TRANSCRIPT

Sydney Ideas podcast

NRW 2020: In this together

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TEELA REID (GRAB)

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We don't have a treaty. We don't have our own, you know, Indigenous parliaments, like they do in Scandinavia. It is total lip service when it comes to the way in which our Parliament treat this.

However, I do think the flip side of that token is that, what we have witnessed in our journey is that the Australian people will show up when we lead them there.

They have stood with us when the journey of reconciliation started. Over 250,000 people walking across the bridge. They showed up in 1967 for the most historic referendum in our history.

And I think that as blackfellas, it is our duty to our ancestors that we continue to lead the nation, to the movement for a First Nations voice as a stepping stone.

LISA JACKSON PULVER

Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us on this beautiful day. First and foremost, allow me to acknowledge the beautiful country that we're on.

We're here at Sydney University in many, many places across this glorious land of Australia, a land that has always been loved and nurtured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since time began.

I pay respects on behalf of all of us, to the owners, to the cultural authorities, to the traditional owners, and to those who call this place home and has a responsibility to us all, as we do to them, of what this country is and what it means. Elders past, present and future.

Today at Sydney Ideas we're talking about ‘In this together’. We've got a bit of a programme here for you, which is going to be absolutely phenomenal and I'll hand over shortly to Ken, who will introduce, as our facilitator, the conversation, and be at the same time a participant.

I'll now pass over to Jakelin Troy to briefly introduce herself and then Jakelin will pass on to Teela Reid and Teela will of course pass on to Ken.

My name is Lisa Jackson Pulver. I identify as a Wiradjuri Koori woman with connections into South Australia, far north coast of New South Wales and way overseas to Scotland and Wales. I'm delighted to be here.

JAKELIN TROY

Warimi, I'm Jaky Troy, I'm the Director for Indigenous Research at the University of Sydney. But most of all I'm Ngarigo of the snowy mountains of south eastern Australia.

I have the privilege of working with Lisa. I call Teela and Ken my friends and my country people.

I'm on Ngunawal country. So I'm coming to you from Canberra, the capital of Australia, and in many ways, a kind of heartland for Aboriginal people around this area. It's been a buzzy hub for, you know, maybe 65,000 years so it's got a bit of depth, this place. Thank you.

TEELA REID

Yaama, I'm Teela Reid. I acknowledge that we are all Zooming from un-ceded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands today.

I am coming to you from the beautiful lands and waters of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, I live and work both on Gadigal and Bidjigal country.

I am a young Koori girl from the western plains of New South Wales and I was born and raised on my country. Wiradjuri country, Wailwan country. Over to you Ken.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Thanks Teela. Good morning and Yaama everybody, my name is Ken Zulumovski, or Kira-dhan is my Aboriginal name.

I'm a descendant of the Kubbi Kubbi of southeast Queensland through my grandmother, my mother and my grandmother. Aunty Sandra Johnson and Aunty Hazel Johnson.

I'm coming to you today from the land of the Gadigal. I was born and raised in a wonderful country.

And I'm also founder of Gamarada Universal Indigenous Resources. And I was lucky enough to be awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Sydney for the work that we do in the community healing and cultural leadership space.

A bit of background on the topic. So what's the conversation for?

Well, 2020 marks [the] 250th anniversary of Cook's landing in Australia and celebrates 20 years of celebrating National Reconciliation Week including the movements accompanying solidarity walks.

Some of you might remember the bridge walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge 20 years ago, where 550,000 people I think, marched across the bridge as a reflection of solidarity and compassionate gesture towards the First Nations Australians.

2020 is also the year that the University of Sydney unveils the new Indigenous Strategy, and that's appropriately titled 'Unfinished Business'. And it's reflecting on past achievements and considering future implementations engaging with local indigenous communities, recognising cultural identity and encouraging participation and collaboration where possible.

And a big strong theme under the strategy is, how we can truly create new relationships between Australia and its First Nations people, where indigenous cultures and people can thrive.

So where are we now? It's National Reconciliation Week. It's Australia. It's 2020.

And yet, if you were to ask a colleague and neighbour, a sibling, a friend – what national reconciliation week stands for, chances are they might not even know what you're talking about.

So I'm going to hand over to Jaky and she's going to give a bit of a research perspective.

JAKELIN TROY

I think one of the key challenges, is to help our people get better educated. Overall, we are still the people in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the people who have the lower levels of education.

Going to university is still not something that's just commonplace in a family. It's getting there, and our universities are working really hard to give us the opportunity to participate, to reconcile, if you like, with the education system in Australia, which actually stole our traditional means of education from us, let's be honest about it.

Aboriginal people have been forced into reserves and missions, driven off their land, we're largely refugees in their own countries.

In my own case, if I want to go down to the snowy mountains, I can but with a permit – right now we're locked out of it completely.

So the idea of being able to learn on country and do the things on country that we've always been able to do, is now a dream for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It's a dream that we are renewing all the time. We go back to country, we do things on country. But it's these big institutions like Sydney University, that are now trying to lead the way with bringing us into the research world; to make sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people get senior research qualifications. The kinds of qualifications that all of us in this group have actually got; your Honorary Doctorate, Ken, was earnt because you are of doctoral status.

So this is the kind of thing; I get communications every day from community members who say, we want to be able to drive the research conversations ourselves – drive education.

What happened to Juukan Gorge in Western Australia happened because many community members are saying, "We don't drive the research conversations. We're not the ones advising Rio Tinto and other big companies about the archaeology of our place. Our voice is there, but it's not the key expert advice that they all take".

So this is where we're heading into the future; reconciliation is about us being the researchers as well. Us, taking over the universities in our own way.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Jaky to add to that I don't know if you noticed, of the 'Blackfulla Test – 11 reasons that Indigenous health research/grant publications should be rejected' and the authors are Associate Professor Chelsea Bond, Dr Lisa Whop and Mr Ali Drummond.

And I encourage anybody who's interested in conducting research with, or for an Indigenous research space, to check that one out.

And Teela, you practise as a criminal defence lawyer, and you're also involved in grassroots activism in relation to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. How do the two spheres intersect?

TEELA REID

In relation to, I just wanted to acknowledge those people that have Zoomed in and shown up for this conversation and that are bearing witness to this discussion.

I will answer your question, but in terms of I guess what this week means and you know, as Lisa said, 'In this together' is the theme.

I guess we have to all ask ourselves not just as panellists, but people who have shown up today – is that a statement? Or is that a question?

And in terms of my work, and I view my work and my role as a lawyer, through the lens of a black woman, through the lens of a sovereign black woman.

For me, I'm someone who was, I was raised around the campfire in Western New South Wales. The tools I have as a lawyer, I see as my responsibility to give back to my people.

And in terms of, I guess, seeing my role as a defence lawyer and my activism; as someone who is for voice, treaty and truth. I don't see them as you know, in isolation of themselves.

For example, as someone who goes to court everyday, who bears witness to people who are voiceless, most of my job, and I should say to be transparent, you know – as the world has slowed down around us outside, the tension inside prisons and the restriction of liberty on all

vulnerable people, not just First Nations people, it is an example of how power is used and abused.

And for me, my activism and my role as a black woman in using these tools is not only in that context; to be a voice for the voiceless in the courtroom, but it's also at a higher level to understand how these systems work and interplay.

So we live in a federation in Australia where we have the states and territories and then the Commonwealth, but they're not in isolation of each other.

I think with COVID, what we have seen is you know this miscommunication between the different levels of the politic and political parties that has caused confusion.

And in terms of my activism for the Uluru Statement, it's about ensuring that all the voices, whether it's on research or whether it's, you know, on issues that affect community, at the community level, are elevated to all of those levels.

And at the end of the day, the activism that I do around the Uluru Statement, it's just not the Uluru Statement, I do a lot of other work outside of it, but that's the tool I'm using at the moment; is about ensuring that First Nations peoples are showing up in order to create change that will result in power within their voices and accountability when we speak truth.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Thank you Teela. And Lisa, would you like to add to that before we go to the next topic which is unfinished business?

LISA JACKSON PULVER

Yeah, absolutely. The word reconciliation, in my mind and certainly in the world that I, I'm in, has always been a bit contentious because it means one thing, that there's an expectation of action that is often interpreted as another thing.

For example, often when you say the word “reconciliation”, you think that you've had two parties that have been together, they've been friends, or they've been partners, and they somehow come apart and the idea of reconciling them again, right.

When reconciliation became a thing back in the 90s, with the Australians for Reconciliation, the walks across the Harbour Bridge, and all of those activities that occurred, many people were left standing and saying, what are we reconciling exactly?

Are we reconciling what the history of people who came here and took what wasn't theirs and have not being willing or wanting or able, or in a space to have a conversation about exactly what does that mean?

What do we need to do to make sure true coin is represented to make sure that Aboriginal voices are there and to basically work through whether it's a treaty process, whether it's another type of process, but to actually have an opportunity of not being the only Commonwealth nation in the world that has taken sovereign lands and called it their own, without something occurring after that, in a way that makes sense.

So that that's one thing, and I think the word reconciliation has become something which means something a little bit different. And now it seems to be an opportunity for people to have conversations that we don't have every other day of the year.

But which is a bit weird, because as far as I'm concerned, the conversation that we need to be having, that we are having today should be happening every day of the week, no matter what, because we have to march down a path to get to a point of peace, of belonging, of decency.

Because at the moment when I think about what happened to my family and to my great grandparents and to ones before them, it's not reconcilable.

It can't be reconciled because of the damage; because of the loss of language and of culture and the stolen gens. I mean, we look today and we say, well, in 2000, we marched across the bridge, you know, everyone held hands, and everyone said “Sorry” twelve years ago and all of this stuff, but we've still got today, more Aboriginal people in prison.

And we’ve still got today, more Aboriginal kids in out of home care. And we’ve still got today some of the worst health statistics of any nation in the whole wide world. How can we reconcile that?

These are difficult things. And these are things that we should be discussing every day of the week and not just now. That's what I'd like to add. Thank you, Ken.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Thank you, Lisa. And this goes off the back of what you were saying, Lisa. It's hard to reconcile when we still have a psychology of terra nullius that exists within the social fabric of society.

The psychology of terra nullius – land belonging to no one which was the doctrine or lie that Australia was taken from. It's so ingrained in our psyche that we, we don't even realise it's there.

It's almost like it's endemic. It's like its systemic racism. And until we become aware of this psychology of terra nullius, by reimagining our relation to place in particular, where are you today? Look out the window. What are you looking at? I'm not looking at, I'm looking at Pyrmont, but what am I looking at really? You know, can I reimagine this place? From what, how it used to be, and can I reimagine the future? You know, that acknowledges First Nations Australians.

So it's like, getting past the psychology of Terra Nullius I think it's a huge thing.

The next segment – unfinished business. So, Lisa, we want to focus specifically on the women's reconciliation movement, would you speak to that?

LISA JACKSON PULVER

Yeah, sure. So a long time ago, there was a group [laughs], a long time ago – last millennia, last century, a long time ago, it's not that long ago is it, really.

In the 90s, there was a group called the Australians for Reconciliation. And there are a number of key people involved in that, you know, including people like Patrick Dodson and Shelley Reys, and it was a phenomenal programme of work that was really about winning the hearts and minds of Australians. And at the time, there were people publishing books – you know, Henry Reynolds and *Why Weren't We Told?*

And you know, we had Savannah Wilson and we had the Royal Commission into the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We had the Black Deaths in Custody report. And when there was a huge amount of work going on, there was an increasing body of knowledge. And there was utter disbelief by some in the community that said, “How on earth could all of this stuff have happened under our very noses?” – this extraordinary desire for many to know the truth, and there were many, many opportunities for people to learn the truth.

We had an organisation called ATSIC – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission – which was, you know, a voice a strong voice that was led by Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people was voted for by Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people, and they had a remit to do a lot of work around education, around law, around health, and other things.

That was all last century. So during that time, there became a group called the Women's Reconciliation Network. And it was started by a number of amazing women including Aunty Jean Carter, Elaine Telford and Carol Vale.

And these are people that some of you may or may not know. But nonetheless, as far as I’m concerned, they’re utter giants and I'm sorry, I probably missed out on a dozen names that I should include there.

But the first gathering, a women's spirit healing event occurred in 1996, International House at Sydney University where women from all over the shop, white women, black women, Asian women, old women, young women. You know, women came, and there were hundreds of people, organisers were worried that they’d only get a few people to come. Aunty Ali Golding, Aunty Ann from down the south coast.

There was a smoking ceremony, the Koori Centre was involved in the day. And there was this most extraordinary opportunity for women to share their stories no matter who they were.

And we had stories of First Nations women from overseas, women who found themselves in refugee camps, and it all came together because everyone was desirous of this thing called healing.

They wanted to learn how to walk together hand-in-hand; in love and respect; to be healed, and to be able to march into the future, holding your head high and able to embrace the history of this place without the fights. And then of course, we all heard about the history wars that occurred and those terribly dark times.

And then, of course, we had our 2000 Bridge Walk. And so that's a very quick potted history of some part of reconciliation from my involvement and from my memory. But at the end of the day, the questions we were asking them, and the desires that we were having at that time, 20-30 years later, are still the same, except the metrics are worse, right.

So as far as we've come, we haven't really come anywhere. You know, we still don't have a treaty. You know, we still don't have a lot.

And these are things that we, in our generation, should be brave enough and courageous enough, and I believe we are, right – courageous enough, to do what it takes so that we don't end up losing the most extraordinary history, as we saw just recently, with those extraordinary rock shelters that have been known and loved in a place of learning for such a long time.

I would love to see an outpouring of grief for that, as we saw from Notre Dame, yeah. But you know, there's a lot to this and certainly won't be able to do that in this short thing. But at the end of the day, it's about the people. It's about the hearts and minds and it's about people making a decision that they do have agency.

They can make the change in their hearts, in their lives, in their families; and support people like Teela on the journey that she's on and others are on, to make the world the place we need it to be for the future.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Yeah, Beautiful. Thank you. Lisa certainly answers the question, or gives us a snapshot of what we've done since the walk.

And a lot of what we've done has come from communities and grassroots; First Nations communities and organisations, most of it has been, it would be fair to say most of it's been Indigenous-led progress, and you know, that point segues into the nation maturing, the nation healing and, and Jaky has a very strong interest in the collective consciousness of the nation. And Jaky, would you like to add to that?

JAKELIN TROY

Well, I think that the theme of ‘Unfinished Business’ is really a good way to think about how we should develop our collective consciousness; I've been engaging a lot more in social media, kind of random social media like Facebook, which I often called fast book, but it's starting to have more meaning for me; and Twitter and other lines of communication, because I'm seeing people moving away from a sort of petty aggro around things, to developing some really deep conversations.

And I think that there's public exploration of, you know, what does it mean to have the east coast of Australia burn? And into that conversation, very strongly was brought the thinking that well, it didn't burn like this or did it burn like this when Aboriginal people were managing the country exclusively, before the invasion of 1788.

There's been a huge amount of support coming from the populace you know, the general populace; this collective consciousness.

I was a young anthropology student in the early 80s at Sydney University learning about Emile Durkheim and the conscience collective, the idea that together we can, you know, have an understanding of how we, as humans interact not only with each other, but the environment.

The environment worldwide is definitely degrading. We know this. Climate change is real. The current pandemic of COVID-19, who knows whether it was invented by you know, whether it's a virus that's come out of a laboratory or not. But one way or another way, humans are very responsible for what's going on worldwide that's actually threatening every aspect of our existence.

And Indigenous philosophy, Indigenous thinking, Indigenous knowledges, have been sort of shoved aside I think by a lot of people as something a bit fun to play with if you want to do something alternative. But it's starting to become a mainstream discussion and you know back to my point about fires; how did Aboriginal people manage using fires, because this country is obviously, Australia is very fire adapted there are a lot of places around the world that are fire adapted.

You know, wherever humans have been, we've used it as a farming technique as an animal husbandry technique. And as a way of developing the flora of the of the places we live in. There are many things in Australia that only seed if they get burnt. The Gadi; the beautiful Xanthorrhea grass tree that is now a symbol of Sydney University.

I'm delighted, it's actually it's like they like the Triffids. They're taking over Sydney University and it's very appropriate the Gadigal were the clan who were responsible for the Gadi and for its increase ceremony; you know, this is how we see the world we say the world is us absolutely connected to it. Every planet, every animal, even COVID.

I was musing on this the other day with some friends about whether, in fact, there is somebody who has COVID dreaming, whether COVID is somebody's totem now because things like diarrhoea, scabies, all these things that we think, "Ooh, that's a terrible, horrible thing" – all of them have some; somebody has responsibility for them.

Every aspect of the world, humans have a responsibility for; not only Australian Indigenous thinking, but world Indigenous thinking. If we all started to think like this, I think back to Greta Thunberg, I know Lisa was mentioning her yesterday, what an arsy little girl, you know, well, this is what we need to be listening to, is this connectivity.

We do need to think to ourselves, how dare we destroy the planet in the way we are. And let's look at ways of doing things differently. And if it comes from Indigenous thinking, as a mainstream thinking now; a way of bringing us all together, and dealing with the unfinished business of the destruction of our world, let's, let's finish the destruction and start on a new rebuilding.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Jaky, would you touch briefly on the pigeonholing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous?

JAKELIN TROY

Indigenous and non-Indigenous? The difference between?

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Yeah and that it's kind of, it's a falsity.

JAKELIN TROY

Oh, yeah, I, for me, I do think that honestly, to sort of constantly be making this binary distinction between people who are Indigenous and people who aren't, really does leave a whole chunk of the world out.

It's a bit like back in the day when 50% at least of the population who were female were excluded from discussions. So, as an Indigenous person myself, I want non-Indigenous people included in all our discussions.

There are certainly moments where we need to regroup ourselves as Indigenous people and think things through particularly because so much of what we have been, has been; we've been prevented from practising. We need to think through what our practices were, doesn't mean we don't have them anymore. it just means we've got to sort of think it through and sometimes we need the quiet space to do that.

But we really are all in this together, this is what I mean by the collective consciousness. If Indigenous and non-Indigenous people don't work directly together, there is no future for this world.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Wonderful Jaky. And now, on the topic of truth-telling and sitting with discomfort. Teela, your work on the Uluru Statement of the Heart, it's all about unifying.

You're known for being in activism. You're known for telling it how it is. And you have an expectation that people have the capacity to deal with discomfort and have a conversation about the truth. How does this movement fit into our conversation about rebuilding Australia?

TEELA REID

Yeah, an important question. I guess with the Uluru Statement. It is a statement of truth. It is a statement of the fact that an assertion Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have never ceded their sovereignty and never will say cede their sovereignty.

So as a starting point, I guess having conversations. It's not just a statement, though. It's a roadmap. Like, it's a roadmap to reimagining and building a nation that is built on the power and the voices of First Nations peoples.

And, you know, it's been so nice to sit back and watch other people's take on, you know, the conversations around it because there's such a common thread here.

The common thread is that we know that our allies and we know that other Australians, especially those that have shown up, are engaged in the conversation. They're willing to have the conversation.

One of the things that really frustrates me is I'm just tired of the lip service when it comes to a week like Reconciliation Week.

We know that our ancestors and the legacy that the people before us, and those particularly on the panel, the strong women here with me today, have worked hard, you know, have dedicated their lives to change and activism.

And we have continued to have these conversations. But I guess I'm at a point in the journey of elevating the voices of First Nations and ensuring that there is accountability and that our narrative becomes part of this country, is how do we translate those conversations to practical action?

You know, one of the things with reconciliation, the term, it is supposed to meet the objectives of truth and justice. In Australia, it hasn't been implemented, like you've seen around the world.

We don't have a treaty. We don't have our own, you know, Indigenous parliaments like they do in Scandinavia. It is total lip service when it comes to the way in which our Parliament treat this.

However, I do think the flip side of that token is that, what we have witnessed in our journey is that the Australian people will show up when we lead them there.

They have stood with us when the journey of reconciliation started. Over 250,000 people walking across the bridge. They showed up in 1967 for the most historic referendum in our history.

And I think that as blackfellas, it is our duty to our ancestors, that we continue to lead the nation, to the movement for a First Nations voice as a stepping stone. Now a stepping stone to getting us to a referendum and to fighting for it.

Lots of people say to me, “Well, Sis, you know, that's gonna be hard.” I'm like, yeah, our mob did not shy away from difficult conversations. They did not shy away from you know, the struggle, and nor should we.

One of the things that concerns me is, you know, the complacency around how challenging it could be. But I say, you know, what if we win? What a beautiful moment if this country, *when* this country, stands together and goes at the centre of our very fabric, at this new nation that we rebuild, that the ancient voices of the ancestors of this country are going to shine through.

And they're not just going to shine through as a tokenistic way, they're going to shine through in terms of that voice, will be guaranteed. And it will be the start of a peacemaking journey in terms of continuing the dialogue and continuing the conversations.

And I just guess I'll end my part in terms of when we speak about the truth. When we engage in these conversations about the truth, we all need to give ourselves permission to feel the discomfort.

One of the things is people think we have to engage, and we have to feel really good. You know, actually, we should feel really bad about our history. We should not be proud of that.

But at the same time, healing hurts. The journey of healing and the journey of truth-telling and that process really hurts. And I, you know, we can't sugarcoat our history.

And while we have those conversations, we must always have in the back of our mind, that as people of the country, rebuilding the country, we're going up against the power of Parliament, but that onus, the onus of doing that is upon us individually, and collectively.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Thank you, and I draw some comfort in that I hope others do, that the conversation around, the very sort of socially responsible conversation around, the safety of Australia – Australia's First Nations people, and the safety of Australians in general, is actually being led by First Nations

Australians who know very much about recovery from trauma, you know, intergenerational grief, loss and trauma and devastation.

So the people in the country in my view, that are qualified to stitch this nation back together and lead it forward in a social emotional, wellbeing in a very holistic, healthy, spiritual way, inclusive way – is First Nations Australians. That gives me a lot of strength and faith going forward because when we look around the world, at nations that are not inclusive and are divisive and when we see the kind of carnage and the kind of crises that happening around the world.

In particular right now as we speak, there's a city in America, where the murder of the black person has recently taken place – that city is now on fire. They're rioting, they're looting, the police are in their police stations, they're too afraid, they've barricaded themselves up [in] the police stations.

So this kind of social unrest, civil unrest, happens in environments where these conversations are not had. And people are not proactive in unifying people around you know, virtuous and meaningful principles, you know, the four pillars of stoicism – courage, justice, wisdom and temperance. You know, like our cultural protocols, guide us our cultural protocols of respect and reciprocation follow us.

So, I hope that listeners draw some comfort from that because particularly at the time right now during COVID-19 where people are vulnerable, people's sense of direction maybe have been disrupted; people's lives have been disrupted. People's health has been threatened, and their livelihoods have been threatened. And we're looking for answers and we're looking for leadership. And I think we are providing it here in a very inclusive, an inclusive way.

So I don't want participants to feel threatened by that because often, the mere sight of an Aboriginal flag can be very threatening; mere sight of a strong black woman can be threatening, or a black man can be threatening, right? We don't want that.

What we want is collective movement for the greater good. It's not about taking your land or claiming your farm or, you know, owning the country and then suppressing – it's not in our culture to do that. Right?

We've proven time and time again, that we're very peaceful, non-violent people. We've never really taken up arms and formed radical groups. We've never challenged the system in that sense. So, you know, I think that element of First Nations, which is contrasted when you see a

lot of things in the media about the violence and alcoholism; kind of either unstable kind of stereotype of Indigenous Australia, it's not really the case.

The next point that we're going to talk about is the idea of record reckoning, not reconciliation. Teela would you like to just explain to what is the difference between reckoning and reconciliation? And why do you think Australian people are ready for reckoning?

TEELA REID

Sure, I think if you know, people have been listening to each of the blackfella speakers, they've all really spoken to what I feel and when I kind of concede this term of reckoning. That, there is something that is so foundational about this country that we all feel really uneasy about.

And in terms of my conception of that idea, in my essay, reckoning; it's about power, for First Nations, real power. It's about accountability, whether there is enforceable accountability on our issues.

So an example, you know, we have seen that we've had a Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody, and there were hundreds of recommendations made.

But where is the accountability when you know, those need to be implemented? That's the second element that I speak to.

And the third element in terms of reckoning, is that First Nations peoples must have self-determination over their lives and their communities.

And when I think about the term in contrast to reconciliation; reconciliation is, I'm not saying it's wrong. I'm saying that you have to have a reckoning before you can have reconciliation.

And right now, we haven't even begun to form that foundational relationship and equal relationship between blackfellas and whitefellas, or however you like to term it.

And in order to engage in a process of reconciliation and truth and justice, we have to start that process on a foundation of equity. And what we are not seeing is that, you know, the conversation happening in a fair and truthful and just way.

And when I think about these terms, I must admit that I do think about it from a lens; through the political lens. People might take a different lens on it. But I see it in terms of, what is our government doing when they say they mean reconciliation, are they saying sorry, on one day, but then they're going and locking people up at the highest rates in the next day?

So, you know, to me, the way in which it's unfolded is I actually think, you know, which the government have, let it kind of implement in the community, has misled the Australian people, I think that the Australian people deserve better.

I think that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people deserve better when we say, are we ready to sit down and reconcile this relationship? Because what are we reconciling? And when I do speak to the term of reckoning; it means you can't have reconciliation without the reckoning first.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Thanks, Teela.

Jakelin. Do you have a quick, quick point on that, to make?

JAKELIN TROY

Yeah, absolutely great that reckoning is what we need to be doing because we need to understand what's happened to the world of Indigenous Australians.

And also, Australian as a whole, needs to understand what it's cast aside. But what's still and actually still sits there, there's nothing about Aboriginal communities that's actually gone, disappeared; even our languages, some languages that haven't been spoken for up to 100 years as an everyday community language have come back into strong use.

Lisa's language Wiradjuri is one of the standouts, you know, Gamilaroi; there's Kaurna down in the Adelaide plains area – all over Australia, people have just sort of picked up their languages again and begun speaking them.

So our knowledge sits there as well exactly like that. And as Teela's saying, you know, this is, you know, we're locking up people who, who've got this knowledge, we're still sort of despising Aboriginal Australia and Torres Strait Islander people as well, instead of valuing and holding dear, what we all want to actually offer the rest of Australia.

So yeah, let's stop locking up Aboriginal kids and older Aboriginal people. Aboriginal women are now being locked up at a startling rate for things like parking fines. You know, it's laughable.

So all this community capacity, all this knowledge, it's not just being devalued; it's being cast aside.

KEN ZULUMOVSKI

Highlighting of the work of Teela, Teela's work in, with the, you know, with the law, with civic advocacy and in the activism; trying to get some systemic change because of what you just highlighted then.

We incarcerate our indigenous people at the highest rates in the entire world, more than America. We are the highest incarceration rates in the world. And you know we need to, we can change that very much can change that.

And we wanted to give the participants a bit of a values exercise that leads to action.

In my work through the Gamarada community healing cultural leadership programs, through our staff training and program development initiatives, we often do an exercise that's linked to values and its begins with a simple question about, "What do you value and what are you prepared to do about it?"

And from identifying things that you value that may have come from this conversation, might be able to think about options that lead to action. So it's deeper than just thinking; it's thinking that leads to action.

So maybe grab a pad and a pen, write down what you value, write down what you're prepared to do about it.

And then you can join, you can contact any of us. Join Teela, Jaky or Lisa, join the Gamerda community hearing program any Monday night from 6 to 8pm online, Zoom, you can find us on Facebook or LinkedIn. Or hit me up through our website and make us your accountability buddy, which is what we do in the circle.

Identify a goal and you make someone else your accountability buddy. And then if you didn't achieve the goal, we explore together what got in the way. And then we identify what kind of barriers that we're actually dealing with.

It's simple exercise we can all do. It leads to action and it supports us in what we are trying to do and supports the nation and makes the nation more richer.

LISA JACKSON PULVER

Whatever you do, don't remain silent. You've got agency you've got power. Use it. Use it wisely. Remember the future is in your hands, in the hands of your children, and those that you love and care about.

This is Sydney Ideas. Whatever you're doing, please stay engaged. Keep the conversation going.

ANNA BURNS (PODCAST HOST)

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Finally, we want to acknowledge this podcast was made in Sydney, which sits on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. It is upon their ancestral lands that the University of Sydney is built.