The Decision to Discriminate Book Launch, Canberra 13 November 2012

Dr John Falzon

We are here because of the decision to discriminate.

We are here because we want to remember the stories that have led to the decision to discriminate.

As well as the stories that follow the decision to discriminate.

We are not, however, here because we are powerless observers of the decision to discriminate.

No.

We are here not just because of the decision to discriminate.

We might be here to share our collective grief over the decision to discriminate.

But we are also here because of the decision to resist!

The recording of these stories;
the decision to document these testimonies to the gaping sore of continued colonisation;
the decision taken by concerned Australians, in solidarity with the First Peoples, especially in the Northern Territory;
this decision is a brave and beautiful act of resistance in the face of oppression.

The decision to resist is a decision to hold fast to the truth.

For there is nothing as revolutionary as the truth.

This book is a means by which the truth speaks to power.

Not because the guts of our desire is to speak the truth to those who have denied and degraded the truth.

No. We speak the truth to power by speaking the truth to each other.

Truth is spoken to power when people experiencing the boot or the brunt of colonisation and control claim the space, taking over the arena, to speak the truth to each other and to those of us who are privileged to stand in solidarity with them.

For the real power for social change comes from the people who achieve it on the ground under the guiding stars of struggle and hope.
Change will not be imposed from above.

As Dr Djiniyini Gondarra put it so eloquently:

*People are sick and tired of being controlled. When people are sick and tired of control they just give up hope: When our lives are being threatened and taken away, we just sit and do nothing... people are dying, not just dying spiritually and emotionally but dying physically. They cannot live for the day because their lives are controlled by somebody else. They have given up hope: what is the use?*

You don’t build a community up by putting its people down.

You only achieve humiliation.

And humiliation begets disempowerment.
And disempowerment begets despair.
Or rage.

But we are here because of a decision to resist, a decision to resist that which dehumanises, a decision to create a society that celebrates diversity, that begins with a profound sense of respect, through listening to and learning from, the First Peoples of this land, a society built not only on a redistribution of wealth and resources but also a redistribution of hope.

This is the only way to achieve lasting change.

Not by discrimination but by self-determination.

This is the kind of revolutionary change that lies at the heart of the contradictions that this book so lovingly documents.

And, let us not forget, as Bobbi Sykes, wrote so powerfully:

*The revolution is alive*
*While it lives*
*Within us;*
*Beating, making our hearts warm,*
*Our minds strong, for we know*
*That justice is inevitable – like birth.*