

**Submission
No 52**

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

Organisation:

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Theme:

Summary

Committee Social Issues - Submission: INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

From: "Caroline O'Brien" [REDACTED]
To: <socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
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Subject: Submission: INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

As a group of Actors studying at The Actors Centre Australia in Surry Hills I wish to submit to you our idea - using storytelling to heal and connect the community.

WHY?

"It takes only one story to ...

Inspire a song,
Create a bond,
Alter a path,
Heal a heart,
Mend a rift,
Rescue a soul,
Transform a relationship,
Reaffirm a marriage,
Save a Life"

-Patty Hansen and Joy Pieterse

Former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev, recalls that the moment the Cold War ended.

It was the moment he and US President Reagan stopped demonising each other, and saw each other's humanity.

In yet another heated argument, rehashing the same issues, President Reagan turned in anger to leave. But something stopped him. He took a deep breath, turned back to Gorbachev, extended his hand and said "I think we got off on the wrong foot. Let's start again shall we? I'm Ron".

So many people have asked why the riots happened, who is to blame for the suffering in Redfern. People are grouped together in faceless nameless groups and pitted against one another. We have forgotten that every rioter, every police officer, every community member is a person with their own story.

I was living in East Timor during the December 2002 riots. My experience and fascination with human nature has taught me that people riot when they feel unheard, feel insignificant.

Rioting brings an immediate sense of significance. People need a chance to tell their stories.

A resident of Waterloo, I heard an aboriginal woman from Redfern being interviewed on ABC radio. "This is genocide" she said. "The white people are wiping us out and no one cares, no one listens to us".

I am a white girl living down the road and I thought what do I tell the next generation?

"I was there. I had a heart full of love to share and two ears perfect for listening, but I did nothing cause I was afraid of getting it wrong?"

That's just simply not an option!

HOW DOES THE PROCESS HEAL?

At the Actor's Centre, a group of Actors from all sorts of backgrounds started to tell our stories in a safe non-judgmental environment, not as any of the stereotyped groups we fit into, but our individual stories, our experience of humanity, our hopes, our dreams, our passions.

The process is an extremely powerful and healing one. When you see someone's humanity you cannot help but be connected.

We endeavour to bring together through a workshop:

- * Police officers,
- * Aboriginal mothers, fathers, teenagers, children and elders,
- * rioters,
- * non-indigenous community members,
- * people who work in the area,

And allow them to tell a story from their own experience, without the pressure of telling the story of their "group" (not as a spokesperson for police, or single mothers, or Chinese immigrants, or social workers, or home owners, or third generation Australian Irish Catholics, or aboriginals, or real-estate agents etc) but a story of their life experience.

What do they love? What do they hate? What makes them laugh so they can't stop? Who do they love? What are they passionate about? What are their dreams? What's their most vivid memory? Their greatest lesson? Their proudest achievement? The turning points in their life?

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE STORIES?

What: With the consent of participants the stories will be collated and collaged and presented by a company of actors formed from The Actors Centre Australia.

Who: The company of Australian actors have such a diverse heritage, Irish, Indian, Fijian, English, Mediterranean.

Where: Cat 'n' Fiddle Theatre Space in Balmain, Sydney

When: First two weeks of September

Key Support:

We are seeking support from (apologies for the vague references, I am reluctant to "dob" people in until they have signed off to give us their support):

- * The City of Sydney
- * Aboriginal Leaders
- * Aboriginal and Youth Liaison Officers in the area
- * Community members
- * The Australia Council
- * PCYC
- * The Actors Centre Australia
- * and of course you The Senate
- * The Powerhouse Museum
- * The Redfern Community Centre

Proceeds: We would very much like our supporters to help us decide what should happen with the proceeds

THE POSSIBILITIES

The possibility of touring both the show and the concept locally, regionally nationally and internationally is something we are all committed to exploring.

The aim is to provide a place for people to be heard, to connect and to be inspired and to learn from and about one another in a non-judgmental, non political environment.

It's about putting a human face on the groups we like to blame in these situations. It's about valuing people beyond their "groups" and stereotypes, and celebrating their individual experience and humanity.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We'd be happy to meet with you to give you more details. Please feel free to contact me:

Caroline O'Brien

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