

Constitutional transformation is one of the biggest political ideas Aotearoa must grapple with. Featuring educators and members of Matike Mai Aotearoa, the Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation, Professor Margaret Mutu and Dr Veronica Tawhai engaged with questions of collective action and change in the opening keynote panel of the conference. In a discussion facilitated by Tayla Cook and Safari Hynes, Whaea Margaret and Veronica not only talk about the importance of conscientisation and deep learning, but offer opportunities for it as well. The intergenerational kōrero between panelists provides critical insights into founding documents like He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, while also asking what it means to honour them. In doing so, they provide space for dreaming, imagining, and inspiring change. The following transcription both captures the critical conversations had and encourages ongoing collective action. As Veronica reminds us, 'it is not just about raising self-awareness through education, it is also the action that accompanies or follows from this'.

## Dreaming Together for Constitutional Transformation

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MARGARET MUTU & VERONICA TAWHAI with  
TAYLA COOK & SAFARI HYNES

**TAYLA ‘TAY’ COOK** – Kia ora kōrua. Thank you both for agreeing to join Safari and I for this important kōrero. Could you please share with us a bit about who you are and what has brought you here today?

**MARGARET ‘WHAEA’ MUTU** – Thank you very much for asking me to come and talk about my favourite subject—constitutional transformation. I am Ngāti Kahu, from way up the far north, and I am also Te Rarawa and Ngāti Whātua. I am Scottish on my mother’s side, and the Scots also spent all their time fighting the English to get their land back. So that’s both sides of my family fighting to get their land back off those same fellas.

**SAFARI ‘SAF’ HYNES** – Kia ora. Tēnā koe whaea. Rangitāne tangata rau, Rangitāne nui a rangi. Tini whetū ki te rangi, ko Rangitāne ki te whenua. Kia ora rā. My name is Safari and I’m a second year taura at Te Herenga Waka and I make a very big point of saying te reo before I say law.

**VERONICA ‘RONNIE’ TAWHAI** – Kia ora. Heoi tēnei au e tū nei ki te tautoko i ngā mihi kua tukuna i tēnei ata. Hoki ki a rātou kua wehe atu ki te pō i tēnei tau, rātou ki a rātou,

tātou ki a tātou. Tēnā tātou katoa. Ngā mihi ki a koutou, nā koutou tēnei wānanga i whakarite me waku mihi ki a koutou, ki ngā mana whenua hoki o tēnei rohe. Tēnei he uri o Te Tairāwhiti e mihi ana ki a koutou, ki ō koutou wawata, ō koutou moemoeā me te tūmanako kia puāwai mai hoki wērā i roto i tēnei wānanga. Nō reira, koutou katoa kua tae, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou. Ko Veronica Tawhai taku ingoa. So, very privileged to be a part of this wānanga and on this panel with Whaea Margaret.

**TAY** – Well, we may as well just get straight into it. No need to muck around. I personally don't know the answer but Whaea, could you please explain what a constitution is? Once we know that whāriki then we can navigate together from there.

**WHAEA** – This is a question that I wish more people would ask because the answer is really very simple. A constitution is a set of rules that we all agree to live by. It is as simple as that. Now there is a whole lot of talk you will hear from academics, from law schools in particular, about how complicated constitutions are. They're not. What made it so much easier for Moana Jackson and myself, when we were going around talking to people for Matike Mai, was saying, 'We need to be clear about what a constitution is, it is simply a set of rules that we all agree to live by'. Simple as that. He mārama tēnā?

**TAY** – Āe. Does New Zealand have a constitution? Is it written? If so, how do we relate to it when moving forward?

**WHAEA** – Well if you're from Te Tai Tokerau, we've got a written constitution. It is called He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirenī, and it was signed in 1835 and recognised by the Crown of England. But, of course, the settlers who came after this document was signed chose to ignore it, and I would say most in this country don't even know the existence of He Whakaputanga.

He Whakaputanga is a simple statement of the following facts: that

mana—in other words, the ultimate and paramount authority and power in this country—lies with the Hapū, and in particular with the Rangatira of the Hapū; that they will never devolve that law-making power, any rule-setting power, to anyone else; and it thanks the King of England for recognising the flag that they had us fly to stop people pinching our boats when they sailed into Sydney; and we asked the Crown to send us an ambassador, because we couldn't understand these lawless Pākehā who kept doing all sorts of terrible things—particularly up in Kororāreka which became known as the 'hellhole of the Pacific', because the Pākehā couldn't behave themselves properly. So for us in Te Tai Tokerau, there is no question that He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tīreni is the written constitution of this country.

You have a codicil or an addendum to He Whakaputanga, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which established the rules for how Pākehā were to live if they came here, that they came under the kāwanatanga of the Queen of England. Te Tiriti also reiterated what had been said in He Whakaputanga: that the rangatiratanga, tino rangatiratanga, would remain with us. So that's how it stands for us in the Tai Tokerau. I have to say the Tai Tokerau, because that's where He Whakaputanga was discussed by the Rangatira and signed, as well as by Te Wherowhero on behalf of Ngāti Mahuta from Tainui and Te Hāpuku from Ngāti Kahungunu. So when Moana and I, and other members of Matike Mai, including Veronica, went around asking people what they would like to have as a constitution and we talked about He Whakaputanga, we found it wasn't widely known outside Te Tai Tokerau, Tainui, and Ngāti Kahungunu. But whenever I explained all of this to people, they'd go 'Oh yeah, that makes sense'.

Now as far as Pākehā are concerned, there is no written constitution because they do not recognise what their own King recognised at the time when He Whakaputanga was signed. The settlers who followed, who of course had a totally different agenda, which was to take over the country, chose to disregard it. But the fact of the matter is that it is still very much there.

So, it depends where you are and who you are as to whether or not

there is a written constitution in this country. As far as Te Tai Tokerau is concerned, there is very much a written constitution: He Whakaputanga, which is backed up by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

**TAY** – Would you say that it’s like a tuakana-teina kind of relationship between the two documents, or between those spaces? Can we reference He Whakaputanga now, and by referencing it are we reclaiming mana for that space?

**WHAEA** – Definitely, but because my tūpuna, Te Morenga, was a signatory, and our Ngāti Kahu tūpuna, Paerata Mātenga, was the first signatory on He Whakaputanga, I was brought up knowing that it existed, as did everyone else in Te Tai Tokerau. It took us a while to understand that others may not know about it. What that meant for us at Karikari—e hoa, you know that place, we didn’t have Pākehā out there until about 30 years ago—was that we were living under the mana o ngā kōrero tuku iho o ngā mātua tūpuna. Living under what our ancestors passed down to us was the norm. It wasn’t until I started travelling with my kuia and kaumātua outside of Te Hiku o Te Ika, outside of the Tai Tokerau, that I began to realise that it’s not quite the same elsewhere. For us out home, nobody can come onto our land and tell us what to do. We decide for ourselves what happens on our own land. Our kaumātua were very clear about that.

I remember when we were worried about getting these letters from the Mangonui County Council, and then later from the Far North District Council, saying ‘Hey, you’ve got to pay your rates, if you don’t pay your rates you’ll lose your land’, and that sort of thing. We got terribly worried about this and were fighting among ourselves about it, and then our kaumātua said, ‘Why are you worried about the Pākehā and what the Pākehā has to say? This is your land, no matter what the Pākehā says this is your land and you make the decisions on it. Right, now what do you want to do?’ So kaumātua reminded us that on our land, in our own territory, we must make our own decisions about our lives. That was the norm for us.

When I move out of there to live in Tāmaki Makaurau it is very

different. First, I'm not in my own territory anymore. The part of Tāmaki Makaurau where I am based is in Ngāti Whātua's territory, so I live according to their rules. They invited the Pākehā into their territory, so you respect what they have. Second, when they ask me for rates in Auckland at least they've provided me with roads, water, and what-have-you. I don't mind paying my rates in Auckland. But at home they provide us with absolutely nothing; they just want us to help make the Pākehā richer, in our territory . . . e kore e taea—we're not going to do that.

**RONNIE** – I want to pick up on a couple of things that Whaea said with regards to knowing about the constitution. There are many of us who will still be in touch with our kōrero tuku iho, who will still be connected with our pakeke, and have their guidance and their knowledge available to us. But we need to recognise that there are many others who don't, and this is a challenge for the constitutional transformation project. We are faced with an educative task, one of conscientisation, of raising awareness so that we can undertake collective action. We need to connect with each other and ensure that those kōrero that have not lost their integrity—because they are from our own people, they have stemmed from our own lands—are as widely available as possible, as widely available as determined suitable by the holders of those knowledges.

Why is connecting with each other and sharing these knowledges such an important task? Because there are two key things at play with regards to the constitutional conversation today, that notion of transformation. First, we have a government, the latest in a long line, that has purposefully lied and been deceitful about what Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga are actually about. John James and I are Te Ata Kura educators, and of the hundreds of people that we take through Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops, as Whaea Margaret said, most have no idea about He Whakaputanga; or if they have heard about it is normally only lies, that 'Oh it was just a bit of paper that was signed by a small group up north'. So, we must commit to doing our research because that's not true; it was signed by others in the North Island.

And why has there been so much effort put into trying to suppress that document? Because it makes it absolutely crystal-clear that ‘tino rangatiratanga’ means ‘independence’. It does not mean any of the other things that the government has tried to redefine it as over the years, such as ‘self-management of our resources under the colonial law that has been established’, as held by the 1989 Principles for Crown Action on the Treaty of Waitangi. This deliberate redefinition of key terms has happened alongside the suppression of our kōrero. So, it’s important for us to connect these things together, because when we look at things like He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni, ‘rangatiratanga’ is in the title, you know? Rangatiratanga, you can’t miss it.

The second thing, which sits alongside attempts to redefine what Te Tiriti actually means, is the ongoing misrepresentation of things like kāwanatanga. It’s not only the suppression of independence but that notion of kāwanatanga, the idea that right now the office of Māori Crown relations, Te Arawhiti, says that kāwanatanga is the right to govern all New Zealanders. Yet if you do a little research and talk to our pakeke and our elders, they will tell you that kāwanatanga was never intended to be exercised over all New Zealanders. You only have to ask yourself: why would 250,000 Māori wake up one day, many who have never even met any of our Pākehā ancestors yet, and say ‘Oh yes, because of a small group of British subjects’—and many were not even settlers at this time, because they were in and out—‘whatever laws they’ve been living under in their country for hundreds of years, we are now going to accept having placed over us’? That is crap. So anywhere we read that kāwanatanga is the right to govern everyone in this country, that is incorrect and a deliberate misrepresentation of what is actually in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. How did the Crown come to govern us all? From 1860–1890 we had the mass-immigration of Pākehā, a period of overtly violent settler-colonialism.

It is very important that we bear this point in mind when engaging with the constitutional conversation, as the government will say things like, ‘Oh yes, we recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi’. You can see this in the recent agreement between Labour and the Greens. This isn’t to pick on

any particular political parties or support any others—I am totally non-partisan—but the agreement says, ‘honouring’ Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Great, but how is that going to be achieved? We need to be careful and sure that in our Te Tiriti o Waitangi discourse and kōrero we are being true to what it actually means, that we can honour things like He Whakaputanga and understand exactly what it says. However big that task may seem, of having to reimagine what those things might be, that it is our duty; it’s part of the aspirations that pass from our tūpuna down through us.

So activating collectivity, as Whaea Margaret said, involves going places, and, if finding that the kōrero isn’t there, offering it. That is the number-one task we have to commit ourselves to as a part of transforming society. Connect to each other, and where appropriate, when you feel safe, share the kōrero that comes from your own communities. Connect to each other and try to delink from the mainstream discourse on these issues, as that discourse is actually a violent rewriting and misrepresentation of what our tūpuna agreed to for their mokopuna, us. That is task number one, okay.

**SAF** – Wait, quick question. When you talked about education being one of the key tasks, you mentioned ‘conscientisation’; what does that mean?

**RONNIE** – This is for all the Native geek-life people out there like me. Conscientisation is not just awareness raising, it is also a commitment to deepening our own learning. This idea comes from Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I am a fan of critical theories because they are useful lenses. This includes all those from here, from our own lands—we have our own lenses, our own theorists, intellectuals like Whaea Margaret, Moana Jackson, Mereana Pitman. But back to this notion of conscientisation, well this is why I love this conference, it is not just about raising self-awareness through education, it is also the action that accompanies or follows from this. If there is no action associated with it, then it’s not conscientisation.

**SAF** – Thank you for that, because that’s been a question I’ve had for ages.



You know, I've always heard people saying it, and I'd think, 'Wow you sound really smart and I have no idea what you're saying'. But to Whaea, you mentioned earlier that you went around the motu with Pā Moana and Ronnie. Was that part of the Matike Mai process? If so, could you explain to everyone what you did and what came out of it?

**WHAEA** – Yeah, so, Matike Mai Aotearoa was created out of the National Iwi Chairs Forum, and I know that there are varying views around the place about the National Iwi Chairs Forum and a lot of it is right . . .

**TAY** – The next cup of tea Whaea, the next cup of tea we will get into that.

**WHAEA** – However, what had happened in the National Iwi Chairs Forum is that we had established ourselves at the call of Ngāi Tahu and Tainui back in 2005, prompted by the government passing legislation to steal the foreshore and seabed off us. So that was the prompt that brought us together and the call from Ngāi Tahu was, 'Can we please all come together and try to share each other's expertise, share each other's experiences, to try and deal with these big issues that are making Māori lives hell?' There were about 30 of us at the beginning and we had our first hui at Kaikōura. It was a beautiful hui—mind you, I spent half my time looking at the beautiful work of Cliff Whiting on the whareniui instead of listening! We decided that we had sufficient expertise, knowledge, and experience amongst ourselves to deal with the big issues, but it was all dissipated, and that dissipation was a deliberate outcome of colonisation. If we could pull it all together, then we could advance collectively and maybe solve these problems. We set about identifying the big issues we wanted to resolve—we were only supposed to have three or four, then it turned into five or six, then ten or twelve, and so on. All the issues involved us having to deal with the Crown.

That was one thing that Ngāti Kahu, who I chair, always had difficulty with, as the biggest issue *was* the Crown, and therefore we needed the strength of the other iwi to escape the oppression of the Crown. However, we had to keep doing it because it was about our people's health, our ownership of

water, our ownership of the foreshore and seabed, and everything else you had to deal with, that was at stake. We had to keep going back to the ones that had stolen from us. But, what we found, when we did that, was that even though we were very diplomatic—we approached them in such a way that they could deal with us at the level of rangatira to rangatira—that once we got a certain way down the line with our negotiations they would ask us to prove a whole lot of things, because they didn't really believe what we were saying. That was a load of rubbish, because there's a lot of research out there that tells you exactly what the facts are, but the Crown would ask us to prove everything over again in an attempt to try and dissipate our energy. If they found they couldn't dissipate our energy, then they would put up a brick wall. That brick wall was their power, their constitutional power, which they had assumed for themselves.

One thing that I want to make very clear is that the constitutional power Pākehā have assumed for themselves, and which they exercise through their parliament and other branches of government, is illegitimate. There was no legitimacy whatsoever behind their actions when setting up a parliament, setting up a justice system, setting up the public service, or any other arms of government. The New Zealand Government has no legitimate basis, because the only legitimate basis it can have stems from the rights we devolved to the Queen of England in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. At no point did we say, as Ronnie quite rightly said, that settlers, Pākehā, anyone, could dictate to us what we were to do, and we certainly did not say they could govern us. So, any attempt to do these things is totally illegitimate, but the reality is that Pākehā, under the protection of the Crown, have stolen our resources, and they have stolen our power to govern ourselves, and therefore we are stuck having to deal with them. As I said, Ngāti Kahu have dealt with them, and we kept hitting brick walls. That brick wall was our constitutional powerlessness, because they had taken it off us, or said they had taken it off us, but we have never conceded that, and we never will.

So that was 2005 when we set up the National Iwi Chairs Forum and by 2009 we thought, 'Blow this, this is a constitutional matter'. That is when we started bringing in advice, and we asked people with constitutional

backgrounds, in particular Caren Fox—now Judge Caren Fox—who had been dealing with the constitutional issues in Fiji. We asked her to come and talk to us about what we could do in a constitutional setting, which led to the conclusion that there had to be a complete overhaul of this country's constitutional arrangements.

In 2010 I was chairing a session of the National Iwi Chairs Forum in Waitangi and Moana Jackson came to the hui and I couldn't believe my luck! I was having to chair this session, and I knew we had to deal with this constitutional matter, but I was worried that we didn't have the necessary expertise, and then there was Moana. I knew Moana had that expertise in an international context, but he was also deeply involved in Te Tiriti and He Whakaputanga, all those sorts of constitutional matters, he just knew it. In the line-up for the Pōwhiri he came around and I said to him, 'Moana, could you please help us? We want to do something about the constitutional arrangements in this country, we know it needs to be done, but we don't know how?' And he said, 'Oh Yes!' That was the start of Matike Mai Aotearoa. It took us a while. It was Huirangi Waikerepuru who gave us the name Matike Mai Aotearoa, so we could get up and do this thing that has to be done. But it was Moana Jackson who took hold of that issue and then he got us around—eh Ronnie?—he got us to all talk about it for a year or so, to make sure that we knew what we were thinking about before we started sending people out.

One of the key things for advancing Matike Mai Aotearoa was our rangatahi, and Ronnie got the job of looking after and organising the rangatahi. Moana and I went around and talked at the hui. Moana did most of them, 252 hui he attended. I attended about 50. Ronnie did a lot with the rangatahi, about 80 workshops. The rangatahi were just absolutely marvellous, they were all whiz-bang; they helped produce a whole lot of things, while Moana and I would just go along and talk at hui. That's why I liked your opening question, Tayla, because we had a rangatahi group based at the University of Auckland and they asked me before they went out on the road, 'Whaea, can you just come and have a look at our presentation?' 'Yeah, ka pai, I will come and have a look', and off I went to the marae

to have a look. At the end of the presentation I said to them, ‘Imagine I’m a member of your audience, and I’ve got a question: “What is the constitution?”’ And they didn’t know how to answer. That’s what I wanted to ensure, that the simple ‘What is a constitution?’ question had a simple answer. It was Moana who said ‘This is how simple it is’, and who guided us all the way through, making sure we weren’t overwhelmed by constitutional transformation—that all we had to do was look at what we do on our marae to realise we already know all about constitutional transformation, that we do know how to live and walk the talk of mana motuhake.

**RONNIE** – I just want to add on to what Whaea is saying, because it illustrates my point about conscientisation, that it’s not just constant action, and nor is it just turning up and asking people, ‘Oh, so what do you think about this, what do you think about that?’ With our rangatahi, just as Whaea Margaret was pointing out, a really important part of the process and the forming of a national rangatahi team was that actually, before establishing their responsibility of the Matike Mai Aotearoa project, we had to go out and ask the rangatahi you know, ‘So what is your vision for a constitution in Aotearoa?’ Of course, in our very first wananga we had a national representative body who came up with the workshop, but it was like, ‘How are we going to possibly engage our mates, our friends, our peers on a topic that, first, sounds so, entirely boring, and second, sounds like something to do with politics?’ Now, anyone who has been studying participatory politics knows that it’s not that young people aren’t interested in politics, it’s just that they’re not into old school, traditional, boring politics—you know, the casting of a vote and that’s it. So, the question was, ‘How are we going to engage other young people?’

The first task for the rangatahi workshops was explaining what a constitution is. Because you can’t just go out and say, ‘Tell us what you think about a constitution?’, because rangatahi will likely respond, ‘I haven’t thought about it that much’. Now a lot of researchers, when faced with such a response, will conclude, ‘Oh, young people aren’t interested’. That’s just a setup; it’s an unfair assumption about our young people, as

well as any others. It's not that young people aren't interested, they're just not interested in going through that process.

So, the rangatahi workshop became an essential part of all our engagements. It took three months to develop, and by the end, it involved drama, spoken word, skits, but most importantly it involved getting the rangatahi involved. Right at the end of each workshop we unfurled a huge banner and said, 'Now you know what constitutional transformation might be about, come and write it down'. We would leave those banners behind, and I've since seen some of them carried in protest hīkoi. I attended several of these workshops, and I didn't see a single young person go through the process who, by the end, was confused or didn't know what it was all about. Right across the motu, those rangatahi all raised the most profound questions.

The other thing that struck me, in terms of the findings from our research in Matike Mai Aotearoa, was a distinction between how rangatahi and adults engage with the process. Adults are obsessed with structures and how it's going to work, who is going to have the power in the decision making, etc., while our rangatahi didn't discuss that at all. They looked at it like, 'Well actually if we had a constitution here in Aotearoa, a constitution that was based on kawa, tikanga, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, He Whakaputanga, those things we know are important'. What they came up were the values that they would like to see reflected. It didn't matter what the constitutional structure was, so long as that structure reflected the key things that they all agreed upon—which included things like what they called *kotahi aroha*—that everyone here in Aotearoa should experience manaaki and be able to live and flourish, that if we had a constitutional structure that reflected that, then that would be fine. But that was only after taking them through that, not leading but taking them through that so by the end people are confident as to what a constitution is, as Whaea was saying.

**SAF** – At the end there you were getting onto the findings of Matike Mai, and I guess we are now at a stage where we can start thinking about how we might realise and action those findings. What steps do we need to take? So,

this is a question for both of you: what are three things that we can do to progress the realisation of things contained within Matike Mai?

**WHAEA** – The first thing is to bring all of the country together to decide on the values that would underpin those simple rules we can all agree to live by. Ronnie is so right, and it wasn't just the rangatahi that came back to values; everywhere we went, we found that people weren't so concerned about the mechanics of it. Their thinking was that if we had the underlying values correct, then everything else would flow from there, because you would be bringing the people together in terms of manaakitanga, aroha, and inclusiveness. Bringing everybody together so that we could say, 'Right, these are the rules that we will agree to live by'. You keep it really simple. You know, I was really surprised that the phrase 'constitutional transformation' kept sticking. But, the first thing that I want to see is that the country thinks about what basic values we want to live by, and how we are going to make the rules that go with these.

I was working with Ranginui Walker at the time, and I've always been close with Tipene O'Regan, and they both worked on the government's constitutional group, so I went along to a couple of their meetings with Pākehā groups. When they asked these groups what a constitution was, nobody knew; and when they asked what values are upheld in this country, nobody knew what to say. When we went to hui and met our people, it was clear. At one place I went to, there were the values all written around the wall. It was mana, hapū, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, rangatiratanga. These are the things that our people just know, we get taught it. I teach it in my classes at university. Our tamariki and mokopuna learn these things. It's essential that those values are well known. So, we need a conversation that makes it clear these are the fundamental values that we uphold in this country.

The most fundamental outcome of such a conversation is to bring everybody under the korowai of aroha, which is what we saw happening when we were out there for Matike Mai. We said we would talk to any whānau, hapū, iwi, to any Māori group, but what we found was a whole

lot of people coming to us who were actually our manuhiri here. The first that came to see us were our whanaunga from Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, who asked, 'Please can we be a part of this?' Then we had the ones coming in from China, India, and all around the Asian region, who asked if they could be a part too. The reason for this being the way the constitutional arrangement was set up by the British settlers, which was very exclusive. They excluded anyone who wasn't white, who wasn't male, who wasn't middle class. It is that 'exclusion' thing that we need to put aside; it is not a fundamental value of this country, it is something that belongs to a very small minority that is getting ever smaller. So, the first thing we need to do is get rid of that exclusiveness and assert our own values, that's the first step.

The second thing I would ask is for our people to please go home and say, 'We have got to walk our own talk in terms of our mana motuhake'. It's not hard. Just go home, and when someone like the district council comes into your home and says 'Me pēnei, me pērā', you say 'Out of here, you. We will make our own decisions about our own lives'. Our people need to move back into those spaces and see how much more comfortable it is when you make your own decisions, and you have got to live by the decisions you make. You see, you can't go blaming anybody when you make a decision and the decision is wrong; it's your decision, and you have to live with it, like those people over in America when they put Trump in. But at least it's your decision, and this way you're not constantly trying to understand stuff like, 'What is this thing that the council is telling me I have to do? And what is this thing that the government tells me?'—as we never really understand and spend half our time trying to get advice to better understand. What for? We need to make our own decisions about our own lives.

So those are the two things. First, what are our values? Get that sorted. We have a little Facebook thing called Vision 2020 Aotearoa where we just wanted people to say, 'What is the vision that you have for this country?', so that people could all come together, and I think our draft one was something that everybody could achieve their potential in this country. So, what is the vision, what are your values? And the second, please go back to

exercising mana motuhake. Okay? That's not three things, but I think that's plenty to do. For now.

**RONNIE** – I absolutely tautoko everything that Whaea Margaret has said. Because Whaea has focused on what we can do collectively, as wider communities, I am going to suggest some initial things that individuals can do, because I know often when people don't feel connected, especially to Māori communities, or are not part of a particular group, then sometimes they can be a bit lost as to where to start. So, I am just going to give three really basic things about where to start.

First, find out as much as you possibly can about the lands where you are living. This is specifically about learning the ideas, the concepts, that have emerged from that land, which is, you know, sometimes something we miss. I know this from my own experience. As a policy analyst, I'm constantly caught up in what's happening in the kāwanatanga sphere, to the point of distraction. So, first and foremost, it's about grounding ourselves where we are, and that's been a huge lesson that I have learnt from people like Whaea Margaret. I actually interviewed Whaea Margaret for my PhD, which is about how to teach Indigenous politics, including how to engage with the really traumatic issues and kaupapa. She told me about her Indigenous politics class, which covers, you know, 'Mana, and rangatiratanga, and kaitiakitanga', and then she says, 'and when we get to lecture nine'—which any student knows is three quarters of the way through the semester—'I say to my class "and then the Pākehā came"'. Man, that is profound, as the first and most important task was going through who we are. For Tauīwi, that will not only include going through your genealogy but also really connecting to that space where you are.

Second, as Whaea Margaret said, is confronting that 'Then the Pākehā came' line. We need to understand what has happened since their arrival, exactly what has happened here. I know we talk a lot about colonisation. The problem with that is that idea often has a start date and an end date. So, one of the things that we are encouraging is that people deepen their analysis of 'settler colonialism'—that there is actually a structure, an



enduring, ongoing, oppressive, violent structure that we must contend with, but which can be dismantled. The settler-colonial structure has many clearly identifiable elements; it is not an unbeatable beast. It actually has clear facets, including things like heteronormativity, which expresses itself through violence against our takatāpui whanau, and heteropatriarchy, which fuels the massive violence inflicted upon our women and children. So, the second thing is we must deepen our analysis of settler colonialism, so that then we can hone in on its different elements—those things that you might have a particular commitment to. Otherwise it can seem like this huge intangible thing, and it can be hard to know where to start when challenging it.

Third, find your people, because anyone who is part of a movement will know this is where the magic happens and you can take action. This is really important in tangata whenua spaces. Do your homework, make sure you are informed, and then ask, ‘What can I contribute?’ So shout out to Te Ata Kura, Society for Conscientisation, they’ve been absolutely key for me, providing a space to join others and dream—and that’s one of the important things about finding your people, dreaming together. As Ani Mikaere, Whaea Margaret, and Moana have said, one of the most devastating impacts colonisation has had upon us is that it has suppressed our ability to dream and imagine something different. That is the call of Matike Mai Aotearoa, of constitutional transformation, that things don’t have to continue to be this way. The suffering and pain endured by our people, not just in the past but today, doesn’t have to continue. But change requires the commitment of our minds, hearts, souls, to imagine what might be different.

THROUGH THAT WHICH  
SEPARATES US



*Through That Which Separates Us* is a collection of writing, artworks, and interviews that form a genealogy of deportation in Australasia and the Pacific. The collection understands the experiences of those people detained under section 501, held in Australian detention centres, and often deported on the basis of a 'character test', as a paradigmatic case illustrating the intersection of xenophobia and settler colonial violence in a world structured by separation.

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