

THE JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE  
2006

# **One Heart and a Wrong Spirit:**

## **The Religious Society of Friends and Colonial Racism**

*When we have vanquished the wrong spirit, we will live in  
respectful acknowledgement that we are one heart*

**Polly O. (Daksi) Walker**

## **The James Backhouse Lectures**

The lectures were instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) on its establishment in 1964.

They are named after James Backhouse who, with his companion, George Washington Walker, visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. They travelled widely, but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through their visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia.

Coming to Australia under a concern for the conditions of convicts, the two men had access to people with authority in the young colonies, and with influence in Britain, both in Parliament and in the social reform movement. In meticulous reports and personal letters, they made practical suggestions and urged legislative action on penal reform, on the rum trade, and on land rights and the treatment of Aborigines.

James Backhouse was a general naturalist and a botanist. He made careful observations and published full accounts of what he saw, in addition to encouraging Friends in the colonies and following the deep concern that had brought him to Australia.

Australian Friends hope that this series of Lectures will bring fresh insights into the Truth, and speak to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism. This particular lecture was delivered at St Joseph's College, Brisbane, on Sunday 8th January 2006, during the annual meeting of the Society.

Ruth Watson  
Presiding Clerk  
Australia Yearly Meeting

© The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia 2006

**ISBN 0-909885-44-3**

Produced by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of  
Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated

Published by the Backhouse Lecture Committee  
PO Box 556, Kenmore, Queensland, Australia 4069

Printed by Goanna Print, Canberra ACT

Copies may be ordered from  
The Yearly Meeting Secretary  
PO Box 556, Kenmore, Queensland, Australia 4069  
[YMsecretary@quakers.org.au](mailto:YMsecretary@quakers.org.au)

## **About the author**

Polly Walker (Daksi) grew up in the White Mountain Wilderness of New Mexico, at the foot of the Mescalero Apache's Sacred Mountain. She is of Tsalagi (Cherokee) and Anglo-European descent, and is a member of the Ani-Gilohi, or long hair clan, known for their responsibilities as peacemakers. She has a husband, Kit, a son who is a university student in the United States, three stepchildren and six grandchildren. An attender for several years in New Mexico, Polly became a member of the Religious Society of Friends in 1997. She was a teacher and administrator in the public schools of New Mexico for 19 years when she received a scholarship to research non-violent ways of educating Indigenous students. This research led to doctoral studies and in 2001, she was awarded a PhD in Conflict Transformation. She works with a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars around the world who are seeking to reduce epistemic violence, the structural suppression and marginalisation of Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and managing knowledge. Currently employed with the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland, she is involved in the following projects: addressing violence toward Indigenous Australians, facilitating conflict prevention through building Indigenous communities' capacity in Vanuatu, and training chiefs and community leaders in conflict resolution in the Solomon Islands. She is happiest when she is hiking in the wilderness, and is a passionate supporter of the return of the Mexican grey wolves to the lands of her childhood.

## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land where I have written this lecture. I also acknowledge that others are much better placed to write this lecture than I. As a guest in Aboriginal country, I am part of the colonising forces that suppress Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I am not certain why I was asked to give this lecture rather than an Aboriginal Australian. I am absolutely certain that as Friends we need to invite and to listen deeply to Indigenous Australian voices giving the Backhouse Lecture. I look forward to the day that this will be so.

In humility, in my Tsalagi language, I say, *Wado-Galieliga*. Thank you, I am grateful for the honour of being asked to write this lecture. The main gift I bring to this writing is that of emptiness, our Tsalagi teachings of being an empty reed through which Spirit flows. The beauty and strength that may be found in this lecture flow through me from the Great Mystery. I take responsibility for the blocking of that flow: any errors within this lecture are mine alone.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the generous support of many Friends, which I felt strongly in spirit, even when constraints of my university and community work prohibited in-depth exploration with other Friends on a face-to-face basis. I was inspired by Helen Bayes' story of what the journey of writing a Backhouse lecture could be; comforted by Susannah Brindle's patient listening and counsel, even in my darkest moments; and supported by Judith Pembleton and Susan Addison, other writers in our Meeting who shared records with me. I carried with me always David Carline's injunctions to write strong, and the beautiful day we shared on Jagera land, hearing his relatives' stories of surviving racism.

I continued to be awed and humbled by the wise elders and senior Aboriginal Australians who shared their experiences with me, both through formal research, and this rich, beautiful journey we share on Mother Earth. My thanks to Penny Tripcony, Flo Watson, Jackie Huggins, Michael Williams and Joan Hendricks for permission to share their stories with a wider audience. One of the settler Australian elders, Muriel Langford, has passed on, but I will never forget her wise counsel: 'If you want to learn about Indigenous issues in Australia, just keep your mouth closed, and listen to Aboriginal people (Langford, Muriel, 1995, *personal communication*).

*Wado* to my husband Kit, who read drafts of the early work, patiently and kindly, even when he did not understand the many hours I devoted to the task.

And I am grateful for Country and all my relations in Australia and in Turtle Island that gave me home, sustenance and song for the journey.

# Contents

About the author

Acknowledgements

Introduction	1
In the East: Illuminating the system of colonial racism	3
In the South: Feeling the Effects of Colonial Racism	15
In the West: Reflections on Quaker response to racism against Indigenous Peoples	24
In the North: Responding with one heart to the wrong spirit	31
In the Centre of the Medicine Wheel	49
Endnotes	55

## Introduction

Quakers are known throughout the world for their role in addressing the injustices of racism, particularly in relation to ending legal support for slavery in the United States. Friends are also known as supporters of Indigenous peoples throughout the world. For example, in the Quaker colony in Turtle Island (part of which is now called the United States), the relationship between Friends and the Lenape/Delaware Indians served as an example of just relationships in an environment otherwise steeped in colonial racism. In his meeting in 1682 with the Lenape/Delaware peoples, William Penn said: ‘We will not be to you as brothers, brothers sometimes contend with brothers. We will not be to you as fathers with children. Fathers sometimes punish children. Nor shall our friendship be as that chain that rust may weaken, that the tree may fall on asunder. We will be as one heart, one hand, one body, that if one suffers, the other suffers, that if anything changes one, it changes the other... We will go along the broad pathway of good will to each other, together.’<sup>1</sup> With these words, William Penn acknowledged both Quaker and American Indian values and philosophy. When he spoke these words, Penn may have been aware that American Indians held very similar perceptions of living in a good way - of walking the Good Red Road,<sup>2</sup> choosing the White Path of Peace,<sup>3</sup> and respecting that we are all connected, ‘all a part of the web of life’.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, the non-Indigenous colonisers, including the Quakers, and the American Indians did not continue as one heart. Although the original Quaker settlers held good intentions, they were part of the larger system of colonial racism that legitimised the appropriation of Indigenous peoples and lands. Not only in the Americas, but also in colonised lands across the globe, a wrong spirit wrought devastation on all Indigenous peoples through a system of colonial racism.<sup>5</sup>

In the spirit of developing one heart between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, I have built this lecture on the Medicine Wheel, a hologram of many American Indian belief systems. This lecture begins in the East of the Medicine Wheel, representing the direction of illumination, of clear speech and the sharp, far-reaching vision of the eagle. In the East, we find the ability to see complex situations and develop hope. In the East part of this lecture, I seek to

develop a deeper understanding of colonial racism and its power. We then move to the South of the Medicine Wheel, the place of the heart, where we listen to the ways in which colonial racism has affected all of us. Next we travel to the West of the Medicine Wheel, the place of going within, and there we examine the role of Quakers in colonial racism. The North of the Medicine Wheel is next, the place of integration, of putting into action what we have learned. In the North part of this lecture, I share what I have learned from elders about effective ways of addressing racism. And we end our journey in the centre, at the sacred fire.

## **In the East: Illuminating the system of colonial racism**

My first experiences of colonial racism occurred when I was five years old in Carlsbad, New Mexico, a small town beside the Pecos River in the country of the Comanche and Mescalero Apache Indians. As a young child, I was not included in discussions of racism. I didn't even know that the word or the concept existed. I learned about it simply from living in a culture founded in violence toward Indigenous peoples. Racism toward Indians was taken as natural, not questioned, just the way things were.

The people of Carlsbad had a fascination with the exhibition of animals. A stuffed bison bull filled the showroom window of the local Dodge Automobile dealer. Next to the lunch counter inside the downtown drugstore the owner exhibited his fully stuffed champion Palomino rodeo horse. In a neighbouring town, a two-headed Hereford calf gazed out from the window of the Western Wear Store. I remember looking at them each time we went shopping, fascinated by their exoticism. I realised they were different and strange. I also loved to go to the library for picture books. I could not yet read, so I would wander past the books into the natural history section. There the librarians had placed the skeleton of an American Indian child on display. I didn't know about racism, but even as a small child I observed that the remains of Indians were displayed like those of animals. I knew that Indians were not considered fully human, but exotic and strange. Soon thereafter, I found out that I had American Indian ancestors on both sides of my family.

I had gone to my great-grandmother's house to secretly carry out a movie-style Indian blood-sister ceremony with my best friend. When my grandmother caught us and asked what on earth we were doing, she sat me down and said, 'You don't need to do that. Your great-grandmother was a full blood Cherokee.' She also went on to tell me that we were no longer officially Indians because my great grandfather refused to sign up under the Allotment Act. In 1887 the United States Government told all the Cherokee that they had to sign up on the Dawes Roll to get an allotment of 160 acres. The government had decided that the Cherokee would never be 'civilised' until they learned 'responsible land ownership', which to the government meant European style individual land titles. My great-grandfather refused to sign the Allotment Act, and my family ceased to be Indian as far as the

United States government was concerned. Knowing that dead Indians were displayed like dead animals, I could understand a little of why my great-grandfather might not sign the rolls as an Indian, and why for some people in my family it was a shame to be Indian.

The power that put the bones of an Indian child on display in the library I visited as a child represents more than the racist acts of a few individuals such as the librarians or curators. The power that underlies the exhibition of human bones as part of a collection derives from the *system of racism* that permeates all colonised countries. This system of colonial racism is still pervasive and powerful, shaping the sciences, political systems and religions that came out of the European imperial centre. Colonial racism places White people at the top of a hierarchy and darker skinned people at the bottom. This system of racism has damaged more than Indigenous and other dark skinned peoples. It has damaged the White peoples who colonised Indigenous lands. It has damaged the descendents of the colonisers. And perhaps most important for the survival of us all, racism has damaged and continues to damage the web of relationships that sustains us all, those living connections to land, seas, winds, animals, birds, fish, the cosmos and to each other.

Racism is defined as the 'pervasive and systematic assumptions of the inherent superiority of certain groups, and inferiority of others, based on cultural differences in values, norms, and behaviours. Those who are assumed to be inferior are treated differently and less favourably in multiple ways. Racism reflects and is perpetuated by deeply rooted historical, social, cultural and power inequalities in society. Racism is oppressive, because it involves the systematic use of power or authority to treat others unjustly.'<sup>6</sup> I define colonial racism as the form of racism that supports inequalities in relation to Indigenous peoples in colonised countries. In this lecture I focus on colonial racism in the United States and Australia, the two countries where I have lived and worked.

### **The role of Western religion in colonial racism**

In the 15th century, Europeans began to travel to lands owned by Indigenous peoples, and to establish colonies there. However, the colonisers needed some justification for claiming Indigenous lands and peoples as possessions. So the explorers turned to the political leaders of their countries, who then turned to the church. On May 4, 1493, the Catholic Church put into place the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera*. At that time, the King of Portugal was in conflict with the King and Queen of Castile. Both countries wanted control over colonial

territories. Pope Alexander VI, a native of Valencia and a friend of the Castilian king, responded with edicts that favoured the King and Queen of Castile. The most racist of these edicts was the *Inter Caetera*, which assigned to Castile the exclusive right to the lands lying west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands, including all the Americas and Australia.

The *Inter Caetera* declared that it was pleasing to God 'that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself. It also claimed sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and their lands in the name of the 'Catholic kings and princes'.<sup>7</sup> This edict ends with a fiery warning, calling down the wrath of God on anyone who might dare to intervene in the forced conversion of Indigenous peoples, their belief systems, way of life, and seizure of lands.

Although there are a number of people around the world working to have the *Inter Caetera* rescinded, it is still in force today, claiming the right of sovereignty on behalf of Europeans over the bodies, lives and lands of Indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup>

Other Western churches and religious groups supported the concept of 'civilising the savage' that underlay the *Inter Caetera*. If civilisation and conversion came at a certain cost, so be it. Sometimes the cost was much higher than at other times. For example, in New Mexico Don Juan de Onate cut the hands and feet off many Acoma Indians to show the superior power of Spanish civilisation and religious belief.<sup>9</sup> The philosophy of colonial racism provided justification for this violent suppression of Indigenous religions and belief systems.<sup>10</sup>

In an approach that featured less physical violence, a number of Christian denominations and other religious groups set up missions and boarding schools. The purpose of these institutions was well intentioned in their eyes, but unimaginably destructive to Indigenous peoples, as the colonisers tore the web that made up the worlds of Indigenous peoples. Whole nations were removed from their lands, children from their families, languages from their knowing, songs and ceremonies from the keepers, all in the name of saving Indigenous peoples from their heathen and primitive ways. The assumptions of superiority that underlie colonial racism supported the physical and structural violence of these religious institutions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, religious institutions lost some of their influence over the governments of Western nations, who began to rely more and more on scientific research as a basis for the development of policy and practice regarding Indigenous peoples.<sup>11</sup>

## **Western science and colonial racism**

The newly emerging 'science' of race was founded on the works of scientists such as Charles Darwin, Samuel Morton and Francis Galton, all of whom focused on the measurement of human beings. The measurement, classification and ranking of human beings that arose from much of this research were used to exert control over Indigenous peoples.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1800s Western scientists developed a range of human classification systems, from demeaning to dangerous. All were devastating to Indigenous peoples, as government policies and practices that were based on this research denied many Indigenous peoples their human rights. One of the first classificatory systems was developed by Christoph Meiners (1745-1810) in Gottingen. Meiners divided humankind into two races: the beautiful and the ugly. According to him, 'Whites were beautiful. . . and the darker you were, the uglier, stupider and more cowardly you were.'<sup>13</sup> I remember when my grandmother Gammie told me stories of our people, the Tsalagi, she said, 'Them was the pretty Indians.' I now wonder if she, too, had been exposed to the effects of the racist classification system of beautiful and ugly Indians. Perhaps some Indians adopted these terms to gain favour or avoid harsher treatment at the hands of Whites.

In the 1830s, many Native Americans, including the Tsalagi, were forcibly removed West of the Mississippi. They were rounded up by troops commanded by Andrew Jackson, then the president of the United States, and forced into stockades without time to gather their possessions. Although the Supreme Court of the United States had ruled that the Cherokee owned their lands and could remain, the President used the army to march thousands of men, women, children and elders to Indian Territory, without adequate clothing, supplies or rest. At least a third of them died along the way, on a journey that we call The Trail Where They Cried. Western society relied on scientific theories of race to justify such drastic measures, repeated in some manner in all colonised countries.

So the classification systems continued: measuring, sifting, and throwing away what they considered to be the chaff, the Indigenous peoples of the colonised lands. However, many aspects of race proved difficult to measure. So a

number of scientists began to collect human skulls and measure them to 'prove' that Whites were superior to Indigenous and other peoples. 'The largest collection in the world - six hundred human skulls - was in Philadelphia and belonged to the American Samuel Morton (1799-1851). He came from a Quaker family...and published *Crania America* in 1839. He concluded that White people's skulls were the largest, giving them unquestionable superiority over all the nations of the earth'.<sup>14</sup> Even a man exposed to Quaker belief and practice was not deterred from this practice of colonial racism. Although Morton made many inaccurate measurements, his scientific reputation, and the widespread acceptance of White superiority was such that for 130 years no one bothered to check his calculations, which were invalid, even by measures of Western science. Even more damaging were the ways in which his research influenced official policy and practice regarding Indigenous peoples. Although the largest skull in Morton's collection belonged to an American Indian man, Morton claimed that 'smaller brained' Indians were naturally driven to their graves by larger brained Europeans.<sup>15</sup> Such research provided support for settler peoples and colonisers to impose policies that condoned physical and structural violence against Indigenous peoples.

One hundred and forty-four of the skulls that Samuel Morton owned were those of American Indians. I wrote the following poem in honour of those 144 ancestors, and all the others who continue to be taken from their lands, experimented upon, classified and placed on display.

***Lament for the work of Samuel Morton***

*144 Skulls*

*In boxes, on shelves,*

*144 Skulls*

*The heads of our ancestors,*

*Warriors, Healers, Grandmothers.*

*Taken from the lands*

*Where loving hands*

*Prepared their burial.*

*Taken from the bodies*

*Of those we love.*

*144 Skulls*

*Torn from sacred sites*

*For the ceremonies of Science*

*144 Skulls*

*144 Skulls*

*144 Skulls*

*144 Skulls.*

American scientists took the leading role in racist discourse, stating that some races would naturally die out as part of human progress, 'Nations like individuals, each have an especial destiny: some are born to rule and others to be ruled. . . No two distinctly marked races can dwell together on equal terms. Some races, moreover, appear destined to live and prosper for a time, until the destroying race comes, which is to exterminate and supplant them. . . Human progress has arisen mainly from the war of the races. All the great impulses which have been given to it from time to time have been the result of conquests and colonizations.'<sup>16</sup> Such statements relieved colonisers living on the frontier of the necessity of assisting Indigenous peoples who were being massacred, robbed of their lands, and forced into slavery. Indeed, such statements provided justification for many settlers to engage in violent acts against Indigenous peoples.

Colonial racism received strong support from the work of Charles Darwin. Although Darwin was concerned that his ideas would be misused against groups of humans, so great was public acclaim for his theories that he overcame his initial misgivings and published *The Descent of Man*. In it, he explicitly argued that the extermination of native peoples was a natural process of evolution, stating: 'When civilised nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short.'<sup>17</sup>

The collection, measurement and display of skulls did not cease when scientific racism turned to more subtle means. Indigenous skulls were frequently displayed around the world in the late twentieth century. For example, 'In the early 1970s the Canberra Institute of Anatomy exhibited four skulls in the following order: male gorilla, female gorilla, Australian Aborigine, modern European Englishman. The label read, "It is not suggested that the Modern European is a direct descendent of the gorilla and Australian Aborigine but these

skulls are used to emphasize the lines along which the refinements of the modern skull evolved."<sup>18</sup>

Although current research discredits the concept of race,<sup>19</sup> many social policies and political practices applied to Indigenous peoples in colonised societies are still based on concepts of racial difference. Indigenous peoples in colonised countries are identified as 'in need' and the solutions offered to those needs are largely based on Western health care, education and governance. Western cultural practices continue to be held as more advanced than those of Indigenous peoples. This 'in need identity' supports the marginalisation of Indigenous ways of knowing which continues within formal academic research.

### **Colonial racism and university research**

*The social sciences in the United States and in comparable nations are... radicalized. . . forms of knowing and interpreting life worlds.*<sup>20</sup>

I teach and do research at university level, so addressing colonial racism in academia is important to me. However, I also believe it is vitally important for all of us seeking a less racist society, because the majority of policies and procedures put into place by government and non-government institutions are based on the results of academic research. Although current university research decries the earlier blatant racism of previous decades, researchers in Western universities continue to be influenced by the race-based assumptions that permeate Western society. Most Western scholars remain unaware of both the overt and silent racist practices that shape their research and are seldom required to address the ways in which racism influences their research.<sup>21</sup>

Although there is a growing number of research projects based on Indigenous ways of knowing, Western ways of knowing largely continue to define what is considered acceptable research. Indigenous peoples are often studied in ways that define them as 'other', placing them in the margins of society.<sup>22</sup> Under colonial rule, many Indigenous peoples were classed as non-human.<sup>23</sup> Although few scholars today would claim that Indigenous peoples were not human, Western scholars continue to regulate who is officially identified as Indigenous and who therefore is entitled to, or excluded from, specific rights or privileges.

The privileging of Western ways of knowing and of doing research is one part of the larger system of colonial racism. This aspect of racism is part of *White race privilege* which permeates the dominant culture in countries colonised by Europeans.

## **Colonial racism and White race privilege**

In relation to colonial racism, the focus of government and of dominant society remains fixed on Indigenous peoples. In the United States, there are repeated calls each year from members of the Congress that the 'Indian experiment' has failed and that American Indians should be assimilated into the mainstream. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are constantly critiqued as being the source of their own problems. Yet seldom do we read or hear an analysis of how colonial racism has affected the non-Indigenous peoples that live in colonised countries. However, colonial racism has affected everyone who lives in a colonised country, and to heal the wounds of racism, we must examine the ways in which it has also affected non-Indigenous peoples. This examination is often called the study of 'Whiteness' and focuses partly on White race privilege, the largely unearned and unrecognised benefits enjoyed by people of White skin.

Studying Whiteness often raises a flood of concerned resistance, even within universities, supposedly open forums of debate. Unfortunately, members of dominant cultures, such as people of Anglo-European background in colonised countries, often turn away from redressing injustices by disagreeing with the label that is assigned to those injustices. We have seen this in Australia in recent times, in the 'history wars' about the colonisation of the continent of Australia. People's concerns over terminology such as 'genocide', 'apology', and 'reconciliation' have stirred massive debate, with many non-Indigenous Australians opting out of involvement because they disagree with the terminology. However, our discomfort with any of these terms, as awkward and offensive as they might seem to some, is not a justifiable reason for failing to address the imbalances perpetuated by the hundreds of years of colonial racism that weigh upon all of us.

For settler-descended peoples, White race privilege is often unseen, and therefore difficult to accept. It is a part of the cultural violence that permeates colonised countries, in which violence against Indigenous peoples is woven into the fabric of historical, political and social structures. 'Our White race privilege is part of a system. It is difficult for us to see our privilege and then keep it in focus,

precisely because it is encoded in invisible systems conferring racial dominance on our group from birth.'<sup>24</sup>

For most non-Indigenous peoples living in colonised countries, particularly those of European ancestry, Whiteness is seldom recognised. It is considered mainstream, or normal. It is partly this unawareness of its own power that makes Whiteness so damaging to Indigenous peoples. '...in its most historically effective forms, Whiteness does not speak its own name. It may be nothing more than the principle in relation to which all (other) races, nations and peoples are classified and hierarchised, the principle of perfection. . . established to measure the degree to which all (other) races have fallen short of it, a definition of the human that renders them subhuman.'<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, Indigenous people in colonised countries are acutely aware of the power of White race privilege. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Aboriginal Australian scholar whose research focuses on the study of Whiteness states: 'For Indigenous people, Whiteness is not normal; it is just common. For Indigenous people, Whiteness is visible and imbued with power; it confers dominance and privilege. White race privilege means White people have more lifestyle choices available to them because they are the 'mainstream'. Belonging to the 'mainstream' means White people can choose whether or not they wish to bother themselves with the opinions of concerns of Indigenous people'.<sup>26</sup>

Whiteness studies explore the ways that colonial racism affects those of settler descent, examining the dominance Whiteness confers in economic, political and personal situations. In speaking of the importance of acknowledging and addressing White race privilege in Australia, Jenny Tanno-ch-Bland states, 'Racism is embedded in our history, our institutions, our policies, our way of life, our psyches. It is through exposing our White race privilege to one another that we can begin to unpack and unlearn racism.'<sup>27</sup>

As Friends, if we turn away from studying Whiteness as part of changing colonial racism, we are refusing to acknowledge in the words of William Penn, that we are of one heart, and that what damages Indigenous peoples also damages non-Indigenous peoples. Focusing only on the oppression of Indigenous peoples in colonised societies relieves the descendants of settlers of examining their role in perpetuating racism. 'Seeing the situation in terms of racial oppression focuses the attention on Indigenous people. Racism is seen as a problem for Indigenous people, but not for White Australians... the... twin of Aboriginal disadvantage is White advantage...but we don't connect White advantage with racism'.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most damaging aspects of colonial racism is the privilege that non-Indigenous peoples have in choosing whether or not to learn about or become involved in reducing racist violence toward Indigenous peoples and Indigenous country. Lillian Holt, an Aboriginal Australian scholar describes the dangers of such privilege:

*This 'not knowing' by Whitefellas of what has happened in their own backyards, for yonks, both fascinates and infuriates me. Fascinates me, because such institutional hierarchies are supposed to represent all that is worth knowing. And infuriates me, because often more is known about South Africa and New Zealand and their racial issues than about our own country.*

*This not knowing has diminished Whitefellas. Generational ignorance has left them bereft, regardless of whether it is recognised or not. And I say that in all sadness and kindness. It is this not knowing that creates the ignorance and stereotypes, which we as indigenous people deal with regularly - even daily. This not knowing seems to be a luxury of White supremacy, which allows people to refrain from the pain of pondering. It allows for filtering, denying and discarding that which is uncomfortable; and there is no doubt that Aboriginal existence in this country has been and continues to be too uncomfortable for most to contemplate.* <sup>29</sup>

In a seminal text entitled *Being Whitefella*, Duncan Graham describes the ways the descendants of settlers benefit from White race privilege:

*Though there is no blood on my hands or yours, you and I are the beneficiaries of our foreparents' actions or inactions. We are the recipients of stolen goods. The men who cleared the land of trees and rocks to grow crops and graze stock also cleared the land of its owners and users. Those invaders said they demolished and destroyed and killed for the sake of future generations. We are all part of that future planned by others. Like you, my family and I find shelter, warmth, profit, security, pleasure, comfort and joy from living on the proceeds ...* <sup>30</sup>

As a Tsalagi woman of mixed descent, I often benefit from Whiteness. I have White skin and can be accepted as White anywhere I go unless I identify as Tsalagi, or if I am with my Indigenous friends and colleagues. I can choose to move back and forth between my ancestries, and I benefit in certain ways, not always of my choosing. For example, my grandparents and great-grandparents travelled from Texas into New Mexico Territory in 1887. In the train of covered wagon sat my families, Cherokees of mixed blood. They were going to Oregon to homestead with their herd of Texas longhorn cattle. They stopped each Sunday along the way to read the Bible and hold Christian services. And yet, immersed in the system of colonial racism, they were willing to take up Mescalero Apache lands that had been seized by the United States Government. My family members were not recognised by the Federal Government as Indians, and were therefore US citizens, free to move onto the Mescalero Apache lands which had been opened for homesteading. Goyathlay, known more widely as Geronimo, had surrendered the year before my grandparents arrived in New Mexico. For many settlers, this would have signalled a higher degree of safety on the frontier. My great-grandparents didn't intend to settle in New Mexico on Apache lands, but they did. They didn't intend to profit from the dispossession of the Apache, but they did, and as one of their descendants, I did also. For those times, my family became fairly prosperous. My great-grandfather was widely respected by the Mescalero Apache and a great number of them attended his funeral. Even with those strong respectful relationships, my family and I were the benefactors of White race privilege through the lands they received simply for living there. In this way and many more, I have unintentionally profited by the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples in Australia and Turtle Island, the two places I have lived. I am largely protected from discrimination by my White skin. Indeed, when I was trying to get my permanent residency in Australia, I was told by a civic leader, 'You won't have any problem, we need people of your colour here. '

White race privilege is based on a foundation of power and riches. The power and riches of the United States and Australia derive in great part from the basis provided by appropriating Indigenous lands for little or no cost, and by forcing Indigenous peoples to provide slave labour. Many American Indians were offered treaties and compensation. However, almost every treaty has been abrogated in some manner, and the compensation offered was often flawed in significant ways. In Australia, lands were seized under the legal fiction of 'terra nullius', the concept of empty land. Indigenous Australians were offered no treaties or compensation for their lands. In both countries, Indigenous peoples were at times literally slaves, and at other times employed under slave labour conditions. The political and economic benefits many people of European descent

enjoy in Australia and the United States derive from this misappropriation of Indigenous lands and labour.

The system of colonial racism was and still is a powerful force in the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in colonised countries. The only way to deeply understand its effects is to hear the stories of the heart, of how racism has affected the peoples who are enmeshed in it. And so we turn to the South of the Medicine Wheel.

## **In the South: Feeling the Effects of Colonial Racism**

*'and still the people cry and die,' Philip Bywater* <sup>31</sup>

The South of the Medicine Wheel is the place of the heart, of compassion, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and anger at injustice. In this Southern part of the lecture, we turn to an examination of the ways that colonial racism has affected all on this planet.

In the previous section of this lecture, I outlined the foundations of colonial racism, the forces that swept it to power. It is vital to understand how the current system of colonial racism came to be such a powerful force against Indigenous peoples. However, there is a seductive danger in relying solely on an historical analysis. It is easy to see the behaviours of the civic, religious and scientific leaders of previous generations as racist. And then follows the siren song, 'But we know so much more now, we have made so many changes against racism.' Beguiled by this song, we may speak with disdain about racist regimes without recognising the racism in our hearts, homes, institutions and societies. However, it is my experience, and the experience of many other Indigenous peoples in colonised countries, that colonial racism has not been eliminated, but has gone underground, is quieter, more subtle, and all the more dangerous because it is not easily recognised and addressed. Gillian Cowlishaw, a leading Australian scholar on racism toward Indigenous Australians, states: 'The call to examine the colonial past is in danger of foundering on the complacency of an imagined distance from the spectacle of blood and violence. Our disgust and horror at the violence and abusive racism means we are absolved.'<sup>32</sup>

This distance from colonial racism is only imagined. All of my Aboriginal Australian friends and colleagues tell me that they face racism daily. They are refused service, denied housing, passed over by taxi drivers, even when they are national leaders. Their children face direct violence at the hands of the police and the wider community. Many Aboriginal Australian parents say they are afraid when their young people leave home that they will not return alive in the evening. Aboriginal Australians of all ages face continual racist comments, both directly and through the media. Anyone who spends any time in the company of

Indigenous peoples in colonised countries will see this racism and experience its effects.

A great deal of racial violence is supported by processes through which members of the dominant society construct identities for Aboriginal peoples. These constructed identities are often used to explain the supposed necessity for White control of Indigenous Australians. The following quote from an inquiry into racial violence describes the ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are affected by the construction of Indigenous identities as 'failed cultures':

*The portrayal of Aboriginal people as a law and order problem, as a group to be feared, or as a group outside assumed socially homogenous values provides legitimacy for acts of racist violence. Those acts of racist violence cover a wide range of incidents, of which police violence is the most extreme and of most concern. However it was clear to the Inquiry that racist violence is an endemic problem for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are faced with racial discrimination in almost every aspect of their daily lives is the underlying reason for the high levels of racist violence reported to this Inquiry. In addition, Aboriginal and Islander organisations whose aim it is to promote the economic, social and political well-being of Aboriginal and Islander people were also the subject of attacks - either directly or through processes engendering fear, distrust and opposition. Such attacks are of particular importance because they constantly undermine Aboriginal and Islander initiatives to control and enhance their own lives.* <sup>33</sup>

## **Effects of colonial racism: Silencing of Indigenous ways of knowing**

Colonial racism has also suppressed Indigenous ways of knowing. When Cortez arrived in Tenochtilan, he burned the libraries of the Indigenous peoples there. Current violence toward Indigenous knowledge is less overtly violent, taking the form of structural violence, of denying a people the freedom to fully express their ways of knowing. Currently when Indigenous knowledges are recognised outside Indigenous communities, they are most often considered to be local or folk knowledge, in need of being framed within Western ways of

knowing in order to be valid political, natural or social science. Auntie Lilla Watson explained to me how racism continually shapes Aboriginal experience into a Western form, attempting to erase Aboriginal ways of being and knowing:

*I find it very frustrating that Aboriginal people continually respond to what governments say. There's never any equal negotiation. The government puts up its plan, couched in its terms. That only allows Aboriginal people to respond to what they had put up. While they say they have Aboriginal advisors and they have Aboriginal bodies, it is all still couched in White terms of reference. It's never couched in Aboriginal concerns. The words they use (like reconciliation) it's not a word we would even use. Whose word is it? It's not our word and we weren't asked. It's very frustrating and I guess that's why I find I've withdrawn more and more from any political activity. It always comes back to whose terms of reference do we operate on. When you negotiate with White people, they maintain the power of definition in terms of how the debate is going to be carried out and how the debate is going to go and that to me is very frustrating. If we operate on White terms of reference, then we're defeated before we begin and to me that's a useless process. I turn my energy more into strengthening what Aboriginal terms of reference are and to maintaining those, and that's where my strength and my energy have been more devoted.*

### **Effects of colonial racism: Loss of language**

Racist policies that banned the teaching and speaking of Indigenous languages have resulted in the loss of thousands of Indigenous languages, one of the greatest sorrows of Indigenous peoples in colonised countries. This represents more than the loss of a spoken language. The worldview and deep understanding of a culture are embedded in the language and thus some of the deep culture is lost along with the language.<sup>34</sup> Colonial/settler policies and practices throughout Australia and Turtle Island ensured that Indigenous people were punished if they tried to speak their language, as Lorraine Liddle, an Aboriginal Australian author explains: 'As for racism that's an everyday thing for Aboriginal People. It can be overt or it can be institutionalised. When I was young, Aboriginal children who spoke traditional language at school would get a hiding. Why did they do that to us? It was called "integration" - the old integration. In order to help Aboriginal people they had to be exactly like White people.'<sup>35</sup>

When talking with me during my doctoral research, Lilla Watson described her sadness over losing her Aboriginal language. Sometimes Indigenous language loss occurs through direct banishment orders, such as those in schools forbidding use of Indigenous languages. At other times, Indigenous peoples choose not to teach their children their own language in order to help them better fit into the dominant social system, as Lilla explains:

*There's a lot of things  
That have been interfered with  
Through the colonising process.  
Some things our parents  
Could have taught us  
And they didn't.  
That's very sad  
Because that's the pressures of colonialism  
On how people conducted themselves.  
Our dad, he was a full speaker  
Of his own language,  
But he never taught us.  
There are things like that  
That are very sad.* <sup>36</sup>

## **Effects of colonial racism: The violence of labelling**

Labelling Indigenous peoples is a dominating process of colonial racism and Indigenous people continually experience painful and derogatory discourse. Racist epithets are a common experience for many Aboriginal Australians. In 2000, when I was doing my doctoral research, Flo Watson, a member of the Stolen Generations, shared a bit of her story of how public acceptance of racist discourse fosters false images of Aborigines, which then fuels people's willingness to make derogatory statements:

*I find that there are myths and stereotypes about Aboriginal people that are repeated so often, they begin to seem like the*

*truth to the people that say them. I try to teach people what Aboriginal lives are really like, what is important to us, and how we are affected by government policies. I think it is important for people to talk to others when they hear racist remarks and explain how racist language impacts on Aboriginal people.*

*They say*

*We're all drunks.*

*We're all lazy.*

*We don't know how to look after our own families.*

*We don't know how to look after our homes.*

*People used to call us*

*Lazy Abos,*

*Drunken Abos,*

*Black Abos, you know.*

*Some people still do.<sup>37</sup>*

## **Racial harassment**

Current harassment of Aboriginal Australians ranges from verbal abuse to firebombing.<sup>38</sup> Such harassment not only inspires terror, it weighs heavily on the spirit of a people. Often the harassment takes the form of racist innuendo published under the guise of balanced reporting in the media. In the following story, Flo Watson describes the increase of the daily racism faced by Aboriginal Australians when racist comments are almost daily occurrences in the Australian media. She was describing her experience of joy turning to fear when claims of cannibalism on the part of her people were aired in the press at a time when other parts of the community were celebrating reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians:

*... when I first arrived in Brisbane, it was ...just easy to get on with people... that was in 1970, 71. And I could walk down the street, you know, and it didn't even worry me, I mean even the colour of your skin. But now it is so hard, I don't know. Maybe the tables have turned and we're still trying. Like all my family, when they come down, they get really scared*

walking down the street.

And I say, 'Why?' and they say, 'Oh, them...those Whitefellas are going to have a go at us. ' And I say, 'You can't look at it like that. You've got to be positive. '

Pauline Hanson...she had a really, really big effect on us. And she has brought. . . a lot of issues out. People have been hiding it for years... even really good friends of mine, and . . . people that I have known for years. Things that they have said! I keep thinking, you know, it's amazing, you've harboured all these thoughts and . . . it's taken someone like her to bring it all out. So I really found who were my true friends.

I think one of the saddest days was, you know,  
When She came on the scene,  
We were all excited for the launch of reconciliation.  
We got up early;  
I went to the station and met a friend,  
Ready to catch the train.  
I got the paper and front page was:  
They're All Cannibals.  
And they're all from the Palmer River.  
That's where my mum was from.  
It gets really, really hard.  
But you've got to keep working it out.  
You've got to keep working it out.<sup>39</sup>

## **Damage to the connections that sustain us all**

Often colonial racism is written about as only affecting human beings, with Anglo-Europeans dominating and suppressing Indigenous peoples. However, racism has done more than damage human beings, it has damaged the living web of the cosmos that includes all things and is meant to sustain all things. In damaging our lifelines, colonial racism has placed all of us and the living system

which is our planet in crisis. Colonial racism not only suppressed Indigenous peoples, it suppressed their knowledge systems as primitive and heathen. And we are in need of Indigenous knowledge systems to bring our systems back into balance. Indigenous know ledges are more than other ways of knowing about our experience in the natural world. They are co-creative epistemologies, and the ceremonies therein are necessary for the sustainability of the earth's systems. As Auntie Margaret Iselin of Minjerribah explains, Indigenous peoples care for the earth and all beings in ceremony, and the earth and all beings care for humans.<sup>40</sup> It is this sacred relationship that is maintained through ceremony. Although these Indigenous concepts have been and continue to be considered by many to be primitive, superstitious beliefs, a growing number of world leaders and scholars are acknowledging them as a science that has been suppressed through colonisation.<sup>41</sup> Many are moving to decrease the racist suppression of Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems, and heal the divisions between Western and Indigenous sciences.

For the last four years, I have had the privilege of being part of a series of dialogues between quantum theorists and Native scientists, seeking to develop a deeper understanding of how Western quantum theory and Indigenous science can work together. I remember sitting next to Brian Josephson, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, in the dialogues in which we are participants. In the 2001 dialogues he cited the work of John Horgan, stating that: 'Our civilization is now facing barriers to the acquisition of knowledge so fundamental that the golden age of science must be thought of as over... we are now witnessing a transition from a science of the past... to a study of complex adaptive matter. We must hope for providing a jumping-off point for new discoveries, new concepts, and new wisdom. Well, I think that's very closely connected to what we're doing, and shows that the two (Quantum theory and Native Science) can be united in this sense.'<sup>42</sup>

All of us need the co-creative relationships that exist between Indigenous peoples, their ceremonies and the earth system. However, much of this knowledge was silenced through colonial racism. Today, some of it is being sought out, but only as information to be analysed and properly researched through Western Science. In this form it is commonly referred to as 'Indigenous ecological knowledge', marginalising the Indigenous ontologies that emphasize ceremony as an integral aspect of reality. However, Indigenous elders around the world say that our earth is telling us we are all in peril and must change our ways, and build on realities that incorporate ceremonies that heal the wounds separating us from each other and from the web of life.

On January 15, 2005, the Guardian ran an article about the alarming effects of climate change on the bears around the world. The following poem is my response to concerns about the warning signs coming from our four-legged relations.

### **The Bears' Witness**

*Brown Bears are meant to sleep through the winter.*

*In St. Petersburg, They are awake.*

*Polar Bears are meant to pull seals through the ice,*

*In the arctic, the ice has receded*

*The Polar bear watches the receding ice,*

*And lies down in the brown field.*

*The bears are waking early*

*In Estonia,*

*In the Czech Republic*

*In Slovakia.*

*One winter's moonlit night*

*I came upon the tracks of a bear*

*Deep in the snow. They*

*Filled me with disquiet.*

*Black bears sleep in*

*The snows of New Mexico.*

*At that time, I thought something*

*Was wrong with the bear*

*To wake in the heart of winter.*

*I was frightened.*

*Now I track the bears*

*Across the world and know  
There is something wrong with our earth  
And I am afraid.*

In this section, we have reflected on how colonial racism has affected all on this planet. We now turn to a consideration of our role as Friends in dealing with colonial racism.

## **In the West: Reflections on Quaker response to racism against Indigenous Peoples**

In the West of the Medicine Wheel, we go within. The West is the place of the unknown, of dreams, prayer and meditation. It is the place of self-examination. The West is symbolised by Bear, whose strength comes from within and Turtle, who teaches perseverance.<sup>43</sup> In the West of this lecture, we reflect on our role as Quakers in dealing with colonial racism.

In her 2000 Backhouse Lecture, Susannah Brindle spoke of the seriousness of Friends' response to racism:

*In these times, when consciousness about the nature and extent of our racism is growing, I feel we are to be challenged to the foundations of our faith and integrity, in much the same way that Friends of the eighteenth and nineteenth century were in the face of their increased awareness of the iniquity of slavery. It has been coming, this no-turning-back time. We Friends, with our historic connections with the poor and oppressed have always expressed concern for the plight of the Aboriginal peoples. To some extent this concern has tended to focus on what we might be able to do for them, an attitude which has its roots in the late nineteenth century belief that they were a doomed race and that we Europeans, from the superiority of our culture and wisdom, might be able to be kind to them and help them. Now we must face the fact that even we Friends have been and are an integral part of their distress.*<sup>44</sup>

The initial Quakers who settled in Pennsylvania seem to have had respectful relationships with the Lenape/Delaware peoples, the American Indian peoples who were the traditional owners of the lands where the first Friends settled.

*Quaker pacifists and peace-loving Lenape had agreed to live in harmony, vowing to follow the Creator's 'Original Divine Instructions' which they recognized as being universal and*

*eternal. colony builder William Penn had joined hands in friendship beneath a great Tree of Peace with Lenape Chief Tamanend, 'The Affable One'. This was said to be one of the only treaties that was never signed and never broken. Where the two cultures had united in the center of the Lenape capital, Philadelphia now sprawled over the site originally called Shackamaxon, 'The Place Where Chiefs Are Made'. Thus Pennsylvania was established on a spiritual foundation generally known as 'The Holy Experiment'.<sup>45</sup>*

Unfortunately, respectful relationships did not last long. Penn's sons did not continue in the same manner, and future governments broke every treaty that Penn made with the American Indians. The foundation of peace that was laid down was destroyed by the larger system of colonial racism.<sup>46</sup>

George Fox himself seems to have been influenced by colonial racism, and responded only in part to concerns relating to the presence of Europeans in American Indian lands. In 1679 Fox wrote:

*To Friends in America, Concerning Their Negroes and Indians*

*All Friends everywhere that have Indians or Blacks, you are to preach the Gospel to them and other servants, if you be true Christians, for the gospel of salvation was to be preached to every creature under heaven... . You must instruct and teach your Indians and Negroes and all others how Christ, by the Grace of God, tasted death for every man, gave Himself a ransom for all men, and is the propitiation not for the sins of Christians only, but for the sins of the whole world. <sup>47</sup>*

My heart hurts when I read these words of George Fox: '*Friends who have Indians*'. How does a Friend 'have' an Indian and live by the grace of God? I suppose these Indians he was speaking of were slaves belonging to Quakers, as there were many American Indian slaves. To 'have' another human being implies a superiority of place and power, a knowing of what is best for them. It appears that what George Fox thought what was best for Indians in this case was to learn the Gospel. Many American Indians then and now maintain that freedom, dignity, and respect would be gifts of God as well as the Gospel. I assume Fox meant well, and was concerned about spiritual issues related to American Indians. However, Fox, like all of us, was influenced by the culture of his time. And one

of the main tenets of that culture was racism. Yet as I read Fox's words, I ache for the founder of the Religious Society of Friends to declare something about Indians' rights to their own lands, religion and belief systems.

William Penn endeavoured to treat the American Indians with respect and justice. In his public declaration to the leaders of the Lenape peoples, he stated: 'I have great love and regard towards you, and I desire to win and gain your Love and friendship by a kind, just and peaceable life . . . and if any thing shall offend you or your People, you shall have a full and speedy satisfaction for the same. ..'<sup>48</sup>

John Woolman seems to have taken concerns for Indigenous Americans a bit further, acknowledging the possibility that Indians' spiritual beliefs may have had something in common with those of Quakers. He spoke of his mission to the Indians in the summer of 1763.

*Having many years felt love in my heart toward the natives of this land who dwell far back in the wilderness, whose ancestors were the owners and possessors of the land where we dwell, and who for a very small consideration assigned their inheritance to us, and being at Philadelphia in the 8th month, 1761, on a visit to some Friends who had slaves, I fell in company with some of those natives who lived on the east branch of the river Susquehanna at an Indian town called Wyalusing, about two hundred miles from Philadelphia. And in conversation and conduct, I believed some of them were measurably acquainted with that divine power which subjects the rough and froward will of the creature.*<sup>49</sup>

Woolman recognised the dangers of colonial racism (even if he did not use this terminology) and the privileges it conferred on Whites. He said: '. . . and in this lonely journey I did this day greatly bewail the spreading of a wrong spirit, believing that the prosperous, convenient situation of the English requires a constant attention to divine love and wisdom, to guide and support us in a way answerable to divine love and wisdom, to guide and support us in a way answerable to the will of that good, gracious, and almighty Being who hath an equal regard to all mankind.'<sup>50</sup> Woolman's words create a portrait of Friends' experiences with Indigenous peoples around the world: in comparison to other religious and political groups, Friends are remarkable for their genuine concern and care for Indigenous peoples. At the same time, Friends are immersed in the culture of colonial racism and take as normal many beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are damaging and distressing to Indigenous peoples.

In the 2000 Backhouse Lecture, Susannah Brindle wrote and spoke of the ways in which James Backhouse was influenced by the racist beliefs of his time. Backhouse was able to acknowledge the oppression of colonisation and speak boldly about restitution for all that had been stolen from Aboriginal Australians. At the same time, he was immersed in the culture of colonial racism and still considered it a responsibility to press British colonial ways of being upon Aborigines. Backhouse said, 'Upon every hand, it is evident that a heavy responsibility has thus been brought upon the British Nation: in which also, the Colonial Government is deeply involved and that it is then their bounden duty, to make all the restitution in their power, by adopting efficient measures for the benefit of Aborigines of Australia, in affording them protection and support, *and in endeavouring to civilise and settle them.*'<sup>51</sup> (emphasis mine).

Although William Penn enjoyed a 'Long Peace' (lasting 70 years) with the American Indians, there is a sadder side to the history of Friends and Native Americans. In their desire to improve conditions for a range of Indian Nations in what was then Indian Territory (now the state of Oklahoma), Friends took over the implementation of policies designed to protect and civilise the Indians. However, many of their practices almost destroyed the peoples they intended to protect. 'In what became known as the "Quaker Policy", Quaker Indian agents in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska operated over a dozen boarding and day schools designed to isolate Native American children from their families and tribes. Indian languages, religion, and all other shows of culture were strictly prohibited; pupils were sometimes separated from their families for years on end, and were inculcated with Western customs and values. This resulted in the breakdown of tribal and family units, and the near elimination of many native cultures and languages.'<sup>52</sup>

Friends continued to support efforts that they believed would civilise American Indians. They supported moves by the United States government to force private land ownership on Indian Nations. A report from the American Friends Service Committee states: 'Perhaps the most devastating government policy supported by Friends was the Allotment Act of 1887. Designed ostensibly to encourage Indians to enter into small scale agriculture and individual land ownership - two ideas which were consonant with the Quaker vision of Indian assimilation - the Act actually enabled non-Natives to take more than 60% of remaining Indian land. Friends came to recognise that their good intentions during

this time actually caused great harm, and learned to use their long connections with American Indians in more constructive ways.'<sup>53</sup>

I have no language to describe the way I felt when I came to the point in preparing this lecture where I learned about Quakers' role in American Indian boarding schools and the Allotment Act. I was beside myself, exhausted with wrestling with this knowledge. I deeply desired to continue to write this lecture in a way that might open hearts and encourage Friends to work more deeply to redress all aspects of colonial racism. And at the same time, I felt both anger and despair. These policies of Friends were instrumental in separating my Cherokee family from the beliefs, values and connections that many of us continually work to restore. How does one 'speak truth to power' in the midst of such pain? I continued to dream of the bones of Ancestors, particularly of skulls, and wondered how to find the light in such darkness. And at the same time, I knew that my experience of colonial racism was slight compared to the existential terror<sup>54</sup> that many Indigenous peoples face daily.

In this lecture, I have been led to sing up the reality and dangers of the effects of living in cultures steeped in colonial racism. I feel concern that the next generations may look upon our practice as the Religious Society of Friends and be grieved that we did not fully engage with the decolonisation and healing of the lands in which we live. George Fox, John Woolman, you and I are all immersed in the culture of racism that arose out of Europe and permeated the countries colonised by Europe. Regardless of whether we ever knowingly commit a racist act, we are embedded in systems that support racism. As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we are a part of that system. We are responsible for addressing colonial racism in peaceful ways. Part of that responsibility is addressing our own White race privilege. Part of that responsibility is decreasing the physical and structural violence that Indigenous peoples in colonised countries face on a daily basis.

I envision our journey as Friends to be like that of Chief White Eyes, the great Lenape peacemaker. In the summer of 1776, near the end of the American Revolutionary War for independence from England, White Eyes travelled with George Morgan on a peace mission to surrounding Indian Nations. Even though they rode through recent battlegrounds and there were signs of war all around them, White Eyes knew well the peace traditions of his own people and those of Quakers who had for a generation lived in peace with the Lenape peoples. In his travel pouches, White Eyes carried the vision of peace woven in the wampum beads of his people.

The following poem, which I wrote in honour of the Peacemakers, speaks to our journey in these dark times. I believe as Friends we are called to open our eyes and hearts to the carnage of colonisation and speak peace to power in bringing change.

### **Dark Music**

*There is dark music in these fields.*

*The hooves of our horses ring*

*Against the bones of our ancestors,*

*Against the skulls of our enemies.*

*Mournful songs rise from this bloodied ground.*

*In our pouches,*

*The wampum belts whisper*

*Ssh, ssh, ssh, music*

*The pale ones cannot hear.*

*Old ones sing in the beads*

*Red White, Black, Blue.*

*Peace, they say for all the peoples,*

*Peace, they say, In the circle where we stand together,*

*Peace, they say, In the hearts of the mothers,*

*Peace, they say, In the mouths of the children,*

*Peace, they say, In the dreams of the dreamers.*

*There is dark music in these fields,*

*And in our hearts a song of peace.*

Friends in the United States and Australia are grappling with issues of decolonisation, of redressing colonial racism. They have implemented a range of programs and projects in both countries that seek to decrease the violence toward Indigenous peoples and to acknowledge and respond to White race privilege.

Friends in both countries speak to their role in perpetuating colonial racism. My intent in this lecture is not to catalogue those efforts. Detailed accounts of these processes can be found on the Internet and in the writings of various Meetings. Given the virtual life and death situation that many Indigenous peoples face on a daily basis, my intent in this lecture has been to explore ways and reasons for us as Friends to intensify our self-examination, reflection, and action regarding colonial racism.

In the process of writing, this lecture became the story of One Heart and the Wrong Spirit. The Creator made Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples one heart, one blood. The language of the Tsalagi testifies to this fact: We have no word for goodbye because we understand that in some way we are always connected to everything in the universe. This lecture also became the story of a wrong spirit - the spirit of colonial racism that tries to disrupt that natural peace, unity and connection. We can work to become one heart, to restore connection. We can work to clear our vision so that we may truly acknowledge that we are one heart. We have much to do, and now we turn to the North of the Medicine Wheel, the place of implementing actions that lead to harmony and balance.

## **In the North: Responding with one heart to the wrong spirit**

*'We need to act in love, truth and responsibility, but also with frankness and radical strength of purpose. We need to speak truth to power on race relations in a way which we have failed to do since the days of James Backhouse.'* <sup>55</sup>

The North of the Medicine Wheel is the place of elders, of vision and justice. It is the place where we bring to fruition what we have learned, solving problems, imagining. 'The final lesson of the North is the lesson of balance. . . and balance, when applied to the interconnectedness of all human beings, becomes justice.' <sup>56</sup> In the West, we reflected on Friends' role in colonial racism. In the North of this lecture, we explore what we learn from elders about ways we can respond to decrease colonial racism.

Friends living in colonised countries all struggle with repairing the damage brought about by racist practices and policies. In this section, I share some of the wisdom wise elders have shared with me. These elders are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who, as Uncle Kev Carmody says, have '*faced the blood in the road*',<sup>57</sup> the continuing injustices of colonial racism. The teachings of elders both in Turtle Island and here in Australia indicate to me that each of us is responsible for listening to these stories and for finding the message within that speaks to our responsibilities in regard to truth, justice and reconciliation. When I listen deeply to the elders of Turtle Island and Australia, I hear them say that we must acknowledge that colonial racism has affected all of us living in colonised countries, non-Indigenous peoples as well as Indigenous.

It is easier to grieve the ways that colonial racism has affected Indigenous peoples than it is to examine the ways it has impacted on non-Indigenous peoples, largely because it is quite painful to see how many have prospered, and continue to prosper, by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, the dispossessed have a continuing relationship with the dispossessors and their descendants. We need an analysis of the wounds of colonial racism that includes all of us in order to find ways of healing that we will heal us and bring us together.

Lilla Watson describes how difficult it is for non-Indigenous people to understand the ways they have been affected by colonial racism:

*It's those things that cause me concern, in terms of the wider population not understanding what has happened. All the blame goes back onto the victims, the Indigenous population. People want to interpret through White eyes. They like to create definitions for the Indigenous population and fit them in. They don't see that in a colonising process, that's affected them also. They don't see themselves as being affected, but something has happened to them that they can look at other human beings and make those sort of judgments. Colonialism is a two-edged sword and it affects everyone, not just the Indigenous population, and I guess that's what I always found very frustrating about... the teaching process at the university was trying to get students to look at themselves and how they have been affected by colonialism, not just the Indigenous population and of course their denial of land rights and human rights and they were so willing to look at that and say how terrible it was, but found it very hard to look in the mirror and say: I'm part of what has happened here, you know, and I need to look at myself, I need to own my own history in this country in order to be able to live here in harmony with the Indigenous population. I guess that was always one of my... most frustrating things at the university was to try and have an impact on the teaching process so that people became more willing to look at themselves .... To me, when I see a White Australian suddenly understand and...something clicks into place, and all of a sudden, he can say: Gee, I never thought of it. I understand a lot better than what I did before that these people are human beings and they have a spiritual and emotional attachment to land and it's part of them and I can begin to see it through different eyes. Once that happens, that person, I believe, cannot go back to being the old colonial person they were before. I think when that self-revelation happens in a lot of cases, then a new person is born.<sup>58</sup>*

## **Address White race privilege**

One of the major tenets of non-violent action is bringing injustice into conscious awareness, regardless of how painful this process may be. In addressing

colonial racism, we are responsible for bringing White race privilege, the twin of Indigenous dispossession, into our conscious awareness because it is most often unacknowledged. As painful as this process may be, it is a necessary step in healing and justice. Yet we often turn away, saying: 'It is too hard, it hurts too much, we're not bad people.' The danger exists that as members of the dominant society, Friends will largely ignore the ways racism affects them:

*The majority (of Whitefellas) have just never been taught it, have never been socialised into it, and therefore don't have any ownership of it. So it's easy for them to ignore it.* <sup>59</sup>

Listening deeply to Indigenous Australians can be a great challenge to Friends. This kind of listening requires attention and patience, which the pace of Western life often works against. Deep listening also requires commitment to relationship rather than isolated analysis of the issues. In listening and dialogue, we become vulnerable, and risk being hurt. Even more challenging to some of us, we risk transformation, and we are afraid of what might be required of us.

Regardless of the risk and challenge, non-Indigenous Australians have the option to remain uninformed regarding Aboriginal experience and race issues. This 'willing ignorance' pervades dominant Australian society, even in arenas such as universities, in which knowledge and informed opinion are prized.

**We can listen deeply, respectfully to the stories of Indigenous peoples who live with racism each day, hearing within our personal and collective responsibilities in redressing racism.**

I know that many times as I listen to Aboriginal friends and colleagues, I am overwhelmed by their daily, intense experiences of colonial racism, from harassment by police, to the marginalisation of their issues. Many Indigenous elders have taught me when we receive the gift of stories such as these, we are obligated to make ethical responses to the lessons we hear within the story. Other Friends have also emphasised the importance of actively listening to stories, of acting upon what we hear in regard to colonial racism. In 1972, at the request of Australian Friends, Charlotte Meacham, from the American Friends Service Committee, visited Australia in response to concerns regarding Aboriginal Australians. In her recommendations following her experiences in Australia, Charlotte called for Friends to engage in deep listening with Aboriginal Australians:

*The overriding 'leading of love and truth' which Charlotte left us, to enable us to confront the problem of White institutional racism was, 'Listen to the Aborigines, White Australia. Theirs is a message not of doom but of hope. They are demanding justice, autonomy and a future for their children - and yours'.<sup>60</sup>*

Auntie Penny Tripcony, an Aboriginal woman of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), shared her experience with me of how non-Indigenous people can learn to decrease racism through building respectful relationships with Aboriginal Australians, and through listening deeply to the stories of their experience. She said:

*Look at me.*

*Everything that people say*

*About Aboriginal people*

*Has touched*

*Every one of us in our families.*

*I can't change that.*

*That is what makes me*

*Me.*

*I demonstrate.*

*I demonstrate in*

*My interactions with people.*

*I'm friendly.*

*I'm very much committed in my work*

*To people understanding*

*What Aboriginal people are all about.*

*Avoid the things that are going to upset people*

*Like the guilt trips.*

*I try to avoid confrontation.*

*Not to make people feel guilty that it is their fault*

*That these things have happened.  
That will turn people the other way;  
Will only lead to further racism.  
Some people go full on and say:  
Your lot are responsible  
For the policies and practices of separation  
Of people from land,  
Of children from families.  
All those things.  
Of people from language and culture.  
It's not the people of today  
I know.  
It was people a long time ago  
Who did it in ignorance  
And their own ethnocentricity.  
It's too late to do anything about that  
But changes can be made.  
You can explain that to people  
Or demonstrate it  
When they are ready.*<sup>61</sup>

## **We can work to develop respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples.**

This summer, leading a university class on Minjerribah, Auntie Joan Hendricks explained that she defines Aboriginal philosophy as based on **respect, responsibility and relationship**.<sup>62</sup> We may reflect deeply on Auntie Joan's words, seeking guidance on how these concepts may speak truth to power in decreasing colonial racism.

Racist behaviours are often diminished through the development of respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Unfortunately, too many non-Indigenous peoples in colonised countries choose to intellectualise about racism and Indigenous peoples rather than to build relationships.

Mary Graham explained what this feels like to many Aboriginal people:

*I haven't taken them on to develop really deep sort of relationships or friendships. The politicians or the intelligentsia, it's almost like an acknowledgment. They are always around, so you are in touch with them, but I never really developed any deeper relationship than that. I'm sort of reluctant to because I've always had a wariness about getting to the point where Aboriginal content is a subject for dinner party conversation. It's good to talk to intelligentsia, but that's what they often do, is use it as a talking across the dinner table. I just always feel it sets up too many kind of contradictory things for me. I am Aboriginal, we are Indigenous people, and we're talking about it as object.* <sup>63</sup>

In building relationships, we face a paradox. Relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people is crucial to a deep understanding of racism. Yet, racism has silenced so much of Indigenous experience that non-Indigenous people may need to undergo quite an extensive period of self-education before they have enough knowledge to approach Indigenous peoples in ways that foster relationship building. Jackie Huggins explains the link between self-education and relationship-building:

*People have been quite transformed by the process, that probably never knew anything about Indigenous peoples before but have made an effort to find out and educate themselves about the issues of Indigenous culture and histories and then they've gone out and spread the words themselves, which I find very, very gratifying and very intriguing that they've changed themselves and transformed themselves and they've become the new educators. It's people who are very balanced and able to take that on a bit further that I encourage and I will encourage their friendships and support their efforts.* <sup>64</sup>

When I finished the first draft of my PhD, Auntie Penny Tripcony came and spoke to me about transforming conflict between Aboriginal and non-

Indigenous peoples. She reminded me to not forget about friendships. She said that some of the most powerful changes have come about from Aboriginal people and Whitefellas who have worked together, served in the armed forces together, and shared deeply.

Jackie Huggins also explained to me the ways relationships between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous peoples can be effective in breaking down racist belief:

*In order for us to know reconciliation at heart, we have to form alliances and friendships with people to break down some of the barriers. We got to know each other as people first and that humanness, and then we formed friendships. I think if Whitefellas in this country have the opportunity to do that, they would see Aboriginal people through very different eyes. It would debase all the stereotypes and prejudices that abound about my people.*<sup>65</sup>

Direct, face-to-face dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alters many misconceptions that are perpetuated in the wider community. Racist stereotypes are diminished when one listens deeply to the first-hand experience of Aboriginal Australians. Flo Watson describes how many non-Indigenous Australians change when they hear her stories in the anti-racism workshops she facilitates:

*I find that there are myths and stereotypes about Aboriginal people that are repeated so often, they begin to seem like the truth to the people that say them.*

*There's a whole new dimension,*

*A new way of thinking.*

*Once I finish*

*And once I show them this history*

*And why we are*

*Where we are today.*

*Racism happens every day of your life.*

*It deals with the colour of your skin,*

*More than anything, you know.*

*And most of them try  
To come to terms with it  
By defending what's happened.  
And as the day goes on,  
When you show them about  
The stolen generation  
And deaths in custody,  
At the end of the day  
All they want to do is say,  
How can we help?  
What can we do? <sup>66</sup>*

## **We can face the Aboriginal histories of colonised countries.**

In recent years there has been a great deal of debate about the supposed 'black arm band' approach to Australian history, which includes Aboriginal histories of massacre, genocide, loss of lands and culture. Some say that including such histories is not a balanced approach to describe Australia as it is today. However, scholars around the world maintain that sharing controversial histories provides a major path to peace and reconciliation in divided societies. Many Indigenous peoples around the world are working to have their histories heard in an effort to make colonial societies a more just place for all peoples. Michael Williams speaks strongly about his experience of facing history as being crucial in ending colonial racism:

*With regards to the Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal situation that reconciliation in Australia is addressing, honesty about the process, honesty about what has happened. Anything in the name of reconciliation that is based on half-truths, myths, fantasy and an unwillingness to let it all hang out, so to speak, is destined to failure. My view is that you can only go forward on the basis of saying, 'Well, this has happened. It's shocking awful and it's happened. What are we going to do about it?' <sup>67</sup>*

## **Respect Indigenous peoples' spirituality, their relationships with their ancestors, and their ways of knowing.**

Within the dominant society in colonised countries, Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing are often dismissed as primitive or superstitious. Decreasing racism against Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing is an integral part of healing from colonial racism.

For example, many Aboriginal Australians that I work with openly acknowledge the role of ancestor spirits in their daily lives. However, the dominant culture is often dismissive of such experience, still regarding it as heathen, or merely imagination. In telling me about her work, Flo Watson described how her ancestors continue to support to her to deal with the racism she faces on a regular basis:

*Many people are involved in reconciliation, including those who lived here before and now live in spirit. In my experience, I have seen both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people receive information through dreams, visions and guidance by the spirits. I believe the spiritual is an essential part*

*Of reconciliation.*

*Well, for my own people,*

*We are very spiritual, eh?*

*My whole house is looked after*

*By my mum and my dad.*

*If anything goes bad*

*I just talk to them.*

*I believe in the spirits.*

*I believe in the spirits getting us to reconcile.*

*Menmuny is my great-grandfather*

*His mother had this dream*

*He told us about it all*

*Through the years.*

*She dreamt of the cultural changes*

*That were going to happen.  
She asked Menmyny not to accept  
The missionaries.  
But he had no choice.  
He's always regretted  
Not listening to her dreams  
Because of the terrible cultural changes  
That happened on the mission.  
They were terrible for his people.  
We believe in dreams.* <sup>68</sup>

Respecting Indigenous spirituality involves respectful engagement that neither romanticises nor dismisses their experience. A deep understanding and engagement with similar aspects of our own cultural traditions is a part of developing a mature and respectful engagement with the spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples.

### **Work to establish respectful relationship with land/country.**

*'The healing of our people begins with the healing of our land.'* Auntie Pat King. <sup>69</sup>

In worldviews in which all things are connected, as is the case in many Indigenous worldviews, one cannot engage respectfully with people without engaging respectfully with country, with land and all the beings and natural processes that inhabit that country. When speaking about transforming conflict between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians, Mary Graham explains the importance of relationship with country:

*For us, the starting and end point, I suppose, is always that relationship with land. Treating it in a certain way. If it could begin and end with that, then we're well on the way, I reckon, well on the way. Those totemic ancestors did pass on the law over a long period of time, eons of time of how to have these arrangements in society, how to look after the land itself. I'm sure it was a reciprocal thing that was deemed to be of more*

*importance to having a lasting relationship than having a comfortable relationship, rather than having a surplus. To me, why societies turn out the way they do is absolutely worked on by the nature of the land itself. The actual land itself works on it. I'm sure ideas don't just come up out of nowhere.*

*Murris had to work out*

*How to get along with people*

*Without killing each other*

*Giving conflict its natural place*

*So we understand the problems.*

*How do we live*

*Without damaging the environment?*

*Finding answers*

*Which don't make people feel*

*Lonely or alienated or nervous.* <sup>70</sup>

Michael Williams also maintains that in healing colonial racism, we must address the healing of the planetary system of which we are a part:

When people talk about reconciliation as between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people only, I think they've got it wrong. There has to be a healing of the rift between people and the earth. The earth can sustain just a certain amount of damage and we are reaching that point. When making decisions about actions that will lead to positive outcomes, we've got to consider what effect that action will have on the earth. <sup>71</sup>

### **Respect Indigenous peoples' ways of handling time.**

One of the challenges we face as Friends is dealing with the time pressures of the dominant society. Often we feel pressure to move on, to reach solutions or take actions that are perhaps not ripe, not in right time. When speaking about respectful change in Aboriginal ways of being, Auntie Penny Tripcony explained:

*In community, I wait. And that's the way. You wait. You observe. You can see. You know the way, that it's a slow way.*

Mary Graham describes another perspective of Indigenous conceptualisation of time. She also speaks to the implications of this concept for responsible behaviour on the part of non-Indigenous people living in Australia:

*In a way it ought to be from a Murri point of view, it ought to be done in a natural evolutionary kind of {way}: like as in it becomes normal gradually. It's a gradualism, I suppose, you know, just gradually coming into it and after a while, after a while of living in this country, they will, hundreds of generations, well, at least another couple of hundred years, they will see that, you know what I mean? To... think and act in a certain way maybe that's a very long time, whereas the converting kind or proselytising kind of missionary style doesn't really, if we want long-term kind of stuff to happen... in a proper Indigenous way, then we have to take that long-term view and not the short-term missionary way.*

As is the case with many processes, there is a balance we must seek between long-term change and addressing issues of acute violence. There is a danger that we might use right time as an excuse to ignore our responsibilities in the now, to the Indigenous peoples whose survival may depend on the immediate actions we support.

### **Be willing to hear the pain and anger of Indigenous peoples' experience of racism.**

In my work, I often hear beautiful people of great integrity and clear intent share stories of how they have turned away from being involved with Indigenous peoples at certain points in their lives because it was simply too painful, and they put it in the 'too hard basket'. They often describe their withdrawal as a response to the anger of Indigenous people toward non-Indigenous people of good intent. And these same people also describe the maturity they have gained that enables them to engage with Aboriginal Australians by showing they will stay the course even in the face of anger.<sup>73</sup> Michael Williams explains how important it is for non-Indigenous people not to turn away from Indigenous peoples' anger over colonial racism:

*They (Whitefellas) have to be mature enough to accept that the pain that has been kept down for so long has got to come*

*out. When these reconciliation meetings occur, when statements are made, there has to be an acceptance.*

*When someone is given the opportunity*

*To say something*

*That they have not been allowed to say,*

*They are going to say it*

*And they are going to want to say it*

*Again and again until they feel*

*As though they have released it.*

*And on the same token, we've got to balance that. This is where I think younger Aboriginal people should take advantage of their vigour of youth and optimism of youth to say, 'Well, righto, this can work, we can work this through.' It is important to maintain to heal.<sup>74</sup>*

## **Engage in respectful inquiry with Indigenous peoples.**

There is also a balance between respectful inquiry and painful scrutiny. Many Indigenous peoples experience relationships with non-Indigenous peoples to be painful, as if they are being 'mined' for information, or are objects of exotic curiosity. Mary Graham explained to me how uncomfortable she is when non-Indigenous people discuss Indigenous issues solely as intellectual constructs. She explains that what many Aboriginal people want from relationship is not a rigorous analysis, but genuine respect:

*There are others who are really interested in some of the implications of the ideas or values that Aboriginal people hold in general. It is much deeper than they thought. So they really want to enter into a more open respectful kind of talk about these things: what social values there are, how societies are changing, how their own society is changing. They're actually looking for answers and the opportunity to listen and learn, meet Aboriginal people, talk with Aboriginal people.<sup>75</sup>*

## **Form respectful alliances with Indigenous people.**

There is a great deal of social change that needs to take place in Australia and Turtle Island in order to adequately reduce colonial racism. Alliances indicate measures of equality, often in stark contrast to many non-Indigenous initiatives that are based on the conceptualisation of Indigenous peoples as victims that are in need of non-Indigenous help. Addressing colonial racism is often more powerful when Indigenous people and non-Indigenous peoples work together in respectful alliance, as Jackie Huggins explains:

*I became to be involved in reconciliation from a very early age, subconsciously. I know it was through my mother, because she was a person who was a great reconciliationist, along with Muriel Langford and other people who were great influences in my life. I saw these two women and other women using their friendships to activate the process of reconciliation, not only for themselves, but for the Aboriginal community as a whole. I guess a lot of that has rubbed off on me, because I think in order for us to know reconciliation at heart, we have to form alliances and friendships with people to break down some of the barriers.<sup>76</sup>*

## **Honour and respect Indigenous ways of being.**

Many Aboriginal Australians speak of the necessity of respecting Aboriginal worldviews, which are often marginalised or silenced. And with this knowledge comes responsibility to act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in ways that increase the strength of Indigenous ways of being which are severely marginalised or silenced within the dominant society. Lilla Watson explains the responsibilities that come with deep understanding of Aboriginal lifeways:

*Murris don't expect other people to become Murris. I think what Murris are asking is that people recognise the humanness of all people, and that there be a respect there for different cultural beliefs. Murris don't want to change Whites into Murris. The expectation is that Whites will develop the same sort of spiritual and emotional ties with land that Murris have and that they will take on the same responsibilities for caring for land and custodianship for land that Murris have. That should become part of their consciousness as it has for Murris. How Whites get there I think is a slow process. But*

*they'd get there faster if there were good will and a willingness to learn from the Indigenous population.* <sup>77</sup>

## **Develop a vision of a society of non-racism, reaching to the next generations.**

'Where there is no vision, the people perish.'<sup>78</sup> As Friends, we must develop a vision of a society which eliminates colonial racism, and heals the damage which it has caused thus far. William Penn and the Delaware/Lenape people shared such a vision. Perhaps it is time to work together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to create a vision of a non-racist society in the twenty-first century. Flo Watson shared a beautiful story with me of her grand-daughter's vision, and how she was able to speak out against racism in a non-violent and loving way to the youngest generation. They were on a family outing to McDonalds, and yet again had to face racism rather than being able to eat their meal in peace. However, through learning about reconciliation from her grandmother, the grand-daughter was able to share positive responses to racist dialogue. Here is a bit of Flo's story:

*I took my little grand-daughter down  
and she was playing in the playground  
at McDonalds.*

*And this little White girl come up and said,  
'Is your mummy Black? '*

*And my little grand-daughter replied,  
'No, that's my Nanny!'*

*And the little White girl said,  
'Well, my mummy said  
I'm not allowed to speak  
to people like your Nanny!'*

*And my little grand-daughter said:  
'But my nanny will speak to you. '*

*That's where it's got to start  
With the kids.*

## **Develop educational frameworks that address the systemic roots of conflict between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians.**

Many of the American Indian and Indigenous Australian elders and senior people with whom I work emphasise the role of education in eliminating colonial racism. Some of the most innovative reconciliation programs around the world are based on educating children about the contested histories of their countries, facilitating a more balanced analysis and supporting efforts to bring justice to bear on many of the previously silenced parts of colonial histories. Jackie Huggins describes the importance of education in decreasing racism in Australia:

*People I've known in the past who I may have gone to school with that have never realised, because we weren't taught Aboriginal history at school, never realised the past history and have come back into my life now and are able to see that some of the stuff that happened to us at school, and why that happened was because of results of racism or ignorant teachers not understanding.*

*And if we can get to those people really early, and this is what we have been trying to tell the education system, that rather than wait till you get to university to tell them about our history and culture and they're all quite shocked because they never heard of it before. Start doing it while they're little. Start really early for students so they do develop into a mindset themselves. So that's where I think it really has to start - early prevention.<sup>79</sup>*

## **Bring racism to the surface.**

*Silent racism* consists of ill-informed beliefs and policies that masquerade as benevolent guidance. As people turn away from overt racism, due both to concern and to political pressure, a great deal of colonial racism now falls under the guise of silent racism. Some consider this to be the most devastating form of racism, because it is difficult, if not impossible, to address an injustice that is not named. In the following quotation, Evelyn Scott, former chairperson of the

Australian Council for Reconciliation, describes the dangers inherent in such practices:

*This acceptance of racism can be overt - as shown by Ms Hanson's rhetoric - or disguised as pseudo-intellectual and 'practical' policies by others who suggest a degree of sympathy with those concerns. I believe it is the quieter, more 'accepted' racism which, if it continues unquestioned, is more harmful. Ignorance has a lot to answer for as the breeding ground of fear, prejudice and misunderstanding.*<sup>80</sup>

### **Speak out against racist discourse.**

It is not always easy to decide how, when or if to speak out against a specific instance of colonial racism. Sometimes I am confused by my requirements to be respectful of my elders and my desire to eliminate racist discourse. In these instances, I share a positive story about Indigenous peoples. Sometimes I walk away so I cease to be a part of the dialogue. I often have a difficult time assessing the effectiveness of my response. Others voice their struggle in deciding how to respond to verbal expressions of racism:

*These events tend to ambush the unwary. You get in a cab and the driver apologises for being late. He explains that he's had to argue with a customer. 'You know what these blacks are like,' he says conspiratorially, certain you are on his side.*

*What do you do? Get out of the cab on some isolated road, express your indignation, threaten to report the conversation then hope an empty taxi will be cruising by and you won't be too late for that critical appointment? Or do you keep your mouth shut, substituting silence for action, arguing with your conscience that the driver would have been embarrassed by the mute non-compliance?*<sup>81</sup>

Another aspect of racist discourse is the way in which it feeds on itself. Many Aboriginal Australians describe the ways in which racist discourse is a vicious circle: many people who might otherwise refrain from racist comments feel free to voice them when similar comments are portrayed in the media as acceptable. In the following comment, Jackie Huggins describes how racist behaviour increased during the Pauline Hanson era:

*While we had the Hanson factor, they didn't care what they said to you in a taxi....I think the basic thing I've learned about reconciliation is just how people's attitudes and prejudices are so deeply ingrained and held. They won't let go of it and the more they're fed of the negative stuff, the more they're gonna soak up the bad food that's being fed to them rather than hearing the other arguments.* <sup>82</sup>

We are rich in the wisdom of these people who are willing to share their knowledge of how we might address colonial racism. There are many other elders, senior people, community leaders and people of good heart who have stories of great power and healing to share. May we listen deeply to these stories and find our responsibility within.

## In the Centre of the Medicine Wheel

*Coming to the centre of the circle connects us to the fire. The fire generates a spirit of action and inner-action with guidance. It raises our level of awareness and sensitivity to concerns that all of us have for harmony and balance in our lives. Coming to the centre is also a way of saying that we must come together as people for action and resolution as helpers and protectors. We centre to rebalance ... we get in touch with our deeper spirit self.*<sup>83</sup>

In this lecture, we are now at the centre of the Medicine Wheel, where we bring all that we have experienced into balanced action.

We have a daunting task in addressing colonial racism in effective, non-violent ways. However, we are not alone in this task; the wise ancestors are watching over us. One Sunday while I was writing this lecture, I sat in the Brisbane Meeting House, looking at the trees in the rainforest and the sun streaming through the windows. I was struggling with what I should say. I was wounded by what I had learned about how Quaker policy had devastated my Cherokee family and ripped away many strands of the web that held our cosmology and our peoples together. And I knew that the principles of love and healing that underlie both Quaker and Tsalagi philosophy urge us to find ways of bringing back into harmony and balance what has been damaged. In that meeting, I asked for guidance from Spirit, for help in developing this lecture in a way that would open hearts rather than drive people away. We were a small meeting that day, with many members away at meetings in the surrounding area. After making my prayer of request for assistance in writing this lecture, I sensed a presence in the space beside the table in the centre of the room.

At first, I wasn't sure if I was seeing something, or only imagining. However, the image grew clearer, and it began to move. The being wore buckskin leggings and breechcloth, with beading and metal cones. I could not see the shirt. Then I realised that he wore no shirt, but had a painted chest and a headpiece of painted wood. His face was painted with a mask. I recognised him as a Ghan dancer, the spirits who are guardians of the sacred mountain that I lived at the foot

of when I was growing up on our ranch in New Mexico. He began to dance in the four-patterned movements that designate the Ceremonial Dance of the Mountain Spirits, which I have attended many times. In part, the dance honours the power and meaning of the four directions. The dancer reminded me to put the teachings of the four directions into this lecture. He made certain I understood, and then he disappeared. I still wasn't sure if I imagined the whole thing because I was in need of support and healing. Then I had a strong directive to pick up one of the books lying on the table in the centre of the meeting. I resisted. I again felt a strong message to open it and to heed the first message I found. I doubted seriously whether this was approved practice regarding Quaker texts. And still the message grew stronger, *'Pick up the book and read from it'*. I quietly slipped the book off the table and opened it to the words of Jane Vaughn Donnelly:

*We are still here*

*Your First Nation, custodians*

*For solemn ages before you began.*

*We are here, and the spirits*

*Of those who went before, they are clustering*

*On these dark foreshores, here among us now.*

*Our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers.*

*Reach out to us your hands, to them*

*In spirit. Then we shall all be whole.*

*So let us cherish through the world*

*All the First Peoples and all peoples.*

*As the music flows and the light*

*Grows.* <sup>84</sup>

Christians might speak of this assistance as coming through an angel. Friends might speak of a vision, of leading by Spirit. Many Indigenous people would consider such an experience to be guidance from the ancestors. We may lack a common vocabulary to link our experience of other dimensions of reality. Yet honouring and respecting these connections is part of addressing colonial racism. These are the kinds of experiences and ways of knowing that colonial racism sought to destroy, and continues to silence, through disapproval, scepticism, or disbelief. Those of us with Indigenous roots also experience the

'colonisation of our minds' and struggle when we experience connections not accepted within the dominant society. Perhaps many of us remain quiet about such experiences, even among Friends. Susannah Brindle has addressed this concern, stating: 'Whether or not those (numinous) experiences become part of our consciousness, however, may depend upon whether they are acknowledged by those in our spiritual community.'<sup>85</sup>

Some American Indian elders say that the Great Mystery brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in an opportunity to learn from each other and to share deeply from our different ways of being, but the peoples fought each other and refused to see the beauty and power of different ways of knowing and being. Leon Secatero, a messenger of the Navajo Nation, along with other Indigenous elders around the world, explains that this is a prophesied time of the 'five fingered ones', a time for us all to come together in respect of our connections as human beings, honouring and healing ourselves, our nations and our earth.<sup>86</sup> Other American Indian elders speak of the rainbow tribe or nation, when peoples of all races come together to create a new world, free of hatred of difference. These same elders also describe our role in the creation of a peaceful world, warning that if we fail to work together to bring about peaceful change, a time of great calamity will befall the peoples of the earth. I understand many current ecologists and ecopsychologists to be voicing similar concerns about the state of our planet, and to be describing the importance of respectful care for ecological connections as imperative for the survival of us all.

We have a long journey. To understand both the hope and despair of this journey, we turn again to the story of bones. This lecture began with bones of our ancestors displayed on shelves in the small town where I grew up. It ends with the treatment of the bones of our ancestors in 2005. Colonial racism is still evident today as the bones and skulls of our Indigenous ancestors are being traded, sold, and exhibited in private collections and universities. For the last several years, the United States Congress has delayed an amendment that would allow American Indians more control of bringing their ancestors' remains home. The current legislation states *'that the remains must have a significant relationship to a presently existing tribe, people, or culture in order to be considered "Native American"....This paves the way for regulations that the scientists want to protect their "studies" on the myriad dead Indians they view as their property.'*<sup>87</sup> The legislation states, in effect, that if a group of American Indians were exterminated in the colonising of Turtle Island, then their ancestors' remains are no longer legally Native American, and can be used for scientific experiments. This is

colonial racism at its most powerful: re-defining, seizing the power over peoples' identities, and robbing ancestors of their resting places in Mother Earth.

We have hopeful news, mixed with these devastating experiences.

A growing number of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working together to support the respectful, ceremonial return of ancestors to their lands. Brad Lewis, one of my colleagues at the University of Queensland, was recently involved in the repatriation of Aboriginal Australian remains from Turtle Island back to Australia, and he shared the following story with me. In 1999, Ted Bailey, an American specialising in the sale of boomerangs, placed Aboriginal Australian remains for sale on the Internet. When he was apprised that the sale of human remains was illegal, he turned them over to the authorities in the United States. The University of Michigan took possession of the remains, consisting of bones and three skulls from four Aboriginal ancestors, some as old as 15,000 years and some as recent as 1960. It is not clear how the remains got to America, but premeditated theft is assumed to have played a role.

Two Aboriginal Australians, Bob Weatherall, a Kamilaroi man, and Henry Atkinson, a Yorta Yorta elder, travelled to Ann Arbor, to collect the remains and return them to Australia. To many Indigenous people around the world the bones are ancestors and are 'a haunting reminder of brutalities and indignities suffered at the hands of their continent's European settlers'.<sup>88</sup> To address and heal some of these indignities, local American Indian elders, Chippawah tribeswomen, met with Bob and Henry and conducted a sacred smoking ceremony. In the United States and Australia, Indigenous peoples are working to address colonial racism by bringing their ancestors home in beauty. I wrote the following poem in their honour:

### **Coming Home**

*Such a gentle phrase,  
'repatriation of human remains'.  
Our academic terminology  
Covering the tracks of grave robbers,  
Headhunters.  
The storied river that runs  
Under cover of those words  
Sings of our ancestors*

*Coming home*  
*Coming home to rest*  
*In Sacred grounds*  
*Coming home to heal us*  
*And restore again*  
*The web of connections*  
*That make up country,*  
*That make us whole.*  
*Brave, strong and gentle hands*  
*Carry bones and skulls home,*  
*Singing them out of darkness*  
*Honouring them with drum and eagle feather*  
*Home, our kin from one First Nation*  
*To another.*

This story is full of both hope and sadness: sadness that colonial racism is still widespread enough that the sale of an Aboriginal skull would appear on the Internet; and hope, in that this ancestor's remains travelled the Good Red Road home, the White Path of Peace, with ceremony and great care. Only a few of us have the solemn privilege of seeing ancestors home to their lands. However, all of us living in colonised countries have the responsibility of addressing the colonial racism in our societies. And we have many more responsibilities in addition to respectfully burying the dead. There are lives to save. Too many Indigenous peoples are dying through preventable disease, addictions, suicide, all indicators of a people in despair. We can clearly see the roots of this despair in the history and current practice of racism in colonised countries. And we see how the disruption of a system of balance and care for the cosmos has damaged the earth on which we live.

Often we do not respect that we are one heart, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. There is a wrong spirit that lives within colonial racism, evident in the deaths that surround us. We have a long journey to travel. But we are not alone. The ancestors are calling us to respond, to do our part to heal ourselves, our peoples and our lands. To return or recompense what was stolen, to heal that which was wounded. To face hard questions of sovereignty and

recompense. One day we will be the ancestors of our children and our grandchildren. We may, as Auntie Maureen Watson often says, 'want to be remembered as wise ancestors'.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps, one day, just as they are known across the world for their role in ending legal slavery in the United States, Friends in Turtle Island and Australia will be known for their courage in addressing colonial racism. May we listen deeply, with open hearts and minds, and bless the next seven generations with a new world in which we acknowledge we are the Creator's children, one blood. To do this we will need to effectively address the injustices of colonial racism that weigh so heavily upon us all. Then, and only then, we will have dispelled the wrong spirit. Then we may fully respond to the invitation of Tsalagi peacemakers:

**Nvwhtohiyada idehesdi: *'may we all live together in peace'***

## Endnotes

- 1 William Penn's letter 'To the Kings of the Indians', 1681.
- 2 The Good Red Road is a heuristic term, that is it is so deeply ingrained into American Indian way of life that most of us have an implicit, but not easily explained understanding of it. I will do my best to explain my understanding, that the Good Red Road is represented by the North-South axis of the Medicine Wheel. In my life, it represents the way I walk through this world, both physically, mentally, spiritually and in relationship with the natural world. I would be walking that road in a good way if I were humble, respectful of all my relations, human and non-human, if I were in good relationship with Spirit, and if I honour and respect my body.
- 3 I have been taught that the White Path of Peace is a place of balance, the path that leads from the centre of the Sacred Fire. When we are in balance, walking the path of peace, we are in relationships of great care with all, the natural and spiritual worlds and ourselves. A balanced life requires a continuing dance with Spirit.
- 4 Chief Seattle, speech attributed to him, but contested by many as not being his words.
- 5 Sheehan, Norm, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 6 APS Working Group, 1997, Position Paper, 'Racism and Prejudice: Psychological Perspectives' , Australian Psychological Society Ltd., Carlton, Vie, p. 10.
- 7 <http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/indig-inter-caetera.html> accessed on 16 July 2005.
- 8 Many Indigenous peoples around the world are working toward rescinding this edict and have formed organisations to this end. There is a great deal of information on the Internet regarding the efforts of these groups. Among Australian Friends, both David Carline and Waratah have spoken to me about the importance of working together to have the *Inter Caetera* officially nullified.
- 9 Francis, Lee, 1996, *Native Time: A Historical Time Line of Native America*, St. Martin's Press, NY.

- 10 Sven Lindqvist, 1997, *The skull measurer's mistake: and other portraits of men and women who spoke out against racism*, translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate, New Press, New York.
- 11 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid*.
- 12 Sheehan, Norm, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 13 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid*, p. 23.
- 14 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid*, p. 43.
- 15 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid*, p. 47.
- 16 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid*, p. 64
- 17 Lindqvist, Sven, *ibid.*, p. 77
- 18 McQueen, 1988, cited in *Race and racism in Australia*, eds. Keith McConnochie, David Hollinsworth, Jan Pettrnan, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls, NSW.
- 19 Phinney, I.S. 1996. 'When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean?' *American Psychologist*, 51, pp. 918-927.
- 20 Stanfield II, I. H. 1994, 'Ethnic Modeling in Qualitative Research', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. eds N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, p. 177.
- 21 Stanfield II, J. H. 1993, 'Epistemological Considerations' in *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, eds J.H. Stanfield II & R.M. Dennis, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 17-25..
- 22 Fine, M. 1994, 'Working the Hypens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 135-140.
- 23 Deloria, V. Jr. 1969, *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, The Macmillan Co., London; Smith, L.T. 1999, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books, London, p.69.
- 24 Tannoch-Bland, Jenny, 1998, 'Identifying White Race Privilege' in *Bringing Australian Together: The Structure and Experience of Racism in Australia*, FAIRA: Woollongabba, Qld, p. 37.

- 25 Montag, cited in Moreton-Robinson, Aileen, 1998, 'White Race Privilege: Nullifying Native Title' in *Bringing Australian Together: The Structure and Experience of Racism in Australia*, F AIRA: Woolloongabba, Qld, pp. 39-44.
- 26 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *ibid*
- 27 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *ibid*.
- 28 Tannoch-Bland, Jenny. *ibid*, p. 33.
- 29 Holt, L. 2000, 'Reflections on Race and Reconciliation', in *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, ed. M.Grattan, Bookman Press, Melbourne, pp.149-150.
- 30 Graham, D. 1994, 'No Questions Please, We're Australians', in *Being Whitefella*, ed. D. Graham, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, WA, p. 107.
- 31 Bywater, Philip, 2003, cited in *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, pp. 246-247.
- 32 Gillian Cowlshaw, 1988, cited in *Race and racism in Australia*, eds. Keith McConnochie, David Hollinsworth, Jan Pettman, Social Science Press, Wentworth Falls, NSW, p. 26-27.
- 33 Racist Violence: Report of national inquiry into racist violence in Australia, HREOC, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991, p. 122.
- 34 Watson, Lilla, 2005, *personal communication*. Lilla emphasises that culture is not permanently lost through loss of language, rather that Aboriginal culture must then be transmitted in another manner. The grief of loss is mourned, and the culture is shared in new ways.
- 35 Liddle, Lorraine, 1993, cited in *Local heroes*, ed. Helen Chryssides, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Vie., 1993. p. 116.
- 36 Watson, Lilla, 2000, *personal communication*.
- 37 Watson, Flo, 2000, *interview*.
- 38 Huggins, Jackie, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 39 Watson, Flo, 2000, *interview*.
- 40 Iselin, Margaret, 2004, *public presentation*, Minjerribah.

- 41 Cajete, G. 2000, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Clear Light Publishers, Santa Fe, NM.
- 42 Josephson, Brian, 2001, *The Language of Spirituality Transcript, A SEED Conference*, SEED Open University, Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 6-8, 2001.
- 43 Bopp, I., Bopp M., Brown L., Lane, P. Jr. 1985, 3rd edn, *The Sacred Tree*, Lotus Light Publications, Twin Lakes, Wisconsin.
- 44 Brindle, Susannah, 2003, *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, p. 259.
- 45 Schaaf, Gregory, 1990, *Wampum Belts & Peace Trees*, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, p. 2.
- 46 Schaaf, Gregory, *ibid.*, p. 2.
- 47 Fox, George
- 48 William Penn's letter 'To the Kings of the Indians', 1681.
- 49 Woolman, John, 1971, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, Phillips P. Moulton, ed. Oxford University Press, New York, pp.122-123.
- 50 Woolman, *ibid.*
- 51 James Backhouse , 2003, *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, p. 248.
- 52 Keil, Amanda, 2001, *The Peaceful People and the First Nations: A Brief History of Friends and Native Americans*, American Friends Service Committee, New York.
- 53 Amanda Kiel 2001, *The Peaceful People and the First Nations: A Brief History of Friends and Native Americans*, American Friends Service Committee, New York.
- 54 Clements, Kevin, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 55 Pittock, A. Barrie, 2003, cited in *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, p. 252.

- 56 Bopp, J., Bopp M., Brown L., Lane, P. Jr. 1985, 3rd edn, *The Sacred Tree*, Lotus Light Publications, Twin Lakes, Wisconsin.
- 57 Carmody, Kevin, 2005, presentation at The Dreaming Festival, Qld.
- 58 Watson, Lilla, 2000, *interview*.
- 59 Huggins, Jackie, 2000, *interview*.
- 60 Haig, Ruth, 2003, cited in *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, p. 253.
- 61 Tripcony, Penny, 2000, *interview*.
- 62 Hendricks, Joan, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 63 Graham, D. 1994, 'No Questions Please, We're Australians', in *Being Whitefella*, ed. D. Graham, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, W A.
- 64 Huggins, Jackie, 2000, *interview*.
- 65 Huggins, Jackie, 2000, *interview*.
- 66 Watson, Flo, 2000, *interview*.
- 67 Williams, Michael, 2000, *interview*.
- 68 Watson, Flow, 2000, *interview*.
- 69 King, Patricia, 2005, *personal communication*.
- 70 Graham, Mary, 2000, *interview*.
- 71 Williams, Michael, 2000, *interview*.
- 72 Tripcony, Penny, 2000, *interview*.
- 73 Westoby, Peter, 2000, *interview*.
- 74 Williams, Michael, 2000, *interview*.
- 75 Graham, Mary, 2000, *interview*.

- 76 Huggins, Jackie, 2000, *interview*.
- 77 Watson, Lilla, 2000, *interview*.
- 78 Proverbs 29: 18, *King James Version of the Bible*.
- 79 Huggins, Jackie, 2000, *interview*.
- 80 Scott, Evelyn, 2000, 'A Personal Reconciliation Journey', in *Essays on Australian Reconciliation*, ed. M. Grattan, Bookman Press, Melbourne.
- 81 Graham, D. 1994, *ibid*.
- 82 Huggins, Jackie, *interview*
- 83 J.T. Garrett and Michael Garrett, 1996, *Medicine of the Cherokee*, Bear & Co., Santa Fe.
- 84 Donnelly, Jane Vaughn, 2003, cited in *This we can say: Australian Quaker Life, Faith and Thought*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Inc., Kenmore, Queensland, p.191.
- 85 Brindle, Susannah Kay, 2000, The James Backhouse Lecture, *To Learn a New Song: A Contribution to Real Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples*, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Armidale North, Vie., p. 55.
- 86 Secatero, Leon, 2005, *personal communication*. For those interested in reading more on these processes, Leon has written a book on the prophecies of this time and I understand that it will soon be published.
- 87 Harjo, Suzan Shown, 2004, 'How many dead Indians will satisfy feds and scientists?', *Indian Country Today*, August.
- 88 *CBS News*, 2004, 'Aboriginal Remains Returned', June 18.
- 89 Watson, Maureen, 2000, Ceremony for the Stolen Generations, Brisbane.