



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

June 2020 No.25

Still I Rise

Maya Angelou

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.*

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.*

*Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?*

*Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines*

Diggin' in my own backyard.

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

*Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?*

*Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.*

Dear All,

Welcome to the 25th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

2020 the year that no one could have predicted. As one ponders what more is to come this year - let us reflect on what a humble Australian who won the Media Award at the NSW Humanitarian Awards on World Refugee Day 20th June 2020 has to say:

"Change happens when we leave our comfortable existence, even for a few moments, and really commit to understanding the disadvantage others face. Often, we find that our biases built up over decades are not accurate, and realise that our role as citizens is to work toward a better world for all." - Craig Foster

In this time of great upheaval & change Justice Updates will be coming to you every fortnight - please send us anything you would like included. Your suggestions, comments both positive and negative or indeed any information you think would be good to include, it is all much appreciated.

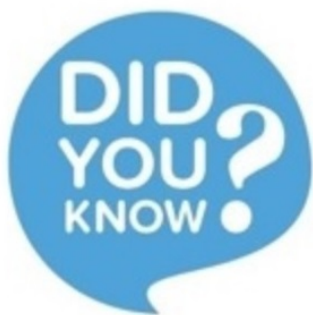
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney



On Thursday 25th June 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru and Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2505 days.



The Australian Bureau of Statistics seasonally adjusted estimates of employment in

May 2020 showed:

- The number of unemployed people Australia wide in May 2020 increased by 85,700 people.
- Employment decreased by 227,700 people- Full-time decreasing by 89,100, Part-time by 138,600 people.
- Compared to May 2019 there were 237,900 less people in full-time employment & 457,700 less people employed part-time in May 2020
- The number of underemployed people decreased by 109,500 in May 2020 to 1,711,500 people, and increased by 47.6% or 552,300 people since May 2019.
- In May 2020 the largest decreases in employment recorded in States & Territories were Victoria down (60,800 people), New South Wales down (43,900 people), Western Australia down (30,200 people) and Queensland down 28,100 people.



Australians rally BLM protest (Getty images/ Quinn Rooney)

Dreaming of a better future for First Nations peoples

Sherry Balcombe, Eureka Street, Vol.30 No.11 9th June 2020

When I heard the news of the killing of George Floyd's killing I was really sad, but not the least surprised. Now I am actually hopeful now that something will be done to stop the ingrained racism in this country. Most Australians choose not to see it.

I see Aboriginal deaths all the time in The Koori Mail and the National Indigenous Times as well as the news on Facebook. We as a community share

the information in the hope that the wider community will see what we see and demand that things change.

The racism in this country is a disgrace and unless you've experienced it then you just don't understand what it is like to be Aboriginal.

I remember when I went to Aotearoa New Zealand I was shocked at how respected and acknowledged the Maori people were, truly shocked and ashamed that my people are treated so badly here.

My people have been fighting oppression for far too long. If you are angry about the treatment of Black people in the USA then you should be angry, very angry, about the treatment of Aboriginal people in your own country.

In the 1950s my father, Valentine Moloney, was a guest of the communist countries where he promoted Aboriginal human rights. His comments on returning were 'I am no longer an Aborigine. I am now a Communist. It is the first time in my life (early 30's) that I have been treated with dignity and all my fellow Aboriginal Brothers and Sisters deserve the same'.

'I long to see a new Australia that prides itself on the treatment of First Nations Peoples, that reveres the cultural heritage of this land; where every child who goes to school learns about the First Nations people as the Guardians and protectors of Mother Earth.'

Are we treated with dignity? Are we treated with respect?

We have to be tougher, more vigilant, second thinking about everything, always on time or we are judged. This is a fact. I have faced racism throughout my life from early primary school. My children have all faced racism head on, in schools and workplace just because they identify and are proud. They have called out racism as I have done and I am proud that they have.

For me the judging is not for being Black, but for not being Black enough! I am constantly questioned on the percentage of my Aboriginality. I can be judged as being not 'really Aboriginal'! We as Aboriginal people must be more diligent, more punctual, more professional... because we are not judged like everyone else. There is a double standard in this country.

There was a push from media and government for the protest march to stop. The media used scare tactics, warnings that it was going to be a violent protest. I think is like trying to incite violence.

Read More:https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/dreaming-of-a-better-future-for-first-nations-peoples?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%209%20June%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%209%20June%202020+CID_7131a091621a0df48603e5771cdd9e15&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE#



'Time to stop the rot': Pat Dodson gives fiery speech about Indigenous deaths in custody

Pat Dodson criticises failure to reduce 'awful blight' of Aboriginal deaths in custody

Labor senator demands government make it 'top priority' to reduce incarceration rates and children in out-of-home care, saying 'now's the time to stop the rot'

Lorena Allam, The Guardian, June 11th 2020

Labor senator Pat Dodson, who worked on the 1991 royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody, has criticised 30 years of government failure to “relieve this awful blight on this nation’s history”.

In a speech to the Senate on Wednesday, Dodson demanded the federal government make it a “top priority” to pressure the states and territories to take action on reducing Aboriginal incarceration rates and deaths in custody.

“And don’t pussyfoot around with the states, saying, ‘Oh, it’s the states’ responsibility.’ Well, we know you’ve been capable of finding ways of dealing with that.

Legal experts call for investigations into Indigenous deaths in custody to be reopened

“Now’s the time to stop the rot of First Nations people dying in custody, being over-imprisoned and having their children put into out-of-home care.”

Dodson said the “new you-beaut” Federation Reform Council could also look at the “continuing, systemic pattern” of incarceration.

Dodson spoke in response to an earlier statement by Matthias Cormann, who said these are “not straightforward” issues.

“Yes, we are committed to continue to explore ways that we can do better,” Cormann said. “We absolutely must do better when it comes to this important issue.”

Dodson was scathing of what he said were “nice words and good intentions”.

“This is not about enlightened policy; this is about subjugating the First Nations people,” he said. “If you correlate that to the number of people who have been taken away – the 30,000 kids in out-of-home care – and if you come up with things like, ‘It’s going to take time,’ or, ‘It’s complicated, and it’s really difficult,’ well, it’s not.

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/11/pat-dodson-criticises-failure-to-reduce-awful-blight-of-aboriginal-deaths-in-custody?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMjAwNjEx&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS



The following is a statement from Pax Christi International on the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and all of those whose deaths have been precipitated by 400 years of systemic racism in what is now the United States of America.

Time to create a more equitable, compassionate, just and reflective world

Pax Christi International, a network which includes dozens of national sections and hundreds of local groups around the world, shares the deep mourning of the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and all of those whose deaths have been precipitated by 400 years of systemic racism in what is now the United States of America. For too long, the lie of white supremacy has corroded right relationships within our human family; it is time to dismantle these systems which harm us all, some much more significantly than others.

The Pax Christi movement was founded 75 years ago in France at the end of World War II; its goal was and continues to be true reconciliation and just peace through active and engaged nonviolence. We are touched by the widespread, multiracial, multigenerational nonviolent movement that is at the heart of the civic unrest in the United States. We pray that our U.S. sisters and brothers in their diversity will persist in their pursuit of a reconciled society.

But how challenging reconciliation is in a situation devoid of truth, mercy, justice and peace! COVID-19 has exposed intrinsically interconnected expressions of systemic violence, including economic injustice, ecological destruction, militarism and racism. While the current crisis was precipitated by the blatantly racist abuse of police power in the United States, the sins of white supremacy and systemic violence are evident around the world. We pray for a peaceful and just resolution to this crisis and for the deep global transformation that will be necessary in a postpandemic world.

Across the globe, people have expressed their solidarity for those in the United States who cry out for justice, who demand accountability from law enforcement and government agents, who yearn for equity and dignity for all. We celebrate these public witnesses – in Kenya, in New Zealand, in the Netherlands, in France and so many other places, as they are a reverberating reminder of our connection and unity.

We pray for the strength and fortitude of those in the United States who are

striving with great effort to build a more just and loving world. Equally, we invite not only those of the United States but the global population to reflect and take constructive actions that will assist in creating a more equitable, compassionate, just and reflective world not only for the present but for future generations – a world where all will have life and have it more abundantly.

Pax Christi International, June 2020





unsplash / @marjanblan

The Good Samaritan: For Our Moment

Jeff Hood, <https://www.patheos.com>, June 19, 2020

On one occasion a theologian stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” she asked, “what must one do to no longer be racist?”

“What have your studies told you?” he replied. “What does it say in your books?”

She answered, “I guess it begins with... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[a]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[b]”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “This is the cure for racism.”

But she was certain that it wasn’t that simple, so she asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply, Jesus said: “An older man was traveling through a large city, when he was attacked by rioters. They beat him mercilessly and left him for dead. Content to keep protesting, activists saw the man and passed by on the other side. Desperate to save their stores, business owners didn’t even look in his direction. Scared for their lives, the police ran by. Just when it seemed that all hope was lost, a young man came to the aid of the older man. His heart full of

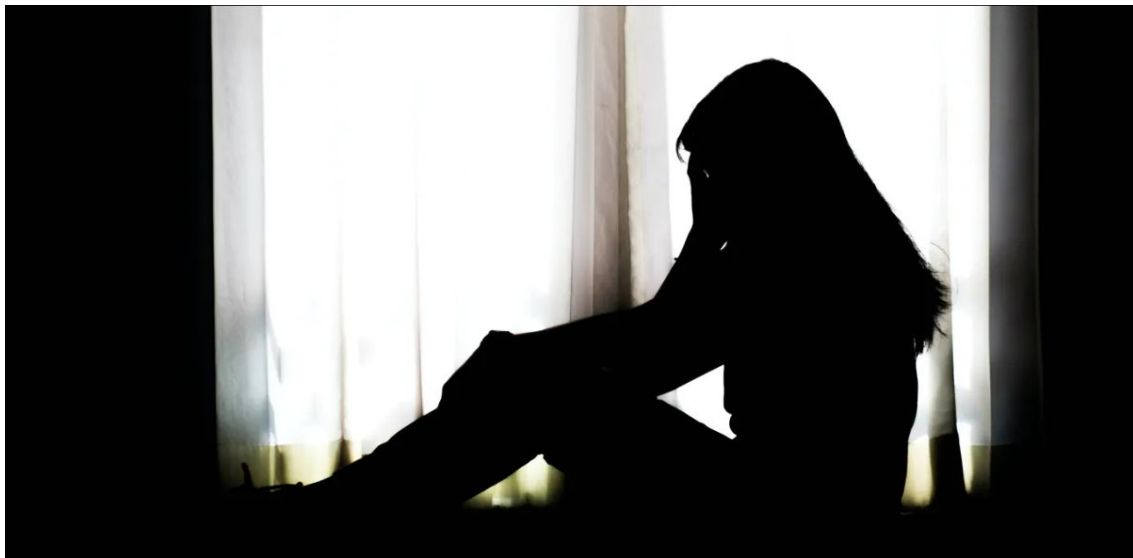
love, the young man began to bandage his wounds as best he could. Since it was impossible to get help where they were, the young man dragged him to his car and took him to the hospital. Until the older man was better, the young man stayed by his side. When it came time for the old man to go home, he looked at the young man and said, 'I owe you my life...I never thought that someone who looked like you would be willing to help someone who looked like me'"

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of rioters?"

The theologian replied, "The merciful one. But what has that got to do with race?"

Jesus told him, "Everything."

Amen.



Think slavery in Australia was all in the past? Think again

Fiona McGaughey, Amy Maguire, Dani Larkin, The Conversation, June 17th 2020

In the charged atmosphere of Black Lives Matter demonstrations, Prime Minister Scott Morrison recently made the mistake of stating there was no slavery in Australia. Morrison later apologised for causing offence. He clarified that his comments related specifically to the colony of New South Wales.

The relevance of slavery to the experience of First Nations and other communities was quickly and forcefully addressed. Robust evidence demonstrated that, of course, slavery did exist in Australia.

Research at UWA is exploring Australian links to historical slavery through the

Legacies of British Slave-ownership (LBS) database.

Academic Clinton Fernandes has revealed the British Parliament granted compensation in the 1830s to former slave owners for the loss of their slaves (but not to those who had been enslaved). Some former slave owners used this compensation to settle in Australia.

It is hardly surprising, then, that First Nations peoples in Australia were forced into indentured servitude and had their wages stolen.

Another example of slavery was the practice of “blackbirding” Pacific Islander people for work on Australian sugar plantations. Today’s South Sea Islander community in Queensland have asked the prime minister to familiarise himself with their experience and its legacies.

Global efforts to confront “modern slavery” challenge understandings of slavery as a purely historical experience. Modern slavery is an umbrella term used to describe human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. It includes bonded labour, forced marriage and forced labour.

Just like historical slavery, modern slavery is a multi-billion-dollar industry. An estimated 40.3 million men, women and children are subjected to modern slavery around the world.

In Australia, we can look to contemporary labour mobility schemes to see the continued vulnerability of Pacific Islanders to modern slavery. Stories continue to emerge of worker exploitation in Australia.

About 15,000 people are subject to modern slavery in Australia, including sex trafficking, forced marriage and forced labour. Cases of forced labour predominantly occur in industries such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, meat processing, cleaning, hospitality and food services. Even more people are enslaved through the supply chains of Australian companies operating overseas.

The Modern Slavery Act 2018 marks an important development. It requires large businesses and Commonwealth entities to report on risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, and actions to address those risks.

The first reports under the act are expected to be published this year and will be available for public scrutiny. Unfortunately, there are no penalties for non-compliance. An advisory group established to support implementation of the act

lacks civil society and survivor representation.

Read more: https://theconversation.com/think-slavery-in-australia-was-all-in-the-past-think-again-140543?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20June%2018%202020%20-%201654415918&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20June%2018%202020%20-%201654415918+CID_87fe01cd35c7320d489d6898f9314786&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Think%20slavery%20in%20Australia%20was%20all%20in%20the%20past%20Think%20again



Woman sitting on couch with head leaning on crossed arms (bymuratdeniz/Getty images)

We're not all in this together, yet

David Manne and Laura John, Eureka Street, Vol 30. No.12 18th June 2020

This Refugee Week, many asylum seekers and refugees are struggling to survive the COVID-19 pandemic. Some are trapped in immigration detention centres across the country in cramped and overcrowded conditions that make physical distancing impossible. Others are living in our community on temporary visas or no visas at all, struggling to make ends meet.

Despite what we're told, we're not 'all in this together'. But we know that the effectiveness of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic depends on all of us doing our part to flatten the curve. So when we leave out some, we inevitably endanger the health of everyone.

There are over 1300 people locked in immigration detention facilities across the country. They sleep in dorm rooms with bunk beds, queue for breakfast, lunch and dinner then eat side-by-side in crowded canteens. They share toilets and showers and are forced to ration limited supplies of soap and hand sanitiser. Physical distancing and self-isolation are an impossibility. Inside detention the rules are different. And they are dangerous.

Many of those who are detained have health conditions that place them at high risk of severe complications from COVID-19.

Abdul* has Type 1 diabetes and hypertension. He is scared that after fleeing persecution from a Middle Eastern country as a refugee he will contract the virus in an Australian detention centre. 'I am very worried,' he says. 'I'm not going to the communal areas because of the crowd and many people, to be honest, as I'm scared of getting exposed.'

The message from people in detention is loud and clear: 'We are not safe in this place'.

'This is not about challenging the immigration system. This is a public health emergency and at the forefront of our response must be the basic principle that the health of one affects the health of all.'

It's a view shared by medical experts. The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases and the Australian College of Infection Prevention and Control — along with over 1100 medical professionals — have consistently advised the government that immigration detention centres are high-risk environments for COVID-19 which places people at greater risk of infection and possible death. Read More:

https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/we-re-not-all-in-this-together--yet?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2018%20June%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Thursday%2018%20June%202020+CID_1c2904cd0a5b03de34b0aa5e1f04bd8b&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE

Threat multiplier: The impacts of climate change on refugees

Jesse Remedios, EarthBeat, 19th June 2020

On June 20, known internationally as World Refugee Day, the world will celebrate the strength and courage of refugees around the world. This year, the vulnerability of refugees has been exacerbated by a global pandemic. Cramped living conditions and lack of access to vital resources put millions [at extreme risk](#). In coming years, refugees will continue facing tremendous and unique challenges caused by yet another ongoing global crisis: climate change.

For refugees, climate change is what you'd call a "threat multiplier," says Joan Rosenhauer, executive director of [Jesuit Refugee Service/USA](#).

As the leader of the U.S.-wing of an organization that served [1 in every 100 refugees](#) worldwide in 2018, Rosenhauer knows well what kind of difficulties displaced persons are up against. In a June 19 interview with EarthBeat, she explained how the effects of climate change will not only lead to enormous numbers of displaced people in the future, but are also making life harder for refugees in the present.

"Imagine having fled your home after violence was imminent for you that threatened your life. You're grabbing your kids. You're fleeing. You're trying to settle into a home and place with almost no resources. You're living in a strange place with a mud hut. And then [imagine] having it all flattened by a storm," Rosenhauer said. "You've had to leave everything behind and you've lost everything already once, and now twice. It's those kinds of experiences where we see that climate change really multiplies the challenges that refugees face."

Below are excerpts from EarthBeat's discussion with Rosenhauer, edited for clarity and length. The conversation touches on terminology and legal definitions related to refugees, examples of how climate has displaced people and how Jesuit Refugee Service is tackling climate change. You can also watch the full interview at the top of the page.

Read More: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/threat-multiplier-impacts-climate-change-refugees>





Mosese and Kinikoto collect sea-urchins from the Navakavu Reef, off Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. The tabu, a traditional marker of fishing grounds, prevents over-fishing. Photograph: Kurt Johnson & Thomas Dallow

Cultural tabu: how an ancient ocean custom is saving Fiji's reefs

Kurt Johnson, The Guardian, 20th June 2020

Traditional practice of tabu – marking a portion of fishing ground off limits – is helping preserve Fiji's reefs for future generations

Mosese Vesikara and his uncle, Kinikoto Mailautoka, are on the reef collecting sea urchins for lunch. Beneath the shifting skiff, the swelling water is clear despite Fiji's bustling capital Suva sprawling along the next point, an easily walkable distance.

When out collecting Vesikara and the other fishers carefully skirt the tabu – pronounced TAM-bo – a no-fishing zone demarcated by barnacled pillars embedded into the reef floor.

These tabus are one tool of many for Fijian communities. Reintroduced to these waters after decades absent, they represent a return to traditional methods of reef and fishery management. The hope is that these traditional wisdoms, combined with modern science, can enable the growing village populations to subsist off the qoliqoli – fishing grounds – that they have for millennia.

Oblivious to the zoning, schools of electric blue fish thread through the beige and twinkling coral thickets below Vesikara's boat. The reef was not always so healthy.

In the late 90s throughout Fiji, and across the Pacific, fisheries hit crisis point. Colonial modes of management stressed centralisation, and commercial exploitation had overseen a steady decline in fish numbers.

Hemo Marvela - chair of the committee that manages Navakavu reef off Fiji's largest island Viti Levu.

"The fish were getting too small. The coral were dead because of the plastic pollution from Suva and the oil from boats," says Hemo Marvela, chairman of this marine protection area.

"You know the generation coming up. That's why we want to protect them. That's the only reason."

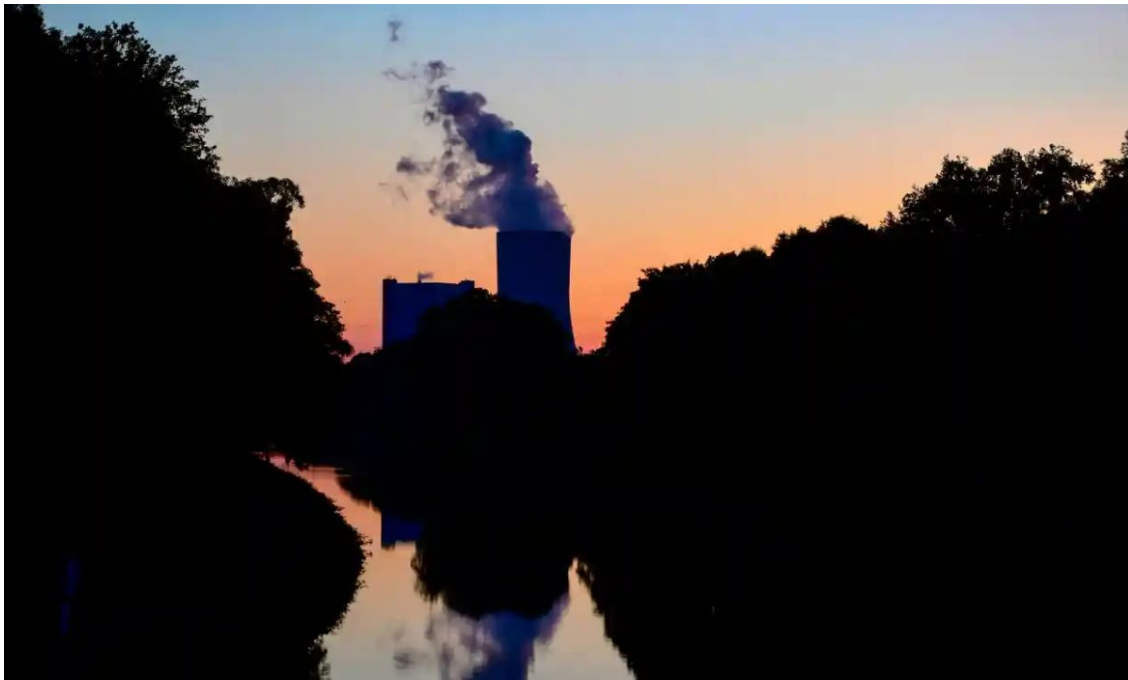
As a result a renaissance of traditional community management techniques began, with responsibility for monitoring the health of the qoliqolis returned to the local communities that lived off them.

Austin Bowden-Kerby, a marine scientist who has spent a career in coral conservation in the Pacific and central America, recalls how the idea of tabus was revived during a community consultation.

"There is one thing our grandfathers used to do that we haven't been doing – we would make a tabu area. We will mark the reef with sticks and a coconut leaf tied on it. And that means you cannot catch anything on that reef. That makes it sacred. For 40 or 50 years this had not been practised."

In Fijian tradition a tabu is the temporary closure of a section of a community's fishing ground for 100 days after a chief's death, before a memorial feast is held. The idea of the modern tabu is to extend that closure indefinitely.

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/20/cultural-tabu-how-an-ancient-ocean-custom-is-saving-fijis-reefs?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMjAwNjIw&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS



World has six months to avert climate crisis, says energy expert

International Energy Agency chief warns of need to prevent post-lockdown surge in emissions

Fiona Harvey, The Guardian, June 18th 2020

The world has only six months in which to change the course of the climate crisis and prevent a post-lockdown rebound in greenhouse gas emissions that would overwhelm efforts to stave off climate catastrophe, one of the world's foremost energy experts has warned.

"This year is the last time we have, if we are not to see a carbon rebound," said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency.

Governments are planning to spend \$9tn (£7.2tn) globally in the next few months on rescuing their economies from the coronavirus crisis, the IEA has calculated. The stimulus packages created this year will determine the shape of the global economy for the next three years, according to Birol, and within that time emissions must start to fall sharply and permanently, or climate targets will be out of reach.

"The next three years will determine the course of the next 30 years and beyond," Birol told the Guardian. "If we do not [take action] we will surely see a rebound in emissions. If emissions rebound, it is very difficult to see how they will be brought down in future. This is why we are urging governments to have sustainable recovery packages."

Carbon dioxide emissions plunged by a global average of 17% in April, compared with last year, but have since surged again to within about 5% of last

year's levels.

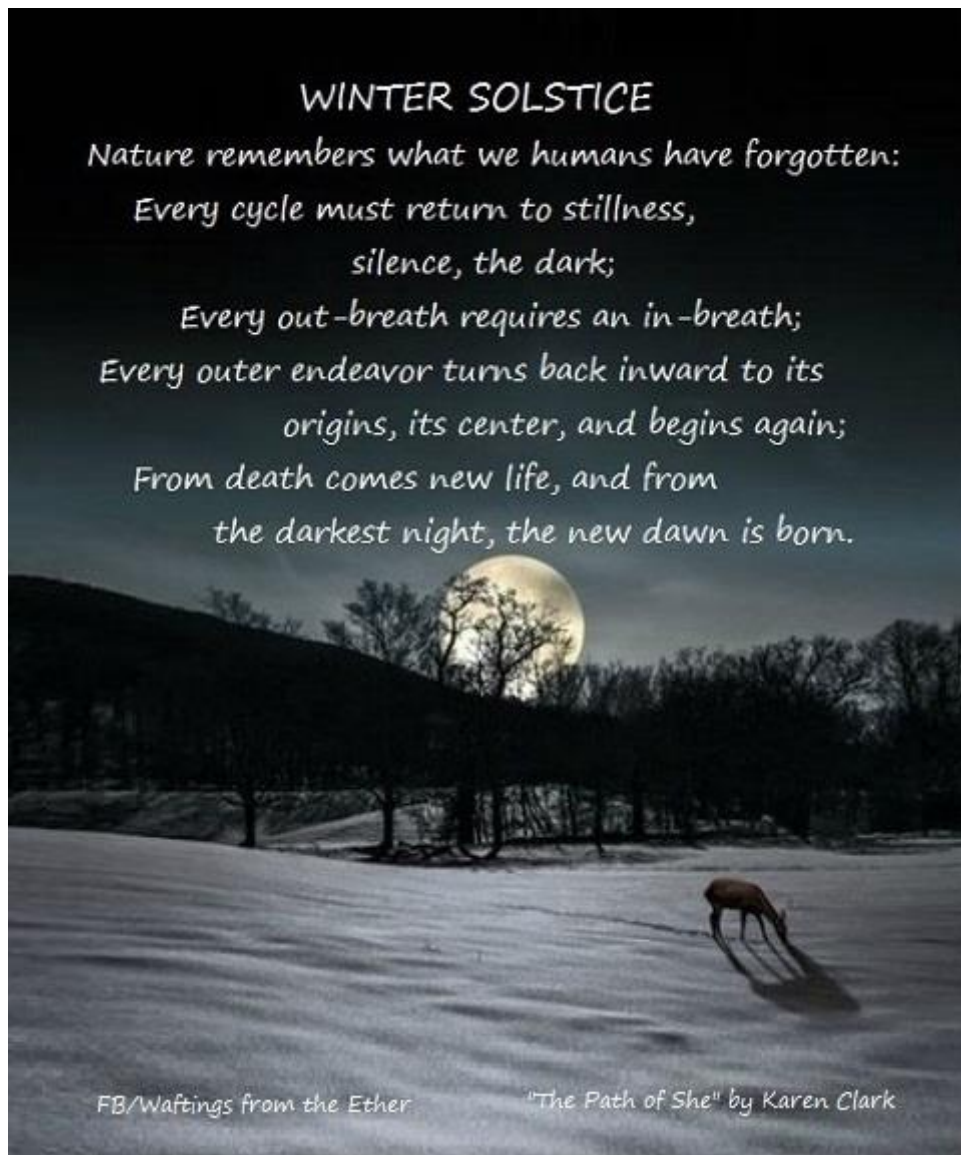
Sign up to the Green Light email to get the planet's most important stories

In a report published on Thursday, the IEA – the world's gold standard for energy analysis - set out the first global blueprint for a green recovery, focusing on reforms to energy generation and consumption. Wind and solar power should be a top focus, the report advised, alongside energy efficiency improvements to buildings and industries, and the modernisation of electricity grids.

Creating jobs must be the priority for countries where millions have been thrown into unemployment by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns. The IEA's analysis shows that targeting green jobs – such as retrofitting buildings to make them more energy efficient, putting up solar panels and constructing wind farms – is more effective than pouring money into the high-carbon economy.

The sustainable recovery plan could create nearly 9m new green jobs each year.

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/18/world-has-six-months-to-avert-climate-crisis-says-energy-expert?fbclid=IwAR0-8g-oWnOMLvklSDVJXcNpRdojhKFdjbThhYjVJI4P-Bd_w95xrvejEoU#:~:text=The%20stimulus%20packages%20created%20this,will%20be%20out%20of%20reach



WINTER SOLSTICE

Nature remembers what we humans have forgotten:

*Every cycle must return to stillness,
silence, the dark;*

*Every out-breath requires an in-breath;
Every outer endeavor turns back inward to its
origins, its center, and begins again;
From death comes new life, and from
the darkest night, the new dawn is born.*

FB/Waftings from the Ether

"The Path of She" by Karen Clark

Secret Trials Down Under: Witness J, Witness K and Bernard

Collaery

Binoy Kampmark, Dissident Voice, 22nd June, 2020

There are few more spiteful things in political life than a security establishment attempting to punish a leaker or whistleblower for having exposed an impropriety. Such a tendency has no ideological stripe or colouring: it is common to all political systems. In Australia, it has become clear that secret trials are all the rage. The disclosure of their existence tends to be accidental, and trials held partly in secret are also matters considered necessary by the current attorney general.

Last year, [the case of Witness J](#) made its way into the press like a threatening menace, a reminder that Australian authorities do not shy away from holding

trials without scrutiny or public record. A former military intelligence officer had been prosecuted in the courts of the Australian Capital Territory and jailed under a cloak of secrecy so heavy it even eluded the ACT's justice minister. Had it not been [for separate proceedings](#) arising from the penning of his draft memoir, no one would have known.

For all the generously scattered propaganda about Australia being a devotee of open justice, the converse is closer to the mark. As the Attorney-General, Christian Porter, [told the ABC last year](#) regarding Witness J, "The court determined, consistent with the Government submission, that it was contrary to the public interest that the information be disclosed and the information was of a kind that could endanger the lives or safety of others."

Such trials are invisible affairs. They repel scrutiny. They repudiate the very idea of legal accountability. All the running is made by government prosecutors. Law Council Arthur Moses [describes](#) it in rather mundane fashion. "The details of the case will not be found on the court website, or on the noticeboard with the list of all the other cases."

There are other troubling cases, two of which are taking place in the Australian capital: that of former Australian Secret Intelligence Service agent Witness K and his lawyer, Bernard Collaery. The largely secret prosecution of both men concerns a generally venal affair: the conduct of an ASIS operation in 2004 against diplomats of the impoverished state of Timor-Leste in their negotiations with Australia regarding the continental shelf rich in oil and gas. Using [the cover of an aid project](#), ASIS agents installed listening devices in the Timor-Leste cabinet office in Dili.

The hope was to furnish the Australian government, then led by John Howard, a robust advantage in negotiations. It was predatory, commercially minded, and indifferent to the plight of a country still crippled by the effects of Indonesian occupation. Witness K, with the assistance of Collaery, subsequently blew the lid on the operation, though they did so, ironically enough, through legal channels. The Inspector General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) was informed. Permission to retain the services of Collaery was sought and granted. Armed with such information, Collaery proceeded to assist Timor-Leste in mounting their 2013 case in The Hague against the validity of the treaty that had arisen out of the compromised negotiations. During that time Collaery's home was raided by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and Witness K detained. Charges were duly laid, but only after the final treaty's conclusion in March 2018.

The whole affair left a stinging impression. "It was outrageous," [fumed](#) chief negotiator for the Timor-Leste government Peter Galbraith. "I'd taken protective measures against Australian espionage, which I thought would be

based on cell phones and internet, but I thought it was pretty crude to be bugging the prime minister's offices."

The Collaery case is now making its way through the channels of secrecy, and we are none the wiser for it. It is troublingly odd, not merely for its clandestine nature, but also for the fact that [he was ever charged](#).

https://dissidentvoice.org/2020/06/secret-trials-down-under-witness-j-witness-k-and-bernard-collaery/?fbclid=IwAR2YdDmzVvYebNrrl_9S3746Rt664XPAH2I09BpdCeEcQD21NsDiTL83IBl#more-105912

REFLECTIONS

Jamberoo Abbey, Facebook Post, 14th June 2020

Another beautiful prayer from the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland which we pray not only for ourselves but for everyone as we gradually move out of isolation. Let's continue to look after one another.

God of our healthy fears, God of our courage and faith: there is a strengthening pull wanting to carry us back to what they call normal. But there is also cautious resistance and a reluctance to embrace all that was.

Help us in this in between. As we venture out and relax restrictions, may we not forget the dangers, nor lose sight of what we've gained in a time of self-imposed limitation. Strengthen our patience to let this play out; and may the lessons we carry help us pull through.

Amen.



*My God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.*

*I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
And the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
And I know that if I do this,
you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,
I will not fear,
for you are ever with me
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*
Thomas Merton

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

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