



WALKING TOGETHER – towards Makarrata

Makarrata = 'coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace.'

Place and context

As days warm up, blue tongues sun on the garden steps. Wararak (Wattle) blossoms. Resting nearby, I am warmed knowing the generosity of Elders who have welcomed me here to Djaara Country. I acknowledge Elders past and present and do my best to tread lightly.

Acknowledgements Of Country are tied into all of my entries of Walking Together. This edition considers aspects of place and context that are sometimes overlooked.

We all have ancestors, culture and context. These are important in our collective story - who we are, where we are and how we are. When we listen to Country, we both acknowledge and respond to it. Every bit of our journey is informed by time and place - as 'Country' in the First Nations use of this term.

I was born to young, working class parents in rural Southern Germany, living my early years in a tiny town and a tiny, solitary house surrounded by fields. There the air force ignored its local impact, jets swooping low, shaking our walls every week. In the early 80s the nation, rumbling with intergenerational trauma, was feeling the threat of the Cold War - nuclear warfare. My family boarded a plane to that curious, vast, distant land down-under to a promise of safety and freedom.

My partner has Northern Italian heritage. We often reflect on nuances of our heritage. A mountain range between those countries, among other contexts, has impacted our history and culture. We similarly reflect about this great land of many nations that our families now call home.

There is so much history and context, beginning with 65000 + years of continuous culture and including ongoing colonisation.

Australia's diverse climate and geography have impacted the ways that people have traditionally lived, managing lands, waters and seasonal foods. They have shaped knowledge systems, trade, kinship, fire practice, Lore and language over countless generations. Non-First Nations Peoples are just beginning to grasp the diversity of First Peoples on this continent and the immense wealth of knowledge and wisdom that could benefit us all if we listen.

In an incredible act of unity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the Uluru Statement From The Heart was born. It is a generous and humble invitation directly to the Australian people after so many years of injustice and failed petitions to parliament. It grew from 12 deliberative regional dialogues, each with over 100 local First Nations leaders from across Australia, who each selected representatives to attend the First Nations Constitutional Convention in 2017. An overwhelming consensus of over 250 delegates adopted The Uluru Statement From The Heart.

Megan Davis - Cobble Cobble woman, professor of Law, UNSW, and United Nations Human Rights Councillor writes

"We are located here together, we are born here, we arrive here, we die here and we must coexist in a peaceful way. The fundamental message that many elders planted in the Uluru Statement is that the country needs peace, and the country cannot be at peace until we meet: The Uluru statement is the beginning of that".

First People face racism every day. There is an all too common lack of understanding of history such as realities of displacement including white assimilation policies. These have been experienced in no short measure in Australia's most populated areas where First Peoples are very diverse in appearance with many important stories to tell. Many non-First Nations people may be surprised to learn that the majority of First Peoples live here.

First Nations have diverse needs and solutions. Yet there are very significant failings at a federal level on issues that disproportionately affect First Peoples across the continent, including incarceration, child detention, deaths in custody, child removals from families, health outcomes, intergenerational trauma and lower life expectancy. Federal policies have not closed gaps on significant issues. In some areas the gap has widened. The Uluru Statement From The Heart speaks to these issues of safety and freedom.

Both resistance and unity have defined First Peoples survival across this diverse land - Australia, and through many acts of resilience, First People continue to call for and show the way.

The Uluru Statement Of The Heart

<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>

Floria Maschek is an ally and member of Friends of Nalderun (FoN). FoN members are guided by Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation and are diverse individuals and representatives of many local community networks, supporting Nalderun's visions and work. Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation supports the Aboriginal Community and is led by Aboriginal people while providing many learning and cultural opportunities to the broader community. Nalderun is a Dja Dja Wurrung word meaning "all together".

More information can be found at www.nalderun.net.au