

Locum's Line-Outs - Sunday 12th September – Land – Week 2 Season of Creation

Wave Hill Station – Northern Territory. 1975

The photo shows much more than a portrait of two great leaders (Vincent Lingiari and Gough Whitlam.) It is the story of something much more - a turning point in the history of our nation, the beginning of an acceptance of the wrongs of the past, and a first step on the long road to reconciliation of cultures.

This is an image which turns our heads to the future, without turning our backs on the past.



**'I put into your hands this piece of the earth itself
as a sign that we restore them [lands] to you and your children forever'.**

Nugget Coombs had suggested to Whitlam that he should pour soil into the hand of Vincent Lingiari as **he handed over the deeds to the Gurindji** – a reversal of the gesture between John Batman and the Wurundjeri as the 'rights' to the land now occupied by Melbourne were exchanged in 1835.

*That was the story of Vincent Lingiari; But this is the story of something much more;
How power and privilege can not move a people;
Who know where they stand and stand in the law.
Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody From Little Things Big Things Grow.*

To listen to the whole song, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_ndC07C2qw

7 Biblical Principles Regarding the Question of Land:

- Land is a gift (and a promise) from God to be justly shared for the benefit of all humanity.
- Land is the 'place of life', the place where life is lived and celebrated, the place that gives life and identity. Land has a social function.
- 'Ownership' of land is never absolute; we are stewards of God's land.
- We must recognise the present-day tendency to turn land into a commodity for profit, leading to the exclusion of the poor and the denial of their rights to land. Our interventions must work to ensure there is fairness.
- The jubilee tradition affirms God's commitment to the poor in seeking to ensure just and equitable access to land and resources.

- Human work on the land should express the dignity of human labour and the joy of participation and cooperation because it is a privilege to be co-creators with God in the unfolding story of creation.
- It is against God's will to strip the earth of its fertility and to rob future generations of its benefits.

(Source: Philpott G., Butler M. *Land in South Africa: Gift for all Or Commodity for a Few*. Occasional Paper No 1. 2004. Pietermaritzburg, Church Land Programme.)

Nelson Mandela writes about South Africa, but I think his words transcends boundaries: *Each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country. Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom. That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland.*

His words remind me of Walter Scott's

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said,
 This is my own, my native land!
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
 As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
 From wandering on a foreign strand!

And we all know Dorothea McKellar's words – *I love a sunburnt country, A land of sweeping plains, Of ragged mountain ranges, Of droughts and flooding rains. I love her far horizons, I love her jewel-sea, Her beauty and her terror - The wide brown land for me!*

But what about this poem:

'Spiritual Song of the Aborigine' – Hyllus Maris

I am a child of the Dreamtime People
 Part of this land, like the gnarled gumtree
 I am the river, softly singing
 Chanting our songs on my way to the sea
 My spirit is the dust-devils
 Mirages, that dance on the plain
 I'm the snow, the wind and the falling rain
 I'm part of the rocks and the red desert earth
 Red as the blood that flows in my veins
 I am eagle, crow and snake that glides
 Through the rainforest that clings to the mountainside
 I awakened here when the earth was new
 There was emu, wombat, kangaroo
 No other man of a different hue
 I am this land
 And this land is me
 I am Australia.



Hyllus Maris was born in Cummeragunja (On the Murray River, NSW) in 1934 (died 1986). With the intent of letting the public know and understand the relationship between indigenous people and Australia. Hyllus wrote 'Spiritual Song of the Aborigine' to share what being one with nature is like, speaking through an indigenous viewpoint. This spiritual connection is rooted in her people's long affinity and history in this place.

Shalom
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