

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHAT'S ON – FEBRUARY 2018

Happy New Year to all members and friends and welcome to 2018.

We hope that you are energised and ready to make your voices heard.
We look forward to your participation, ideas, enthusiasm and friendship.

FEBRUARY

Thursday 1 February
6.00 – 8.00pm

Making Waves: ICAN (2017 Nobel Peace Prize)
The Cube, ACMI
Federation Square

Tuesday 13 February
1.00 – 3.00pm
12 noon

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room, Ross House
Lunch at Japanese restaurant opposite Ross House

Wednesday 21 February
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

MARCH

Celebrate International Women's Day with the UAW.
Tuesday 20 March 10.30 – 12.30
4th floor meeting room Ross House.

Speaker: Emeritus Professor Patricia Grimshaw AO
'WHY WOMEN'S STORIES MATTER'
Put the date in your diary now!

VALE: Elizabeth Kourtis (see page 8)

“WHY I’M NO LONGER TALKING TO WHITE PEOPLE ABOUT RACE”

By RENI EDDO-LODGE

by Carmen Green

At last year’s Melbourne Writers’ Festival, London based Reni Eddo-Lodge was one of the most talked about writers because of her book **“Why I’m no longer talking to white people about race”**.

A few years earlier, British white feminists had accused her of being divisive if she tried to discuss a race analysis of feminism as they saw no need to discuss structural racism. Whites became defensive and anxious at her attempts to discuss the impact of racism on the lives of British men and women.

As a result of this, in February 2014 Reni published a post on her blog which said that:

“I’m no longer engaging with white people on the topic of race. Not all white people, just the vast majority who refuse to accept the legitimacy of structural racism and its symptoms. I can no longer engage with the gulf of an emotional disconnect that white people display when a person of colour articulates their experience. You can see their eyes shut down & harden.”

Her blog received huge support and praise from both black and white readers many of whom shared her view that discussions about racism were often led by those who are largely unaffected by it. So she decided to expand the blog into a book with the same name. In a page turning seven chapters, she makes sure that her readers understand that racism is a white problem. She has put us on notice that we talk about race by not talking about it.

Her book outlines the existing power dynamics of British society. She highlights discrimination on the basis of race and says that racism is baked into society. We do not live in a meritocracy as racism has concentrated power into white hands. People with African sounding names are less likely to be called for a job interview.

We are all affected by white privilege. White people have the positions of power in society so they dictate the dominant ideology. She answers the statement that non -white people can be racist too by saying “yes but they can’t negatively affect other people’s lives with their prejudices because of the huge power differential between whites and blacks”. If you’re part of a national minority, she states that the dominant ideology describes the past and the portrayals of “you” in the media are formed by the dominant ideology.

Her chapter “The feminism question” is a must read for feminists. She says that “being a feminist with a race analysis means seeing clearly how race and gender are intertwined when it comes to inequalities.” She criticises those in Britain who claim that misogyny is a foreign import when the statistics show that on average seven women a month are killed in England and Wales by a current or former partner. She says that “misogyny is not a problem to be solved with closed borders ...it exists in the psyche of what it means to be a man in every country.”

Black feminists use the word “intersectionality” to talk about the crossover of two distinct discriminations-racism and sexism- that happens to black women and creates barriers and obstacles to equality.” Reni’s descriptions of the the white feminist backlash against intersectionality make disturbing reading. She says that in Britain among feminists” there are a few ideological standouts-race, reproductive rights and conservatism-that continue to cause immovable fault lines in the movement and that the backlash against intersectionality was white feminism in action.”

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In relation to the question of race and class, Reni says “The reality is if you are born not white in Britain you probably haven’t been born into wealth ...and that black and minority ethnic people are much more likely to live in income poverty than their white counterparts”. Black men have the highest unemployment rates in the country and that black women are more likely to be unemployed than white women. She stresses that “none of this is to say that white people aren’t living in poverty in Britain. Rather it’s to point out that the working class people in this country are not all white.”

Reni has described the British experience of racism but her book has also resonated in countries like Australia. She wants to promote self-reflection in white people on how we are advantaged by the dominant white ideology. She says that we all participate in the privilege given to whiteness unless we consciously refuse to by challenging other white people on race. She said that writing her book was her way of re-gaining her power and that we all have a role to play in challenging unfair dominate modes of power. Perhaps in Australia, we could start by joining the campaign to change the date of Australia day to something more acceptable than the day of British invasion?

This review doesn’t do justice to this important & totally absorbing book so please borrow this book from your local public library or listen to the Melbourne Writers’ Festival podcast : “Reni Eddo-Lodge on race with Benjamin Law :
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcktV6lCB74>

Make the connection: GENDER PAY GAP IN AUSTRALIA AND RACE by
Santilla Chingaibe by Carmen Green

I first heard Santilla Chingaibe (award winning journalist & documentary filmmaker) speak at a Victorian Women’s Trust function late last year and although she spoke only briefly I was impressed with what she said. I was, therefore, pleased to read an article by her on the VWT website. In her article she makes the connection between the gender pay gap and race in Australia. She also examines some of the barriers that are preventing indigenous, migrant & refugee women from participating fully in the workplace. She says that one of the biggest barriers is systemic racism and that according to the Australian Human Rights Commission systematic racism “is not about whether individuals hold racist views, but about the uneven impact of laws, policies or practices” and is entrenched within institutions, governments and businesses. The Commission’s former President Gillian Triggs believes that there is a clear correlation between discrimination and inequality. Santilla feels there should be clearer data around the gender pay gap that depicts these differences to help policy makers come up with effective strategies to ensure all women are able to have access to employment opportunities.

Both Santilla and Reni Eddo-Lodge write with a sense of urgency about the need for action to ensure that everyone -regardless of race or gender or ethnicity or religion- has the same right to live their life without discrimination.

ABORTION LAW REFORM IN AUSTRALIA: activism still needed

by Cath Morrison

Jane Caro recently commented although there have been many positive social changes in recent years- same sex marriage is now a reality across Australia, euthanasia legal in Victoria, abortion law reform lags behind.

She writes that "euthanasia legislation passed in Victoria and similar legislation only failed in NSW by one vote. Such a result guarantees the issue will be back. And yet, a bill to decriminalise abortion in NSW was defeated in May this year by a much wider margin.

What was one of the first things some conservatives in our Federal Parliament did after the resounding "Yes" vote on same sex marriage? They went after women's reproductive rights, specifically the decision by anti-violence-against-women group White Ribbon to publicly support the decriminalisation of abortion in the two Australian states where it remains a crime: NSW and Queensland.

Young Australian women should not think that their right to choose to have an abortion is as solid and secure as they may have thought. It still depends upon where you live and how much money you have and the anti-abortion religious opposition will never rest in their efforts to turn back the clock and remove the few rights we have achieved.

This is the current situation in Australian States and Territories:

ACT: Legal; must be provided by a medical doctor. (Laws reformed in 2002)

NSW: A crime under criminal code, though generally regarded as lawful if performed to prevent serious harm to a woman's physical or mental health.

NT: Legal if two doctors agree a woman's physical or mental health is endangered by pregnancy, or for serious foetal abnormality.

Qld: A crime under criminal code, though generally regarded as lawful if performed to prevent serious harm to a woman's physical or mental health.

SA: Legal if two doctors agree a woman's physical or mental health is endangered by pregnancy, or for serious foetal abnormality. (Act amended in 1969)

Tas: Legal to 16 weeks' gestation; two doctors must give approval if performed after 16 weeks. (Laws reformed in 2013)

Vic: Legal to 24 weeks; two doctors must give approval if performed after 24 weeks. (Laws reformed in 2008)

WA: Legal to 20 weeks, though some restrictions apply.

Currently, women in Queensland do obtain abortions, but risk criminal charges for doing so. Women in New South Wales face the same scenario, where they can be prosecuted for procuring or performing a termination. This is despite research showing a vast majority of Australians support laws that enable women to access abortion before and after 24 weeks' gestation, and that only a small minority believe abortion should be banned.

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Dr Leslie Cannold author of *The Abortion Myth*, says: *Australian feminists — at least those outside of Victoria, where abortion was decriminalised in 2008 — have never fought hard enough for abortion law reform. I don't think we've ever really had it together in this country ... That is why we've got laws [in Queensland and New South Wales] that date back to the 1800s. Don't kid yourself that the Australian pro-choice movement has ever really been good at this stuff." In some states and territories, she says, women have organised with great effect — the ACT decriminalised it in 2002, Victoria in 2008, and Tasmania in 2013.*

Much more needs to be done. It is important that feminists do not “drop the ball” on campaigns for abortion reform- publicly funded, readily accessible and legal

Access to publicly funded abortion services is as much of a problem as legality of abortion.

For associate professor Barbara Baird, deputy dean in the School of Social and Policy at Flinders University, the bigger issue concerning abortion in Australia is access. It largely impacts poor women, Indigenous women, women in rural and regional areas and women who need abortions in the second and third trimesters.

"The decriminalisation of abortion in Victoria has made, I think, almost no impact on the problem of access to services," Associate Professor Baird says. She says roughly 80 per cent of abortions in Victoria are performed in private clinics — most of which are located in Melbourne — and can be prohibitively expensive. This is also the case in most other states, where access to affordable abortion is becoming more difficult.

For example, abortion service provider Marie Stopes International in late 2016 revealed that it would no longer be performing surgical abortions in two of its north Queensland clinics due to lack of funding, meaning women who require surgical terminations (medical abortions can only be provided until nine weeks' gestation) will have to travel to Brisbane if they can afford it. This access difficulty is being replicated in other States.

In Tasmania, although abortion was legalised in 2013, it was reported recently in *The Age* that the only clinic in Hobart (and all of Tasmania) had closed late in 2017 (ABC News, David Robertson). The Tasmanian Government is under pressure to find a new surgical abortion service, after the closure of the state's only clinic.

As Leslie Cannold says; *the abortion debate, and the push to decriminalise it, is also about the place of women in society. "This is a ground-zero feminist battle, because if we cannot control our bodies, we control nothing," she says. "That's why [anti-abortion groups] focus on this issue ... they believe that the place of women is barefoot and pregnant in the home....And the way that you ensure that is ... you deny [women] the capacity to control their fertility, and you stigmatise and degrade them when they seek to do so."*

Abortion rights remain a hot button issue for all women fighting for equality.

UAW UPDATE

While many of us were relaxing over the holiday period, other members had their wits about them and were sending off letters to the editor on a range of subjects. They were published in The Age, and we think that they are worth reprinting.

Congratulations to ICAN

Congratulations to the winners of the Nobel Peace Prize (Nobel 'gratifying', but ban would be better, 11/12) from an Australian mother and grandmother who agrees with and appreciates the efforts of this group in the banning of nuclear weapons. It's a shame the Australian government shows disdain and has failed to congratulate and celebrate the award. I'm proud of you guys, keep on with it.

Valerie Campbell. 12.12.2017

It's a rotten process and design

Thank you, Damien Bonnice (Comment, 29/12) and Dimity Reed (Comment, 31/12), for your lucid comments on the proposed commercial desecration of Federation Square. I agree, Federation Square is our square, it was designed for the people as a civic and cultural space. It reflects our history and reinforces our shared democratic values, which we need to protect now and for future generations.

Surely it is the government's role to take the lead in promoting the common good, not to undermine it by a secret deal with a tax-minimising corporation that by its own admission makes things difficult for its customers. It's been a rotten process and it's a rotten design, Mr Premier, it's time to ban Apple from Federation Square.

Jenny Wills. 2.1.2018

Turnbull won't, and can't fix up his federal problems, so it's an all-out assault on the progressive Victorian government.

Jan Kennedy 3.1.2018

Perhaps this date

I appreciate being an Australian citizen, and am actually proud of the implied values citizenship holds for me. Despite so many shameful acts being erased from our consciousness there are many sound qualities I still chose to think of as Australian values. Specifically steadfast support of the underdog and demonstration of a collective belief in "a fair go" for all. It is fact that celebrating the raising of the Union Jack at Sydney Cove on January 26, 1788 still causes pain to many first Australians. Surely we could celebrate a day that we could all relate to with joy. March 3, 1986 marked the simultaneous passage of the Australia Act by both British and Australian Parliaments. This act, in effect, eliminates the possibility for Britain to legislate with any effect in Australia.

From mixed European heritage to truly multicultural can we all embrace the best in ourselves and accept first Australians and those people seeking asylum on our shores as the valued people they are. Let us wake up, define and claim a "fair go" for all.

Rosalind Byass 25.1.2018

The power of the pen, or of the voice, can be formidable. We recognize that many of our members are unable to be on the streets or to get to meetings as readily as in the past, but we can all pick up the phone, and we can all write either an email or, often better, a hand-written letter – to our local politician, to various ministers, to the Opposition, to the local Council, to an inquiry. **It is effective. So let's get to it!**

UAW SPONSORS PALM SUNDAY PEACE RALLY 2018

We are again sponsoring the Peace Rally, Sunday 25 March, and have contributed a statement:

“The UAW Vic seeks justice and humanity for asylum seekers: the closure of offshore detention on Manus and Nauru with detainees brought to Australia for prompt processing; a genuine engagement with Pacific neighbours to help alleviate the refugee crisis; and an acknowledgement and acceptance of our international obligations.”

In late December, we also made a donation to the **Asylum Seeker Resource Centre**.

“FREEDOM OF RELIGION” INQUIRY.

As a sop to the conservatives in government ranks, and to get agreement to the Marriage Equality legislation, PM Malcolm Turnbull set up an Expert Panel on Religious Freedom, headed by Philip Ruddock. It is receiving submissions from the public until 14 February. We believe that there is already adequate protection of religious freedom in Australia and are rather concerned about the granting to religious organisations or individuals the right to further discriminate. Religious schools and hospitals, for example, although receiving public funding, already have the right to discriminate in employment and provision of services.

The UAW will be putting in a submission. But members can do so too – handwritten, a page. It all counts. Write to

- The Expert Panel on Religious Freedom
c/- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600
- Email: religiousfreedom@pmc.gov.au
- OR Use the form on the website

Letters/submissions need to get there by 14 February. Advise whether confidential or can be published with your name. If you need pointers, contact UAW Secretary Cath Morrison, who can email them to you.

RECONCILIATION, TREATY, AUSTRALIA DAY.

Anne Sgro

Northcote MP, Lidia Thorpe, has been threatened with death and rape for daring to suggest that flags should be lowered on 26 January in memory of indigenous people for whom Australia Day equates with Invasion Day. Hardly indicative of reasonable debate, discussion or national unity.

I recently heard her speak at the Unitarian Peace Memorial Church. Reconciliation groups in Gippsland are seeking to have the name of the Federal electorate of McMillan changed. Angus McMillan came to the area in 1838, as a result of Highland clearances. He formed a Highland Brigade that murdered countless numbers of aboriginal people as part of what Thorpe regards as a general war of attrition against aboriginal peoples. Many believe that the war continues: indigenous children are still being removed and locked up, suicide rates are increasing. She believes that until the truth of what happened in this country is acknowledged, particularly by those making decisions, we cannot move forward.

She emphasized the need to talk about peace between those who invaded and the first peoples.

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And she wants a Treaty, because she doesn't believe that the reconciliation movement has got us far, and that the energy of those who walked over the Sydney Harbour Bridge all those years ago has been deflected to discussion of reconciliation and constitutional recognition. There are obviously huge divisions within the Indigenous community. Why wouldn't there be? But we were interested to hear that she is not in favour of the Uluru Statement. Those present were aware of how little we know. Her aim is for a clan-based treaty that is about family, country and empowerment. The process has begun in the state of Victoria, with Jill Gallagher appointed as Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner. Lidia said: 'Treaty first – let's end the war on our people.' Food for thought. Perhaps a future guest speaker?

VALE Elizabeth Kourtis.

Elizabeth passed away in early January aged 86. She was a long-time UAW member; particularly active in Darebin. She organised and was programmer for the UAW 3CR radio program for many years: a huge commitment and contribution. She was also active in the peace movement and the Cuban Friendship Society. She was a good woman.

Condolences to her family

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