The State of the Pākehā Nation

Tēna koutou katoa.
Ko Max Harris tōkua ingoa.
He Pākehā ahau. He tāngata Tiriti ahau.
Kei Tāmaki Makaurau ahau e noho ana, e mahi ana.
E mihia kau ana ahau ki a koutou katoa.
Tēnā koutou, tēna koutou, tēna tātou katoa.

My name is Max Harris. I'm Pākehā. I live and work in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. I wanted to thank everyone for coming along to listen to what I have to say. I wanted to acknowledge Ngāire Rae for asking me to give this talk, Joan Cook who has inspired the tradition of talks of which this is a part, and all those at Network Waitangi Whangārei who have continued her legacy. I also wanted to pay tribute to all of the organisers of this wonderful Te Tiriti Based Futures event. I've really enjoyed listening to some of the other talks this year, as well as talks in previous years, and I'm grateful for all the people sending organising emails, providing technical support, and doing the work that goes into making an event like this happen.

I want to speak about some aspects of Pākehā culture and identity; how some perspectives on politics and history can help us to understand Pākehā culture and identity more sharply; and what some of the short- and medium-term challenges and priorities are for Pākehā committed to building an Aotearoa that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga. My talk will be split broadly into these three parts. One of the key points I want to make is that Pākehā culture and identity are political, and politics shapes culture and identity. What flows from this is that Pākehā committed to reflecting critically on culture and identity must engage with politics, and a transformative vision of politics, to live honourably in this place. This talk is grandly subtitled the 'State of the Pākehā Nation'. That title – gifted to me – is a riff on the 'state of the nation' addresses sometimes given by New Zealand politicians, drawing on the American tradition of 'state of the nation' speeches. I understand the title to be gesturing towards a snapshot of the Pākehā community in its current state. I acknowledge that the snapshot that I'm sharing will be shaped by my perspective and positioning. My views and my blindspots reflect my social circles, my class and position as a Pākehā person, my gender, and my upbringing (in a middle-class, educated household). I will return to my own family background later in the talk. I also want to acknowledge that non-Pākehā may have valuable insights into the Pākehā community – how members of the Pākehā community behave or operate – that are not immediately visible or recognisable to someone like myself from that community.

1. Pākehā identity and culture

One reason that I think it might be helpful to talk about the "state of the Pākehā nation" is that the phrase recognises that Pākehā are a community. Members of that Pākehā community may be members of multiple communities – members of the Pākehā community may also be Māori, for example – but Pākehā represent one community.

As previous writers of the Joan Cook Memorial Essay – such as Jen Margaret and Tim McCreanor – have also pointed out, there is a longstanding tendency for Pākehā perspectives to be conflated with New Zealand perspectives. Relatedly, there can be assumptions – especially among Pākehā – that Pākehā are the norm. Claudia Rankine writes about how whiteness can be seen as "neutral, nonpartisan, and normal" – and the same could be said about Pākehā perspectives in this country. When introductions are made in meetings, Māori may recognise their whakapapa, other tauiwi (non-Māori) may recognise their cultural or family background, while Pākehā often say nothing of

our background, seemingly assuming that if nothing is said about where we are from, we are Pākehā.

It's important to recognise that we are a community, that we are Pākehā, because it makes clear that we have a particular cultural or racialised background – we are not neutral, or nonpartisan, or normal. Recognising our rootedness is part of acknowedging our history, and it may be a first step to understanding that our perspectives may be skewed or tilted because of our history or background. It moves us away from the assumption that we sit above other perspectives, without a particular stake in outcomes. It is also important to recognise that we are a community because when we acknowledge that we are a part of a community we can take some responsibility for that community. When we see that there are patterns across a community, that some of those patterns may be harmful or damaging, and that we are part of that community, we can commit to doing our bit to addressing those harmful or damaging practices. I will return to how that community, and our histories, can be a source of pride as well as a source of responsibility. But for now the point is simply that seeing ourselves as part of some diffuse nebulous mass without an identity is a way to resist taking responsibility for the community and its own history.

This is not to say that it is always easy to pin down what it is to be Pākehā. But it is one thing to say that the definition of Pākehā is fuzzy and that it has changed over time; it is quite another to say that the category does not exist at all. On this point I think there is much to learn from the work of Charles Mills and Cedric Robinson on racialisation: on how racialized groupings, including Pākehā, are made and remade. Mills and Robinson are both black writers and thinkers, whose work has illuminated whiteness, race, as well as aspects of black radical traditions. The late, great Charles Mills, a Jamaican philosopher, said this at a University of King's College lecture series in 2010 (and I will quote this at length because it is so important and clearly set out):[1]

> Race does exist but its existence is not a biological existence; it's a socio-political existence. And from this perspective, the reality of race is basically a reality that is socially created. It's not an intrinsic reality in the nature of the human race that there be these sort of natural demarcators, these sort of natural lines of division among the family of humans; rather, these lines are artificially drawn by human beings. And the argument is they're drawn in response to particular projects.
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> So the idea is that race then becomes a system. If we ask person "what is your race?", what we're really asking is: "where are you located with respect to the system?" It's not a question about what the person's biology or natural genetic makeup is. That's not really the question. What we're really asking is, "How are you located in the system?"
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> And the system varies. So you can move from one country to another and you can assume a different race. The system evolves over time. So if you're racially categorised one way at a particular time, you could go back a hundred years and find you're racially categorised a different way.
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> But we should not infer from this that race is therefore unreal. That's a mistaken inference: 'race is constructed, therefore it's unreal'. It's not a conclusion that follows.
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> Race is constructed but it's very real. It's very real because being categorised a certain way, being identified as having a certain race, then slots you into a particular position in this racial system. And the extreme example, of course, the clear-cut example, is apartheid South Africa: you're categorised as black, you're categorised as coloured, you're categorised as white, this is going to have an immense influence on your opportunities, on your life chances, on where

[1] A clip of this lecture is online at https://x.com/folukeifejola/status/1440244036653105158?s=20 (Charles Mills, 'Conceptions of Race in Philosophy, Literature and Art', University of King's College, 16 September 2010).

> you can go, on whom you can marry, on all these things – and as such, it's likely to have an effect on your consciousness also. So the social reality of race should not be taken to imply that it's not something that matters. It matters hugely.

I do not here understand Charles Mills to be saying that whakapapa is not relevant to racialisation. The important point is that races are made, and that race is real, including because it is a system of power that slots people into a hierarchy of value.

Cedric Robinson's book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, known for sketching a concept of racial capitalism, also has an extended historically grounded discussion of whiteness that is highly relevant to understand the category of Pākehā today.[2] The first part of that book is called 'The Emergence and Limitations of European Radicalism'. It sets out how "the idea of Europe" changed over time was associated with Christianity and contrasted with "barbarians".It discusses how the class that ruled in Europe, the nobility, "imprinted its character on the whole of European society". It traces how the association of Europe with Christianity resulted in the demonisation of Islam, and focuses on what it calls "intra-European racialism": the racial ordering of groups within Europe. It examines how the definitions of "European" evolved in relation to Italians, Irish, Jews, African labourers, and others. It also pays close attention to the English working class, and its relationship to Welsh, Scottish, West Indian, and Asian groupings, among others.[3] This is an application of the approach described by Charles Mills. It is also easy to see how this analysis might apply outside of Europe: for example, to the way groups such as Italians, Irish, Jewish people, and African-Americans have been included and excluded from the category of "Americans".

From both Mills and Robinson we can take several insights about approaching the category of Pākehā. First, the category of Pākehā is constructed but it is also real in the sense that it has real-world consequences. Second, who counts as Pākehā changes over time; people are racialised as Pākehā. Third, who is categorised as Pākehā may be influenced by decisions of those in power, including state decisions, and decisions about how Pākehā ought to relate to others. Fourth, the categorisation of Pākehā slots people into a position of power in the system of race that operates in this country. Some excellent work has been done on how racialisation works here, and has worked in Aotearoa New Zealand's history, including through chapters in the book *Towards a Grammar of Race in Aotearoa New Zealand*.[4] Other work could helpfully consider further who has historically been included and excluded in categories such as Pākehā, 'Kiwi', and New Zealander, and by whom – using some of the approaches suggested by Mills and Robinson.

What forms part of Pākehā culture and identity is highly contested. It often appears that claims about the content of Pakehā culture and identity reflect the particular experiences or preferences of the person making the claim – and these claims often slide into claims of New Zealand culture and identity. For those who enjoy sport, Pākehā culture and identity are tied up in sport. For those who would like to see Pākehā as fair-minded, Pākehā culture and identity are bound up in notions

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[2] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 2000 [first published 1983]).

[3] Robinson also resists views of racism that regard it as a form of psychosis and those who see it as purely driven by economic imperatives: Robinson writes, "... some students have happily reiterated the premise of a sort of mass psychology of chromatic trauma in which European reactions to darker-skinned peoples are seen as natural; others, including Marxists, have argued for a simplistic 'empiricism' where the inevitable consequences of slavery and domination are the rationalizations of racial superiority and inferiority." He rejects both.

[4] Arcia Tecun, Lana Lopesi, and Anisha Sankar (eds), *Towards a Grammar of Race in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2022).

of fairness and 'the fair go'.[5] It is sometimes said that Pākehā – and New Zealand identity – is associated with land, even property,[6] though it is worth asking in whose interests these claims are made. Again, however, to say that Pākehā culture and identity are contested, even disputed, is not to say that Pākehā culture and identity do not exist.

There has perhaps been greater self-reflection among Pākehā in recent years about Pākehā identity, following from acceptance that Pākehā constitute a community.[7] In my view, Pākehā should be humble enough to acknowledge that Māori practices and traditions have also shaped Pākehā culture and identity. In particular, while these practices should not be equated or assumed to be the same, Māori cultural commitments to whakapapa have in my experience encouraged some Pākehā to attempt to investigate our familial and cultural background.

Speaking for myself, in recent years I have felt an impulse to learn more about ancestral connections and stories, likely influenced by Māori friends and acquaintances' approach to their own whakapapa – and seeing what can come from the knowledge and understanding of our own familial links. I was lucky to travel to the United Kingdom late last year, and travelled with my sister to Seven Sisters, a small mining village in South Wales where my grandfather grew up. We visited the building that previously housed a pharmacy to which my great-grandfather was connected, and the old pub – still standing that my great-grandmother possibly worked in. We saw the mining pit, now covered up or 'filled in', in which members of the family worked. Visiting this place gave me a fuller understanding of my familial inheritance.

I also learned more last year about my grandmother's family, who were settlers in Queensland in Australia. While in Magandjin / Meanjin / Brisbane, I spent time outside the old Colonial Sugar Refining (CSR) factory building, surrounded by white picket fences, which is where members of my grandmother's family worked. That same company played a significant role in extractive industry in Fiji, extracting sugar and wealth from the land, and extracting wealth and freedom from Indian indentured labourers. My family history, like many people's family history, is a mixed inheritance. It involves connections to several other settler-colonial societies, including Australia and Canada, but it also provides footholds for me for my work – ways for me to ground in my family history the work I try to do.

My family history is a reminder of the extraction and exploitation in the settler-colonial enterprise and my family's contribution to that, and my family's history – in parts – is also a source of inspiration (for example, in the figure of my politically active UK-based auntie or in aspects of my New Zealand-based grandmother's life). The history enables me to see continuities between my commitments and the commitments of members of that family, but it also enables me to identify paths of travel that should be interrupted or opposed as each generation reflects on how to move forward.

Pākehā can acknowledge the debt to Māori in the way our culture and identity are evolving. But I do think we must be cautious in mimicking or mirroring cultural practices that cannot be lifted out of Māori cultural contexts. Pākehā do not have the same understanding of whakapapa connections to maunga (mountains), awa (rivers), and other sites. We are not "of" this land in the way that Māori are. We must avoid adopting pepeha structures, borrowed from Māori, that may give this impression (it would not be right for me to say "No Pōneke ahau", or "Ko Matairangi te maunga",

[5] For a discussion of fairness as a New Zealand value (in which Pākehā practices are often associated with New Zealand practices), see David Hackett Fischer, *Fairness and Freedom: A History of Two Open Societies – New Zealand and the United States* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012).
[6] See Austin Mitchell, *The Half-Gallon Quarter-Acre Pavlova Paradise* (Whitcombe and Tombs, Christchurch, 1972).
[7] Including from groups such as Tauiwi mō Matike Mai.

as much as Matairangi or Mount Victoria may have a special place for me). Even talk of "Pākehātanga" needs to be treated with caution in my view. There is much that is rich and inspirational in Māori culture that has informed and shaped life in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Pākehā, we can own our own history – our contribution and complicity in imperialism, as well as other sources of pride – and pay tribute to Māori influence on our culture and identity, and be deeply respectful of Māori culture and language, while taking care not to borrow or replicate cultural practices in ways that do damage to those practices. As in many aspects of Pākehā-Māori relations, we should take our lead from the views of Māori. We must also continue to work on avoiding a collective defensiveness in relation to assertions of racism or white supremacy, a form of Pākehā defensiveness that I have written about previously.

Greater self-reflection on Pākehā culture has led to, in some of the circles that I am in, criticism of cultural tendencies in Pākehā spaces. Some of these are absolutely correct in my view, sometimes even funny: the view that there are more diminished practices of hospitality among Pākehā communities, compared with other cultural communities; the view that work, achievement, and ego are championed to a greater degree in Pākehā communities than other communities; the view that there are fewer collective rituals or traditions in these communities that can hold us together. Regardless of the truth of these criticisms, what is important to remember in my view is that cultures are made and remade by human beings. There may be deep, longstanding generational reasons for cultural tendencies – but these tendencies are not biologically innate. We must learn where cultural practices or tendencies came from, their material conditions, their relationship to politics, and how we can change them. So I'll turn now to the relationship between politics and Pākehā culture.

2. Politics and Pākehā culture

Charles Mills' analysis helps to explain how being Pākehā is not necessarily a biological fact but can nevertheless have real-world consequences. What it does not explain, though, is how Pākehā have come to be slotted into a position of power in a hierarchy of groups. It also may not explain how Pākehā culture has tended at times to be individualistic or limited in its hospitality. To understand these things we have to consider the history of colonial capitalism in this country, and its close connection to racialised narratives that have justified and sustained Pākehā power.

Many people will have a glimpse of that history through their own families, and through local histories of place and power. Catherine Comyn's recent book, *The Financial Colonisation of Aotearoa*, shows how financial wealth and political power have long been fused in this country – as well as how Māori used the tools of finance to resist colonisation. Comyn shows that a company, the New Zealand Company, played a central role in New Zealand colonisation: colonisation was not just perpetrated by the state. At times the New Zealand Company jostled with the state for power, and at other times it used state power for its own advancement. Comyn also shows, as other historians have demonstrated, that property speculation was the foundation of New Zealand colonisation, and that racist narratives helped uphold that colonisation. Speculators sometimes operated from a distance, without ever having visited Aotearoa: Comyn calls this "armchair colonialism". One of the many insights that can be drawn from Comyn's book is that early colonisation in Aotearoa helped to enrich the state (for example, through the guarantee of pre-emption in article 2 of the English version of the Treaty of Waitangi, which gave the Crown the first right of purchase of Māori land), and it also served to secure land, property, and wealth for a particular group of settlers who tended to be Pākehā.

It's also little discussed in New Zealand that Karl Marx dedicates a full, and the final chapter, of volume 1 of his book *Capital* to the model of colonisation sketched by Edward Gibbon Wakefield

for use in New Zealand. While in prison for abducting a fifteen year old girl, Wakefield concocted a plan for "systematic colonisation": a plan that would lure in labourers and keep land at a "sufficient price" to keep it just out of reach of those engaged in ordinary work, but within reach of long-term ongoing work that would embed a hierarchy of power between landowners and the landless. Marx comments on this model of colonisation because he regards it as showcasing capitalism in its purest form. For Marx, Wakefield in the colonies shows how capitalism operates in the United Kingdom. This is relevant as we consider our current political-economic model in Aotearoa New Zealand, and its historical trajectory.

It's also relevant to understanding Pākehā power and culture in this country to grasp the changes of 30-40 years ago, what's sometimes described as "neoliberalism" or Rogernomics and Ruthanasia, after the ministers of finance in the Fourth Labour Government in the 1980s and the National Government from 1990 onward. This year is the fortieth anniversary of the start of that process of radical right wing economic change that began in 1984. Jane Kelsey was tracing the impact of this work almost as it was occurring, from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Key features of this period – as explained so clearly by Kelsey – include the privatisation of state assets to enrich a small group of investors (who often tended to be Pākehā), the loosening of regulation on industries, the cutting of progressive taxes, beneficiary-bashing and cuts to welfare in the Mother of All Budgets, the decimation of trade unions through the Employment Contracts Act 1991, and a punitive turn in criminal justice. These changes punished Māori and the beneficiaries of these processes were overwhelmingly Pākehā. Racist anti-Māori and anti-Pasifika stereotyping was used to justify beneficiary-bashing, highlighting how racism and capitalism could operate in tandem. The changes of the 1980s and 1990s have also entrenched an individualistic, competitive culture, which forms the basis for the view that Pākehā culture can be individualistic and unhospitable.

As well as following the money through New Zealand history, we need further nuanced work on nepotistic social networks in this country, how those networks have benefited Pākehā and formed part of racism and white supremacy, and how those networks have been sustained by or relied upon the state. We need work to explore Franz Fanon's claim that "In the colonies ... You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" – work that can show how whiteness, and Pākehā identity, is associated with wealth, and benefits from wealth, down generations. Such work would help to fill out a map of who holds power in this country and how, including how it relates to early colonisation and Pākehā identity.

One particular political dynamic that I am interested in, for the purpose of mapping Pākehā power and anti-Māori racism, is the cycle of scare-mongering over supposed Māori power-grabs by stealth that is used to entrench existing power structures. Prior to the Waikato War, over 150 years ago, fear was whipped up that a secret Māori attack on Pākehā was imminent and this was used to justify a violent and brutal Crown attack. This scare-mongering is not too different from claims made by Don Brash in the early 2000s, or Judith Collins in the early 2020s, or David Seymour in the last year, suggesting that there is some mythical Māori power-grab occurring by stealth. These claims, on each occasion, are of course utterly false – and what is telling is that they are used to justify not just war, or racist speech-making (as in Ōrewa), but also the removal of minimal Māori rights, which David Seymour is currently attempting, in order to uphold those individuals currently in power.

3. The fight in front of us

That brings me to the Treaty Principles Bill, and also to the question of what we all – and Pākehā in particular – should be doing in the weeks, months, and years ahead. I offer these suggestions cautiously. I continue to learn, and every time I read something I have written in the past I want

to rewrite it. But I think it's still helpful not just to look to the past and to map the present, but also to call for action in the future.

The Treaty Principles Bill is the most dangerous piece of legislation to be introduced into Parliament in the last 20 years. The ACT Party, with the National Party and New Zealand First's approval, is trying to introduce its version of Treaty principles via legislation. Different versions have been circulated (including in the ACT Party's materials and in a leaked Ministry of Justice document) but in essence it takes the three articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and twists them. Principles one and three roughly line up to articles one and three of Te Tiriti, with their assurances of Crown government and equality for Māori. But where you would expect principle two to match up to te tino rangatiratanga (ultimate Māori authority or chieftainship over their lands, villages, and all their treasures), the Treaty Principles Bill has replaced tino rangatiratanga with "chieftainship for all New Zealanders". This is an attempt to erase Māori authority, primarily because ACT perceives that its base – wealthier New Zealanders with large property holdings – are threatened by what tino rangatiratanga might mean in future. ACT has no right to rewrite Te Tiriti, and this Bill absolutely does endeavour to rewrite Te Tiriti through the vehicle of rewriting the Treaty principles, which have force in New Zealand law and policy.

It is crucial that as many of us as possible – but in particular Pākehā, who benefit from our whiteness and our close association with the Crown – speak up and against the Treaty Principles Bill. We need each of us to reach into our communities, to explain what the Bill is, and to encourage submissions against it. This means setting up conversations in progressive political spaces, unemployed workers' centres, women's centres, criminal justice campaigns, political party meetings, church groups, youth groups, community spaces, and more. We all need to be armed with responses to common counter-arguments. And we also need to be willing to explain why a referendum – which may lie behind this Bill, including if it does not proceed past select committee – is deeply damaging for this country as a whole. ActionStation, an organisation I work for part-time, is leading important work on this kaupapa, as are many Māori-led advocacy groups around the country.

Key to our advocacy as Pākehā on the Treaty Principles Bill will be explaining why we all have an interest in Te Tiriti o Waitangi: why Te Tiriti is a source of pride and differentiation for us as a country, why Te Tiriti gives us security and belonging in this country, why Te Tiriti is good for all of us. Because our advocacy must come from a place of solidarity, not charity. (I think, by the way, that Te Tiriti o Waitangi can be a point of differentiation without accepting the myth that we have the best race relations in the world; and without Pākehā using the "settler moves to innocence" – the attempts to relieve responsibility for imperialism that are described by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang.) Fred Moten said to white Americans, of white supremacy in the United States: "I don't need your help. I need you to recognise that this shit is killing you too, however much more softly ..." The same is true of Pākehā and white supremacy and racism in this country. A system that enables anti-Māori racism, the trashing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the supremacy of private property rights for the few is corrosive of collective peace in this country – and it feeds a hostile, corrosive culture that none of us can be proud of.

We must not also lose sight of the other threats on the immediate horizon: this National-ACT-NZ First Government's promise to reject the earlier endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the commitment to "rebalance" history teaching in schools, not to mention environmental changes (including the Fast-track Approvals Bill) and social and economic changes that may disproportionately harm Māori rights and interests, while granting further privileges and advantages to the most wealthy and powerful members of our community.

But I also think that in our work we cannot allow all of our energy to be sapped by this Government's damaging plans. We need to oppose those plans vigorously, organise, and act collectively. We must also, however, maintain advocacy for a positive, different future. Pākehā and tauiwi have an important role to play, in my view, in supporting moves towards realising the vision laid out in the Matike Mai report, coordinated by Moana Jackson and Margaret Mutu. There are difficult questions about the role for Pākehā and tauiwi in these efforts – Matike Mai was a Māori-led process, with values coming out of conversations with Māori, and Pākehā in particular need to proceed with caution when lifting these values out of the report and their cultural context. Progressing understanding of the spheres set out in the report – the kāwanatanga sphere, the tino rangatiratanga sphere, and the relational sphere – is in my view crucial, but we must also be led by Māori (especially those closely involved in taking Matike Mai forward) in determining how lines are drawn between those spheres.

In work on Matike Mai, and in other work, we as Pākehā must understand that we are differently positioned from other tauiwi or non-Māori. Pākehā are differently positioned from Pasifika peoples, who have a shared whakapapa with Māori. Pākehā are differently positioned from Asian New Zealanders, many of whom have experienced the oppressiveness of colonisation (often at the hands of the British) through their family history. Pākehā are differently positioned from black New Zealanders and other tauiwi New Zealanders who have a particular experience of racism in this country. It is other tauiwi who have helped me understand these points – a reminder that it will sometimes be non-Pākehā who help us better understand the place and positioning of Pākehā.

It will also be important to continue to seek to undo those changes of the last 30-40 years, if we are to build a Pākehā culture and a culture for Aotearoa that is less individualistic, more hospitable, and more connected. There are difficult questions for progressive and left-wing people also committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in these efforts. How can we reduce the role of markets in our lives, and sometimes insist on a greater role for a stronger social state (for example, in providing universal dental or free public transport) while also centring tino rangatiratanga? We need to wrestle with these questions, remembering always that collective analysis is likely to be more fruitful than individual reflection on these points.

Another key site of struggle is New Zealand's international orientation. While we are locked in to networks with the UK, the US, and other settler-colonial societies – through the Five Eyes alliance, for example – it will be difficult to shift our future direction as a country. We must consider new solidarities, with the Global South or People of the Global Majority, and how to unwind old ones. Groups like Justice for Palestine and Te Kuaka are doing important work raising these issues.

In sum, when I consider the Pākehā people in my social circles (including my family), when I think about the Pākehā community, I see a community that is divided. Yes, divided by class and wealth and perspective. But also divided by a small fringe that wants to damage this country's foundations. It is sometimes said that Te Tiriti o Waitangi could be inconsistent with democracy. But democracy has always been about more than box-ticking and head-counting. It is about constitutional foundations as well as elections; that is what a constitutional democracy is. Reviewing, revising, and erasing Te Tiriti o Waitangi tries to tear up our foundations – and so it is anti-democratic.

As well as the community being divided, I think there are parts of the community that are uncertain. The Human Rights Commission commissioned polling showing 32% of people in New Zealand haven't read any version of the Treaty or Te Tiriti and 32% say they are uninformed about Te Tiriti, compared to 58% who believe they are informed. There is a hunger to learn more, and

there is sometimes an instinctive desire to do more – but more education, organising, and mobilising can move that uncertainty to action to honour Te Tiriti.

While that community is divided in places, and uncertain, I also see pockets of commitment in the Pākehā community. 83% of people in New Zealand believe a country where everyone knows its history is important, according to the same Human Rights Commission polling, and a bulk of those respondents must have been Pākehā. I see people that use te reo Māori in everyday life, that want to learn more about te ao Māori and our history, that want to see Te Tiriti honoured. That is the state of our Pākehā nation, then: divided, uncertain, but – in parts – committed. That is where we start from as we look at the challenges ahead.

Conclusion

And there are a lot of challenges in front of us, as Pākehā, as New Zealanders, as human beings. We must begin by acknowledging that we are a community, just one community, that is part of a bigger community in this country – and a much longer history in this country, that long preceded the arrival of our community. We must continue to grapple with difficult questions about our culture and identity. And we must acknowledge that these questions are all political, questions that call forth from us the need for political action. We can all play different roles in political struggles: some of us will be on the streets, some of us will be speaking in our own communities, some of us in the media, some of us supporting others playing these roles. We need solidarity over saviourism, intellectual inquiry over ignorance, and courage over cowardice. These are the ways that we can take small steps towards realising Matua Moana's vision of a different, fuller, better Aotearoa by 2040. Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.