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The shock of the news of Kennedy and Nixon

REVIEWS

Brian Matthews



If you are of a certain age, you not only remember the assassination of President John Kennedy but also where you were at the time you heard the news. This doesn't happen with every memory of course. But the Kennedy attack is different. Probably because it was so shocking, so utterly unthinkable. For my part, I was moving into a flat - my first experience of an actually liveable residence since leaving the parental home a few years before - and I was poised on the first floor balcony juggling boxes and suitcases when Miss Agnes Brown, let us call her, the elderly lady who lived across the corridor and who would become, to her ill-disguised dismay, my nearest neighbour, told me about the events in Dallas.

She had most of the details wrong as it turned out. Kennedy had been horse riding, she told me, and had been thrown from his horse. I don't know how she got this idea though our subsequent rather rocky neighbourly relationship made it easier for me to understand that her take on some things might diverge so spectacularly from mine that I would question my grasp on reality. 'Do I wake or sleep?' I would quote to the mirror through shave-cream muffled lips after Miss Brown, having caught me picking up the morning paper, had poured forth with an obsessiveness compared to which the Ancient Mariner would have sounded casual, some arcane version of that day's news or scandals.

But what started me on this track was a different though still presidential occasion. Last week, on her daily ABC Classic FM program, Margaret Throsby replayed her fascinating 2004 conversation with John Dean, who was White House Counsel for President Richard Nixon from July 1970 until April 1973 and deeply implicated therefore in the Watergate affair. She began the program with an excerpt from Richard Nixon's resignation speech, made 40 years ago.

'Throughout the long and difficult period of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you

elected me. In the past few days, however, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort … with the disappearance of that base, I now believe that the constitutional purpose has been served, and there is no longer a need for the process to be prolonged … I have never been a quitter … But as President, I must put the interest of America first. America needs a full-time President and a full-time Congress, particularly at this time with problems we face at home and abroad. To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress … Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow.'

When I heard this, I immediately remembered in startling detail where I was forty years ago when that speech was first broadcast. It was high summer, a beautiful warm day in Oxford. I was strolling along the banks of the Thames - or the Isis as that stretch of it is often known locally - through a leafy camping ground, thinking about nothing much, just how pleasant it was to have some warm sun and blue sky above the 'Dreaming Spires', and how I would go that evening to the venerable 'Eagle and Child' for a few pints and a pub meal and some good talk when, from a radio in one of the caravans, I heard a voice I immediately recognised. ' … To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication …' I stopped, amazed, even though some such Watergate sensation had been brewing for weeks. Only then did I notice other people in the vicinity lingering and straining suddenly to hear. ' … Therefore, I shall resign the Presidency effective at noon tomorrow.'

Between all of us poised there for that fugitive moment listening to an unseen radio there was a momentary fellow feeling: each of us knew that this was history and we were just for an instant part of it. We would inhabit the future together - pausing by the river's calm bend in the benign sunlight - whenever we recounted our story, though we hadn't met and never would.

'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.' As with an impossibly distant star light years away, back near the beginning of things, you need good lens to see the past and even then the tricky, effulgent blur of distance distorts and confuses. But like lightning flashes, some of the past periodically brightens up around you, because for a moment you were there - an indelible personal memory of 22 November 1963; a voice, tragic yet culpable, retrieved from an unseen radio on 8 August 1974 in another country. Thus we inhabit and are imprisoned by what has gone before.

'So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.'

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

Mexican border reflections on Australian asylum seeker policy

AUSTRALIA

Frank Brennan



I have been here in the USA for the last month. I am presently spending the week down on the Mexican border at the [Kino Border Initiative](#), which is a Jesuit sponsored cross border project at Nogales. The Jesuit community members sleep on the Arizona side of the border and walk across the border to Sonora each day for work.

At the *comedor* (soup kitchen), new deportees from the USA and those coming through Mexico trying to run the gauntlet back into the USA can come for two meals a day. Kino workers document human rights violations. Other NGOs such as the [Samaritans](#) and No Mas Muertes (no more deaths) come and provide practical assistance, including a telephone service so those on the run can check in with family and friends back home or across the border.

The Samaritans include many Arizona residents well used to encountering migrants without visas making their way across the desert on foot. The Samaritans provide food and water, and even Vaseline for the feet of the weary. Their T shirts proclaim 'Humanitarian assistance is not a crime'. Many of them are heading to DC at the end of the month for civil disobedience outside the White House protesting US immigration policies.

Each day at Kino, Mexican nuns provide spiritual consolation, inviting world weary people in flight to play the sorts of games we all played in primary school, doing contortions with our hands and designs with pieces of paper.

On Sunday, Fr Sean Carroll SJ, the executive director of Kino, celebrates mass (pictured). Those on the run freely share their heart rending stories. The whole ethos of the place is to provide a humanitarian space for people in desperate circumstances. No matter what walls are built, no matter what draconian push back policies are adopted, there is no way the USA can seal this border. The Congress is deadlocked. Obama has been labelled the 'Deporter in Chief'. Still the people come.

We Australians confront none of the complexities of sharing a land border with a poor neighbour many of whose family members are citizens of our country. Most Americans, I find, think that Australia has little to worry about when it comes to securing borders. There are three recent Australian developments which Americans generally seem to find morally repulsive and just stupid. They either cannot believe or understand that we routinely lock up children in immigration detention facilities; that we recently held 157 people including over 30 children in detention on a ship in the Indian Ocean for almost a month; and that we are now going to send up to 1000 asylum seekers to Cambodia. The Americans have had to deal with unaccompanied minors turning up in numbers we could never imagine. In the nine months to 30 June 2014, more than 43,000 unaccompanied minors from lawless Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador made their way through Mexico and across the US border. Under US law, they are to be screened by US Customs and Border Protection within 72 hours and then handed over to the

Department of Health and Human Services where the Office of Refugee Resettlement arranges for the children to be placed in the community with a family member or some other sponsor while their asylum claim is determined. Whatever of any so called magnet effect, the Americans consider that locking up kids without their parents or guardians is just one step too far. Something has dulled the Australian moral conscience on this issue. Americans think it is just not decent. It is unAmerican.

As for keeping people forcibly on a ship for a month on the high seas, and then contemplating sending asylum seekers, most of whom will be proven refugees, to Cambodia, the American litmus test is clear: very indecent indeed. The American reaction has me thinking that we Australians have become too legalistic and morally dulled on these issues.

The latest US State Department country report on Cambodia's human rights record states: 'Corruption remained pervasive, governmental human rights bodies reportedly were ineffective, and trafficking in men, women, and children persisted. Domestic violence and child abuse occurred, and children's education was inadequate. The government prosecuted some officials who committed abuses, but impunity for corruption and most abuses persisted.'

Admittedly Cambodia is a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention. But so what? Cambodia signed every UN human rights instrument as a precondition for independence when the UN administration withdrew after the civil war. The signatures count for little. Our government's constant refrain is that we are complying with the Refugee Convention whether we are sending people to Cambodia or keeping them incarcerated on a ship in the Indian Ocean. Perhaps the Refugee Convention is something of a straw man. Key countries in the region are not signatories. Unlike most UN rights conventions, the Refugee Convention does not require signatory governments to make regular reports. There is no complaints mechanism. There is no authoritative international court to interpret the Convention. The Convention to some extent means whatever people want it to mean. Those debating refugee policy go off on one of two tracks. The legal purists think the Convention provides both a comprehensive code for refugee protection and a benchmark for judgment of the political pragmatists who do indecent things. The political pragmatists think it provides a convenient cover for indecent arrangements like holding people for a month at sea or sending them to Cambodia. The Convention provides no adequate legal safety net. We are in the realm of morality and politics, not law. The international law is not helping. It is just providing the warring parties with their own rationale for their intractability, avoiding the need for moral and political engagement. The question is not, 'Is it legal?'. The question is 'What's decent?'

When censuring Julia Gillard in Parliament on 14 June 2011 for her Malaysia solution, Tony Abbott asked, 'Why would the Prime Minister send illegal arrivals to Malaysia' 'where they would be detained and tagged', 'when she can't guarantee the standard and accessibility of medical care'. and 'when she can't guarantee the access to school for the children?'

He told Parliament, 'The one thing that is absolutely certain about this deal is that this Prime Minister, this minister and this government cannot be sure that boat people sent to Malaysia will be treated humanely. They cannot give that guarantee'. There is no way that Tony Abbott and Scott Morrison can give that guarantee for anyone sent to Cambodia. Given a choice, many of those being sent to Cambodia would prefer Malaysia which has over 120,000 asylum seekers.

The mystifying thing about this new Australian legalism is that it arises from our politicians responding to the High Court decision which struck down the Malaysia solution. In that case four of the majority judges were careful to point out: 'Nothing in these reasons should be understood as expressing any view about whether Malaysia in fact 'meets relevant human rights standards', let alone whether asylum seekers in that country are treated &'fairly&' or &'appropriately&'.'

Both sides of the Australian parliament then agreed to legislate to take away the High

Court's capacity to review a ministerial declaration that a resettlement country passed muster for adequate human rights protection. It is now a matter exclusively for the government of the day with no review by parliament or the courts. We are constantly told that the proposed solutions comply with the Refugee Convention, with Scott Morrison claiming on Tuesday: 'Those criticising the (Cambodia) arrangement seem to believe that ­resettlement should be confined to first-world economies - an economic upgrade program rather than a safe-haven program'. No, it is not a matter of seeking an economic upgrade. And it is not just a matter of the letter of the law. It is a matter of whether any proposal is decent and humane. Keeping lone kids locked up, locking up people on a boat on the high seas for a month, and sending refugees to Cambodia do not pass the smell test of decency. I never thought I would find fresh air down on the US-Mexico border to reflect on my own country's indecency. But in the humane, decent air of the Kino soup kitchen, I carried the stench of these recent Australian initiatives. They do stink.

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I am Gaza, I am bleeding

INTERNATIONAL

Lyn Bender



It was 30 degrees centigrade and sunny in Gaza, as our small band of around 20 kept vigil in the cold night rain at Melbourne's Federation Square. We shed silent tears for the people of Gaza. A place that should have been beautiful; but that is the setting for misery death and horror.

In the last month an estimated 2000 Palestinians including 400 children have been killed and 10,000 injured. Much of Gaza is reduced to rubble and rendered uninhabitable, with bodies that lie still and silently entombed beneath destroyed buildings.

It is only during the fragile stingily brief ceasefires, that people of Gaza emerged from flimsy shelters, to search for and bury their dead. They return to see if their homes have survived the bombing and shelling.

It is a time to pull a prayer rug from beneath the ruins, or to salvage precious objects. How many have there been, these halts to the killing? No sooner announced than breached? We held tea candles powered by battery to resist the extinguishing of their flames.

We stood in silence. Jewish, Christian, Muslims and atheists, united in sorrow. The bell, activated by a mobile phone, tolled from a laptop for the dead. We shivered. We heard words from a Jewish person, a Catholic and a Muslim mother. Her daughter recited a poem, 'I am Gaza I have a dagger in my heart. I am bleeding'.

I wished that I could hold this jewel of a poem in memory, but the words slipped away. Where is the world? On Swanston Street, the world walks on by. It is Saturday night in Melbourne, and the town is in party mode. No exploding bombs light the skyline. Just the city lights, and the moon, if you can find it. It is soothing to hear the words of peace, and to share sorrow. Some of us hug and others stand in stillness. St Paul's Cathedral stands solidly on the corner opposite, festooned with 'Lets fully welcome refugees'.

There are now estimated to be over 500,000 displaced people in Gaza. The borders are controlled and the UN shelters full. There is nowhere for them to go in the aptly named

Gaza Strip, which is a mere 10 by 45 kilometres. Rain falls, my hands like frozen water clutch my candle and I think about the images I have seen and stories that I have read on my screen. The two and a half year old, with cracked skull, blasted as she played near her family, and whose suppurating, swollen, purple panda, eyes barely open. The 85-year-old orange and lemon farmer, Ibrahim Mohammad al Toum returning to find his house ruined. The home that he had rebuilt for the third time, has been bombed in each of the three conflicts since 2008.

'Why did they do it? Why. It is unfair unfair! I am a peaceful man'.

Fr John urged us to remember the pain of trauma but acknowledged its paradox. Trauma can both numb and sensitise feelings. We can become hypersensitive to our own pain and numb to the anguish of others. We should not cast blame but think also of the wounds to the Israelis. I think of the Israeli settlers' chairs set out as though in a theatre at Siderot, watching and cheering from the hilltop as Gaza city is bombed beneath them. It is a retort in laughter that proclaims, 'We Israelis have suffered the slings and arrows so shall you'. Born Jewish, I know very well the massive sensitisation to holocaust pain which for many has meant the numbing desensitisation to the pain of others.

Some of us lament our Vigil for Gaza's - insignificance in the scheme of things. A heckler denounces our vigil as puny; saying war is all the fault of religion any way. But it has been a respite of spiritual restoration. History recalls the mission of lone Indigenous William Cooper. He brought a petition to the German Consulate in Melbourne in 1938, protesting Kristallnacht. This was the night when German Jews, their businesses, and synagogues, were smashed and 30,000 Jews were incarcerated. It heralded officially sanctioned persecution.

Cooper, an indigenous man whose people had known displacement, humiliation and genocide, found it in his heart, to speak for the suffering of others.

It is hard to look at, but harder to look away from, the suffering in Gaza. It has a population of 1.8 million whose average age is 17 years. Over 25 per cent are children. They have suffered bombardment and incursion three times since 2008. The Israeli Defence Force call it 'mowing the lawn'

The Jewish people of Israel are the descendants of those who have suffered systematic genocide. These wounds take generations to heal. This is equally true regarding the decades long suffering of the Palestinians.

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dignity. Even the metaphor of Team Australia invited barracking, not reflection. It has generated fear and loathing of Muslims and of Islam. To ethnic communities the linkage of the racial vilification legislation with community cohesion looked less like an olive branch than payback.

There is more to speech than freedom. Any society relies on relationships between speakers and listeners that are marked by trust, accountability and care for truth. These qualities need encouragement and sometimes sanction, as for example for lying under oath. Irresponsible and vindictive words can do great harm. People who have been disadvantaged and abused because of their race or religion may be damaged in their sense of self, their confidence and in their trust in society they vilified because of negative characteristics a speaker associates with their race.

Societies need symbols that express abhorrence of this kind of damaging speech. In extreme cases such as in denial of the Holocaust, laws may sometimes be appropriate symbols. Whether the original legislation against racial discrimination was the best symbol may be debated, but the legislation to amend it became a symbol of the right to abuse others with impunity. It was rightly resisted.

The other two pieces of legislation, and the Prime Minister's justification for dropping the racial vilification bill, are associated with terrorism. Terrorism is also an unhelpful abstraction. It encourages the indiscriminate association of immigrant groups and particular religious and groups with violent action, and encourages indiscriminating broad brush legislation that will exacerbate the situations the legislation was intended to address.

If we describe the situation in terms of persons and their relationships, and not of ideology, it comes down to the fact a relatively small number of people are travelling overseas to fight in a civil conflict outside Australia. This poses the risk that when they return to Australia some will act violently. This needs addressing as a policing matter, one that perhaps may demand some limited new powers. It should not be dramatised as part of a war on terror.

The challenge is not new. Australians have often gone overseas to fight with other armies in other wars. Australians have joined the French Foreign Legion, become mercenaries in Africa, fought in the Spanish Civil War and joined revolutionary groups in Latin America and in Communist countries. The experience normally leaves people disillusioned with violence. Of course, the risk has always existed that people returning from war, whether as soldiers in our own army or in some one else's wars, will act violently in their own society. The risk has generally been managed competently.

The added risk in the case of those going to fight in Syria and Iraq is that they will accept the ideology of the group they fight with and will target its enemies in their home nation. That needs to be taken seriously. But the roots of that alienation usually lie in earlier experiences of alienation. These too need to be addressed. But the more indiscriminate the response and the greater the deprivation of ordinary human rights, the more likely it is that people will be alienated.

High fibre diets have their uses. But societies do not thrive on high fibre alone.

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Robin Williams tried to outrun the dog

MEDIA

Megan Graham



As human beings we do all kinds of things to avoid suffering. Drink, drugs, hobbies, television, 'retail therapy', computer games, gambling. The list is endless. It is our job to survive and avoid suffering: to huddle around our loved ones, to live and thrive and not let the shit of life get us down. This need is something we must all answer to.

For Robin Williams, it seems avoiding suffering was a very hard task. By abusing alcohol and cocaine, some might think he brought mental ill health upon himself. But those who are well don't abuse their bodies with toxic substances - because to a healthy human being this wouldn't make any sense. It is an attempt to escape pain.

I didn't know Robin Williams - although I wish I had been one of those very fortunate people. But it seems obvious that this comic genius did all he could to flee what is commonly known as the Black Dog - depression. I believe he tried to outrun his suffering. It breaks my heart that yesterday, it chased him down and backed him into a corner where there seemed only one way out.

I believe he wanted to live. I think about his films that have planted seeds in my mind which blossomed into little hope-filled memories. In particular the semi-biographical film *Patch Adams* (pictured). The last time I thought about that film was a mere week ago - reflecting on the female lead character Carin (Monica Potter) who yearned to be free from the men who preyed on her as a thing to be used. I remember how Patch (played by Williams) deeply loved and cherished her for the whole person she was. How patient he was with her sadness. How - despite an utterly devastating turn of events - she became his ultimate reason to not be defeated by the darkness in the world.

And I regularly think about the scene where Patch explains that helping others helps him forget about his own problems. For someone who is both brilliant and has the potential for deep sadness, finding purpose in helping others can be a liberation. It might be risky to try to carry on purely for the sake of other people without dealing with one's own demons - but what is even more dangerous is for society to make the assumption that

the latter option is always within reach.

I cast my mind to the emotionally intense scenes in *Good Will Hunting* where Matt Damon's character - Will, a highly intelligent man who seems to know about and understand everything except himself - receives therapy from Dr Maguire, played by Williams. The experienced shrink uses daggers of insight and truth with precision, to pierce the layers of Will's denial and repression. In this scene, Williams repeats arguably the most famous lines from the film: 'It's not your fault. It's not your fault. It's not your fault.' Will's wounds, having been acknowledged and aired, have a chance to heal. But Damon's character is young, and so the therapeutic intervention perhaps early enough to save him. As portrayed in the film, the potential for this kind of healing shouldn't be seen as a certainty but more as beautiful in its total miraculousness.

In the late 1990s I stood in front of hundreds of proud parents along with my primary school peers giving a colourful, props-filled rendition of 'Friend like me' - the rousing number Genie, voiced by Williams, sings to Alladin in the Disney film of the same name. Our creative and enthusiastic teacher, who literally orchestrated this performance, let our ideas run wild, to this day securing the esteemed place in my heart of 'favourite teacher'. Tragedy struck, however, and in later years I learned of this person's enormous struggles with alcoholism and a deep well of mental anguish. We knew a teacher who was passionate, fun and creative. We did not know about the other side, the suffering. To be highly smart and creative, running on high emotions and highly sensitivity to life around you, may seem like the luck of the draw. But the tragedy is that such a state can all too easily lend itself to self-destruction. Author of the internationally-acclaimed memoir *Eat Pray Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert, describes it this way: '... having a creative mind is something like a owning Border Terrier; It needs a job. And if you don't give it a job, it will invent a job (which will involve tearing something up.) Which is why I have learned over the years that if I am not actively creating something, chances are I am about to start actively destroying something.'

Williams created, gave and suffered, all in huge amounts. And his suffering was extremely hard to outrun, though he bravely struggled against it. It is hard to not despair at the news, knowing he will be sadly missed by millions of people. Yet there are no neat answers - except to recognise that a beautifully prolific mind can sometimes be a danger to itself.

I take solace in what I believe to be the truth - that Williams did not want to die so much as he had a deep desire to live and to win out over his suffering. Yesterday, he did not win. But we should not forget the many, many times he did. The many times he found joy and shared it; the ways he has made the world laugh. His films and comedy have enriched those of us lucky enough to have experienced it. If only we could have given back to him the same joy he so abundantly provided; and if only that Black Dog would have let him have it.

Rest in peace Robin Williams. Thank you for all the times you outran that dog - and for all the joy you left for us.

Megan Graham won the 2013 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

Sitting in the doors of the powerful

MARGARET DOOLEY AWARD

James O'Brien



When the Federal Government put out a cartoon saying 'No Way' to asylum seekers from Afghanistan, it struck a gong that reverberated around the nation. Some church leaders gathered together to begin a movement, playing off the government's slogan. They began calling themselves 'Love Makes A Way'. Here were people who would seek to use nonviolent actions to call attention to the injustices in our asylum seeker system, notably the close to 1000 children in immigration detention.

Drawing upon the inspiration of Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr, this was an ecumenical coming together of Christians with the backing of 'Pace e Bene Australia,' a group dedicated to a spirituality of nonviolence. With leaders across the nation like Perth's Jarrod McKenna and Sydney's Justin Whelan, they began training in the kinds of actions they would seek to perform. Their strategy started to take shape: sit-ins in the electorate offices of federal parliamentarians, asking that justice may 'roll down like waters'. The movement would hold simultaneous sit-ins at the electorate offices of the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader, calling on both sides of politics to make a way for the vulnerable at our door. In a sense they were joining themselves with the prophetic tradition, crying out that society may welcome the stranger, care for the orphan and make space for the widow. In each case the electorate office staff called the police, with each person involved in the protest making a choice whether to stay put. Protestors who remained were then charged with 'trespass', meaning they would have their day in court. They would trust that words be given them.

When an Adelaide sit-in eventuated in the electorate office of Jamie Briggs MP, included among those sitting-in was Rabbi Shoshana Kaminsky of Beit Shalom Synagogue. She went on to say 'I am risking arrest today because the most-repeated teaching in the Hebrew Bible is to treat the stranger with kindness. We Jews trace our roots back to the Hebrew slaves in Egypt 3000 years ago and re-enact the agony of slavery each year at the festival of Passover. The International Refugee law that our government is

undermining was written to say 'never again' after the Holocaust. I cannot stand idly by and watch my government keep some of the world's most vulnerable children in detention when my faith commands me to act.'

The movement had reached beyond the confines of group boundaries, gaining momentum with an online sharing of the campaign on Facebook and Twitter. But what are the roots of these nonviolent actions? Pace e Bene says it draws on 'the vision of Jesus, Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Shelley Douglass, John Dear and many others.' As Gandhi said 'An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.' Nonviolence in the pursuit of peace recognises that our world is beset by such violence that the only strategy we have is to resist the very strategies of the violent. When our State sanctions draconian policies and actively carries them out, not to act is to be compliant and even perhaps complicit. As Love Makes A Way is fond of quoting King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, 'Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatise the issue that it can no longer be ignored.'

So we as a community are forced to confront the uncomfortable truths that sanction the use of power to keep the vulnerable at bay. We are encouraged to confront the words that are given precedence in our community. We hear words from our Prime Minister, Mr Abbott: 'I don't think it's a very Christian thing to come in by the back door rather than the front door... I think the people we accept should be coming the right way and not the wrong way… If you pay a people-smuggler, if you jump the queue, if you take yourself and your family on a leaky boat, that's doing the wrong thing, not the right thing, and we shouldn't encourage it.' Then we see faith leaders spending a whole day in a politician's electorate office and we wonder.

One key passage for Christians is the parable of the Good Samaritan. A lawyer asks a question of Jesus regarding the dual commandment to love God and neighbour. He asks 'who is my neighbour?&' Jesus goes on to tell the story of a man mortally wounded, stripped and beaten by a band of robbers. Both priest and levite see him on their way, and yet they each decide to pass by on the other side. The Samaritan stops. He engages. He is 'moved with pity'.

This movement of the heart leads him to tend the wounds of the man, taking him to an inn where he will be cared for. Jesus concludes that the one who shows mercy is the one who behaves like a neighbour.

In a globalised world of forced migration because of war, discrimination, violence and repression, our response to the question 'who is my neighbour?' needs an expansive imagination. In order to stop and consider, to let ourselves be 'moved with pity', we need the prophetic witness of the Love Makes A Way movement. We need the witness of people with an ability to bring the needs of the distressed to the doors of the powerful. There is at this place of encounter the possibility of transformation. For as with the levite and the priest, what looks like the greed of the strong could be the fear of being too involved, the fear of being changed by the other and their needs. In one direct action by the movement, police officers were moved by the integrity of the group's actions. With nonviolent action led by the heart, the powers that be are shown a liberating authority and spirit at work. The State is encouraged to imagine a new way of behaving.

As the lawyer in the parable is told 'Go and do likewise', so the politician whose office is prayed in is invited to consider the ways they respond to the needs of our asylum seeker neighbours.

Maybe then they too may look to Martin Luther King Jr. writing in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*: 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' This is the significance of action and inaction. He went on, 'We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.' What we do matters. The people involved in King's nonviolent movement went through training in purification of motives, and what they would accept themselves. They asked these questions: 'Are you able to

accept blows without retaliating?' and 'Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?' King saw nonviolent direct action as helping his brothers and sisters 'rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.' It is in this tradition that *Love Makes A Way* stands. These actions are to help end the monologue from those in power, and begin society's considered dialogue on the question being put. Why children in detention? Why punishment without crime?

Over fifty years ago, one prophet of peace Thomas Merton wrote to another, his friend Dan Berrigan SJ. 'The real job is to lay the groundwork for a deep change of heart on the part of the whole nation so that one day it can really go through the metanoia we need for a peaceful world.' This change of heart will only come if we stop and consider. If we are moved by the faces, the names, and the stories such that our action brings on the kind of crisis King believes will force the community to confront the issue. What is being done in our name?

King in his time was disappointed with the white moderate who says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action.' He responds that 'shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.' Dan Berrigan writes, 'We want the peace; but most of us do not want to pay the price of peace. We still dream of a peace that has no cost attached.'

The federal government has created a limbo situation for our asylum seekers, particularly children. Nonviolent direct action through movements such as *Love Makes A Way* has the effect of helping people stop, and thus it changes hearts. As Dan Berrigan says 'Every slavery is an invitation to another exodus; every exodus is guided by a dark promise.' For every asylum seeker we send back on the open seas, we lose a potential teacher, cricketer or Australian of the Year. *Love Makes A Way* for asylum seekers.

James O'Brien is currently enrolled in a Diploma in English Literature at Sydney University and enjoys writing, football and the cello. This essay is the first prize winner in the 2014 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers. Twitter: @jpeob.

SMSFs offer 'pension fund socialism'

ECONOMICS

David James



In 1976, the unusual and often prescient, management thinker Peter Drucker penned a book entitled *The Unseen Revolution: How Pension Fund Socialism Came to America*. He was making the point that, at least in terms of the strict legal definition, the actual owners of the stock market were workers - via their pension funds. Drucker was somewhat cheekily implying that the home of capitalism, America, was becoming Marxist: the workers' owning the means of production. At the very least it showed that there were many different types of capitalism.

A similar broadening of ownership has developed in Australia since the creation of compulsory superannuation. A study in *BRW* magazine that compared individual wealth of Australia's richest people with the wealth held by superannuation funds (undertaken by this writer) revealed the trend. In the early 1990s, several wealthy individuals made it into the list of the top 20 sources of wealth. A decade later, only mining magnate Gina Rinehart made the list, and then only just at number 20. The biggest pools of money, and financial power, in Australia are in the superannuation funds and insurance companies, not with individuals.

The subtle effects of such diffusion of wealth and investment intentions are hard to trace but it is reasonable to conclude that they have a profoundly equalising effect. A country in which wealth is in the hands of powerful families - as is routinely the case in many Latin American countries, for example - will almost inevitably have a more concentrated power structure than a country in which the sources of wealth are more distributed. But if Drucker thought that the growth of pension funds would lead to greater emancipation of the workers, he was to be very wrong. The 'ownership' by the workers was only indirect. The decisions about how the money was to be invested were made by intermediaries: fund managers. They rewarded themselves handsomely for that privilege - the old trick of getting a percentage of funds under management rather than a flat fee - and became something of a rule unto themselves, a new power elite.

The global financial crisis demonstrated just how reckless the financial managers could be with other people's money, and, worse, how they could act against the interests of the very workers whose interests they were supposed to be representing. Not only did they fail to get returns to justify their massive remuneration - there is decades long evidence that, in most cases, the more you pay a financial intermediary the worse the result - their investment strategies routinely worsened the situation of many workers (especially the use of globalisation to drive down wages).

No socialism here, thank you. Ferocious capitalism was back.

But since the GFC those workers with super have increasingly become aware of how little they actually get from the fund managers who are supposed to act on their behalf. Few managers can beat the index for any sustained period of time, largely because they are the index. If a fund manager does beat the index in one year it is more likely that they will be at the back of the pack in the following year. That is why paying more for financial advisers ensures a poorer return. Most fund managers track the index, at best. So if you pay them a higher fee, that is the amount that they will fall below the index.

In Australia, many superannuants have looked for a way out, establishing and managing their own fund: a self managed super fund (SMSF). The numbers are staggering. There are over 1 million SMSF trustees, double the amount in 2004. There are over 500,000 individual funds and over \$550 billion under management, about a third of all superannuation funds in Australia (and equivalent to about a third of the Australian stock market). The median SMSF trustee is in his or her 60s (which could create problems as they age). On average the funds have grown five-fold in 10 years, and the average funds in each fund are over \$1.5 million.

This growth of SMSFs over the last decade has caught the funds management community completely by surprise, especially the retail funds, which have suffered the most.

Industry funds have done rather better.

The financial sector has managed to strike back against this annoying tendency towards financial democracy. The Commonwealth Treasury estimates that superannuation fees are running at \$20 billion annually, equivalent to 1 per cent of Australia's GDP. According to the Treasury, this is about three times what Australian superannuants should pay.

But maybe there will be a little more of Drucker's 'pension fund socialism' this time around. Certainly, the rise of SMSFs is very much connected to the attractions of controlling one's own destiny. Many superannuants who saw their wealth diminish during the GFC have concluded, reasonably enough, that they can just as easily make mistakes themselves. At least they won't be paying their fund managers a fortune for the privilege.

David James is a business journalist with a PhD in English literature. He edits Personal Super Investor.

Investor image by Shutterstock.

Driven to distraction

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.

The wind blew through us

CREATIVE

Kevin Gillam



stopping

stopping makes a sound,
offers a plea, drops a hand,
pulls you skyward. stop-

ping lives below the
white sack on the red letter-
box, composes songs

using dust motes. show
closed, stopping warm, beside you
on the ferris wheel

'clockwise is off'

in this convalescence - good word that with it's
gauze-like length and syllabic wrap - been

practicing that lost art of waiting, bus and
train stations, doctors' rooms, never enough

shade or new 'New Ideas', been watching,
the wizened and the upright, figs ripening,

footpaths that flow like prose then trip like
misspellings, been rubbing paperbark trees,

listening in on frogs, been mulling over the
difference between learned and remembered,

the venn intersects, making a mantra
of 'clockwise is off' while pondering the

origin of knowns, the mind that did
the choosing, hands that shape our days

Thursday

too many birds, yes,
too many for logic,
a squadron of black cockatoos,
cries like can openers,
sharp around the rim of sky.
collective leading,
a tag team of wakes.
too many for a chorus of updrafts,
too many for the thoughts
of too few,
too many for the sullen work of bridges.
winged fiction, air-pocketed,
scythed from page,
sleek and paragraphed.
too many for lighthouses,
for regret,
too many for ships or why.
Thursday, etched on blue,
residue of clouds.
these birds, sly bells,
for creeds or commandment, enough for belief rope armies taken my lungs to ocean,
remembering that on taps, clockwise is off, though this is my truth, my tomorrow, not
that of the clock hands and been thinking 'bout tides and un-neaping, and lets call it global
swarming though we'll never get there of course, when, for every ant there's a human -
they know that, 'cos for us 'mining' means 'mine' and we're more blind that they are and
while we're making books for our faces they're forming rope armies to bind and save the
world

and the wind

the wind blew through us. we were small that
day, there and not. sea was scuffed, frothed, whipped,

smear of land far out where blue skirts blue.
wind blew through us. swept us clean, swept us

of tales and ache. we were lost that day,
found but not. one gull, high up, wheeled and

watched. blew through us. we were song that day,
free on the stave, note then note, spume and

a whiff and dried weed, lick and boom of
waves, nudge of groyne. the wind blew through. we

were sand that day, sand and salt and shell
and curled. we were grain that day. wind through

us. glint of sun off the quilt of brine.
we were small and hope. the wind through us



Kevin Gillam is a Western Australian writer with three books of poetry published.

Windy beach image by Shutterstock.

Good Christian morality is better than bad science

INTERNATIONAL

Matthew Beard



Even before the controversies surrounding Eric Abetz's remarks on Channel Ten's *The Project*, the World Congress of Families was under fire for its endorsement of Angela Lanfranchi's research linking abortion to breast cancer.

Dr Lanfranchi was accused by feminist writer Van Badham of 'peddling… information out of a concern for women's health, while playing down their theological or political agenda.'

Badham's implication was that Dr Lanfranchi and others have tried to develop medical scientific or psychological arguments against abortion. The specifics of the arguments differ, but the general point is the same. Abortion is against the best interests of women, and activists who defend it as a means of advancing the wellbeing of women are mistaken.

Although it's very likely that Dr Lanfranchi genuinely believes her argument to be true, it still doesn't give voice to what anti-choice activists actually argue is wrong with abortion; namely, that the foetus is a morally precious person with infinite value and dignity. Instead of making this powerful claim, scientific proponents dilute the argument in order to make it more palatable to a potentially hostile audience.

It's important that we not assign motive and *assume* that any medical scientific argument (or, for that matter legal, practical or psychological argument) against abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or other heated moral issue is actually subversive ideology. However, it is not beyond the realm of possibility to believe that some such arguments are - from both sides of these debates.

Subversion of this sort is problematic for anybody interested in truth and integrity in public debate. For one thing, if proponents of a particular perspective aim to support their arguments with facts rather than ideas, they are at constant risk of losing the argument if the facts change.

Consider, for instance, the possibility that it is true that there is a link between abortion

and breast cancer. For those who oppose abortions, this makes a compelling case for minimising abortions, but if, say, we were able to sever the link, then the argument against abortion would disappear. I suspect, though, that many with a stake in the scientific argument would not so readily abandon their position. There is good reason for this: because arguments against abortion exist in deeper, more powerful forms, even if they are less effective at gaining popular support.

To mask beliefs in another form (if, and when, that occurs) is to immediately concede that they are shameful, unpopular, or *prima facie* unacceptable. Why would I try to sneak my argument through the back door if I genuinely believed it to be true? Worse than that though, it's dishonest. The attempt to persuade someone through incidental facts rather than by presenting the strongest possible version of the argument is deceptive and presumptive.

The presumption is that I already possess the truth, and that the task of debate is not, in fact, to debate but to convert. Public discourse becomes an act of salvation. Why not, as Paul asks in Romans 3, simply use whatever means are necessary to persuade people of the truth?

The answer is that the inherent contradiction in the practice of using lies, subversion or deception attacks the same truth it aims to uphold. We have public debates about morality and ethics because reaching the truth of these matters is objectively valuable. When we aim to deceive, we manipulate truth in order to suit our own ends. If we care about truth, we have a duty to present it in its best possible light.

Christian bioethicist Nicholas Tonti-Fillipini has frequently criticised Christian arguments that are separated from Christ himself. This method, even if effective, 'sells [Christians] short and represents a failure to engage in secular discussion on equal terms and a failure to give adequate witness to the teachings of Christ.'

An old expression in the teaching of legal advocacy goes as follows: 'if you have the facts on your side, hammer the facts. If you have the law on your side, hammer the law. If you have neither the facts nor the law, hammer the table.'

Equally, if you have morality on your side, argue morality; and if you have Christ on your side, argue Christ. The Christian faithful ought not to be afraid of an explicitly Christian, moral voice in public debate. Anything less is dishonest and - potentially - embarrassing.

Matthew Beard is a research associate at the University of Notre Dame's Centre for Faith, Ethics and Society. Twitter @matthewtbeard

We must reconsider our need to fly

ENVIRONMENT

Thea Ormerod



The travel advisory 'you should reconsider your need to travel' has taken on new meaning now that we've had a commercial jetliner shot down while it was flying through air space above a conflict zone.

International airlines were immediately challenged to fly safer skies, even if it meant using more fuel. At first Qantas was not going to deviate from its established flight path over Iraq. But it was subsequently influenced by other airlines to re-route its Dubai to London flights around Iraqi airspace, even though this would make the flights uneconomic.

In the long-term, more circuitous routes will put upward pressure on fares. Will we grin and bear the extra financial burden, or might there be other factors at play?

Human fear is a strange thing. As a counsellor, I understand that the intensity of fear is often not matched by real levels of danger. For example, in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, large numbers of Americans switched from flying to driving, even though it was in reality less safe, and it led to a proportional rise in deaths on US roads.

It seems to me that most people are fairly oblivious to the most dangerous aspect of air travel. That is its impact on the long-term viability of the biosphere. The latest research is pointing towards a terrifying 4 degrees or more global average temperature rise by 2100. That is a good reason to apply the 'you should reconsider your need to travel' advisory to all air travel.

Yet people manifest, at best, a collective blindness and, at worst, a kind of idolatry.

Notice how excited your colleagues become around the water cooler as they talk about their next trip. Ever tried challenging the wisdom of their plans? I have. Even ardent climate activists will push back on the suggestion they should exercise restraint.

International events are taking place in virtually all areas of human endeavour. In addition to professional conferences and sporting competitions, there is everything from the Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture festival to the World Paper Planes

Championships.

Religious institutions are as much a part of this trend as anyone else. World Youth Day comes with a substantial environmental cost, but this is very rarely questioned. International relationships are fostered to maintain overseas aid and development work, and inspirational speakers are hosted from across the globe.

What is conveniently overlooked is the fact that aviation's contribution to global emissions varies from two per cent to five per cent or more, depending on who's counting. Compounding these calculations is the fact that burning fuel at high altitude has nearly three times the climate impact of burning the same fuel at ground level. There is added complexity because the nitrous oxides created are 310 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, and the effects from condensation trails (contrails) are difficult to quantify.

Furthermore, global annual aviation growth is currently estimated to be around five per cent each year. Improvements in energy efficiency have not kept pace with this growth, resulting in a net increase in global emissions.

George Marshall, author of *Carbon Detox*, has calculated that a holiday to Australia for a family of four living in the UK has the same climate impact as heating their average size house for a decade. Climate scientist, Kevin Anderson, calculates that air travel is the most emissions-profligate activity per hour.

Unfortunately, as Marshall argues, the 'carbon offsets' that people buy in good faith go only part of the way to offsetting the real effects of flying. Offset companies routinely under-estimate flight emissions and over-estimate the amount of carbon that off-set projects save. At the same time, they conflate non-fossilised and fossilised carbon. For example, the carbon that a tree soaks up in a few decades is equated with the carbon released by burning ages-old fossil fuel in a single flight.

The reluctance to curtail flying habits derives in part from the belief that our small actions are not going to make a scrap of difference anyway, and that the key to reducing emissions is structural change, not individual sacrifice. This position is convenient, but it exposes the gap between the talk and the walk in our personal responsibility.

We can enjoy holidays in our own country, take part in webinars, video conferences and Skype meetings. As aviation fuel becomes less available, these options will be forced on us at any rate. Perhaps by travelling less we would not achieve what we currently do, but we could something equally valuable but less environmentally damaging.

Thea Ormerod is President of Australian Religious Response to Climate Change.

Airliner image by Shutterstock.

The unjustified secrecy of the Abbott Government

INTERNATIONAL

Jack Maxwell



Secrecy has been a hallmark of the Abbott Government to this point. It barred the release of the Department of Treasury's 'blue book', a briefing book prepared for the incoming government before the last election. Media appearances by Ministers must be cleared by the Prime Minister's office. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, which conducts external review of freedom of information decisions, has been abolished.

Over the past month, however, it has broken new ground. In the first week of July, we were faced with a particularly disturbing situation. Our government was apparently detaining over 150 people, incommunicado and in an unknown location. And the responsible Minister was refusing to answer questions.

Australians could be forgiven for wondering just what kind of government we were living under. The Tamil asylum seekers have since been whisked from the high seas to Curtin detention centre, and now to Nauru. But the secrecy shrouding the Abbott Government in general, and asylum seeker policy in particular, persists.

Why is this alarming? Several different stories can be told that explain the pernicious influence of secrecy in government. Secrecy subverts political accountability. Utilitarians like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham recognised that only an informed citizenry could hold its government to account, in public debate and (ultimately) at the ballot box, for misusing public power.

Secrecy also makes us less free. The state interferes with our lives constantly. We usually have the information and the avenues to challenge interference that seems illegal or unjust. When the exercise of public power becomes covert, arbitrary and secretive, however, the state begins to dominate its citizens.

Finally, secrecy undermines self-respect. John Rawls thought that people's sense of their own worth hinged on the development of their capacity to engage with questions of justice. But information is required to participate in these debates, whether in the area of asylum seekers, school funding or intelligence powers.

These are strong moral arguments for transparency in government. They suggest that we should adopt a robust presumption in favour of openness, leaving it to those who assert the need for greater secrecy to prove it.

Of course, there are instances in which secrecy is justified, or even required. First, secrecy can promote effective deliberation, allowing parties to speak more honestly and make compromises without the threat of a backlash. Second, the release of certain information can cause direct harm. We recognise that divulging confidential medical records or the identities of spies would harm innocent people. Third, transparency might undermine the efficacy of a beneficial policy. The concealment of the times and locations at which ticket inspectors operate on public transport is acceptable, because otherwise

the policy itself would be defeated.

To prove that one of these exceptions applies, however, an actual argument needs to be made. The Abbott Government has asserted broadly that the release of information gives 'aid and comfort to the people smugglers'. But given the presumption in favour of transparency, this claim should be a springboard for debate, not a gag. How does particular information provide 'comfort' to people smugglers? Why is this relevant? The fact that the navy does not shoot smugglers on sight presumably also provides them some comfort, but there is no call to conceal it. What kind of information - boat arrivals, turn-back procedures, conditions in detention - 'aids' the smuggling trade, and how? In failing to answer these questions, the Abbott Government has failed to make the case for the sweeping secrecy of Operation Sovereign Borders.

This opaque regime cannot be justified on the grounds of good deliberation. Lieutenant General Angus Campbell has stated that it helps 'acknowledge bi-lateral and regional sensitivities in the counter-people-smuggling effort', but it's difficult to understand what that means. Is this information blackout for the sake of avoiding some red faces in Indonesia?

The release of information about the treatment of asylum seekers on navy vessels and in detention also would not cause harm to innocent people. Quite the opposite. It is crucial to allow the protection of those seeking aid, given their vulnerable position. Just last week, it emerged that the Immigration Department attempted to suppress information about children's mental health problems in detention.

The most plausible justification for this secrecy appears to be efficacy. Publicising information about how boats are approached and turned back might allow people smugglers to circumvent this operation.

The fact that secrecy is necessary for the success of a policy, however, is not sufficient to justify its secrecy. The core aim of the policy must also be beneficial, and its benefits must outweigh the costs of secrecy. With respect to Operation Sovereign Borders, this is at least an open question.

Furthermore, the scope of the secrecy must be limited to what is necessary. Returning to the ticket inspector example, the fact that there are inspectors, the size of fines, and the rights of suspected fare evaders are all public knowledge. Reports of misconduct by inspectors may lead to public enquiry. None of this is inconsistent with inspectors fulfilling their valuable function. By contrast, the secrecy surrounding asylum seeker policy stretches far beyond this test of necessity.

This kind of scrutiny is one way in which liberal democracies keep secrecy in check. Where secrecy is justified, this justification should itself be public. The Abbott Government has failed miserably on both counts. It has withheld important information from the public on questionable grounds, and it has shielded itself from criticism by stifling debate on whether that secrecy is justified. As anti-terror legislation and government surveillance now move into the political spotlight, we can only hope that things become clearer.

Jack Maxwell is a second year law student at the University of Melbourne who completed an honours degree in philosophy in 2012.

Abbott's Team Australia must include jobless young Muslims

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



The Abbott Government shelved plans to amend section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act because it feared alienating ethnic minorities. The prime minister declared: 'I want the communities of our country to be our friend, not our critic. … I want to work with the communities of our country as &'Team Australia&''.

He was keenly aware that alienation of minorities caused by the 18C changes would have been likely to contribute to an increase in the number of young Muslim males travelling to wars in the Middle East, and subsequently return to Australia radicalised and skilled to carry out terrorist attacks here. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had said that preventing Australian citizens from becoming involved in terrorist activities was one of Australia's highest national security priorities.

It would seem reasonable to assume that 'Team Australia' refers to a nation in which social inclusion is a priority for government policy. Such a term would indeed be meaningless if the government did not care about social inclusion. That's why it's so significant that the May Budget was one of the most divisive in the nation's history. One of the more extreme measures in the Budget was the proposed rules forcing young people to wait six months before getting unemployment benefits and require them to apply for 40 jobs per month. This divisiveness of this was amplified with Thursday's release of statistics that show Australia's unemployment rate is at its highest in 12 years.

How can the nation's young unemployed feel part of Team Australia if they sense they are being punished by such a draconian regime? Surely they will feel excluded, sitting on the sideline with the chill wind running through their veins.

Young Muslim males are well represented in the ranks Australia's young unemployed, yet the government hopes they will identify with Team Australia and not be subject to the

discontent that makes them open to the recruitment pitches of Muslim radicals. It's fine to protect young Muslim males from being excluded from mainstream Australia through vilification. But there's little point to that if they feel excluded by a set of judgmental welfare rules. The government will be completely outflanked by their Muslim radical brothers in offering means towards self-validation.

It's likely there's a political imperative behind the government's toughness against the young unemployed. Voters like to see governments crack down on 'dole bludgers' in the way that they want the boats stopped. So perhaps It's something they feel they have to do to remain electable.

However a group of church welfare organisations this week suggested a way out, which is to de-politicise welfare payments. They want the government to transfer the power to set welfare payments to an independent body that is motivated by fairness rather than electability. It is similar to the idea of an 'Australian Entitlements Commission' that Catholic Social Services Australia suggested in 2008 to set and review welfare payments.

Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews has already dismissed this week's suggestion, but in doing so he is ensuring the politics of division will dog his government's wish to contain the threat of home grown terrorists who side with Muslim radicals and not Team Australia.



Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.

Muslim youth image by Shutterstock.

<!--Follow him on Twitter.-->

Signs that East Ukraine has averted mass human tragedy

INTERNATIONAL

Tony Kevin



At the time of writing on Sunday, the ABC was reporting that the destructive civil war raging in East Ukraine since April now seems to be drawing to a close, essentially on Kiev's terms. It appears that the tense test of wills between Russia and the West generated by the crisis, which briefly last week risked a wider war, has ended in a tacit backdown by Moscow.

The ABC news report carried the following:

Pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine say they are prepared to strike a ceasefire deal with Kiev forces as Russia calls for 'urgent measures' to prevent a humanitarian disaster in the region.

There are conflicting reports whether Russia actually tried in recent days to send in an armed 'humanitarian convoy' to relieve the beleaguered separatist forces in East Ukraine. Kiev says they did try, but were warned back. Moscow says this is a fairy tale. The truth is probably that US intelligence picked up signs of mobilisation for such a move, and Obama warned Putin it would be regarded by the West as a hostile act.

So ends, in my interpretation of published news, the biggest threat to East-West peace since the Cold War. It ends in devastation and tragedy for the people of East Ukraine. As my former DFAT colleague (and former Australian Ambassador to Moscow) Cavan Hogue commented on Saturday:

It's a very complicated situation. Places like Crimea and Odessa and where the troubles are now are inhabited by Russian-speaking people who think of themselves as Russian. So, are we going for self-determination or are we going for territorial integrity?

It seems that territorial integrity has won.

Hogue also suggested that for Australia publicly to insult the Russian Government seemed pointless: what was in it for us to get involved? He wondered how much of this was for domestic purposes? I will answer: almost all of it. The outrage over the M17 shoot down, seemingly by Moscow-armed separatists who mistook it for a Ukrainian

airforce plane on a bombing mission against them, and the anti-Moscow sentiments of sizeable numbers of Australian voters, created a fertile field for vote-garnering by a beleaguered Abbott government. Perforce, Labor has to follow suit.

As for the Americans and European Union, they must have been irritated by Abbott's inept efforts to put himself front and centre of international response to the MH17 disaster. The vainglorious foolishness of the proclaimed armed ADF/AFP mission to seize control of the crash area in order to search for remains and establish accountability would have particularly concerned the Dutch and Malaysians.

As I read Paul McGeough's [report](#) for Fairfax Media, heavy-handed Australian tactics in this tragicomedy actually complicated the release by the separatists of the black box flight recorders and the train carrying the remains. In the end, quiet diplomacy by the Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak secured these essential goals.

Neither Abbott and Bishop, nor Australia, emerge with credit from these weeks of parochial and insensitive world grandstanding. As for Bishop's diplomatic triumph at the UN (on which I [wrote](#) on 21 July), much of this would have reflected staff work by a highly competent Australian UN Mission led by Ambassador Gary Quinlan in drafting appropriate resolutions, setting up meetings, and preparing talking points for those meetings.

But to return to the main story of the war, which the Red Cross rightly designated a civil war subject to humanitarian rules of war:

Since April, Ukraine's President Poroshenko led a forceful but calibrated military campaign against the separatist region, deploying troops, tanks, aircraft and artillery bombardment against towns and villages where civilians lived. The goal was to cause just enough damage to encourage refugee flows, to clear the battlefield.

As a result, the extent of the outgunned rebel-held area steadily shrank to two major cities Donetsk and Lugansk and some surrounding rural areas. The rebels appear no longer to hold a corridor to the nearby Russian border. Approximately 1500 Ukrainians have been killed in the conflict and over 250,000 people forced to flee their homes and farms: some to Russia, some to other parts of Ukraine. Key infrastructure (roads, bridges, power supplies, hospitals) were destroyed and great suffering inflicted on the people of East Ukraine.

When I wrote my last [commentary](#) in *Eureka Street*, on 30 July, my hunch was that Putin would intervene but was waiting for the right moment to do so. He was between a rock and a hard place, but I thought domestic political considerations and I believe his own values, would finally impel him to send in overwhelming Russian forces. In the end, he left it too late.

As Hogue said:

What can Putin do? He can back down and lose face domestically and internationally or he can hit back. He's left in a very difficult situation.

Finally, it seems today, Putin succumbed to American power and steely resolve. Obama, with full backing from Germany and Britain, seems to have persuaded Putin not to launch any form of unilateral humanitarian intervention into East Ukraine.

According to the ABC report, Obama and Angela Merkel agreed on Saturday night Australian time that such a move would be unacceptable, would violate international law, and would provoke additional consequences. David Cameron's office reported that he and Obama had spoken, had expressed grave concern, and had agreed any humanitarian mission by Russia into Ukraine would be unjustified and illegal. All very strong diplomatic language to Moscow.

Soon afterwards, the prime minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic caved in. He said areas in the Ukraine's east where rebels are fighting government troops were lacking food, water and electricity. He said:

We are ready for a ceasefire to prevent the proliferation of a humanitarian disaster in

Donbass. We have no humanitarian corridors. There is no supply of medicines... food supplies are nearing their end.

Kiev Government officials said they are ready to agree to a ceasefire but on condition the rebels surrender their arms.

So, this tragic five-month civil war appears to be drawing to a close, essentially on Kiev's terms. I hope there will soon be some face-saving cooperation announced between Kiev and Moscow that will enable urgent humanitarian assistance to flow in from neighbouring Russia. (No other country seems in any hurry to help the East Ukrainians).

Thus *realpolitik* triumphs once again. In World War Two, this strategic Donbass industrial region (around Donetsk) was first invaded by the Nazis and then recovered by the Red Army in a bitter campaign. The region was devastated. It was repopulated and rebuilt since 1945, with handsome Soviet-style cities like Donetsk and Lugansk. Now so much human toil has been destroyed again, in a needless war that a modicum of statesmanship and diplomacy could have prevented. These people have again been dealt a raw deal by history.

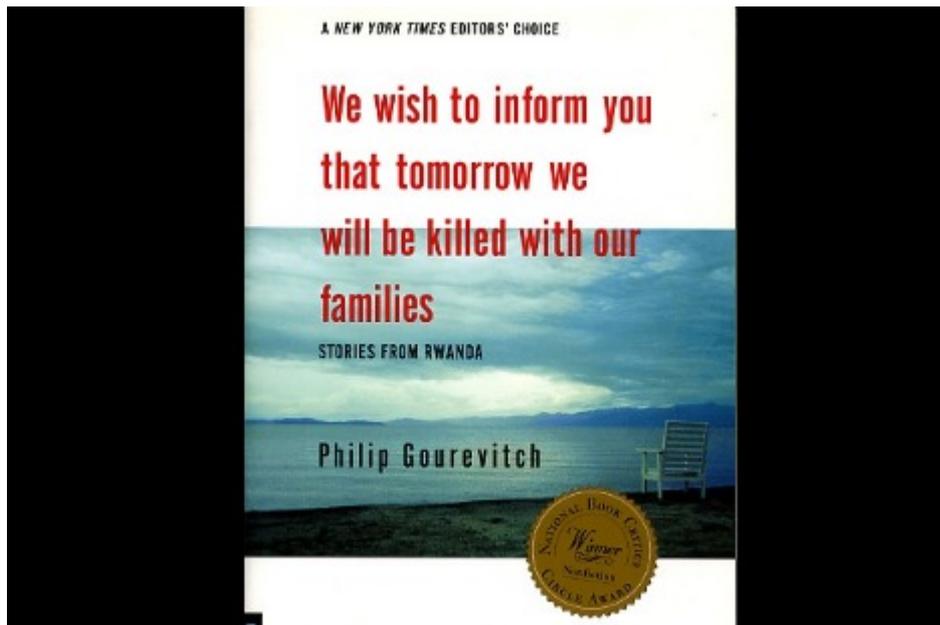
Much now depends on the quality of Poroshenko's leadership. Will he reach out in charity and compassion to the defeated people of East Ukraine, or will he be vengeful and triumphant, stirring up more trouble for Europe's future peace? Surely Europe has had enough of discriminated-against, resentful ethnic minorities lodged unhappily in fragile multicultural nations?

Tony Kevin is a former Australian ambassador to Poland.

Abbott's temporary reprieve for hate speech prohibition

INTERNATIONAL

Moira Rayner



We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families.

That is the title of a book of stories from Rwanda written by *New Yorker* staff writer Philip Gourevitch.

The quote comes from a letter written by seven Tutsi pastors to their leader, Pastor Ntakirutimana, on 15 April 1994. They asked him to intervene and save their lives, 'The same way as the Jews were saved by Esther.'

He didn't.

Gourevitch paints a detailed background to the 1994 Rwandan genocide: the slow build of hate speech; the ubiquitous anti-Tutsi 'discussions' by Hutu spokesmen, including the 1990 publication by charismatic Hutu extremist, Hassan Ngeze of the 'Hutu Ten Commandments'. These were premised on a fabulous and deadly doctrine of Hutu 'racial purity, their 1959 revolution, and the necessity of solidarity against 'our common Tutsi enemy.' The most often cited commandment was, 'Hutus must stop having mercy on the Tutsis'.

This immensely popular and widely spread work was championed by then-President Habyarimana as proof of Rwanda's freedom of the press.

The radio broadcasts did the rest, in April 1994.

Fresh from the war-crime trials about the effect of anti-Semitic 'racial purity' propaganda on humanity after WWII, the UN and most countries have made laws prohibiting stirring up racial discrimination.

Australia's Racial Discrimination Act 1975 has from the beginning, read:

It is unlawful for a person to do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (Section 6)

There was no explicit ground of 'racial harassment' in the Act. It is just a form of discrimination. There is a sexual harassment remedy in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and a harassment provision under Disability Discrimination act 1992.

The RDA Act was later amended to include a new Section 18C prohibiting:

'Offensive behaviour because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin

(1) It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:

(a) the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and

(b) the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or of some or all of the people in the group.

The next section gave exemptions, on which the a careless and opinionated newspaper columnist, Andrew Bolt relied, and failed to establish that he had acted:

&'(R)easonably and in good faith:

(a) in the performance, exhibition or distribution of an artistic work; or

(b) in the course of any statement, publication, discussion or debate made or held for any genuine academic, artistic or scientific purpose or any other genuine purpose in the public interest; or

(c) in making or publishing:

(i) a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest; or

(ii) a fair comment on any event or matter of public interest if the comment is an expression of a genuine belief held by the person making the comment.

Bolt failed, because many of his 'facts' were not, his language was intemperate and the judge said it wasn't a fair and accurate report. He wasn't fined or made to apologise. His employer had to correct his misleading words and paid his legal costs.

The Coalition thought this was a frightful blow for 'freedom of speech'. Early this year the federal Attorney General published an alternative regime:

1. &'It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:

a. the act is reasonably likely:

i. to vilify another person or a group of persons; or

ii. to intimidate another person or a group of persons, and

b. the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of that person or that group of persons.

2. For the purposes of this section:

a. vilify means to incite hatred against a person or a group of persons;

b. intimidate means to cause fear of physical harm:

1. to a person; or

2. to the property of a person; or

3. to the members of a group of persons.

3. Whether an act is reasonably likely to have the effect specified in sub-section (1)(a) is to be determined by the standards of an ordinary reasonable member of the Australian community, not by the standards of any particular group within the Australian community.

4. This section does not apply to words, sounds, images or writing spoken, broadcast, published or otherwise communicated in the course of participating in the public discussion of any political, social, cultural, religious, artistic, academic or scientific matter.&'

Quite rightly, the bill was seen to remove all limits on 'freedom of speech' without regard to the vulnerability of those targeted. It also applied an explicitly racist test of what might be 'reasonably likely' to offend or intimidate.

Applied to the Bolt circumstances, only someone who wasn't an Aboriginal person - with all the dispossession and disadvantage that include - could stand in the shoes of a 'pale-skinned' Aboriginal, and pretend to know what would be 'reasonably likely' to offend him or her.

Andrew Bolt was infuriated, Senator Brandis lost face and his new Human Rights

Commissioner Tim Wilson was 'disturbed' by the bill being shelved. The IPA is rabid. But the PM is a pragmatist, and there are obvious risks of running both this and his new 'anti-terrorist' legislation at the same time. That is aimed at radicalised Muslims who might participate in 'jihad'-like activities, and removes traditional civil rights, such as being considered innocent until proven guilty. It will apply to other radicalised groups, too. Think about it.

Prime Minister Abbott shelved, didn't withdraw, this new provision. It will come again. Abbott said he did it because everyone should be part of 'Team Australia.' He obviously hasn't seen the brilliant animated feature, '[Team America](#).' Team Australia? &'Feck, Yeah!&'

Maira Rayner is a barrister and writer.

Australians don't need to speak proper English

EDUCATION

Ellena Savage



Back in the day, Australians were schooled on manipulating their speech to emulate the upper classes. 'Correct' pronunciation was akin to an acceptable level of education and socialisation, and any deviation from what was considered 'correct' was marked a 'speech problem'.

By 'back in the day,' I mean back on Monday this week, when Fairfax published a column by vocal teacher Dean Frenkel on class anxiety and the Australian vernacular entitled 'The great Australian speech impediment'. It argued that 'most people' in Australia, 'including the Prime Minister, still have poor speech skills.' The author and vocal teacher Dean Frenkel wrote that our 'standards of communication are unacceptably low.' How so? Strayans are getting away with saying things that sound like 'proibly' and 'gumment' and 'commundity'. It is very distressing. Why can't people just stop being so confusing all the time? I can't understand anything anymore.

Instead of keeping pace with spoken trends like the intelligent, relevant citizens we are, Frenkel suggests that we opt for wiping out linguistic differences that arise from region, class, gender, and educational institutionalisation, and police language according to the arbitrary values ascribed to equally arbitrary changes in word use and pronunciation. Earlier this week, I said something to a colleague about him being a bit like the salt of the earth. He didn't know that phrase, so I tried to describe what I meant. 'As in, you seem honest,' I said. 'Like you could make things? Not neurotic?' My own words failed me, so I looked it up when we got back to the office. I laughed when the internet elaborated its official meaning: apparently 'salt of the earth' means 'an individual or group considered as representative of the best or noblest elements of society.' I had gone from offhandedly telling my colleague that he seemed pretty chill to describing him as the best and noblest human in the world.

My point? Dictionaries necessarily struggle to keep up with how words are used in the real world - I was using the phrase in one way; someone will capture another meaning

with the same phrase. Words change. Pronunciation changes. Language is not value-free; it's contextual, and context is constantly shifting. Miscommunication is the essence of comedy in any case, which points to the fact of how different regions, cultures, and genders use words impact how they operate in the world.

I work as an editor for magazines, and am constantly surrounded by language. I work with authors at all stages of their careers, and from many linguistic backgrounds. Some of the best pieces I've worked on were written by authors writing in their second or third language, which at the first draft stage, contained errors like misplaced commas and interesting uses of prepositions. An editor's job is to gently usher other peoples' writing into a style and shape that coheres with a given publication, and to make meaning clear. I'm not really interested in thinking people are dumb or lazy because they're not all over their semicolon usage; I'm interested in what their writing has to say.

There's bad writing, no doubt, but bad writing is usually about bad taste than more than it is about a misuse of grammar or punctuation (that's what editors are there for). What makes writing bad is when it doesn't understand its context; it doesn't understand what it is really saying. Bad writing usually just betrays a lack of experience or an unwillingness to look outward.

But speech is different. Speech is managed poorly and quickly. There's no editor, and rarely an adequate oral sphincter to bridge the divide between thought and communication. It was only when I began recording and transcribing interviews for work that I understood how odd people's speech was compared with how my brain seamlessly interpreted their meaning. Speech is not value-neutral - it's contextual. And I'm a bit more concerned with the context than the content of words in the public domain: pronounce 'gumment' however you want, just make sure you're critiquing its mandatory detention of asylum seekers.

Frenkel writes that there ought to be some kind of standardised verbal communication skill-level as a 'prerequisite for politicians, educators and advocates.' Why? 'If their skills are deficient, they are letting down their constituents.' I can think of many ways that politicians let down their constituents, and they are never, ever about mispronouncing words that have no static pronunciation in the first place.

Presumably Frenkel doesn't want to live in Australia where teachers or politicians have different accents because they were born elsewhere. Or an Australia where people with physical or mental handicaps that affect their pronunciation are taken seriously. Personally, I'm quite content with our vocal particularities, the flexibility of meanings, and the possibility for miscommunications. And as they say, if you don't like it (diversity), you can leave (to some place where people don't ever talk out loud).

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

Mouth image by Shutterstock.

Learning from the homeless

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

To be homeless would be one of our worst nightmares. To have to ask ourselves where we would sleep tonight, to have nothing on which to cook, no postal address, no answer to give to people who ask us where we live, nowhere to keep our bodies and our possessions safe, no confidence that we can keep our family together - we just don't want to go there.

So Homeless Persons' Week, celebrated this week, creeps up on us like a cane toad. We don't want to know about it, nor even think about it.

Yet many people in our society are homeless, and the threat of having nowhere to live hangs over even more people. Over forty percent of prisoners can expect to be homeless when they leave jail, for example. And many vulnerable young people have no stable home life, live in abusive situations, are isolated or suffer from mental illness. So it is decent to keep homeless people in mind.

Homeless Persons' Week is even more topical this year because the young people in risk of homelessness are precisely those who under new government proposals will lose benefits, will be constrained to make forty applications each month to seek work and will be obliged to do community work. Charity groups are already reporting an increase in young people living on the streets. These restrictions on support mean that more young people will join them. Although there may be arguments for this punitive regime in the case of the relatively small group of people who simply do not want to work, its application to include vulnerable young people will be harmful. It is easy to see why this should be so.

If you are young, living precariously on the edge of homelessness you have little space to reflect on your life. You must focus on survival. Nor do you have the stability you need in order to benefit from education or work. The things that you need to keep you connected with society - work, a bank account, a driving license - are beyond your reach. You are never far from losing your health, your self-confidence and your self-esteem.

It will not help if you are burdened with filling in forms to apply for jobs that do not exist and required to meet obligations you are not capable of, and then are stigmatised as work-shy, bludgers, leaners and not lifters, and the other rhetorical tropes that so often serve in the place of a properly thought-out policy.

Homelessness does not affect only individuals. It also touches society. The costs of homelessness will be paid in devastated lives and more hospital wards, police cells and gaol beds. Governments neglect their responsibility to people and to society if they do not enable housing for those who need it, encourage people to make connections with society, and help them find work. The economic logic that seeks to cut spending on the unemployed and on job creation will in the longer term lead to increased Government spending to deal with the consequences that are measured in damaged lives.

Homelessness reminds us that people who matter are treated as if they do not matter. That is why it makes us shudder. The Budget and changes to welfare suggest that people do not matter, defining them by only one aspect of their lives. Their worth is defined by their economic contribution. As a result not only the few who choose not to seek work or education are stigmatised, but also the vast majority who cannot do so because of disadvantage or because there is no work. Those fortunate enough to be able to work are praised cheaply as if their employment were a mark of virtue, not of good fortune.

There is much more to people than their ability to work. When we come to know disadvantaged people well we are often impressed as much by their resilience as by their great need and their fragility. Despite all the difficulties in their lives they keep on desiring something more. When they find people to stay with them and governments that values them for who they are, and not simply for their social usefulness, they may be able to learn and to find employment. Ensuring that people have homes is a government's duty. Homelessness is a failure of the social imagination.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

The beauty of hard-won hope

REVIEWS

Megan Graham

Begin Again (M). Director: John Carney. Starring: Keira Knightley, Mark Ruffalo, Adam Levine, James Corden, Catherine Keener. 101 minutes.

Not too long ago I read this on a favourite blog of mine: 'Today it starts all over again.' Cheesy, perhaps, but potentially powerful as a reframing tool for someone who feels defeated by life. Rough-looking has-been Dan (Mark Ruffalo) has all the hallmarks of defeat down to the alcoholism and disregard for basic decorum. Ditched by the successful record company he founded with a friend, a stranger to his teenage daughter and separated from his wife of 18 years, he is a mess - and the mess keeps compounding as he jumps at the next opportunity for self-sabotage.

At heart, Dan is a brilliant musical mind starving for inspiration; not just the inspiration to create but also to simply get through a day sober. In a heart-to-heart with freshly devastated singer songwriter Gretta (Keira Knightley) he tells her the '“pearls“ are getting further and further apart on the 'string' of his life.

Supportive Gretta and her singer boyfriend Dave arrived starry-eyed in New York a few months prior. They were greeted lavishly by the adoring record company who have just signed Dave. Things get rocky when the success goes to his head and their relationship becomes collateral damage. Maroon 5 front-man Adam Levine does a great job in this role, making Dave exceptionally dislikeable as he callously breaks Gretta's heart in cruel, if not clichéd, fashion. In contrast, Knightley is eminently pleasant and relatable, allowing us to identify with her despair and the inevitability of hope in her story.

Broken and bruised by their respective journeys, Gretta and Dan seize the chance for solidarity. A friendship forms naturally through the film's catalyst - a creative music project which sees Dan producing Gretta's songs by recording them in unorthodox environments. For both, their sense of compassion and resilience allows them to navigate a cold and indifferent city that threatens to swallow them whole. They use the creation of music as a mirror to reflect back a version of themselves - and NYC - that they can love. The process and the product are both lovely to behold.

Begin Again is about focusing on the possibilities for the future even while the whitewash of the last storm is still receding around one's ankles. We watch each character's downfall and subsequent rescue through the mutual recognition of each other's potential - such a story can't help but leave the viewer with an indomitable sense of hope and liberation.

Perhaps such a story is a dare to create something in spite of the inherent disorder and precariousness of life; even when there's more 'string' than 'pearls', Dan still searches for the pearls. It's also about having fun; Gretta and Dan are not only alright, they're choosing to live - and they'll make music on rooftops, at train stations and in laneways if they have to.

While starting over is a heavy and daunting task for both characters, wisdom and self-belief is the consolation prize for their hard experiences. The next chapter - the next song - is about what you make. But you have to start somewhere - again and again.

Megan Graham won the 2013 Margaret Dooley Award for Young Writers.

The return of the Jesuits

AUSTRALIA

Frank Brennan



Everyone knows that we Jesuits have had a rocky history. We were fabulously successful in educating the European elite for quite some time. Things went off the rails badly in the eighteenth century.

We lost out to the Vatican Curia over the dispute about accommodating some Confucian and Hindu traditional rites in prayer and liturgy on the missions in China and India. We fell out of favour with the imperial court in Portugal, then in France, and then in 1767 in Spain.

By then many Jesuits were on the run throughout Europe. The Portuguese were particularly upset with our defence of the locals living on the Reductions in South America. We had some sort of notion that the locals owned the place, not their colonisers. Ultimately the courts of Europe prevailed on Pope Clement XIV who published the brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* on 21 July 1773. Having listed the many shortcomings of the Society of Jesus, he decreed:

From sure knowledge and fullness of apostolic power, we abolish and suppress the oft-mentioned Society. We take away and abrogate each and every one of its offices, ministries, administrations, houses, schools, colleges, retreats, farms, and any properties in whatsoever province, realm, and jurisdiction and in whatever way pertaining to the Society. We do away with the statutes, customs, usages, decrees, Constitutions, even those confirmed by oath, by apostolic approval, or by other means.

In much the same way that recent popes have decreed that we can never again talk about women's ordination and that it would never be possible anyway, Clement purported to wipe out the Jesuits not just for the present, but forever. In his mind, there could never be a restoration of the Jesuits. He decreed:

The letter is not to be subjected to terms of the law nor are remedies to be sought in law, fact, favour, or justice. No one is to seek concessions or favours whether in court or outside the court. But we want the same present letter to be always and for ever valid,

firm, and efficacious, and that it be allotted and maintain its full and entire effects and that it be inviolably observed by each and every person to whom it pertains or will in some way pertain in the future.

Bishop Bill Morris had it good, compared with us back in those days. No such thing as due process back then. There was one huge loophole. The brief needed to be promulgated by the ruler in every jurisdiction where the Jesuits were.

The good old Tsarina Catherine II, the Orthodox Empress of Russia (God bless her), had her own reasons for wanting to maintain the presence of the Jesuits in White Russia. She refused to promulgate the brief and the Jesuits were happy to provide their services especially when the Russians took over part of East Poland with a lot of Catholics.

Clement died a year after he published his decree. His successor was the long-reigning Pius VI who had been educated by the Jesuits and who was known to be sympathetic to the restoration of the Society. But he was not able to stand up to Spain. In 1801 shortly after his election as Pope, Pius VII formally approved the ongoing existence of the Society of Jesus in Poland. Then ultimately on 7 August 1814, he issued the papal bull *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* restoring the Society of Jesus throughout the world.

Pius VII decreed:

We concede and grant to our beloved son and priest Tadeusz Brzozowski, current superior general of the Society of Jesus, and to others legitimately deputed by him, all necessary and appropriate faculties at our pleasure and that of the Apostolic See, so that in all said states and jurisdictions, they may licitly and freely admit and accept all who seek to be admitted and incorporated into the regular order of the Society of Jesus. The show was back on the road everywhere. Our present superior General, Fr Adolfo Nicolas, has said: 'All the crises of history enclose a hidden wisdom that needs to be fathomed. For us, Jesuits, this is the commemoration of our greatest crisis. It is, therefore, important that we should learn from the events themselves, that we should discover the good and the bad in our behaviour in order to revive those great desires the Pope spoke of and continue the work of evangelisation, refining our brotherhood and deepening our love.'

Today (Thursday 7 August 2014), we mark the 200th anniversary of this Restoration. Last Thursday the Church's first Jesuit pope Francis came to lunch at the Jesuit Curia to celebrate the feast of St Ignatius Loyola, our founder. He came on an hour's notice. He came in his Ford Focus. He sat down to lunch with the Jesuit community and there was hardly a clerical collar in sight. Also present were the seven siblings of Fr dall'Oglio SJ who was abducted in Syria a year ago.

We Jesuits still espouse the land rights of indigenous peoples. We still think it important to take seriously local cultures and spiritualities when evangelizing. We still educate all sorts of people, including some who are rich and powerful. Many politicians still think we are meddling priests. And we still get into trouble occasionally. But for the moment both the white and black popes are one of us. Now that is a turn-up for the books. And no one any longer talks about Clement's ludicrous claim that his decree was '&always and for ever valid&'. So please do raise a glass to the Jesuits this day, and don't hold us responsible for everything done by our alumni who occupy the modern equivalents of the imperial courts.

Frank Brennan SJ AO is currently in the USA taking up the Gasson Chair at Boston College.

Assessing the Catholic Church's child abuse culpability

EUREKA STREET TV

Peter Kirkwood

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse now under way around Australia will ensure this issue will have public prominence for the foreseeable future.

Indeed it was the impetus for the authors featured in this interview to write their recently published book, Reckoning: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse (jointly published by Eureka Street and ATF Press), their own thorough study of this thorny issue in the context of the Australian Catholic Church.

Damian Grace and Chris McGillion are eminently qualified to write on this topic, both with distinguished careers: Grace as an academic specialising in applied ethics and political philosophy, and McGillion as a journalist and author who's devoted most of his career to writing about religion.

In the interview they talk about what they are trying to achieve with the book, the difficulties in being even handed with this issue, why it has taken the Church so long to come to grips with sexual abuse by clergy, and the effect and significance of the Royal Commission. They conclude in the second part of the interview by looking to the future, discussing how the Church might recover from this, and whether Pope Francis is a sign of hope in dealing with it.

Damian Grace has taught ethics, political philosophy, history of political thought and philosophy of religion over the past four decades. He previously lectured at the University of NSW, and is currently an honorary associate in the Department of Government and International Relations at The University of Sydney.

His research has centred on Renaissance political theory and applied ethics, and his publications include a wide range of academic papers, book chapters, and, co-authored with Stephen Cohen, the books *Business Ethics* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1995) and *Ethical Theory and Practice in the World of Accounting* (ICAA 2007).

Chris McGillion is a former religious affairs editor and columnist for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He has also written on religion for the prestigious British journal *The Tablet* and the *National Catholic Reporter* in the USA. He currently teaches journalism at Charles Sturt University.

Amongst his many books he was editor of *A Long Way from Rome: Why the Australian Catholic Church is in Crisis* (Allen & Unwin 2003) and co-wrote with John O'Carroll *Our Fathers: What Australian Catholic priests really think about their lives and their church* (John Garratt 2011).

This interview is in two parts - Part 1 (11 mins) above, and Part 2 (7 mins) below:

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

Mixed messages undermine western solidarity with Gaza

INTERNATIONAL

Raff Piccolo



The week gone has seen massive rallies calling for an end to the Israeli invasion of Gaza. From Sydney to Paris people have come together in a sign of solidarity with those Palestinians who are trapped in Gaza and whose lives remain threatened with every day that passes. But with all the goodwill that seems to resonate in the forms of solidarity rallies the world over, one has to ask, is it enough?

The solidarity rallies, no matter their size and frequency cannot mask the reality on the ground. Living in Ramallah, I see it daily. It's in the papers that come out in West Bank cities. As every day passes, the story changes little; more homes are destroyed, people maimed and lives lost. People remain frightened, insecure and vulnerable. This is not to say that the actions of the Israeli government have not garnered the attention of the international community. The United Nations Security Council has met to discuss the matter as has the United Nations Secretary General issued statements calling for an end to the conflict.

However for Palestinians, no matter how strong the wording of the forthcoming statements is, they cannot mask the impunity with which Israel acts. For every 'condemnation' that is directed at Israel by the President of the United States, the same speech will undoubtedly make reference to the 'inherent right of Israel to defend itself'. However well intentioned the sentiments of the President are, they are effectively being used by Israel as a *carte blanche* to justify all and every action in Gaza. At the same time the sincerity of such sentiments are constantly brought into question as the United States continues to renew Israel's weaponry stockpile as the conflict continues. As American talk show host Jon Stewart aptly noted, the United States 'can't be Israel's rehab sponsor and its drug dealer' at the same time.

Even when the conflict in Gaza does finally come to an end, if the past is anything to go by, it is not expected that Israel will be confronted by any more than a slap on the wrist for its actions. It is the historical inconsistency between action and word from leaders in

the international community that leaves Palestinians bewildered.

Palestinians are not seeking an internationally sanctioned counter invasion into Israel to bring the current conflict and the occupation to an end. However what they want is an international community that is willing to move beyond inconsistent statements and actions. They want an international community that is willing to act in response to unjustifiable widespread destruction, injury and death and the overt flouting of international law (Israel's continual failure to abide by United Nations Security Council resolutions). Palestinians know that the international community is capable of bringing substance to it values through action. They saw such action in the form of the boycott that brought down apartheid in South Africa.

This is not to say that the international community as a whole has remained unwilling to act. Bolivia recently announced that it would end the visa exemption agreement that it had with Israel in protest to the current conflict in Gaza. The agreement had been in place since 1972 and exempted Israeli citizens from requiring a visa to travel to Bolivia. Diplomacy still has its place. However statements should remain clear and consistent. People should not be left trying to decipher what is meant every time a statement released or action is taken. For example Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay made it known that they 'energetically condemn the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, which in the majority affects civilians, including children and women.' However unlike other members of the international community this message was not later undermined by another inconsistent statement or action. Instead these countries maintained their stance; all three have recalled their ambassadors from Israel. Chile, Peru, Ecuador and El Salvador have similarly recalled their ambassadors from Israel. The continuing destruction and death in Gaza unfortunately makes it obvious that the combined actions of those willing to act thus far are simply not enough. The actions of the few nations and the solidarity rallies that continue to be held across the globe remain overshadowed by the inconsistency between word and action of the United States, the European Union and the international community (through the United Nations). Should anyone of these major players go about bringing their words and actions into concert we can expect the reality on the ground to change. But until that happens, Palestinians will just be left bewildered as to the inconsistency and seemingly indifference the international community takes to their plight.

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

Spitting the dummy

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.

Writing a poem is hard work

CREATIVE

Various

The Poem About What It's About

Here's my question. What if there was a poem
That didn't know what it was about until it got
To the end of itself? So that the poet's job isn't
To play with imagery and cadence and metrical
Toys in order to make a point, but rather to just
Keep typing in order to find out that the poem's
About how hard it is to watch your kids get hurt
By things they can't manage and you cannot fix.
If *I* had been the boss of this poem I would have
Made it so they *can* manage things, or I could be
The quiet fixer I always wanted to be as a father.
But that's not what the poem wanted to be about,
It turns out. You have to sort of admire the poem
That's about what it's about. But you can also be
Angry and scared by how you can't argue with it.

-- **Brian Doyle**

The Poem

The poem weeps cursive on parchment
it is an old story, told many times
the permutations only in pigment
a tale of travellers from many lands
fleeing oppression, seeking refuge and
finding none
only barbed wire and fences

The poem weeps blood on the page of history
spraying words like bullets
refugees betrayed by kisses
from friends of democracy
detained without liberty
as trauma layers trauma and
politicians touch and retouch
their policy like a painting
disguising layers of cruelty
in the guise of protecting borders from
souls seeking asylum

The poem weeps effluent besmirching the printed page
croupiers reporting arrivals on a biased wheel
using spin and a white ball to
gambling with fear in the populace zero spiel deflecting boats to the neighbour
a play on people's lives -- Deanne Davies Writing a Poem is Hard Work It never looks like hard
work, watching clouds. It never looks like work, unblinkingly staring out the train window
as I head to work. It never looks like I've just rolled my sleeves up while I stare at an old
shoe in the corner of the room for hours. And it absolutely never looks like I've sweated a
day in my life as I skewer a stare right through the Friday morning waitress - the brick wall
behind her - and the heart of the faint moon in the sky contemplating absolutely everything
at all -- Darby Hudson Why Poetry? Why poetry, he said, And why not prose? Many stories
to be told and 'Literary fiction' to be written. But so much discipline as well Days and
nights obsessing A love of language to be sure Life to be lived instead. Already forty years
of toil Of discipline and effort Of early starts and tired days Why do that in retirement? Live
in the present, live today Live fully and alive Enjoy it all and sensitive With feelings on the
surface. So poetry for me's the thing Emotions in an hour The beauty of the language too If
selfish, in the moment. Why poetry? Intensity. -- David Atkinson Listening To write again,
if not perfect poems, at least to feel that excess of meaning - awkward in corridors and too
loud in libraries, cluttering desks, a distraction at prayer - unsettling the agenda
generally. It's the old thrill, to write freely, not knowing what you have to say, but being
written in a way: Lower case inspiration, you might call it. Whatever the case, despite the
theories, things get given: there's store enough in nostril and tongue, in skin and eye and
ear, and in the push and pull of being here, to say nothing of a larger undertow of that
presence and absence somehow -- even enjoying the limits of vocabulary, its resonance
and dance; and, the times being as they are, to wait, pencil poised, or fingering a
keyboard, listening. . . -- Tony Kelly

Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland, Oregon.

Deanne Davies from Geraldton WA won the Matthew Rocca Poetry Prize in 2011.

Darby Hudson has been published in Eureka Street and Black Inc's Best Australian Poems, 2012 and 2013.

David Atkinson, who lives in Sydney, is a retired lawyer and new poet.

Tony Kelly is a Redemptorist theologian who recently gave a reading and paper in the

Poetry for the Soul series at The Carmelite Centre, Middle Park, Melbourne.

Old boots image by Shutterstock

Low fat food products are a con

INTERNATIONAL

Mike Foale



The clearest version yet of the story behind the distressingly confused and troubled world of dietary advice has just been presented by Nina Teicholz in her *New York Time* bestseller *The Big Fat Surprise*, which has [attracted favourable reviews](#).

In the book Ms Teicholz reveals that the war on dietary saturated fat was declared by the American Heart Association in 1956, based on flawed science, unwittingly boosted by the national anxiety that followed a serious heart attack experienced in 1955 by President Eisenhower. Media attention to the President's health opened the way for a particular theory about the widespread incidence of heart failure to be elevated to national acceptance. Put simply - and to borrow a phrase from more recent history - saturated fat was dubbed erroneously to be a 'weapon of mass destruction' of healthy hearts.

The medical researcher who developed the saturated fat theory was Ancel Keys, who had cherry-picked data from six countries showing a correlation between fat consumption and heart disease, while ignoring data from many other countries where there was no such correlation.

Serum cholesterol was identified as a key indicator of cardio-vascular risk. It was found that saturated fat (most common in animal fats) raised cholesterol, while unsaturated fat (found mostly in oil seeds like olive and soy) did not. Keys achieved celebrity status in the media through aggressive promotion of his theory, so that his demonisation of saturated fat was swiftly embraced in a national policy urging an incisive reduction of fat, particularly saturated fat, in the American diet.

Decades later, the incidence of heart disease has not diminished, while obesity and Type-2 diabetes have reached epidemic proportions. Credible science journals have lately been publishing robust [reports](#) that saturated fat is not implicated in heart disease.

At the same time, research has shown that cholesterol is a complex entity coming in both good and bad forms. Two lipoproteins of low and high density respectively (LDL and HDL) 'manage' cholesterol in the blood stream. They have opposing effects on its availability to

do harm by over-patching inflamed arterial walls to the point of blockage, thereby presenting a neutral risk of harm when present is balanced proportions. There are many other factors which pre-dispose the body for the development of cardiovascular disease - especially smoking, excess alcohol, lifestyle stress, and excess dietary sugar promoting inflammation, as well-as Type 2 diabetes and obesity. Saturated fat in the diet is now recognised as not even present on the 'short list' of risk factors. It is reported that President Eisenhower had a history of being a chain smoker, an obvious pre-disposing factor, but that went unnoticed at the time, and saturated fat got the blame for his heart troubles.

In spite of the steady flow of robust publications in recent decades showing that saturated fat is not a heart risk, the US authorities (Food and Drug Administration, Heart Association and others) and the National Health and Medical research Council of Australia have so far failed to change their advice against saturated fat. In the meantime the recommended low fat diets have resulted in sugar and other carbohydrates overload, due in part to the lack of the satiety response that fat induces in the body. That is the mechanism that naturally reduces hunger and moderates food intake, reducing the risk of obesity.

What is behind this lack of response to a seemingly obvious paradigm shift in understanding among health researchers? Well, clearly there must be acute embarrassment for policy defenders confronted by unequivocal evidence that the low fat diet they have embraced for so long has been disastrous. Naturally multinational and other food processors and marketers that have invested heavily over a long period in low fat products, would be expected to apply pressure on the policy makers to hold the line. Their primary interest is profit for the shareholders, not community health. Any level of dependence of our policy makers and defenders on funding support from these same investors would surely weaken all but the strongest resolve to change policy. But this leaves us all, obliged as we are to be food consumers, still exposed to promotions defending the old paradigm, and still dependent upon a confused medical service industry. Our older cardiologists and GPs were trained in a time of certainty that saturated fat was truly a 'weapon of mass destruction' of heart security. Now, as with George Bush's belief that such a weapon of war was available in Iraq, the belief that such a dangerous dietary weapon exists must be cast upon the scrap-heap of history.

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Scott Morrison's conflict of interest

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



It was reported on Friday that a Human Rights Commission inquiry has heard that the Immigration Department instructed medical experts to suppress new statistics that show the majority of children in detention are suffering from significant mental health issues. Earlier in the week, Immigration Minister Scott Morrison dismissed as 'quite sensational', claims of Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs about the poor mental health of the 174 children in the Christmas Island detention facility. After a three day visit last month, Professor Triggs said 'almost all' of the children 'were coughing, were sick, were depressed, unable to communicate (and) weak'. Some of them were not leaving their cabins and were not eating. Triggs said there is 'no eye contact with some of them' and 'a lot of the younger babies are not crawling or not doing the things they should be doing at their age group simply because of the conditions'. Under the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946 - the IGO Act - the Immigration Minister is the legal guardian of children who arrive in Australia without a parent or carer. That means Morrison assumes 'the same rights, powers, duties, obligations and liabilities as a natural guardian of the child would have'. A report released last month by the Refugee Taskforce of the National Council of Churches in Australia argues that Morrison is not fit for the task and that an independent guardian should be appointed. The report, titled *Protecting the Lonely Children*, is written chiefly by Anglicare Southern Queensland mission and social justice researcher Jennifer Basham. It points out that the minister has a conflict of interest in his roles as guardian, judge and jailer of unaccompanied children. Immigration ministers are generally not penalised for failing to consider or act in the best interests of the vulnerable asylum seeker children in their care, even though 'under law they have this most serious of duties'. In the IGO Act, and in practice, the minister's border protection role takes priority over his guardianship responsibility.

As it happens, this subordination of Morrison's duty to protect children means he is not subject to social pariah stigma generally attached to parents, guardians or institutions that wantonly neglect the children they're responsible for. The majority of Australians voted for a government strong on border protection. Morrison is delivering in spades, so it seems they're prepared to turn a blind eye to claims of child neglect, especially if they're dismissed with such confidence by a rock star minister.

It's this suppression of information that is most significant, along with the repudiation of eyewitness accounts from erstwhile authoritative figures such as Triggs. Australians who voted for border protection are prepared to buy it, but for how long? The stories of the vulnerable children can't stay hidden forever. Their hope is that the increasing weight of evidence of the neglect will swing public opinion in their favour. After all, it's this kind of momentum that led to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.



Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.

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The Norfolk Island solution

AUSTRALIA

Andra Jackson



While the Federal Government continues to cast around for other Pacific nations and Cambodia to take in refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru, it has one ready solution right on its own doorstep. It is a place that has been calling out for help to counter its falling population and its prolonged economic crisis. It is an Australian territory and one that is already receiving Australia's financial support.

The locale with the dwindling population is Norfolk Island, positioned 1600km from the New South Wales coast. The former penal colony turned tourist haven has fallen on hard times. The island's population has shrunk from a peak of 2601 in 2001 to 1795 at last count. Meanwhile the island's economic dependence on tourism rendered it particularly vulnerable to the global financial crisis of 2007-8. It has yet to fully recover.

Australia has been financially propping up the Norfolk Island government to allow it to meet its debts. It provided \$4.5 million in 2012 and \$5.4 million in 2013-4 to ensure the island's sustainability. In exchange the Australian Government has negotiated a reform package with the self-governing island's Legislative Assembly to pull Norfolk Island out of its economic malaise.

The package, titled the Norfolk Island Road Map, took effect as the Territories Law Reform Act (2010). It recommends restructuring the island's economy away from dependence on the one industry of tourism by encouraging diversification. This is to be implemented by lowering barriers to immigration to Norfolk Island and selecting immigrants with skills in trades, agriculture, the professions, business, and management.

The Norfolk Government did its bit. Norfolk's then Minister for Immigration David Buffett set up a working party in 2012 to prepare a campaign 'to grow the island's population' through immigration. Target groups were to be sea-changers, self funded retirees,

professionals, 'fly in and fly out workers' and business investors.

But just last month, Australia's Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Warren Truss told Federal Parliament that: 'It is clear that the problems facing Norfolk Island are getting worse, the financial position of the island is deteriorating and the population continues to decline.'

This is where the island's desperate need for a population boost and the Abbott Government's determination to place refugees anywhere other than the Australian mainland are a perfect fit.

The island has lost 25 per cent of its male population aged 25 to 50 since 2011 - a largely similar demographic to Australia's detained asylum seeker boat arrivals.

This is by no means to advocate that the Government should dump large numbers of asylum seekers on the small island. But Norfolk Island does offer one small but practical and humane solution to the resettlement of a manageable number of refugees. They could be offered a place on Norfolk Island on the basis of any skills needed by the island as it strives to turn its economy around.

Among the asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru, and the estimated 2000 in detention centers and community detention in Australia, are those with business experience and trade skills, teachers and doctors - skills not generally available to the island's population because of the lack of training institutions.

Reza Berati, the 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker tragically killed on Manus Island in February, was a qualified engineer. He would have had much to offer Norfolk Island given that infrastructure reform is a key concern of the Road Map. Truss described the condition of the island's infrastructure as 'dated, run down and fragile'.

For the last eight years, pregnant Norfolk Island women have been unable to give birth on the island but have had to be flown to hospitals on mainland Australia, using the expensive Medivac service. Any other island resident with a life threatening illness also has to be evacuated to mainland hospitals. The island's Legislative Assembly was forced by the inadequate medical service on the island to set up a Medivac fund in 2006.

Overseas trained doctors who arrived in Australia as refugees have proven to be valuable additions to many a country hospital and community around Australia. Norfolk Island with its scenic beauty, safe environment and friendly people would be an attractive proposition to doctors among the refugee/asylum seeker population.

The island's population includes Pitcairn Island descendants. They would need to be reassured that their cultural identity would not be eroded through arrivals from diverse backgrounds. However Norfolk Island already hosts significant numbers of Fijian workers without any dilutions of that identity.

The proposal outlined will not solve all Norfolk Island's economic problems nor prove a resettlement solution to large numbers of refugees, but it could be a small step in the right direction for two costly situations facing the Australian Government.

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