

# 2023 Joan Cook Memorial State of the Pākehā Nation Essay

*Treaty education group Network Waitangi Whangārei has commissioned annual reflections on the State of the Pākehā Nation since 2006.*

*Founding member, the Rev. Joan Cook, died in 2009 and the essays since that time commemorate her pioneering Treaty and anti-racism work. As an Australian she was so intrigued by the cultural contradictions and disconnections of her adopted country, that she learned and then taught us our hidden history over several decades.*

*The speeches and essays are free to download from the NWW website <https://nwwhangarei.wordpress.com>, along with an introductory booklet, Treaty of Waitangi Questions & Answers.*

*The group also co-published, with Te Kawariki, an independent panel report on Stage I of the Ngāpuhi claim (WAI 1040), called Ngāpuhi Speaks, available as an e-book from [meBooks.co.nz](http://meBooks.co.nz) or hard copies from [reotahi2@gmail.com](mailto:reotahi2@gmail.com).*

We acknowledge and thank **Emily Beausoleil** for compiling this year's essay.

Emily is of English and French descent, and lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara where Te Ātiawa, Taranaki Whānui, and Ngāti Toa are mana whenua. She teaches politics at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington, is co-lead of Tauwi Tautoko, and member of Tauwi mō Matike Mai.

## State of Pākehā Nation 2023

The invitation to craft the annual address on the 'state of the Pākehā nation' felt important to extend to those Pākehā from whom I have learned so much as we have journeyed and worked together – as part of Tauīwi Tautoko, Tauīwi mō Matike Mai Aotearoa, or Te Reo o Ngā Tangata-The People Speak; artistic productions like Madeline MacNamara and Jade Eriksen's *Refusing Performance: The Attitudes* and Barbarian Productions' *Captain Cook Thinks Again*; or the change-making that can and should take place in academia. And so a bit of an experiment, this year: what might we see by collectivising our vantage on this ongoing work of Pākehā, to fulfil the promise and obligations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi?

Each of the 14 voices gathered here is responding to the question,

**At this time and from where you are working, what do you feel is the crucial work we must be doing as Pākehā to be part of Te Tiriti justice and decolonisation, and what feels most important to share here to support that work?**

*Emily Beausoleil*

1.

The state of the pākehā nation 2023, in 200-500 words each – the perfect assignment in which small is all and me is we, and where we consider the inevitable self-destruction of the anthropocene –

For me, the crucial work we must be doing as Pākehā to be a part of Te Tiriti justice and decolonisation is:

to wane

to retreat, to consider, to respect, to acknowledge:

that we are –

a part of something that is a part of something that is a part of something and NOT the something.

It is to create space

in our heads, hearts and worlds

for the wisdom inherent in this land and in its people;

to consider humanity aligned with all species present

and to address the systems and processes of power

that flood, that strangle, that drown.

It is to find our rightful place amongst all tangata tiriti,

seeking honourable kāwanatanga,

seeking balance,

and seeking to understand and embody the phenomenal relational potential

inherent in the offer of Te Tiriti.

It is to leave space:  
to implore our loud to quieten,  
our powerful to acquiesce,  
our driven to still;  
it is to listen hardest to the softest.

It is to seek subtlety.

It is to contain  
to gather, to gift, to share, to celebrate:  
to seek what is truly valuable;  
to find the connections and to wonder at the magic of them –  
in small and quiet ways.

It's time to wane;  
to live the shifting paradigm  
to speak (though quietly) the turning narrative  
to remind ourselves how much we all yearn to care and connect  
to nurture and nourish  
and how little we actually give a shit about

a l l

the

o t h e r

fucking

t h i n g s .

*Kelly Dorgan is of Irish, English, Jewish and Scottish descent and lives in Ōtautahi where Ngāi Tūāhuriri are mana whenua. She is on the organising group of Network Waitangi Ōtautahi and is part of the Taiwi Tautoko community.*

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2.

I was standing in circle with ten white women, our bare feet on the grass. The sun was in our eyes, our hands on our heart spaces and we were introducing ourselves, describing where we were from.

*I am from Christchurch, one plainly stated.*

*Another explains, I am from all over the place really, but I suppose I am from Auckland.*

*Home is Titahi Bay for me – even though we've only lived there five years, says another.*

It comes to my turn and I fumble around, yearning for more. Later on in the course, with this still brewing inside me, I stare at my lunch plate and quietly venture that maybe we don't come from here. It comes out far harsher than I would have liked, much less expansive than I had intended. I ache to talk about it but it is quickly shut down.

*Oh, I definitely feel like I come from New Zealand*, someone says in response and there is a mutual murmur of agreement and a shared nodding of heads. The conversation quickly veers towards ethical milk alternatives.

I feel soft towards all of those who say, *I am from here*, because I did the same for a long time. *I am from Taranaki*, I would proudly proclaim. A tidy story of me, that starts in the 1840s and has been a "New Zealander" ever since. It's a straightforward tale that completely ignores the stark fact that I am half a world away from all my ancestors' bones and rituals and stories. Quietly wallpapers over the cracks that led to them sailing out here for reasons unknown.

But as I grew in my understanding, I noticed that my "Pākehā-ness" was made up of many beautiful places far away – a piece of land from gentry in England, an ordinary hill in Wales, a clifftop near Dingle in Ireland, and a scrap of Norway that I will not be able to find. And if I lean in long enough here, with all these places running deep inside me, I know there was a time – back in the *somewhen*, where my people had an abiding love for the land under their feet.

But we didn't bring that love out here.

The stopbanks, floodplains and pine-forested hills of Hawkes Bay will tell you this.

So too, will Ihumātao.

So too will Pūtiki.

And Tangaroa and Hinemoana can tell you of the state of the water

Tāne Mahuta will tell you of the state of the ngāhere.

Hineahuone, the sad state of our soil.

And, and, and, and, and and.

We didn't bring our love out here.

Somehow in the rip and the sail and the start the f\*\*\* again, we cloaked our heartache with a cape of entitlement, swapped our need to re-member what it is to be human with a *kiwi can-do attitude*, and cast a thick, dripping coat of capitalist whitewash across this whole darn land.

That Pākehā sense of centrality, of supremacy – it not only emboldened my ancestors to colonise Aotearoa but continues to inform much of the Pākehā relationship to tangata whenua and this place.

For me, there can be no denying that the values that brought us out here, have well, brought us to this here. Take a good look around. This is not what love looks like.

And so, perhaps, to really engage with decolonisation and Te Tiriti justice, Pākehā need cultural humility. An expansive humility that can recognise not just where we are on this globe in space, but also where our values have landed us in time - at the brink of an existential collapse.

As Bayo Akomolafe so powerfully said – we have “an invitation to stop in our tracks and feel – failure is the gift that we are looking for right now.”

Our collective values as Pākehā have brought us to this moment, so let's be humble as we step into relationships, into decolonisation and Te Tiriti justice spaces. What are the values we want to grow going forward? And how can we bravely grow our love again and truly thrive in relationship with this land and its people?

*[Sarah Hopkinson](#) is Pākehā of English, Welsh and Norwegian descent, an education consultant and a Hua Parakore food farmer who grows [The Green Garden](#) on Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai whenua.*

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3.

I write this piece from the position of identifying myself as Pākehā with whakapapa links to Ngā Ruahine. My Pākehā tupuna came here, like so many Pākehā tupuna, from Scotland, in search of a better life. Alexander Gray arrived and settled in Kororareka in 1827. My father arrived in Auckland in 1930 aged 11, with his widowed mother and three older siblings, eventually settling in Hunterville. My Ngā Ruahine tupuna came centuries earlier, settling in South Taranaki. Some time in the early 1820s Kōtiro Hinerangi was taken by Ngāpuhi to Kororareka, where she eventually married Alexander Grey.

There must be thousands of us out there with a dual heritage, along a continuum from those who would still choose to call themselves “New Zealander” rather than “Pākehā” to those who identify as Pākehā while maintaining often strong connections to their hapū or iwi and to te ao Māori. Myself, I tiptoe, carefully but increasingly comfortably, around the edges of te ao Māori – drawn to the culture, but also aware of myself as culturally Pākehā. Like many, I have visited my marae only once. But when I was asked how I fitted in, and I explained my whakapapa, and was told “Ah, so you’re coming home”, I was overcome by the truth of it. I have spent some years working in a Māori environment, but live what might be described as a very Pākehā life in Grey Lynn, Auckland. Māori friends, colleagues and whanaunga have insisted that because my siblings and I have whakapapa, we are Māori. And yet ...

My dual heritage has formed me, but so also has Pākehā privilege. My knowledge of this privilege is part of what has politicised me and led me into Treaty education. For me, what the Pākehā nation *still* needs is information, understanding and knowledge about all of our pasts in this land, a willingness to listen and to share experiences (new and old) with each other. I see this as a stepping stone to enable the sharing of power that Te Tiriti promised. I learnt from my tuakana in the Treaty movement to open sessions with stories of our ancestors, of why, when and how they had come to this country. I used to chafe at the time this took when I could have been giving more information about Te Tiriti and about the devastation of colonisation. I have learnt now that this is time well spent. People open up to seeing themselves and their families, as well as others in the group and their families, in this place – over time and now in the present. It seems to me, observing and interacting with these people, that seeds of decolonisation find more fertile ground.

My tupuna matter to me. As I get older, they are increasingly with me and within me. They make me such a part of this place, Aotearoa New Zealand. They are part of the reason why I think te Tiriti is so very important.

*Sue Abel identifies as Pākehā with whakapapa links to Ngā Ruahine, and lives in Tāmaki Makaurau where Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, Ngāti Rehua Ngāti Wai ki Aotea, Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua, Te Uri o Hau, Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Te Kawerau ā Maki, Ngāti Tamaoho, Te Ākitai Waiohua, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua, Te Ahiwaru Waiohua, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Te Patukirikiri are mana whenua. Since retirement, she has been working in the area of Treaty education, and is part of the Tauwi Tautoko community.*

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4.

Land work

Is it crucial work, to attend to the whenua?

Land that is colonised carries the look  
of invasion in the simple tenacity of plants  
who arrive, who stay, who take over.

Let me begin with you, one Pākehā plant among many,  
with both Latin and common names as is custom:

Raphanus raphanistrum the jointed charlock,  
wild radish, cadlock, runch.

I say Pākehā because you came with—  
were strewed from a bag of homecoming seed;  
wedged in the rotten leather of a farmboy's boot  
when he ran off to sea on a whaler;  
lodged in the cloven hoof of a cow;  
fed to the chickens and thriving in excrement.

You came in all ways and early,  
coarse in your mustardy hairiness.

Your purple veins stencil a four petal crux—

etchings in faded indigo, natural as sacrifice.  
Who would see you, so pretty and naturalised,  
fat in the handshake of all your cousins,  
as a troublesome traveller arriving unasked for and lively  
in lands that have been disturbed?  
It would seem you do little harm—  
a bit overshadowing here, colonising waste land there.  
People so different from plants in the claims for belonging.  
For a plant to be naturalised is to have come from elsewhere  
and been able to form a population that is self maintained.  
But me and mine? We believe in forgetting not maintaining.  
From Hikura to Rakiura you've taken root,  
as have I and my kin, with our crucifix stencilled veins.  
And yet, who knows, now, who you are?  
Just a handful of care for your presence.  
Here, on the edge of this wetland, I see you.  
I've researched your whakapapa.  
I've made it my business to learn all the names  
of you and your associate incomers,  
though you come in your thousands.  
I note how you all choose to live  
within scent of the gorse and the honeysuckle.  
I make you my work.  
Kāhu glides more than beats her wings above the wetland heart  
where the cattle and diggers have failed to reach.

As the naturalised disturber of lands, let me notice this wetland.  
Let me pull charlock, cudweed, and catchfly,  
beggar's tick, bindweed, blackberry,  
sand spurrey, storksbill, sow thistle,  
dogstail, and monkey musk out by the oxtongue—  
and all the nightshades with them.  
Let my crucial work be this: to restore a whenua  
for harakeke, turutu, pikopiko, wheke, raurenga, pūkio,  
the fragile green of maikaika, and the striped sun orchid  
with her tiny cyan flower.  
Let my work make space and sanctuary for swamp walkers,  
pūweto, mātātā, makatu, kāmana:  
Let me listen to ancestors feathering and filling the wairepo,  
the glim stillness of these other fens.

*Robin Peace is of Anglo Scots Irish descent and is a poet and wetland conservator, living in Ōtaki where Ngāti Raukawa are mana whenua.*

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Since I was young I have been convinced that the powers-that-be are lying to us on a colossal scale. I've grown into an understanding that our political system should be illegal, and this pseudo-democracy has been co-opted, rigged by neo-liberal corporatism. I also believe as Pākehā we are descendants and inheritors of this reality and it is our responsibility to confront and redress it.

These days I am working as a coordinator for a project which our leaders at Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira affectionately refer to as 'democracy 2.0'; Te Tiriti-based deliberative democracy on a local scale.

I often think back to a conversation I had with someone close to me. I was explaining this work and they thought it was fantastic – until I got to the part where I described how we are giving effect to Te Tiriti through an exclusively mana whenua space within this deliberative system. This person suddenly shut down and expressed that everyone must be included equally - no special spaces, otherwise it is just more favouritism and discrimination. As can often be the case in conversation with loved ones, I didn't know how to respond and probably became emotional and unclear. If I were to have that conversation again I would ask – why should the rules you feel comfortable with be the ones we are all ruled by? If we were going to have just one space, why wouldn't that space operate from a Te Ao Māori framework instead of a Pākehā one?

The more I have had the privilege of learning about the first laws of Aotearoa the more I am convinced of their innate superiority to those that came here second. Here in Aotearoa there thrived a gift economy and a fundamentally inclusive system of collective justice where generosity is the ultimate measure of wealth, courage, strength and respect. Human health is mirrored by the health of all aspects of life (human and non-human) and landscape.

Adversarial politics have ushered the environmental apocalypse onto our doorsteps and into our homes. Māori have been aware of this for far longer than the majority. Indigenous perspectives and leadership is where longstanding solutions lie. NZ law continues to be permissive of industry which shows no signs of slowing down its profit driven rampage. Political parties pit us against each other, our division is their tool to maintain the status quo and this is fuelling both extremism and apathy making us the enemy of ourselves. There is nothing democratic about appealing to the people who have won at the game of exploitation, division and destruction.

Only some middle-class but predominantly the rich can influence who political leaders are and what they do. The majority don't have a seat at that table. But I don't want a seat at that table built on white supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. I like the ideals of collective justice, relationships, generosity and a fundamental interconnection with nature.

Aside from my own preferences, there are historical wrongs, socio-political and environmental (for example), which for everyone's sake can no longer be swept under the rug. What is good for Māori is good for all of Aotearoa. I have made a commitment to myself to join those who have fought for the survival and revitalisation of Te Ao Māori, to use my



privilege and energy to support them and, most importantly, to follow their lead. This, I believe, is our vital work.

*Cally O'Neill's ancestors are from Ireland, Wales, Romania, Spain and England. She now lives in the rohe of Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Taranaki Whānui, and studies Māori Laws and Philosophy (Ahunga Tikanga) at Te Wānanga o Raukawa. She is part of Te Reo o Ngā Tangata-The People Speak, [Te Waka Hourua](#) and numerous climate coalitions.*

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6.

For me, the crucial work we as Pākehā should be doing is to look in the mirror and ask ourselves some hard questions. For example:

- What is my family's arrival story, and by whose authority did we settle here?
- On whose land do I live, and by whose authority do I live here?
- How do I genuinely and meaningfully take action on my answers to these questions?

And it is likely that our answers will be uncomfortable. Perhaps we are a new immigrant, settled here under the policies of the coloniser, rather than the tikanga of Tangata Whenua. Perhaps we have been here for generations and have difficult stories in our history. Perhaps we don't know much about the journeys of our forebears, unconsciously exercising our privilege to ignore the past. And perhaps we own a property, a business or a farm, and therefore our wealth is built, at least partially, from the dispossession of Māori lands, and enabled through the imposition of a worldview where land is simply a tradable commodity.

So how do we then act on these uncomfortable answers? It is no longer sufficient to outsource our difficult history to the government via the Treaty settlement process. We, as Pākehā living on this land, are not absolved by that Bad Naughty Crown saying sorry and sending some pūtea to Iwi, and nor is meaningful reconciliation achieved.

Instead, our crucial work is both personal and systemic, both reflective and action-oriented, and it is probably a long, tricky, and relatively uncharted journey. But maybe we can start by learning more about our own history. And perhaps from this stories will emerge that need to be acknowledged and put right. Then we can learn more about the land on which we live. And perhaps from this initiatives like pay-the-rent and landback, which are emerging both overseas and here, can be explored. And then we can learn more about the Aotearoa that was envisaged by Māori at the signing of Te Tiriti and hoped for today. And perhaps from this we can support things like Matike Mai Constitutional Transformation and other initiatives which decentre ourselves as Pākehā, and rebalance power and resources.

So let's do the crucial work of looking in the mirror, let's ask ourselves hard questions, and then let's listen to and act on the voices that answer us. Then, together, we can build the Aotearoa of āpōpō.

*Kate Frykberg was born and raised in Te Matau-a-Māui Hawkes Bay in the rohe of Ngāti Kahungunu, and has South African, Swedish and British ancestry. She is an independent philanthropy and community consultant, a trustee of [Te Muka Rau](#), associate of [Tūmanako Consultants](#), and part of the Tauwi Tautoko community. She lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, in the rohe of Te Āti Awa Ki Te Upoko o Te Ika.*

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7.

As a Māori identifying male with a Pākehā passing reality having been involved in tangata tiriti spaces to understand the positionality of my whiteness better, I feel that the crucial work that Pākehā can be doing for Te Tiriti justice and decolonisation is to just STOP. Stop being so politically powerful. Stop having more money and resources. Stop being so nice but so racist at the same time. Stop being afraid of Māori people, language and culture. Stop forgetting the past theft and current privilege of colonisation. Stop pretending to not understand Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Stop wanting to be 'Kiwis' without recognising the destructive elements of this identity making process. Stop making tauwi of colour feel like they need to be part of the Pākehā culture to belong. Stop having a superiority complex. Stop being so defensive when made aware of the system of oppressive Whiteness that informs Pākehā power in Aotearoa. Stop supporting legislation that makes your lives even easier and everyone else's bloody harder. Just STOP being so fucking unevenly dominant and unwilling to do anything about it.

Aaah, wow, that felt good, cathartic and needed! Now for some ideas on being better tangata tiriti, decentring/dismantling unhelpful and damaging positions of whiteness and how Pākehā can get up and truly GO towards a Te Tiriti honouring and just future for Aotearoa. Go learn your whakapapa. If you can, understand where you are from. Go and be in some positive Māori communities and most importantly just listen while you're there. Go to many Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops over many years. The path to a decolonised mind is not quick, easy or final. Go and be the best Pākehā tangata tiriti you can by developing a sense of when to step back and affirm tangata whenua and tauwi of colour in their mana and leadership. Go and learn the Māori street names and significant Māori figures of your community. Recognise and respect the inalienable connection and indigenous title of local tangata whenua to the lands you live on. Go to protest actions against land theft, racist policy and laws, and protection of te tai ao. Just GO hard out and be part of a movement to reclaim the positive aspects of being Pākehā in a just relationship with tauwi of colour, tangata tiriti, and the indigenous Māori tangata of Aotearoa.

*Barry McLernon is Tangata Whenua (Te Atiawa) and Tangata Tiriti (Scottish and Dutch descent), who lives in Te Hāwera, South Taranaki where Ngati Ruanui me Ngā Ruahine are mana whenua, and works with Te Ata Kura - Society for Conscientisation, and Tauwi mō Matike Mai.*

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8.

When Emily asked this question, I wasn't really sure where to go. It feels as though everything has already been said by other people much more articulately than me. So instead, I offer a few ways in which we might hold ourselves, alongside some of the many resources that have grown my understanding – other people's work feels most important to share. These are the resources I return to again and again. Maybe you know some of them, or all of them, but I hope you may find something to discover, or rediscover. This list is of course, non-exhaustive, both in actions and in readings. It is a starting point for the crucial work, and I certainly don't think I have achieved these myself! I am inspired by Tina Ngata's post [What's required of Tangata Tiriti](#), but her list is better. Read that first.

We must shift power, and work towards constitutional transformation that honours Te Tiriti, He Whakaputanga, and UNDRIP.

Read: [Matike Mai](#), watch [Constitutional Transformation and the work of Matike Mai Aotearoa](#) by Margaret Mutu

We must challenge, be bold and unflinching in our analysis of colonial violence.

Read: [The Savage Coloniser Book](#) by Tusiata Avia

We must stop excluding tauwi of colour from conversations about Te Tiriti; it harms them, and limits our ability to work towards justice. We must learn from tauwi of colour about how we best approach being/becoming tangata tiriti.

Read: [To centre constitutional transformation for Asian 'Tangata Tiriti'](#) by Mengzhu Fu and Mahdis Azarmandi and [Be\(com\)ing an Asian Tangata Tiriti](#) by Lincoln Dam

We must understand how colonisation and racism shape our health, justice, education and government systems, and fight it in whichever systems we are in.

Listen: [Getting Better](#) by Emma Espiner, [True Justice](#) by Re:News

We must remember the violent histories of colonisation and racism across Aotearoa, but especially where we live.

Read: [Fragments from a Contested Past](#) Joanna Kidman, Vincent O'Malley, Liana MacDonald, Tom Roa and Keziah Wallis, watch: [No Māori Allowed](#), [Speak no Māori](#)

We must imagine that a better future is possible. Moana Jackson was a master at that, and I could make a whole list of things to read by him, here are just a few.

Read: [How about a politics that imagines the impossible?](#) and [Decolonisation and the stories in the land](#) by Moana Jackson

We must connect colonisation with other systems and oppressions: gender, climate crisis, capitalism, understand that they are all linked and mutually reinforcing.

Read: [Tina Ngata's blog](#)

We must listen to Māori and tauwi of colour, regularly and about all manner of topics, in replacement of Pākehā media. Listen in your relationships and listen to have empathy. Listen for human experiences, not for statistics.

Read: [E-Tangata](#), Listen: [NUKU](#) by Quiane Matata-Sipu, [Conversations with my Immigrant Parents](#) by Julie Zhu and Saraid de Silva

We must return whenua, and awa, and moana.

Watch: [Land Back](#) by Tūturu, [Ake Ake Ake](#) on Māori TV

We must take responsibility for educating and working with other Pākehā.

Read: [Tripping over Te Tiriti](#) by Catherine Delahunty

We must reflect, understand our own relationship to, and privilege from, colonisation.

Read: [From Parihaka to He Puapua](#) by Richard Shaw

*Helena Mayer is a queer and trans first-generation German Pākehā, who lives and studies in Ōtepoti on Kāi Tahu whenua. They have been involved in several environmental and social justice organisations, including hosting a Te Tiriti reading group with The Basket Hauraki and being part of the Tauīwi Tautoko community.*

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9.

I believe that the most crucial work we can do as Pākehā in Aotearoa is to reduce our individual harm towards iwi Māori and tauīwi. The combined impact of historical colonial violence and the current discriminatory systemic power structures is overwhelming. There is so much work to do; we must stop contributing to it.

We've learnt so much from the ways of our colonising ancestors, so those of us who know better must do better. We can address our desire to be 'above reproach', the apathy that undermines real change as we plateau in our own decolonisation process. I am committed to discomfort in this mahi, assuming it will be awkward. I want to dig deeper, even when there is no intrinsic motivation, to uncover the ways I participate in, benefit from, and perpetuate whiteness in Aotearoa.

I believe that Pākehā must engage in radically honest self-reflection. Not in one mystical moment of insight, but in the everyday. Pausing before responding, replaying our words and learning from our mistakes. To avoid a self-centred approach, we must also unpack the wider structures of oppression and control we live with, allowing us to understand our role in dismantling them. We must become tellable, accept feedback, and listen to what our Tiriti partners have told us for generations. And then we must become accountable for what we do next. We can't stay 'aware and concerned' but dispassionate.

This persistence will ensure that the next generation has less unlearning to do, less racism residing within themselves, less innate bias, and more confidence in interrupting Tiriti injustices and harm in their communities.

I can't unsee the injustice or pretend I am not entangled in its origins. My ancestors came to Aotearoa in the hope of a new life, but tragically they did this at the cost of many others'

hopes and lives. As tāngata Tiriti, we are here by the grace of an agreement signed in 1840, and we must each choose to belong here graciously now.

*Kay Benseman is Pākehā of Irish, Scottish, German, Spanish and English ancestry) is the Community Weaver at Taiwi Tautoko, contributes to Taiwi mō Matike Mai Aotearoa and is Co-Director of social enterprise, Pito Press. Kay lives in Whanganui, where Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangī are mana whenua.*

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10.

Amidst the amazing work simmering and overflowing across the motu, one area I'm hopeful about is the emergence of new cultural practices and norms that will facilitate the constitutional transformation we all deserve.

In making space for that emergence, some of us have explored the ways in which we come together and the ways in which we fall apart as Pākehā. Thinking and seeing relationally is a critical skill to develop for those of us who are used to keeping our blinders up.

As we explore ways of being together with other Pākehā, with all Tangata Tiriti, and of course with Māori, our cultures need not be the same, but our cultures' compatibility will temper our ability to be in relationship. On the path to constitutional transformation, the harmful attributes of Pākehā culture will create obstacles, but they are not immutable.

Let us experiment with different ways of being together.

Below is a blessing I've offered to Tiriti Justice movements to gently invoke a hopeful and deeply relational tone particularly for Tangata Tiriti.

May we welcome the transformation  
In ourselves, us, and others  
May we lead with imagination  
and grow what it uncovers  
This journey will be daunting  
For guests in another's home  
But to all, it is costing  
And here is where we start from  
Let us move towards liberation  
grounded in the earth, air, and sea.  
And may our dreams of relation  
Take us all from me to we.

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*Waiohua, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua, Te Ahiwaru Waiohua, Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Paoa, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Tamaterā, and Te Patukirikiri are mana whenua. She is a treaty educator with Tangata Tiriti - Treaty People and a facilitator and organiser in Tauīwi mō Matike Mai and Gathering at the Gate.*

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11.

There seem to be some older Pākehā out there who don't like all this Māori language flying about these days – and no doubt they wouldn't like me calling them 'Pākehā' either. But they are a declining minority if the recent Stats NZ survey on attitudes to te reo is anything to go by. It seems that two thirds of us think te reo should be compulsory in primary schools. Such a heartwarming statistic!

It feels like the tide really is turning towards the re-centring of te ao Māori in Aotearoa. I think it's unstoppable, despite this rump of resistance. Māori placenames are being reinstated, institutions are acquiring not just Māori names, but also constructive relationships with hapū and iwi and other Māori organisations, and are upskilling their staff to engage with Māori, offering te reo classes at work and so on. Gradually Māori-led organisations are being established in sectors such as health, and tribal authorities are increasingly important economic actors across the regions. Despite the negativity and division out there, these are changes to feel hopeful about.

A few years back I interviewed a small group of Pākehā whose work involves them being actively engaged with te ao Māori. The people I spoke to were carefully chosen for their reputations as highly thought of by their Māori colleagues and communities. And while I only spoke to a small number of people, there are many, many more Pākehā/non-Māori out there getting on with positive engagement with the Māori world and involved in making changes to their workplaces to centre Māori people, interests and concerns.

I am in awe of the people I spoke to. They are putting in the hard yards of pushing Pākehā-centred institutions and colleagues to change, and of working to give Māori communities reason to hope that these institutions might be worth engaging with after all. They take some flak at times, but that comes with the territory – and they know that. They have developed strategies to cope. They are strong people who know where they stand and what they stand for.

And that's the thing. The elderly Pākehā who complain to right-wing political leaders about the 'woke' te reo Māori on our airwaves, in our streets, labeling our government departments and so on – I think they are fundamentally driven by a fear of losing their comfortable position of feeling in control and at the centre of our society. They know what NZ Transport is, but what on earth is Waka Kotahi? But if the people I interviewed are anything to go by, becoming engaged with te reo and te ao Māori has made them feel more comfortable, more secure in who they are and in their sense of their place in this country – not less so. They know that what they learn from Māori values and ways of operating enriches their lives and offers guidelines to reframe our social institutions in positive ways to the benefit of us all.

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12.

I wonder if for us Pākehā, racism is a bit like dust. Racism, colonisation, white superiority, fine particles of matter in the air. Dead skin, dirt, hair, fibres, swirling around in the atmosphere undetected and unseen. It's easy to ignore the way dust collects in the dirty corners of our lives. We can sweep it away quickly when visitors come over. But it's still there, a constant part of the air we breathe.

Once in a while a dramatic shaft of light reveals that racism, like dust, is everywhere. A terrorist attack of a mosque, a documentary about racial segregation in South Auckland, an outcry over funding for Māori arts. We cry "this is not us!" because we want to go back to enjoying the haka before the game and resume our collective and comfortable amnesia. We choose, again and again, to wilfully forget that we are living our lives on stolen land.

These shafts of light are reminders of a hard and dirty truth. We choose to ignore the truth because it hurts and it feels too hard to do anything about. Can't we all just get along? How much more money, time and energy do we need to invest in rehashing the past? Can't we just order our coffees, go to work and be good people?

Those feelings of guilt, shame and anger that arise when we learn about the history of Aotearoa and the truth – that our European ancestors did not come here to build relationships, they came here to take land – those feelings are real and they are justified. If you are not feeling guilty, ashamed and angry, why is that?

It's 2023. Trauma-informed practice and healing is something we know a lot about. What would happen if instead of pushing Pākehā feelings about racism down and carrying on with business as usual, we chose instead to pause, think about it and talk about our feelings with each other? What if as Pākehā we listened to stories of our past in a different way – listened to understand first before we listened to respond. What would happen if we stopped gaslighting ourselves and others and instead of burying the valid emotions that come with our collective trauma we recognised them, acknowledged them and made a conscious choice to keep them as a constant companion to acting responsibly every day in every way we can to shut down racism? What if we did the white work of keeping each other supported and accountable for our actions?

The good news is that systemic racism, colonisation and white superiority is constructed and designed. It is not inevitable like dust. Systemic racism can be deconstructed and dismantled.

But as every trauma-informed practitioner worth their salt will tell you, you need to recognise and acknowledge the trauma in order to process it and move towards healing and you can't do this alone. Let us work together – and in our own small ways – to draw back the curtains, to let more light in.

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13.

Learning and unlearning in this context is anything but linear, closer perhaps to turning and airing compost to accelerate breakdown. One thin layer is peeled off, made strange and open to observation, hopefully change, only to reveal further layers still continuing to release gases from complex chemical reactions beneath the surface. Even in this ongoing process, I notice and try to temper my cultural habits of seeking certainty and final arrival, rooted in a deeper desire for control, to be unaffected by and unentangled with the world. The task now is not primarily to find 'the' answer. I try to remember that impatience is an expression of privilege – as one so late to the party, we who are only beginning to catch up on what has been known, shared, demanded for so long. Our habits of short-termism and urgency, borne of obliviousness to how long these struggles have been underway; our chronic incapacity to *stay* – when things get awkward, when our mistakes and unknowing are laid bare, when there is little apparent change – so tightly bound to this obliviousness, and a lack of resilience from lifetimes without struggle. I notice how our people's habits of perfectionism – another way to secure control – keep us often on this side of action. I try to remember that the challenge is not 'personal' but rather about how these inheritances go forward into future generations – yet also that caring for each other and our relationships is more crucial to this work than any abstract aim. Layer after layer, each peeled back to reveal, at best, a better question, increasingly oriented to the context my people have forged whole societies on denying.

At this time, and from this place – at this stage of a lifelong, intergenerational process of peeling back these layers – perhaps what feels most important is for us to work with our own people, to 'cut back the gorse' as Heather Came put it so beautifully in 2014's address. Yet this work of 'cutting back' or ceding ground is, I have come to believe, also a *substantive* project of developing a collective sense of identity and purpose. I was introduced to 'waharoa' within tikanga marae as the preliminary step manuhiri must take to gather themselves at the gate before they are ready to meet; a necessary labour of developing a sense of collective identity and purpose to which my people are utterly oblivious, and which we have yet to perform. To mature beyond our illusions of being 'simply individuals' in a present magically divorced from the past, this is the labour required of us; and I strongly believe that the more we grow this muscle, are able to feel the broader context of history, structure, and culture beneath our feet, to think and work as a people, the more we also cut back the ongoing invasion of our people that flourishes through our collective obliviousness.



Our work, then, is to actively and collectively grow this capacity to know who we are and why we are here. This shift to collective orientation can also diffuse defensiveness and temper Pākehā feelings that colonise focus; it connects us to our past but overcomes Pākehā 'freeze' by calling us into a future vision and steps in the path towards it.

The connection between gathering at the gate and clearing the gorse is nowhere more clear than in the work of the Tauīwi Tautoko community who 'call in' to tauīwi communities to create softening, opening, and shift of anti-Māori racism. The more we can name the collective ground from which we see, speak, and meet and invite others to do the same, the more we see listening and shift, acknowledgment of complexity and partial vantage, even apology or curiosity among those expressing the collective consciousness of a racist Aotearoa. The racist voice that presumes to declare the whole world from nowhere is rendered visible to itself and on the hook; the reach of its violence reined in as its specific ground of particular experience comes into view to itself and others.

In this work, the community of Pākehā seeking to become, as Tim Howard wrote in 2015's address, the "Pākehā (and tauīwi) with whom the rangatira thought they were signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi" continues to grow. What would feeling ourselves and working increasingly *as* community stretching the expanse of the motu do to strengthen our collective courage and ongoing action?

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14.

Sailor, anchor yourself to the land, first  
the land is first  
and the people of the land  
*the first people of the land*  
(not us)

try to hold course through a narrow channel  
look out for rocks of appropriation  
avoid the sandy shallows of paralysis  
stay awake, sailor  
we have to carefully  
actively navigate

alive to our feet on the boards of our ship  
a tall white sailed ship that we arrived on  
*our ship*, however much we dislike it  
we brought many kinds of diseases

like assimilation  
like superiority  
they're still raging, still claiming lives

sailor, find a place on deck that is truthful  
has clean energy  
no mansplaining or space-taking  
there's no room 'just to listen'  
be ready to catch the rope, tie the knot  
or slash it

we're not captains  
maybe clowns  
so listen hard  
accept what's coming

try  
take the hit  
try again  
no collapsing

this is how we'll get it right sometimes  
and wrong sometimes  
because there is no exact wrong, and no exact right  
the binary is a problem that we brought  
along with the hierarchy

we used to think the earth was the centre of the universe  
and everything revolved around it  
sailor: we were so wrong

can we get out of our own way  
scuttle our individual egos  
focus on the sun in the centre  
there's only one place like this  
with these rhythms  
these creatures  
this history

there's no hack to untying horrible knots  
no quick fix  
we're out there  
on the waves  
it'll take many generations  
genuine action from the heart

we're out there, on the waves

find a hand to hold

*Jo Randerson is of Danish descent, and belongs to arts company Barbarian Productions at the Vogelmorn Bowling Club community in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, where Te Ātiawa, Taranaki Whānui and Ngāti Toa are mana whenua.*