

KA WHAI WHAI TONU MATAU: MOBILISING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

MEREANA PITTMAN

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>>RINGA HĀPAI: Mōrena koutou, we're just waiting for a few more people to join us and then we'll get started. So grab yourself a glass of water, we've got some time for that. We'll just give it another little moment and then we'll get started, just waiting for everyone to join.

Mōrena koutou, nau mai haere mai, welcome to our session this morning, "Ka whai whai tonu mātua mobilising for racial justice." Ko wai au? (Te reo Māori). My name's India, I'm from Kahungunu. It's a beautiful day here today in Kahungunu of course as usual, one of the little patches of paradise that I feel really lucky to call home.

What we'll do is just cover a little bit of tikanga for our session just in case folks haven't seen that already. So this is our safety net for the next few days if you haven't seen it already, but just holding that we are curious and open and respectful, that we have respectful kōrero, that we make generous assumptions and that we hold kindness and compassion around those assumptions and that there is a degree of confidentiality, that this is a safe and sacred space, so we'll treat the kōrero that is given with that respect and that sacredness as well. And that we speak for our own experience, because there will be so many of us sharing big, big kōrero and it's important that we speak from authenticity as well, and that we hold things lightly and space for people to find their words as we go through. I'll definitely be asking for that, I can't find the flash words all the time, so I ask for your patience with that, and that we bring joy and fun into this space as well.

But thank you all so much for joining, I feel so lucky to be helping hold this space this morning and sharing a bit of kōrero with Mereana. Yeah, it's such an honour and a privilege to get to welcome Mereana into this space, so I'll hand over to you Mereana for your kōrero and your mihi.

>>MS PITTMAN: Kia ora tātou katoa. Tēnei te mihi atu ki a tātou katoa, te rōpū ka whai whai tonu matau. Ki a koe Naida mō tō kōrero i tēnei ata, ōku whanaunga, ōku hoa, e ngā iwi o te motu nei tēnā koutou katoa, to our overseas participants, greetings to you all from the centre of the universe, Ngāti Kahungunu. Ko wai au? (Te reo Māori). My name's Mereana Pittman, I live on the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa and I'm amazed that everyone gave up their Saturday to come and listen to this.

But I want to begin by saying that I'm by no means an expert in racism, but in my life -- I just want to do this in three parts. So I kind of want to talk a little bit about when I

was younger and being raised in Wairoa. Wairoa was a very racist little town. I can hear my relations going nuts now. But it was -- clearly if you go to Wairoa there's a river that runs right down the centre of the town with a bridge. When I was growing up 95% of white people lived on one side of the river, on the south side of the river, and 95% of Māori people lived on the other side of the river. So in my mind there was always this kind of separation anyway. And all the shops, all the commerce, all the schools, almost all the schools were all on the other side of the river. The town was run from the other side of the river and we were kind of like the poor relations on this side, the north side.

I was raised during the 50s, 60s in Wairoa, so it was a time of great change. One of the things that I remember being struck by quite early is that we had a very Māori upbringing. We worked most weekends at one of five or six marae that I whakapapa to, and my upbringing was all about work and about serving our people.

So we would spend the weekends with hundreds, sometimes hundreds of our people, with our family at the pā. We would be cooking, laughing, playing bullrush, welcoming people, farewelling people and mostly cooking and working though. And so it was our kind of -- it was our school, our kura in terms of being Māori. And then on Monday we went back to our other lives and we had run spot run, jump spot jump, Janet and John books.

But one of the things I remember very early in my life when I was about 7 or 8 is realising that what happened on the weekends in my family was never a real part of what was happening at this thing called school. So there was this kind of split all the time of there was the real Māori world, my world, our world, our whānau world, and then there was this other world that you had to go to to learn from these people. And I kind of coined it a kind of cultural schizophrenia really, operating in two worlds all the time.

I was brought up around -- Māori values featured greatly in my upbringing. My mother was fiercely protective of her Māoritanga and through my mother's whakapapa I came from a very political-orientated, activism-orientated 100 year history. My great grandfather was a follower of Te Kooti and lived with Te Kooti at Te Kuiti when he was -- when he sought protection under the Kingitanga and lived under the mantle of Maniapoto Rewi Maniapoto and the protection of Maniapoto. So my great grandfather, along with a number of other chiefs from the Wairoa area, moved to live with Te Kooti, and that was a narrative inside our family all the time that I was growing up. So I was also brought up to understand and know whakapapa and the history of our people, especially my mother's family.

My grandfather too was a member of the Kotahitanga parliament, so in the 1890s joined the setting up of the separate Māori parliament. So I always felt in my life that there was this kind of historical engine room behind me, political engine room behind me and that through various stages of my life as I grew to, you know, grew into activism, that those things were an important part of my life and gave me something to hang my hat on.

The other thing that happened during the 50s and 60s when I was growing up, I think it was like conscientisation by osmosis, is that I grew up in the times of the Bay of Pigs, the Vietnam war, the Czechoslovakian student riots, Yugoslavian European student riots, the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement and the women's movement were all vocal and during the time of the 60s and 70s.

And so I remember sitting with my mother and my father watching our black and white television, watching things like the Nuremberg trials, watching people like Martin Luther King be assassinated and the Kennedys and all those people, watching the Draft Dodgers in the United States and Muhammed Ali and all of that. Listening to Germaine Greer and Charlotte Bunch and watching Stonewall in terms of the gay rights. So I think by this kind of process of television osmosis, that was my first level of conscientisation after my own history.

So I think it was just kind of natural that I would become who I was. I don't remember my life experience in racism full on in my face in an overt manner, but I remember one of the things I hated, and it's a reason why I can't really get into kapa haka these days, is that when I was a child the only time that things Māori and Māoritanga was reflected in my community was when an important Government Minister or Prime Minister was being welcomed to Wairoa and we were dragged out, Māori in our piupiu, in our bodices to greet and welcome them. And even though that was a part of being Māori to welcome your visitors, I also -- it felt like it kind of -- I remember the laughing at the haka and putting all the really nice, pretty, young Māori women in the front row and all the big tall ones like me in the back row. But, you know, there was this kind of entertainment kind of value.

And that's what I remember from kapa haka. So I don't enjoy kapa haka these days for that reason. I like going to watch it and I love listening to the lyrics and finding out how that song might have been composed, that waiata might have been composed and the reason why, but I don't enjoy the entertainment value that is attached to it.

Yeah, so I have a whakapapa of resistance, and I also had the political conscientisation of the 60s and 50s. What moved me to become an activist was I was -- my

children I think were about -- just before they went to school in the 1970s. By the way, my children are 49 today, so happy birthday to both of them, can't believe I've got 49-year-old children.

I remember just before they went to kura, I turned on the television to watch the news one night and I saw columns of policemen walking up the Mission Bay road and I remember being really physically sort of struck by that and kind of blown back into my seat. And I sat there and watched them as they progressed to go up the hill and on to Takaparawhau, and then over the ensuing days watched them pull a marae down and arrest koroua and kuia.

So in my world, in my Māori world, that was just abhorrent to do that, to go on to somebody's marae, to dismantle it, to arrest koroua and kuia, and jail them and take them away in buses when they -- to not listen to the people, to not listen to what was happening, all of those things were like -- it just kind of catapulted me off my couch and to Auckland.

When I arrived in Auckland, the engineering students were having a -- He Taua was having a little dispute with the engineering students, so I kind of walked straight into that, and became involved in Māori land rights movements, gay rights movements, women's movement. So it was a great time of conscientisation for me. And got to participate in protests like the Springbok tour.

And so over those years the whole issue of racism -- later on in my life I became a decolonisation Treaty educator, and in researching about that ended up back at the doctrines of Christian discovery, which I think is the template that was set in the 15th century for the colonisation of the indigenous world. And the Dum Diversas papal bull that was put out in the 15th century, around 1492, said essentially -- which was an agreement between the Portuguese monarchy, private enterprise, the traders or the "explorers", inverted commas, and the Church put out a papal bull providing the moral reasoning behind colonisation, that they were given the right in their exploration of the, inverted commas, "new world" to go into those countries, to hold those people in perpetual slavery, to covet their lands, to take their resources and to kill, basically, those who were not Christian, were not white.

And for me, the beginnings of racism come around that time of the papal bull. And over the next 600 years, if you track the history of the, you know, of indigenous peoples, especially in Australia, Aotearoa, the United States of America and Canada, you clearly see the impact of how racism is institutionalised in the process of colonisation and becomes a part of how you colonise people.

So the next thing is that Cook does when he arrives here, the next thing he does is that he goes on his travels to Tūranganui-a-Kiwa. And I kind of dispute this whole thing around Cook discovered us. We were not discovered, we weren't lost actually. We have been here for over 1,000 years and brought to this country by a Māori woman on her own waka, Kura-marō-tini, and her waka from her father was gifted. Kupe kind of happened along with her, but she came, she saw and she brought the people to the land.

So -- forgotten where I was. Have I forgotten where I was? Yeah, so colonisation, inherent in colonisation is the whole thing around racism. So they come here, Cook comes here, the first thing he does is he goes into Tūranganui-a-Kiwa, promptly shoots three or four people, some major whakapapa on the East Coast, kidnaps some young children, releases them here at Cape Kidnappers in Ngāti Kahungunu. So without any discussion, this is, you know, from a people who are used to talking to each other, having discussions, having three, four day, five day wānanga to resolve issues between themselves, until this white man sails in and begins to fire upon our people at Tūranganui-a-Kiwa. From then on it just gets worse and worse.

But what I have to say is that even though the process of colonisation we move through war, legislative racism, etc, etc, all the way through right through to today and to assimilation, Māori resisted all the way. All the way through that, Māori resisted. It isn't true -- I often hear as a Treaty educator, you know, but what did our people do, they did nothing. Our people actually fought, took up arms, they were incarcerated and during that whole time, you know, we resisted right through. We still resist, even though resistance has become a very personal thing now, a personal decision. I'll just say a little bit about that right at the end.

So we resisted right through and there are huge examples, there are examples all over Aotearoa of our people resisting. We attempt -- our people set up separate organisations, the Kingitanga, whose kaupapa originally was to stop the sale of land, to cease the sale of land; the Hauhau movement, which was set up in 1865 by Te Ua Haumene at Taranaki, again to stop the taking and the theft of land; the legislation, Te Whiti and Tohu Kakahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai and the setting up of Parihaka, again to stop the taking of land; the ploughmen that came out of Parihaka, the fences that came out of Parihaka; and the huge amount of legislation that was racist that came out of Parihaka as well, the Maori Prisoners Act, the New Zealand Settlement Act which introduced raupatu, confiscation to our people and confiscated millions of acres of land from those who fought against the Crown, against the government.

So that resistance continued, movements continued to be set up, and a number of prophets came to the fore. The really interesting thing about those prophets is they married matauranga Māori, the Māori values and belief systems, with theology and the teachings of Christianity and became very powerful at a time where we had been -- we had had land stolen, we had been separated from each other, we no longer had access to our resources.

But, you know, when you look at colonisation, that is what it is designed to do and racism helps that. It's designed to separate us from each other, colonisation separates us from the land, from the resources, from our own whanaunga and from our Atua. And so it's any wonder that today we have the negative statistics that we do have around violence and around abuse.

I find that sort of institutional racism that colonisation brings to be very, you know, be quite sick and quite violent, you know, racism to me is an act of violence. In our laws here around domestic violence we have verbal and psychological abuse attached to family violence. We should have racism in there as well because racism is in itself violent and has a terrible effect on our people, and a cumulative effect over 150 years.

So there was a resistance right through to 1900s and beyond that as well. But from about 1900s onwards we have coming to the fore a number of prominent Māori, very well-educated in terms of matauranga Māori but also in terms of Pākehā education. Maui Pomare, Te Rangi Hiroa and Apirana Ngata, they come to the fore and begin 70 years of assimilation and trying to prove ourselves as citizens of this country.

One of the biggest things about assimilation for me that was really racist is that when I was going to kura right through all my years at kura, through academic studies, except when I went to Te Wānanga o Raukawa is it that the benchmark of success was Pākehā. It was a white benchmark, that you were successful if you reached this level. If you got this amount of points on your school certificate. You were a success if you majored a number of Pākehā benchmarks.

And that was one of the things that had a huge effect on our people, because it's like being set up to fail. That those who didn't make those benchmarks were, under assimilation, regarded as failures and put over there; and I think became the pipeline who didn't behave properly, who didn't respond properly to Pākehā, the Pākehā world were -- the Royal Commission on abuse at the moment has a litany of narratives around that, what happened to those who, inverted commas, "failed" to reach the benchmark at primary school, failed to reach the benchmark at secondary school and in later years. They became the pipeline through to residential homes, through to borstal, through to Kohitere and places

in Levin like that and through eventually to prison. And so the intergenerational impact of institutional racism that came with colonisation has been huge for us. Yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: I'll jump in with a question there, Mereana, if you'd like.

>>MS PITTMAN: Great.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: And also, of course, I invite the audience to write questions as well. As we know with the last session there were so many questions that we couldn't get around to all of them, so I'll just apologise in advance if we don't answer your question, but please shoot them through in the Q&A box. I think personally, and there's so many pātai that I have, but I think what comes to mind for me as a rangatahi Maori is, you know, you're speaking about your experiences of racism as a kid. And I remember when I first realised that there was a significant portion of people in Aotearoa who did not like me when the foreshore and seabed happened. As a child -- I was a child when that happened, I remember seeing the iwi versus Kiwi billboards and that's when I kind of realised that there was a bigger battle going on than what I just experienced as a kid.

But I was wondering if you have any advice or insights around our rangatahi who are coming up in this space who might want to be activists, or who are just trying to get by, you know, just trying to survive in this racist system. And maybe you haven't quite unpicked some of that internalised stuff, whether you have any advice for our rangatahi who are dealing with that kind of mamae?

>>MS PITTMAN: Probably my first advice is that being an activist is not a good career move, it takes a lot of time away from your children. One of my things to my twins this morning on Facebook was an apology to them for them having to endure years of living with a mother who is an activist and whose work often became first, and I've seen over the years my children suffer from that.

One of the things, one of the things that I learned the most during the 60s was that there was so much resistance and revolution in the 60s; why? Because people started to find their voices and started to speak out. They started to say "you can't do that, that's not right, that's not just, I don't like being treated like this."

And so for me that was a huge learning thing too, having come from a whakapapa, and certainly women in my whakapapa who were the boss, the bosses, and were very strong in where they were coming from and could organise things really, really well; to learning during the 60s that revolution came because people started to say things.

And I think in terms of my -- one of the things that racism does to us psychologically, emotionally, is that it makes us frightened. But it also -- if you can handle

facing the fear, you can find your voice. And you need to say, I've been watching -- I watch Facebook every now and then where the young people are treated really badly in shops and at garages, and next minute it's all over Facebook and I think good on you, good on you that you did that, you know, good on you that you spoke out, good on you that you called it out.

I think that's one of the things is that we have to find our voice. We have to find our voice. You have to find your voice, rangatahi, and you have to start to say hang on a minute, and never be afraid to ask questions. I don't remember any time in my life in the Maori world ever being afraid to ask my mother, her sisters and my nannies anything. We could talk to them about anything, you know, we could ask some quite risqué questions sometimes. We already knew, we already kind of knew how far we could go with our parents and our nannies, but we could always have the kōrero.

And so I know it doesn't sound like much, but have the kōrero, have the kōrero and learn to find your own voice and learn to say where you're coming from. Because you'll be surprised that once you do start to say, there are allies, there are people who think the same way as you. There are people around who have experienced, had the same experiences as you have, and they will come along and they will stand alongside you, and then together you have, you know, you have tools to -- it's better, you know, five or six of you not buying from that shop that was really racist, it's, you know, or standing and challenging people; it's so much better than just you standing by yourself. You are not alone in what you think and you need to stand up for yourself.

The other thing about racism is that it attempts to define you, redefine who you are. You know, the first lesson learned by any colonised people is to define yourself, you must define yourself. You know, you're not the Māoris, you're not the natives, you're not the savages, you're not the whatever it is that they call us at different times of our history. I'm Ngāti Kahungunu.

I'll just tell you a little story. I went to New York one time -- I've told this story a bit -- and I went to register at the United Nations, we were there for the CEDAW committee. And this Negro man said to me, "who are you girly?" And at the time I was just about 40. I thought to myself, having been schooled in feminism, I don't know who he thinks he is calling me girly, but I said to him "my name's Mereana Pittman, I'm from" -- "where you from girly?" I said "I'm from Aotearoa". And "what are you?" I said "I'm Māori and I belong to a tribe, iwi called Ngāti Kahungunu." He said to me "I know you, you're Australian." I went "no, no, no, I'm not Australian. I am from the South Pacific, but

I'm not Australian." And "I know you, you are a New Zealander." I said "no, I'm not a New Zealander, I'm Māori."

And so, you know, that fight to retain your own identity I think is really important, but the exploration of your own identity I think is part of what rangatahi need to do, is to go back into their own history, to find the resisters, to find those who stood on their land and said "well actually you can't come in here", to find out who you are gives you more power to your voice and your narrative when you're coming from a truthful place, yeah. And know, you know, it doesn't sound like much but it helps when we do that.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Yeah, I fully appreciate it, thank you so much. I think it's such an interesting thing around the cost of activism as well, because I know even my mum, who wasn't necessarily an activist but still works in Maori Health, but yeah, there was a lot of time spent away doing the mahi and the training.

I was kind of wondering, because you've seen the anti-racism movement shift and grow and change over several decades now. I wonder if, you know, from when you started to now, is there anything in particular that's stayed the same and anything in particular that's changed a lot in terms of how we resist and what works?

>>MS PITTMAN: I think that indigenous peoples around the world, all around the world, like the Black Lives Matter movement, all those movements that are anti-racism movements, we've moved 1,000 miles. But white people have not moved at all, white people still cling to their ignorance and their stereotypes, and fall back into that safe place of categorising everybody.

And that's a thing that doesn't change. But we have changed a lot, and I think partly because we have taken control of our own education increasingly, with Kōhanga Reo, we've made choices for ourselves, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Whare Wānanga. We now can go right through a holistic Māori system of education, where many, not me, have done lots to reclaim around te reo Māori, around matauranga Māori. So we've done a lot.

That's a big change from the 50s and 60s, from being stuck in an assimilative kind of wheel, or we're the happy little guitar playing, laughing, singing Māoris from Aotearoa and we all live in this kind of land of racial harmony. I think we've broken through that mould and we've started to discover our own identity and our own narratives, but white people haven't moved at all.

And that often to me is quite sad, you know. I refuse now to teach white people anything about what I'm talking to you about this morning because I believe that other white people who are conscientised, like the rōpū that is running this and tangata Tiriti, the

Asian against, you know, for tino rangatira movements, all those tauiwi you need to be in there conscientising your own people. The challenge needs to come from you, otherwise if it doesn't, then the narratives that come from people like Mr Brash and Muriel, our friend Muriel Newman, they're just going to reinforce the stereotypes that already exist amongst many white people.

I know there are many white people out there that are doing work in anti-racism and I applaud that, but it's not our job, it's not our job to go and conscientise white people about racism, it's your job, you go and do that work.

It's been really interesting the last two days to see all the feedback and listen to radio talkback, which I often do, around the new history curriculum for Aotearoa. Because in actual fact all our people are really positive about it and we could do this and we could do that, and this might be a way through and that might be a way through. But all the white people coming on Facebook are kind of like throwing their hands up in horror and saying "but, you know, how come we're portrayed as villains and they're portrayed as victims?" And the young woman from the Act party and whatever his name is, Mr Seymour from the Act party stirring the stereotypes, stirring the ignorance, you know, and not layering any growth or development on top of that.

Yes, we all know what we want, you all know what we want, you want us all to be kind to each other, and you want us all to be one. But we can't be one if you don't move. If we're doing all the movement and you're not moving, we can't be one people. Anyway, some of us don't want to be one, we're already one with each other, why would we want to encompass another way, you know? It's not our job to conscientise you, you need to go out and get yourself conscientised by your own people.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: There's so many questions coming through so I'm going to try and mix some together. But I think there's a really interesting -- some really interesting ones around -- so someone who's asked if you think there is a space for forgiveness in the space of trauma and/or racism imposed upon us as Māori.

And then the other kind of complexity to that is, you know, how do we navigate our relationships with Pākehā in our lives if they're not doing that moving, and if some of that mamae, as we dive deeper into our whakapapa, starts coming up interpersonally with Pākehā that we might be friends with, yeah.

>>MS PITTMAN: What was the first bit?

>>RINGA HĀPAI: If there's space for forgiveness in this.

>>MS PITTMAN: Oh, you know, in the whole time that I was being raised under Māori values and beliefs hohourongo and tatai pounamu are an integral part of that process. So manaakitanga, reciprocity, all of those things are part of the process of growing up Māori and of course there is. There is.

But in many ways in Maoridom too, forgiveness has its own pathway and its own way of coming. It's not something that you go and beg Jesus Christ for, or, you know, go down on your hands and knees and beg anybody for; it's a process of working through, of kōrero, of fronting up kanohi ki te kanohi so it has its own kawa and protocols attached to it.

But of course there is, you know, it's not all about -- it's not that I don't -- I don't dislike Pākehā people, they're there, they're a reality, they're in our world, I have to go down and buy my newspaper every morning from Pākehā people, actually Indian people. But I find increasingly in my life, just to be truthful, that Pākehā have very little to do in my life, that I don't socialise with Pākehā people very much, I don't talk to Pākehā people very much. Because mine is a Māori world, I work with Māori people. I buy my vegetables from Māori people, I often shop at Māori shops, you know, I don't -- my world is not encompassing, if they're -- I'm not sure that I have many Pākehā friends.

I have Pākehā allies, I have Pākehā people who are on to the same kaupapa and work towards the same thing that I do, and I'm really happy to go and tautoko the Heather Comes and the Tim Howards and the Moea Armstrongs and people like that of the Pākehā world to help with that work, but not to directly work with Pākehā, but to work and help with the people who teach Pākehā that stuff, yes.

So in my, yeah, in my life there's not much interaction with Pākehā people. They are there to serve my needs really.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: All right, there we go, that's the wisdom.

>>MS PITTMAN: Sorry if it sounds a bit harsh, but that's the way it is.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: And I think that really is honest about the complexities that arise, because the personal is political and the political is personal, so it's going to show up in our interpersonal relationships and how can we navigate that, and based on those values around conflict resolution and transformative justice and those kinds of things.

We've got -- I think it's a really relevant question here around kind of the need for solidarity from Māori to other communities who are also experiencing racism. A question here is -- it's a pātai from a migrant to Aotearoa, black African woman. She comes from a people -- they come from a people who have experienced British colonialism in Ghana and

racial oppression in America, but sometimes get lumped or addressed as if a coloniser. There seems to be a disconnect at times in aligning our collective struggles in anti-racism. So how can we bring Maori along. I think this is so relevant, because over the last couple of weeks we've seen major discussions on social media around anti-blackness in Māori communities, and just, yeah, how can we align those movements of solidarity, yeah.

>>MS PITTMAN: I've just spent the last almost 42 years now in my life educating our people. I have made -- about 25 years ago I made a deliberate choice to educate only our people because I would stop and educate others, you know, ten of our people would be walking past going "sis, why aren't you -- you should come and talk to us." So I think that we need to wananga together a lot more and to kōrero face-to-face with each other, and host each other and talk about those things with each other.

We do have the same ideas and notions around race etc, etc, but we have different methodologies, we've got different kawa, we have different protocols about working through those things. I remember a time, you know, during the 60s and 70s there were women in armed struggle like the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the IRA women. And I remember going to this hui once, and it was interesting where we ended up there was a social justice, land struggles, arm struggles and Māori in the middle trying to be the moderators, the mediators, and not trying to please everybody, but trying to find our way through a whole lot of issues like that. And I think the more we can kōrero to each other, but, you know, not go to our corners and stand there and kind of not talk to each other properly, we need to talk to each other properly, yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Kapai. Yeah, I definitely agree, and it's really hard in a pandemic when it's unsafe to hang out with each other, but hopefully we can do more of that in the near future.

I was wondering, because we talked a lot about racism and the struggle and it's hard; what is it that you're holding hope for? What is it that you're hoping for the world to come that we're working on making?

>>MS PITTMAN: What do I hope for in my little world? I hope that my granddaughters and grandsons grow up to have balls and can talk and can speak and can challenge and confront and can love. And I don't know what I hope for, just, yeah, I kind of feel -- I have always felt a sense of destiny about what I do in my life. It's not up to me really, it's up to those mokopuna, those grandchildren and great grandchildren about how they -- about us making them strong enough to be able to conduct themselves in honest and truthful ways, and to be able to take challenge and stand up, you know? Yeah, I don't know that I have anything past that, because it's not my world. I'm responsible for what we have in this world now

and there are, you know, a multitude of environmental, climate change things going on that we're responsible for that we're trying to kind of influence and turn around. I worry that my grandchildren and other grandchildren, mokopuna around the world, I worry about the legacy that we leave them and whether or not they're tough enough, strong enough to be able to survive the big, huge, fat mess that we're in. Yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Quite a mess, yeah. We've got a few questions here around, do you have any advice for people who are working in the Crown or in local government who are Māori and how they might keep themselves safe in that space and look after themselves while trying to do mahi in the kāwanatanga sphere?

>>MS PITTMAN: Yeah, I have to be really, really careful. I was watching last night on television the death of -- the eulogies being paid to Wira Gardiner and Wira Gardiner was the quintessential public servant. I watched Hone Harawira's eulogy to him, his mihi to him, and I thought what would I say? And I thought it's better not to say anything, because nothing that I would say would be good about his time, that he was, you know, he was a great man in many other ways, but I found him extraordinarily difficult that he was used.

And I think that when it comes to Crown agents or agents of the Crown, you have to be very aware of where the line is between yourself and whether or not you are Māori working for the Crown. You know, are you -- who are you working for? Those things are always going to come to you if you work for the government. If you work for the government you always have to be aware that you're going to make them look good all the time, you know? And they are going to use you all the time to be the māngai, to be the mouthpiece, to be the front person, to go out there and have the battles with us etc, etc. But we know, we know what you're doing, we know who you are. I'm not anti our people working for the Government, I just think that it's a reality, you know, and that we can influence some change.

I think a really important part if you work for the government is to conscientise yourself and to make sure you know what you're doing, make sure that you know how to do that and that you're not being used by other people.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: That's the reality of it, I think, I definitely agree. I want to go back to one of the threads in your kōrero around wāhine and the fact it was a wahine to come to Aotearoa and Kupe was along for the ride. Of course this is really timely with the mana wāhine inquiry with the tribunal and that kind of thing. Is there anything in particular that you would kind of want to share around the mana of wāhine in activism and in this change-making work?

>>MS PITTMAN: Can you ask me that again slowly?

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Yeah, I just -- it's okay, we're nearly done, so -- it's coming to the end of the hour, I just thought it might be nice to pick up on some of those wāhine threads that you were talking about in the kōrero that you gave earlier, and are there any particular thoughts or insights that you have around the mana of wāhine in activism and in anti-racism work.

>>MS PITTMAN: Well, you know, just about all the greatest mentors and activists that I had in my life through my period of time, my time as an activist, have been women. You know, the contemporaries, the greatest contemporaries, the ones that I respect are women. There have been the men and that's been really great, but the Eva Rickards, especially aunty Eva, and Titewhai, Sue Nikora, all those women were really important in our development as women, and the strength that we have taken from each other, because our individual experience as women in terms of coming through the domestic violence, living with partners, bicultural relationships etc, etc, all of those issues have brought us closer together in our protection and work with each other.

But I stumbled -- I've been doing a little bit of work with another rōpū of people around Kupe and the first law of the land. And then through Jean and something that I read that she had written I came across this whole thing that actually Kupe came with her on her waka with Kura-marō-tini on her waka, Matahorua, that was gifted to her by her people, by her parents, by her father. He came here with her and suddenly this narrative is that Kupe came and, you know, the boys were here and it was all about the boys. But in actual fact it was her.

And so the reclamation of those stories of great women in our whakapapa. In my whakapapa I have generations of strong, powerful women who organise their families, who gave birth to upwards of 26 children, you know, women in my whakapapa who had seven or eight relationships and had children to them all, and survived and raised those children and never turned their back on them, and didn't get sucked in by the morality of the others, still went and attended karakia and church and went and helped and all those sort of things.

So for me I wouldn't be here doing what I'm doing if it wasn't for the many strong women in my life and the contemporaries that I have now, who are there to support and tautoko. And we can sit down and we can laugh and we can cry, and we can listen to each other's struggles.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Kia ora, thank you. We just have one or two more questions, quick ones. We're almost done. But there's someone here asking if you can define the word

"conscientise" for people, because that might be a new word for some folks. So when you're talking about conscientisation, yeah, what does that mean?

>>MS PITTMAN: The process of conscientisation, it actually comes from Freire, is the process of making people aware, is making people aware of another, of the other story, the other narrative, the real narrative, the truth about things, the process of conscientisation, you know, like -- and building that awareness to a political understanding, yeah.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Awesome. And I thought just as my final pātai, because we probably should wind up here, is you talked about making kai as a kid and being at the marae and making kai for people. What is your favourite grounding kai after you've done some mahi?

>>MS PITTMAN: Sweetcorn on toast.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Sweetcorn on toast, I have not had that before. Worked for Kahungunu.

>>MS PITTMAN: Cream corn on toast, yeah, it's my grounding --

>>RINGA HĀPAI: There we go whānau.

>>MS PITTMAN: I've got lots of grounding kai, but kai generally for me is a great -- it's the great encompasser, you know. You can heal lots by saying to people "let's have -- shall we go and have a kai, let's sit down and have a kai", because with kai comes kōrero and with kōrero often there comes resolution, growing kai, whatever. So I was brought up really to, you know, kai featured really important, we had huge gardens when I was growing up, it was lots of work, I just remember lots of work; but there was lots of rewards out of kai, and we were probably a lot healthier then than we are now because none of the kai we had as a child was processed kai. We had to go and dig it, look for it, shoot it, smoke it, dive for it, we had to work for our kai in those days, and so those things we did together with each other and they were important things. Kia ora India.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Thank you. All right, whānau, we're going to stop the session there, thank you so much for coming. Everyone is commenting in the chat that the sweetcorn on toast is -- they really enjoy it too, so thank you.

>>MS PITTMAN: There you go.

>>RINGA HĀPAI: Yeah inspiring everyone, we're getting hungry for lunchtime because it's pretty much lunchtime, it's a good idea. But thank you so much for this kōrero, honestly such a blessing. And thank you for taking this time. I know Zoom is not the favourite, so thank you for joining and, yeah, honestly, I'll be thinking about this kōrero for a long time, pulling out the little gems. So yeah, we'll close on that, whānau, and catch you at the next session.

>>MS PITTMAN: Thank you for moderating the session, and I look forward to meeting up with you face-to-face.