the conditions. If there is no hope of recognition on reasonable terms the elections will be dominated by hard-liners. The next few months are critical.

Once Palestine is recognised as a state and has been admitted to the United Nations as a full member, negotiations between Palestine and Israel will resume over borders, the return or compensation of refugees, the status and future of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and so on. Negotiation will have a much better chance of success if the question of statehood has already been resolved and the Palestinian state is credibly committed to peaceful relations with Israel.

Offering recognition on reasonable terms would not involve countries making the offer in negotiations with Hamas, or with Fatah, or with Israel. The Palestinians would work out among themselves whether and how to meet the conditions. In the final stage, when the Palestinian government presented its plan for achieving control over its territory, discussion with the countries offering recognition might be needed to determine whether the plan would be effective, but the discussion would be with representatives of an elected Palestinian government already pledged to accept the obligations of international law.

The suggested approach-recognition first, then negotiation-is quite different from the approach the US has been following for so long. Resolutions of the US Senate and House of Representatives threaten sanctions if the Palestinians seek recognition except through negotiation with Israel. This gives Israel a veto over Palestinian statehood, which is surely the intention. Those who insist that there can be no recognition until Israel consents, knowing as they must that Israel will not consent, are in fact saying that there can never be a state of Palestine. If the US and its allies genuinely want a '&two state solution&' (and there is no Plan B), then they must break out of this framework and reassert their right to give recognition with or without Israel's consent.

Though many Israelis support the two state solution, Israel's government are against a Palestinian state under any circumstances. Mr Netanyahu said in 2002 in relation to a Palestinian state, 'Not today, not tomorrow, not ever'. At Bar Ilan in 2009 he did speak of a Palestinian state, but it would be a 'state' subject to conditions that are incompatible with statehood. Mr Netanyahu's coalition colleague Naftali Bennett is very clear: 'I will do everything in my ability, forever, to prevent a Palestinian state'. There is much more to the same effect. The 'peace process' conducted as a never-ending series of bi-lateral negotiations simply buys time while Israel colonises the rest of what might have been Palestine.

The ideal resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians would be two multicultural states, one predominantly Jewish but with protection for Arab and other minorities, the other predominantly Arab but with protection for Jewish and other minorities. The boundaries need not and should not attempt to divide Jews neatly from non-Jews, there should be no transfer of population, and no one should be deprived without their consent of any citizenship they now have.

The ideal solution may not happen. At some future time Arab-Jewish relations may be even worse than they have been. The best that can be done now to improve the chances of a better future is to encourage the emergence of a well-governed state of Palestine pledged to peace and the rule of law. A conditional offer of recognition is the first step. The offer should be made without delay.

John Kilcullen is Senior Research Fellow in Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University.

Ribbon image by Shutterstock

Hearts in the right place during NAIDOC Week

AUSTRALIA

Frank Brennan

Homily for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, 6 July 2014, as The Reconciliation Church, La Perouse, Sydney (readings: Zechariah 9:9-10, Mt 11:25-30)

Jesus blesses his Father for hiding things that matter from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. During the week our Prime Minister, a Rhodes scholar, was addressing some very learned and clever people at the Economic and Social Outlook Conference. He was reflecting on the fact that Australia was unimaginable without foreign investment.

He went on to say, 'I guess our country owes its existence to a form of foreign investment by the British government in the then unsettled or, um scarcely settled, Great South Land.' Perhaps it was the disbelieving look on some of the learned and clever faces in the room that made him change course mid-sentence. Maybe it was his own internal radar which sent out the warning message.

You could make a party political point about this, but that is not our purpose here in church on Aboriginal Sunday. That which was not self-evident to our learned and clever prime minister is the clear lived reality for every Aboriginal person here in this Church today, and for most Aboriginal children who live in this Great South Land. They have not needed to attend university to gain this learning and this insight, though happily there are now some at university earning their PhDs deepening this learning for themselves and for the nation.

They live the reality that this land was settled for tens of thousands of years before the British arrived and that much of this land was taken forcibly from their ancestors producing adverse consequences to this day. Pope Francis says he wants 'a Church which is poor and for the poor'. It's in our poverty and in our childlike humility in the face of unalterable realities of our lives that we come to understand the deepest mysteries of life, handing them on from generation to generation.

Warren Mundine, who has joined us for mass here in this Church in times past, was prompt in his defence and understanding of our prime minister.

He said, 'We could all do with a bit more education on this but I know his heart is in the right place.'

With hearts in the right place, we can all forgive and be forgiven. Those of us who labour and are overburdened can come to the table of the Lord's banquet being assured that we will find rest for our souls with the One who is gentle and humble in heart. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

During this NAIDOC Week at the first centenary of the commencement of World War I, we recall those who carried the yoke of war and the burden of service so that we might enjoy freedom and prosperity. With the theme, *Serving Country: Centenary and Beyond*, we recall that descendants of the true first settlers as well as descendants of the later British settlers joined arms and joined forces to defend the land which is now home to us all, while always being the traditional country of indigenous Australians.

On this Aboriginal Sunday at the commencement of NAIDOC Week, NATSICC has chosen the theme, 'Praise to the Lord of Heaven and Earth'. This year we gather in this Reconciliation Church surrounded by Richard Campbell's stations of the cross which are now complemented by Richard's wonderful Reconciliation Cross. We are privileged to

have Kay Mundine join us. We all remember Kay escorting Pope John Paul II down the Dreaming Track in Alice Springs in 1986.

Just as Gloria adorned me with the Aboriginal stole at the beginning of this mass, Kay and Aboriginal representatives placed the stole and knitted beanie on the Pope in the distinctive colours of red, black and gold. He then told us that 'the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.' We remember also the beloved Fr Frank Fletcher MSC who has now taken his place at the eternal banquet since our last mass for Aboriginal Sunday in this place. Frank worked in close solidarity with Elsie Heiss to ensure that this Reconciliation Church could be established as a home for the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry of the Sydney Archdiocese. Frank always appeared slightly gangly and sounded slightly diffident even though he was always focused, straight directed and purposeful.

His memory evinces that image of Zechariah. The learned and the clever who exercise power in our society are those who ride on chariots from Ephraim and on horses from Jerusalem. None of that for Frank Fletcher. Proclaiming peace for the nations and justice for the Great South Land, he was more like the king who came humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

We pray for peace in our hearts, in our families and in our land for the year ahead. We pray that together we might be able to share the yoke, the labour and the burdens. We pray that we might know the consolation that the Lord's yoke is easy and his burden light, while still committing ourselves to justice, love, peace and reconciliation with all, including those who are learned and clever and don't yet see a need to be attentive to the revelations held by those who are poor, those who are mere children, and those whose ancestors have walked this land for millennia. Let's give 'praise to the Lord of Heaven and Earth'.

Frank Brennan SJ AO is professor of law at the Australian Catholic University and adjunct professor at the College of Law and the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University.

will never be the same. Writing is precious. The stanza of crab-walk
Doesn't survive long.
It's my shell-time today,
Trying to clutch the dandelion clocks that seem
To be fleeing so fast as they dance on the sunlight beams
Unaware that we, too, still have much to do.

The Parting of the Ways
The rabbits are running along the river today.
It's all blue and green, the weeds are fresh.
And everywhere the words are talking to themselves
Deciding in generosity what the morning menu will be today.
It's a day when all is steeped in beauty,
You hope a lot will stop and watch,
You can't be sure, but you do know if they surrender
To the stars and to the sands, they will see a new light,
A saga of unborn stories strung across the days,
Dancing like dice on the plush of life.
Don't be anxious, bury the ennui, praise the wonderful days
We have had, and now there are new ways,
But that's only part of the glory, come compline
We, in the calm, fill out the story-line
With the words that will go on living, thriving,
And be fresh enough to heal the deep of wounds,
When the blood at the front has run out and silence is a bone.
Cross-Matching
As the poet never knows
Where words may lodge,
So the donor gives the blood,
But not in vain.
I ask the physician, &'Have I any of my own?&'&'Good question,&' she says with a smile.
And so I begin to trace - Dispossessed, but still in possession - The cast of tenants.
A huckleberry-picker perhaps,
A saint of sound in hairshirt,
Or, and so sweet and savoury,
An oyster-farmer
Who stands in his sea-stroked vineyard,
Pearls of irritation lapping in silence,
Those bi-valvular brine-tasters
That loosen the vowels,
Give the voice a saline source
To make plain and pure
The small acts of patient love
That make the pulse beat in the vein.

Peter Gebhardt is a retired school principal and former judge of the County Court of Victoria. His most recent book is Black and White Onyx: New and Selected Poems 1988-2011.

Australia should be worried about a Prabowo presidency

INTERNATIONAL

Pat Walsh



Australia was the only country mentioned by name during the recent television debate on foreign policy between Indonesia's two presidential aspirants.

Both Jokowi and Prabowo said that, though Australia does not seem to trust Indonesia, they would continue President SBY's good neighbour policy. Prabowo later repeated this assurance to the media and diplomats. His message is that Australia and the international community have nothing to worry about from a Prabowo presidency. The prospects are very different. Australia and other countries have a lot to worry about if Prabowo is elected. A Prabowo win will damage Indonesia's much improved international reputation as a constructive good global citizen and compromise its ability to capitalise on the good will President SBY and his Foreign Minister Marty Natagelewa have generated.

Following the debate on foreign policy, the *Jakarta Globe* asked its readers to say which candidate they thought would improve relations between Australia and Indonesia. Over 80% said Jokowi. One has to agree. It is easy to see the clean, straightforward Jokowi being feted not just in Canberra like SBY before him but also by the Australian community. On the other hand, Prabowo, if he ever came to Australia, would predictably spark adverse media comment, strong protest and walkouts by MPs. The relationship that so many at all levels on both sides of the Arafura sea have worked hard to build would be further set back. PM Abbott's call for 'more Jakarta less Geneva' would become his worst dream.

Governments, however, are famously agile in situations like this. Though Prabowo's former father-in-law Suharto was never elected freely or fairly over 30 years and only managed one visit to Australia in all that time, Canberra embraced him. It will be easier if Prabowo is elected, providing, as seems very likely, the election is credible. Timor-Leste, which knows Prabowo even better than most Indonesians, will also accept the result and can be expected to attend his possible inauguration on 20 October. Asked by John Pilger at the Ubud Writers Festival in 2012 how he would react if Prabowo became president of Indonesia, Jose Ramos-Horta also gave the politically correct answer. The Nobel Laureate, no longer president at the time, avoided any further comment. The problem for Prabowo, Indonesia and Australia, however, will not be at the government-to-government level but the people-to-people level, an important element in foreign policy that Jokowi acknowledged during the debate but is often disregarded. A recent survey of Australian public opinion on Indonesia concluded the temperature of the relationship was lukewarm.

There are a number of reasons for this. Some, as Prabowo and Jokowi suggested, lie within the Australian psyche. But what neither candidate acknowledged is that Indonesia's history of state and non-state violence over several generations has also deeply affected Australian perceptions. A Prabowo presidency would confirm that view. Prabowo will not be Suharto re-incarnated but there are strong signs that under him

sectarian Islamic and nationalist elements will be emboldened and tensions with the new post-Suharto generation will manifest with consequences that will further entrench negative attitudes towards Indonesia in Australia.

It also has to be acknowledged that Prabowo has not been proven guilty of the crimes he is accused of. But neither a credible election process nor the presumption of innocence will shift the deeply entrenched public perception that he has at least command responsibility for human rights violations over many years. This view is widely held in Australia and in Timor-Leste where, during a recent visit, I found Timorese following the Indonesian elections with as much interest (and alarm) as the World Cup in Brazil. Many in both societies also believe that Prabowo has only been free to run for the presidency due to grave failures of the international and Indonesian justice systems. Only due process, as the US Ambassador to Indonesia has correctly said in recent days, will resolve the issue and clear the air either way.

It is puzzling to watch Western nations sidelined and reduced to helpless silence by the very system of democracy and freedoms they espouse so strongly. But, if elected, Prabowo can be expected to leave Australia to his foreign and other ministers and look to the Middle East and Asia where he has strong personal connections. This might be the best of a bad situation, but many will weep far into the night because it could have been so much better for Indonesia, and for Australia.

Pat Walsh is currently visiting Jakarta. He co-founded Inside Indonesia magazine.

Commbank plunder part of new world economic order

ECONOMICS

David James



The furore that has broken out about the Commonwealth Bank's wealth management advice, the result of outstanding work of Fairfax journalist Adele Ferguson, is a rare example of a big Australian company and the corporate regulator, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), being held to account. For the most part, ASIC is reasonably skilled at pursuing small players. Its record against big players is less than distinguished. Local business media, meanwhile, conscious of the need to maintain access to Australia's oligopolies, tends to be supine, a situation made worse by the shrinking number of journalists.

The problems at Commonwealth Bank are hardly a surprise. It is just the latest instance in the progressive domination of the financial sector, a phenomenon, known as 'financialisation', that is occurring in most developed economies. In 2001, the largest industry sector in Australia was manufacturing, which accounted for about 12 per cent of GDP and about 12 per cent of employment. Financial services accounted for about 9 per cent of GDP and less than 4 per cent of employment. A decade later, financial services accounted for the largest proportion of Australian GDP, 11 per cent. Manufacturing had fallen to 9 per cent. The finance sector's share of employment remained about the same. The Treasury estimates that \$20 billion goes on super fees a year, which it believes is about \$14 billion too high, based on international comparisons. The \$20 billion equates with about 1 per cent of Australia's GDP. There is a similar trend in Europe and America. In Britain, the financial sector's share of GDP leapt from 7 per cent in 2000 to over 12 per cent in 2007. The rise in America was more steady, increasing from 7 to 8 per cent over the same period. But the general trend is the same.

There has of course been slippage in the financial sectors of developed economies since the global financial crisis - although far less so in Australia, which has had a good Great Recession - but it is only a hiccup. The shift to making money from money, rather than

making something useful to serve the real economy, remains relentless. Financial firms like to think of themselves as businesses, and in the sense that they create products and sell them to customers, that is true. But they are more than that. Finance is a set of rules. After thirty years of financial 'de-regulation' - a nonsense, because rules cannot be deregulated - the rule makers have changed. Instead of governments being in charge of the system, 'de-regulation' has meant that private companies have been allowed to make up their own rules - a free-for-all that almost resulted in the collapse of the entire global banking system in 2008. By allowing finance to grow as big as it has, financiers have become our new sovereign. This is the prism through which the Commonwealth Bank failings should be seen. Australia's four banks dominate banking to an unusual degree, and they dominate wealth management advice. About four fifths of advisers are essentially sales people for bank wealth management platforms (mostly former insurance sales people). It is hardly surprising, given this dominance, that they start setting their own rules. After all, they are collectively in charge of the market. It is equally unsurprising that the Abbott government is uninterested about governing the finance sector. The 'de-regulation' ethic is now considered such a self-evident truth by most governments in the developed world, they cannot even imagine retaking control. Much better to let the industry 'self regulate', leaving governments not having to bear any responsibility. Rarely has the dictum 'buyer beware' been more relevant. Every private business spruiks its own products and neglects to mention any shortcomings, and it is the same with financial advice. They can help clients navigate the rules of investment and tax and superannuation, although that is probably better coming from an accountant who has a more clearly defined professional obligation to act in the clients' interests. But they cannot offer better than average investment returns, because nobody, or very few, can over time. It is not the case that by paying more for advice you get better quality. Indeed there is strong evidence that the more you pay an adviser the worse the returns will be in the long term (one reason for the rise of self managed super funds, in which you, in effect, pay yourself for advice). Neither is it the case that a history of good returns indicates that they will continue into the future. In fact, the opposite is usually the case. So wealth management advice is a questionable service at the best of times. But the bigger issue is the trend in Western societies to make financiers our rulers. It is leading to continual asset bubbles, the making of money out of money. For example, the American economy rose by \$1.49 trillion during the first quarter of 2014, but the real economy (as measured by GDP) actually contracted by 1 percent. Share price appreciation and real estate appreciation was responsible for \$1.1 trillion. The obvious instance of asset appreciation in Australia is the soaring property market, which has greatly benefited the banks. As the Pope and economist Thomas Piketty have observed in recent times, the inequity created by capitalism is a growing concern. But the problem with this argument is that 'capitalism' is too broad a term. It encompasses many different types of socio-economic systems and includes business activity as well as financial activity. Indeed it is arguable that there is no such 'ism' as capitalism. The attack would be far better directed against the financialisation of developed economies. A new type of sovereign has emerged, and like all rulers they are cheerfully engaging in acts of plunder.

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