

SO WHILE THE COLONY OBSESSES OVER BALLOTS AND ADVISORY BOARDS, A LOT OF THE SOVEREIGN MOB ARE ACTUALLY OUT HERE BUILDING FUTURES, WHERE OUR PEOPLE SURVIVE WITHOUT THIS COLONIAL OCCUPATION, AND WITHOUT HAVING TO RELY ON IT.

BECAUSE FOR US THE GOAL HAS NEVER BEEN ASSIMILATION.

THE GOAL HAS NEVER BEEN INCLUSION.

THE GOAL HAS ALWAYS BEEN SELF-DETERMINATION, SOVEREIGNTY, AND LIBERATION.

AND WE'RE NOT WAITING FOR THE STATE TO GRANT IT.

WE'RE RECLAIMING IT.

Keiran Stewart-Assheton is the founder of the Black People's Union and a Traditional Owner of Wani-Wandian Country in the Yuin Nation.



Made into a zine on unceded Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung country, in solidarity with First Nations struggle.

sovereignty
is not a policy
document,
it's a
practice

Keiran Stewart-Assheton

First Nations listeners are advised that the following program may contain the names and voices of our Mob who have passed on to the dreaming.

1. "WHEN THAT REFERENDUM FAILED, NOT ONLY DID THE STATE TIGHTEN ITS GRIP, BUT THE SETTLER LEFT FELL SILENT."

i. "where did everybody go?"

Today we're going to be having a few different yarns on a few different topics. Originally I did have an interview planned for today, unfortunately due to some technical difficulties we're gonna have to save that one until next week¹. but instead today we're gonna talk a bit about post-referendum stuff. it's been what – seventeen, nineteen months, something like that, since the failed Voice to Parliament referendum. And what I wanna ask is:

"Where did everybody go? What happened to unity? Why is there so much silence amongst the settler left?"

Now, I dunno about you but I remember in the leadup to the referendum, as well as post-referendum, we had a lot of you know, so-called progressives coming out hand in hand parroting the same script, you know talking "about it's time to heal, let's come together let's unify, lets move forward as a nation."

But what they really meant was "forget."

Forget the centuries of genocide, forget the betrayal of Blackfullas by the state, by the left, by the liberals, and even by the so-called comrades.

Forget that they campaigned for a powerless advisory body while boots stayed on necks and our people kept dying in custody, kept having our land stolen, our kids removed and our voices ignored.

Because when that referendum failed, not only did the state tighten its grip, but the settler left fell silent.

So, where are they all now? Where are all these so-called progressive voices who claimed to stand with us? The ones who said, "we have your back" – but only showed up for panels, not for protests? Not for frontline defense? They only showed up for optics, not for outcomes. When it was trendy to speak up they flooded our inboxes, but now – where are they?

Nothing. No solidarity. No action. No presence.

Y'see, the settler left in this colony has a habit of performing support during campaigns, but then vanishing in the aftermath. They pack up their placards and they move on to the next cause, the next identity to platform, the next issue for them to co-opt. I remember so many of these people talking about how post-

Why's it filled with worms? Because the kangaroos been all ripped up in the bush.

Why's it been ripped up in the bush?

Because the bush is too thick.

Why's it too thick?

Cos these greenies just think that nature should be something that is just left to run rampant and wild by itself.

They don't understand that First Nations people are very much a part of the environment.

Now this is another thing – we've only got ten minutes left so I'm not going to talk about it this episode, but just how there exists a disconnect between Europeans and settlers in general – and the land. They very much see the environment and humans as being two separate entities. They don't see themselves as a part of the natural environment and part of these natural ecosystems, but Blackfullas are very much a part of the environment and ecosystems here prior to colonisation, so our manicuring and our impacts on the bushland and the way that we looked after it all was very much in line with the ecosystem, cos we were a part of that ecosystem, in the same way that an ant in a colony is still part of the bush, you don't look at an ant colony and go, "this is just an ant-made structure, it's not a part of the environment." It's still a part of the environment. Same with Blackfullas and the way we used to manage the bush.

– Keiran Stewart-Assheton, May 2025

Suggested further reading:

"Driving Disunity: the Business Council of Australia Against Aboriginal Communities," Lindy Nolan, 2017.

¹ See "Liberal Activism and the Police State" *Yillamin* episode on the killing of Abdifatah Ahmed by Victoria Police 17/4/25: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-liberal-activism-and-the-police-state>

That wilderness only sprung up because the land wasn't being managed by First Nations people anymore.

We weren't doing our cool burns anymore.

We weren't managing the land and taking care of everything, and it just grew bushy and wild, and overgrown, and that is not how the ~~australian~~ bush is suppose to look.

And I don't just say that as a Blackfulla saying "oh it's not meant to look this way, because we didn't have it look this way." I'm actually talking about the fact that it's not meant to look that way at all, even for the health and safety and longevity of the plants and animals in that bushland. Now a perfect example is these old-growth forests in ~~tasmania~~ I'm talking about, they took some core samples recently and they found that these big thick wildernesses down in ~~tasmania~~ only sprung up over the last hundred-and-fifty-odd years. Prior to that, there was a lot more plains down there, a lot more grasslands, and the forest and bushland down there was a lot more spread out.

This is something that is beneficial for so many of the plant and animal species on this continent. They've evolved to live like that: in these open woodlands and these open plains. Not these thick, scrubby bushlands that choke out all the light and choke out all the – x amount of plant species, and you end up with these monocultures of one or two types of trees dominating the whole entire bushland, and all of the biodiversity just gone.

Now we also see this right across the mainland, as well, not just ~~tasmania~~ of course. This is, like, everywhere that Europeans have impacted our cultural processes of maintaining the land and we see the same flow-on effect in the animals as well. Another really great example is kangaroos. Prior to colonisation, kangaroos had all these big open expanses to live in, where there was bush, it wasn't this thick dense scrubby bush that they couldn't get through. Now don't get me wrong, there's a lot of farmland out there that you find kangaroos on and stuff like that, but in places where kangaroos are still in the bush, the bush has grown so much more thicker and scrubbier that when the kangaroos hop through this bush, they get so ripped up and so cut up from all of the shrubs and thorns and bushes and whatever else, cos they don't have the open area to jump through, they get all cut up and then those cuts get infected, they get filled with stuff like worms, all different kinds of worms, and whatever else. And as an end result, it's actually made a lot of kangaroo meat across the Eastern coast not really fit for consumption anymore.

We can't even really go out and hunt kangaroos anymore in a lot of places across the East coast, because that meat is now filled with worms.

referendum, whether it was a 'yes' outcome or a 'no' outcome, we would have to continue to build, we would have to continue to, youknow, progress forward, that the fight wasn't ended – yet, when that referendum failed, so many people went quiet.

And this was actually the opportunity! The failure of the referendum was *the* opportunity for all the so-called allies to actually come out and support us, to demand more. We had shot down a powerless, tokenistic concession. Now was the time for people to actually, youknow, stand together and demand a lot more. Demand progress, real progress. Demand sovereignty. Be actually heard and listened to. Demand that self-determination be something that is given back to us, or rather – youknow, because self-determination is not necessarily something you can give – but rather, the obstacles to our self-determination be removed. The obstacles, of course, being the occupation of this colonial state and the way it refuses to engage in any sort of meaningful international treaty with us, or to give us any kind of meaningful land back, or to, youknow, just simply allow us to control our own affairs in our own communities.

It's been silence ever since. And youknow ironically as well I see you know a lot of these people from my own community, other Blackfullas, 'yes' campaigners, youknow they – same sort of thing – talked this big talk about how we had to come together and we had to heal the fractures in our communities caused by the referendum, yet the only healing – if you can call it that – that I've seen from these same actors are just with themselves. All the 'yes' campaigners coming together to pat themselves on the back and tell themselves what a good job they done, and youknow, LARP² as healing the community, healing the rift.

But the fact of the matter is, these people haven't reached out to the sovereign 'no' campaigners, they haven't reached out to Blackfullas who said:

'No.
We don't wanna be
included in your
racist,
illegal
constitution.'

² 'Live-Action Role-Play'

They haven't looked to heal any of the fractures between the 'yes' camps and the 'no' camps, and I just wanna also include here. I really want to touch on something, which is that it's not necessarily the responsibility of the sovereign 'no' campaigners to initiate this healing process, or to lead it or guide it. We weren't the ones in the wrong at the end of the day. And at the end of the day, people might have opinions about who was in the wrong, who was in the right, but when we take an actual factual material analysis to it, we see that those who stood in their sovereignty were actually doing the right thing. They were doing the *legal* thing, in terms of intentional law, which is upholding our sovereignty, resisting our occupation, resisting assimilation. We're not the ones who need to do the coming-together. Don't get me wrong, we need to be a part of it. But we're not the ones who need to initiate this. Those 'yes' voters, those 'yes' campaigners – I wanna make a distinction here between voters and campaigners – those 'yes' campaigners, especially the ones who took a lot of money from the government and from NGOs³ to go out there and campaign 'yes,' they're the ones who need to address these issues. Because they're the ones who fractured off from our communities. They're the ones who decided to sell out their sovereignty and sell out calls for more tokenistic reforms. They're the ones that need to make the amends.

Now, I could talk for hours on this subject. I won't go on too much about it, but one thing in particular I really wanna touch on is the connection between the Voice to Parliament and Zionism. Now this is a connection that not many people know about. A lot of the sovereign 'no' campaigners were very aware of this, part of the reason why we were in that 'no' camp in the first place. But so many of those who – I'm including allies and stuff here as well – so many of those who thought they were doing the right thing and thought they were on the right side of history by campaigning 'yes' don't realise even today – or maybe they do, I dunno – but I'm gonna give 'em the benefit of the doubt, they don't realise that Zionism very much played a role in that Voice to Parliament. I'm not talking about Zionism in some sort of metaphorical sense where we compare the ~~australian~~ occupation to the occupation of Palestinian lands. I'm not just talking about it in the sense that equates Zionism with ~~australia's~~ settler colonialism. I'm talking quite literally.

We had one of the co-drafters of the *Uluru Statement From The Heart*, one of these co-drafters, many people may or may not know, was actually Mark Leibler. Mark Leibler is the chairperson of the ~~australian-israel~~ Jewish association – committee or something like that – 'AIJAC'.⁴ It's a Zionist lobby group that very much pushes for ~~australia's~~ support of ~~israel~~. It's a lobby group that pressures

yeah back to all the dry trees and stuff, you know they do these hazard reduction burns during the cooler wetter months, like over autumn and winter. It dries out for three to six months, and then what time of the year is it? Oh, it's the hot dry season. The time when all the bushfires are actually burning.

And look at all the fuel you've just created.

It's absolutely ridiculous.

So, youknow, this is just more evidence that the settler population here don't posses the knowledge, the epistemologies and ontologies to be able to actually manage our lands.

ii. bush “regeneration”

Now another big factor I see here that really evidences this is even in national parks and other areas where they have designated bush regeneration programs and they're not cutting down the bush and destroying the place, as they are over most of the continent. Even in these places where they try and re-green the place and make it look like the bush again, it doesn't look how the bush looked pre-colonisation. It really doesn't.

And you can actually go back – there are two ways that you can get the evidence yourself for this if you don't believe Indigenous oral traditions and history, is you can go and look at those diaries from the first fleet, as well as from Captain Cook's little “endeavour,” and the talk about this continent being a vast expanse of estates looking like farm-land kind of estates, that stretch for as far as the eye can see. In fact, the way that they documented it, was that it was the most lush and well-maintained estate that they had ever seen. It was more grand and more better than any estate that existed in Europe at the time, and this is written in their very own diaries of the colonisers. This isn't just me saying this. This is the colonisers themselves saying this. They talk about how great the place was. But they don't talk about this big thick dense bush. That's not what the diaries talk about.

Now another way that you can get the evidence of this is if you go and take core samples of the soil, where you drill in and you take out a big tube of the soil going down, and you analyse the layers, and you go back in time over history of how it looked in the past, and what-not. We see that a hundred and fifty to two hundred years ago, the place looked completely different to how it does now. And this even applies to places like those big old-growth forests down in ~~tasmania~~, where youknow they call 'em old-growth forests and they make out it's this untouched wilderness, but the thing is:

³ 'Non-Government Organisations'

⁴ ~~australia israel~~ & Jewish Affairs Council.

escape the flames very much climb up into this heat zone that kills them, because the flames are a lot higher, a lot hotter and a lot bigger, but not only that, it also kills off so much in the bush itself, those actual hazard reduction burns. Now, not only does the high temperature impact stuff like soils, and also youknow beneficial bacteria and fungi and whatever else that lives in the soil, that very much ties the ecosystem together, and allows plants to thrive, all of those micro-organisms in the soil, they're often killed off by the heat of these burns. Not only that, but depending whereabouts in so-called ~~australia~~ that you are, the heat of these burns can very much bake the soil – so you know, we've got a lot of clay-dense soils right across this continent. When they're exposed to heat, they dry out more, they solidify more, they become a lot more rockier, a lot more harder, a lot more difficult for the plants to actually live in, as a result. And now, another thing that these hazard reduction burns do – this is the thing I noticed the most though – whenever I go and see where a hazard reduction burn's happened, three, six months earlier, I see so much dead fuel everywhere. Because what happens is, these hazard reduction burns, they burn so hot that they kill plants. Now, they don't necessarily catch alight there and then, because the plants are green and healthy and thriving, before the hazard reduction burns, so they got all this water in 'em so they don't actually catch alight. But the heat kills the plant, and then it sits there for three to six months, drying out. And yknow, because it's standing up quite often, as well, it dries out even more effectively and even more quicker. You know when you seen a log that's been left laying on the ground, it very much sits there in a lot of moisture cos it's down on the ground. When you leave a log standing upright it dries out a lot quicker, a lot more thoroughly, so what happens is these hazard reduction burns take place, when you come through three to six months later, and then there's suddenly all this dead, dried-out fuel everywhere, ready to fuel the next bushfire.

Not only that, it's standing up still, quite a lot of it, which makes it so much easier to catch alight.

But not only that, it also allows small ground fires to so much easier climb up into the canopies of trees and create crown fires, they are obviously a lot more destructive than your average bushfire, but this is a problem that we often see with these hazard reduction burns.

That, and the hazard reduction burns themselves more often than not actually turn into bushfires. Cos these fullas, they don't know what they're doing when they're doing these hazard reduction burns, and it gets out of control, and it starts a bushfire, itself. And it's such a – it'd be comical if it wasn't so disgusting and so upsetting to see. But it's so ironic that they do these hazard reduction burns to prevent bushfires, and more often than not inevitably they actually create bushfires there and then with the hazard reduction burns itself. But

the government to ensure that it continues to send supplies and resources to ~~israel~~, continues to supply them with logistical support, as well as, youknow, paints a lot of the PR campaigns that try and promote ~~israel~~ as some sort of progressive entity. Youknow when we talk about, for example, when we see that propaganda around ~~israel~~ being the only democracy in the Middle East, and having the most moral army and all the pinkwashing and queer-washing and whatever else that happens with the IDF⁵. In the context of ~~australia~~, a lot of that is very much tied to Mark Leibler. Mark Leibler is a dodgy tax lawyer. He runs Arnold Bloch Leibler⁶, he's the only senior partner of Arnold Bloch Leibler. He's also old schoolmates with John Howard. You know, *the* John Howard: the conservative prime minister, who attacked so much workers rights, attacked so much First Nations rights, who began all this propaganda around the refugees and the boats that were coming in. Some of the older listeners might remember the TAMPA incident, where, coincidentally, the ship was called TAMPA and they decided to *tamper* with all the PR and all of the photos and stuff that were coming out of that and paint refugees as horrible people throwing their babies [off]-board in the middle of the ocean and whatever else. This was all part of John Howard's agenda.

The Voice to Parliament itself was again very much a part of John Howard's agenda. Many people might associate it as a campaign of [the] Labor [party], but it actually has its roots much earlier, it has its roots right back in the 1990s, actually.

The original roots of the Voice to Parliament is constitutional recognition, which was first put forward by mining lobby groups to the Howard era government.

And what happened, essentially, was all these mining lobbies, they came to Howard and other ministers of the Liberal National Party, and they talked about how they foresaw the primary obstacle to their extraction on this continent as First Nations sovereignty, and First Nations resistance, grounded in sovereignty. So they proposed this whole little agenda, called constitutional recognition, where Blackfullas would be inserted into the ~~australian~~ constitution, and as a result would, in terms of international law, would legally cede our sovereignty over to the ~~australian~~ entity in the process.

Now, back to how Leibler fits into all this. Leibler was very much a part of that original steering committee, [...] the constitutional reconciliation committee, that John Howard set up, he was on there alongside other Liberal ministers, other

5 ~~israel~~ Defence Force, also known as ~~israel~~ Occupation Force, or 'IOF.'

6 Arnold Bloch Leibler are a law firm specialising in commercial law and tax disputes. They are known to have supplied free legal advice to conservative politician Peter Dutton as recently as 2024.

players in the mining industry, they'd had a few different mining execs on there. This was very much a Zionist agenda. It literally was written by a Zionist lawyer. You need only go look at Mark Leibler's twitter to see the sort of stuff that this person supports, and see exactly how... How can I word this so it's appropriate for radio? I'm not entirely sure. But if you go and look at his twitter, you'll see exactly what I mean. This is the sort of person who retweets calls to raze Gaza and retweets calls to slaughter Palestinians, and all these other horrible things.

So, you know. Something for the listeners to contend with if they were very much in that 'yes' camp, but I do suggest that you go and look at the history of that, start to learn a bit more about it because there's still so much of it that's been swept under the rug, even now, eighteen months or however long after that referendum. Now a really great reading recommendation I have for the listeners out there is a book called *Driving Disunity: the Business Council of Australia Against Aboriginal Communities*. This book was written by a comrade, Lindy Nolan from the CPA-ML⁷ and this book actually is a really great resource that documents the Business Council's agendas and the way that the Business Council has consistently and continually undermined our sovereignty, undermined our cause for self-determination and very much steered this whole agenda toward assimilating us into the ~~australian~~ constitutions, as well as the other stuff that has caused quite a lot of fractures within our community, like Native Title for example. Native Title has been absolutely devastating for our communities, it has caused so much fractures, so many fights and arguments both in nations as well as between nations, but again you know Native Title was very much a product of that Business Council. So yeah go and read that book if you get the opportunity. It's only a short book as well it won't take you very long to read.

ii. "REBUILDING"

Now building a bit on from that last little bit that we were just discussing, I want to talk about not just resistance but I wanna talk about rebuilding. We've spent generations resisting, we've been resisting for, what, 250-odd years now. Ever since Cook first tried to land and the Gweagal warriors up there told him he wasn't welcome and Cook first fired those first shots at the Gweagal people there. Now we've obviously spent many generations resisting invasion, assimilation, resisting the erasure of who we are and where we come from, but resistance is only half of the story. The other half, the part that isn't talked about often enough in my opinion, is rebuilding. Because our struggle isn't just about what we're against, it's about what we're building in its place.

⁷ Communist Party of Australia-Marxist Leninists

Europeans have, in relation to ownership of land, and extraction of resources and ra-ra-ra. But not only that, they also lack the eighty thousand-plus years of knowledge that we've accumulated here, knowledge of how we manage the ecosystems, knowledge of how the forest and the bush and how we manage animal populations and waterways et cetera et cetera. We know from experience and just looking around us that this is the case.

2. "SETTLERS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS [ARE] INCAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE CURRENT PROBLEMS."

i. "hazard reduction burns" and cool burns

One really telling and really obvious way that we can see this is by simply just looking at **fire management**. For eighty thousand years or more, my people very much managed this land in such a way that we didn't have to worry about these big bushfires coming through every single year, as we do now. Settlers and their institutions, especially the government and your RFS and CFA¹⁰ and whatever other acronym depending on what state you're listening in, but all these fire-fighting services, when they go out and do hazard-reduction burns, they don't do it properly.

We used to do hazard reduction burns, for lack of a better term – fire-stick farming is a more appropriate label though – but y'know, we used to do these burns, prior to colonisation, but the way we would do 'em would be completely different from what we see now. We used to do what's known as a cool burn. Where we would burn off all of the dead matter, and we would do it in such a way that allowed the animals, and even the insects, to be able to escape those flames. In fact, a lot of the wildlife here on this continent has actually evolved alongside that, those cool burns and that fire-stick farming. One really easy example to see is when you go and light a fire out in the bush, and you start burning stuff off, you'll see all the insects start climbing up the trees and climbing up the bushes and whatever else trying to get to the top. Now the reason they do that is because our cool burns are very much down on the ground level, and 'cos our burning, a lot colder and a lot smaller than the hazard reduction burns that we see today. Insects would actually climb up these plants and they would be safe, out of the heat, and out of the flames, once they got youknow like two meters, or a meter and a half, however high, above the ground.

Now, when they do hazard reduction burns today, it's not the case. And all of these insects and other animals that try and go up these trees and plants to

¹⁰ Rural Fire Service and Country Fire Authority.

more empty homes just sitting there wasting away than we have homeless individuals in ~~australia~~. It's an absolutely disgusting statistic. In fact, we have several times the amount of empty houses as homeless individuals, we could house every single man, woman and child with their own house several times over, but you know when we're talking about land back, we're talking about, for example, ensuring that housing is divided up the right way, and that people aren't out there with investment properties and whatever else, profiting and exploiting their fellows civilians, especially working-class civilians, we're not talking about any of that stuff. So, in that regard, it's again something that settlers should really get behind.

But also – and this is something that Uncle Robbie⁹ talks about a lot – we've got this whole issue of ecocide. Which is rooted first and foremost in genocide. But this whole issue of ecocide, which will inevitably lead to our suicide if it's not something that we address. Now when we look at the climate, and how rapidly it's changing, when we look at food production systems, and how they're starting to fail across the planet, even when we look here in our own backyards of ~~australia~~ we see massive massive issues with this stuff, ~~australia's~~ got one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, one of the highest extinction rates, one of the highest rates of stuff like topsoil erosion and dry land salinity, now all of these things happen and are continuing to happen because of eurocentric models of agriculture, and eurocentric models of relating to the land. In particular that domination-ownership, and that extraction-ownership. So when we're talking about landback we're also talking about being able to steward our lands, the way that we have sustainably for eighty thousand years or more, to ensure that we're not all marching toward our suicide. To ensure that we as a species continue to live for several more generations. Which is something that unfortunately, Western systems are completely and utterly incapable of addressing.

And we know that they're completely and utterly incapable of addressing it.

And its not just because of capitalism. This is another excuse that you often hear: that if there was some sort of settler-led socialist revolution, we could address climate change and ra-ra-ra, and the fact of the matter is we can't. Because at the end of the day, these issues aren't just rooted in capitalism. They're very much rooted in eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies. If you don't understand what I'm talking about when I start using these technical terms, what I'm describing here is European ways of thinking, European knowledge systems, and European ways of relating to the land in general. This is very much something that is incapable of addressing the current problems. We know this, because of the whole entire extraction and domination outlook that

9 Uncle Robbie Thorpe, elder of the Krautungalung people of the Gunnai Nation, and prolific activist.

When we talk about decolonisation, about land back, about sovereignty, we're not talking about it in the abstract sense. We're not talking about it in the symbolic sense either.

We're not interested in advisory roles or a seat in parliament's little waiting room.

We're talking about real power.

We're talking about the power to feed our communities with our own hands, from our own land.

We're talking about the power to teach our children truth, our truth. Not the colony's lies.

We're talking about the power to govern, to heal, to defend and to thrive on our own terms.

We already know how.

We been doing it for eighty thousand-plus years now.

We are the oldest surviving culture with the oldest surviving political systems, political and cultural systems, that have been proven for eighty thousand years to be sustainable indefinitely.

This is something obviously that very few other cultures and political systems around the world can claim. I think there's maybe only two or three other Indigenous groups that passed the ten thousand year mark. Those being the Indigenous people of Turtle Islands and their many different cultures and political systems, and some of the Indigenous tribes of Africa, who, of course, have same sort of thing: political and cultural systems that go back tens of thousands of years.

When we look at other places around the world, though, we see that quite often political systems, they die off around the thousand-year mark. It's very rare for an empire to – or any other sort of nation or political system – to last more than a thousand years.

Talking about what we're looking to build here, we have been very much doing it quietly: in community gardens, in cultural camps, in healing circles, in food sovereignty projects; we've been building fire stick teams across this continent, bringing back stuff like fire stick farming and traditional sustainable management of the land, we're reviving traditional fisheries, there's language programs happening right across the continent, looking to have resurgence in that cultural language, which is a very important thing – we know that language is very much tied to identity. People who have their own language have their own identity, their own nationality and have something to rally behind. But we've not just been doing that stuff, we've also been doing stuff like creating blak-led unions, like the BPU⁸, for example.

8 Black People's Union.

This is what sovereignty looks like.

It's not a policy document, it's a practice.

It's not something that we ask for permission for from the colonial occupier, it's something that we do, regardless of recognition or permission from the occupiers.

So while the colony obsesses over ballots and advisory boards, a lot of the sovereign Mob are actually out here building futures, where our people survive without this colonial occupation, and without having to rely on it.

Because for us the goal has never been assimilation.

The goal has never been inclusion.

The goal has always been self-determination, sovereignty, and liberation.

And we're not waiting for the state to grant it.

We're reclaiming it.

With or without them.

If you want to know where the future is being built – it's not in Canberra, it's out on country, in the hands of our people, and it has very much already began.

Now, this is something, of course, that we do look for settler support with. Of course I don't mean that in a way where we want settlers to think that they have the ideas or solutions for our problems because they do *not*. We know from experience that when settlers come out with paternalistic ideas of how to address and fix our situation, that these ideas are very much rooted in that covert racism and that paternalistic racism that sees us and our cultural and political systems as being incapable of looking after ourselves and bettering ourselves and managing our predicaments. What we need instead is *labour*. We need resources, we need settlers who are willing to be not *allies* but *accomplices*. Settlers who are willing to put their money where their mouth is, to reach deep into their pockets, and to help fund our programs, and to show up, to put in the labour, go stand on the front lines with us, to actually be a part of our struggle. Now something I often hear is that – there's a lot of reactionary nonsense around, right? Where quite a lot of settlers think that our sovereignty is something that's going to leave them behind. Something I've mentioned plenty of times on the show but I want to mention again: when we talk about caring for country as First Nations people, obviously we're talking about caring for the land and the waterways, for the plants and for the animals, but we're also talking about caring for people as well. For us, caring for country is caring not just for the land but for everything on that land. That includes the settlers that live here

today, too. Caring for country, for us, is not about looking after Blackfullas and looking after our lands and kicking out the whites. It's never been about that. It's about making sure that everyone is actually looked after, everyone is healthy.

So our sovereignty is not something that seeks to mass deport settlers or disenfranchise settlers. In fact, quite the opposite. It's something that would actually provide quite a lot of material support to the average working class settler. Now you take housing for example. We don't want to become some exploitative landlords, that's not what landback is about. For us, landback is not about taking land and putting it into the hands of a couple of Blackfullas who are going to manage it privately as some capitalist investment. For us, landback is about upholding kinship that our people have with country. Land back for us, and land ownership for lack of a better term, for us, is very much rooted in kinship and very much rooted in communal ownership. I'm using the word 'ownership' here in a very light sense, because our concepts of ownership are very different to western concepts of ownership, especially in terms of property, especially in terms of land.

A great analogy actually that I like to use for this is - and it's such a symbolic thing, as well, but – we see the land as our mother. Now, when we look at our relationships – and when I say 'we,' I mean people in general – you don't *own* your mum. But it's still *your* mum. You know, it's the person who provides you and your siblings with nurturing and nourishment and whatever else, it's where you come from. And it's also the person who, when you, in turn, you grow up and they get old, then you look after them back, and you ensure is looked after and cared for and fed and whatever else. You know when we're talking about ownership of land, we are very much talking about it in that sort of kinship, ownership of, you know, it's not our possession, that we dominate, but it is still a – for lack of a better term – somewhat of an exclusive kinship that certain people are privy to, and others not so much.

Now, when we're talking about landback we're talking about stuff like housing people, not just housing our own Mob, who really do need housing at the moment, very desperately need housing, our Mob are something like ten times more likely to be homeless than anybody else on this continent, even though this is our own homeland – ten times more likely to be homeless on our own homelands. Absolutely ridiculous statistic, but we're not talking about becoming some landlords that are going to exploit all these settlers, and workers, and exploit each other and whatever else. We're talking about owning the land communally, in that kinship sense, and using it to look after everybody on the land. Now we've got plenty of houses for example. ~~australia's~~ homelessness crisis doesn't exist because of lack of housing. There is very much an artificial supply and demand issue that could be addressed literally over night. We have