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Acceptance Speech

Kath Walker

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Acceptance Speech

Abstract

Allow me to begin this address by expressing my sincere gratitude to Macquarie University for bestowing such an honour upon me. It represents a milestone in the history of this land now known as Australia, for it recognizes, belated though it be, the value of a most ancient earth culture to modern society for us who came late to 'civilization', missing the gap of centuries. When you came we admired and marvelled, but with foreboding. We had so little, but we had happiness, each day was a holiday. For we were people before we were citizens, people before we were ratepayers, tenants, customers, employees, parishioners.

OODGEROO

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Allow me to begin this address by expressing my sincere gratitude to Macquarie University for bestowing such an honour upon me. It represents a milestone in the history of this land now known as Australia, for it recognizes, belated though it be, the value of a most ancient earth culture to modern society for us who came late to 'civilization', missing the gap of centuries. When you came we admired and marvelled, but with foreboding. We had so little, but we had happiness, each day was a holiday. For we were people before we were citizens, people before we were ratepayers, tenants, customers, employees, parishioners. We could not understand white man's gradings, rigid and unquestioning. Your sacred tokens of lord and lady, highness and holiness, eminence, majesty. We could not understand your strange cult of uniformity, this mass obedience to clocks, timetables. Puzzled, we wondered at the importance to you of ties, gloves, uniforms and shoes. New to us were gaols and orphanages, rents and taxes, banks and mortgages. We, who had so few things, had the prime things. We had no policemen, lawyers, middlemen, brokers, financiers, millionaires. So, the new 'wonders', stocks and shares, real estate, compound interests, sales and investments, had bewildered us all. Oh, we have benefited, we have been gifted with new knowledge, a new world opened. Suddenly caught up in the white man's ways, gladly and gratefully we accept, for this is necessity. But remember white man, if life is for happiness you too surely have much to change. In summing up I would like to restate that a multicultural society can only successfully occur in this country when seventh generation Australians recognize the Aboriginal culture. No change can, or will occur, until the theft of Aboriginal land and the slaughter and enslaving are redeemed and compensated. This Aboriginal land will never accept and will always be alien to any race who dares try to enslave her. Aboriginals will always be the custodian of the traditional lands, regardless of any other enforced law system. For ladies and gentlemen, my friends, the land is our mother. Aborigines cannot own her for she owns us. Thank you.

At the conclusion of the ceremony Oodgeroo recited the Aboriginal Charter of Rights:

We want hope not racialism,
Brotherhood not ostracism.
Black advance
Not white ascendance.
Make us equal not dependent.
We need help not exploitation.
We want freedom not frustration.
Not control but self-reliance
Independence not compli-ance.
Not rebuff but education
Self-respect not resignation.
Free us from a mean subjection
From a bureaucrat protection.
Let's forget the old time slavers,
Give us fellowship not favours,
Encouragement not prohibitions
Houses, not settlements and missions.
We need love, not overlordship
Grip of hand, not whip hand wardship.
Opportunity that places
White and Black on equal basis.
You dishearten, not defend us,
Circumscribe, who should befriend us.
Give us us welcome, not aversion,
Give us choice, not cold cohesion.
Status, not discrimination
Human rights, not segregation.
View the law like Roman Pontius,
Make us proud, not colour conscious.
Give the deal you still deny us,
Give goodwill not bigot bias.
Give ambition, not prevention,
Confidence, not condescension,
Give incentive, not restriction,
Give us Christ, not cruxifixion.
Though baptized and blessed and bibles,
We are still tabooed and libelled.
You devout salvation-sellers
Make us neighbours, not fringe dwellers.
Make us mates, not poor relations,
Citizens, not serfs on stations.
Must we native old Australians,
In our own land rank as aliens.
Banish, ban, and conquer caste.
Then we'll win our own at last.