

My Other

You are 'my other'
But you do not steal my gaze
Or consume my thoughts
I am not preoccupied
 with trying to understand
 what its like –
 to be you
 to be white
 to be the majority
 to be the so-called definition of civility
 how it must feel to assume the superior role.

And I do not ask you –
 what it's like to be non-Indigenous
 to have the freedom to choose
 to be politically active
 or to choose to participate
 in the reconciliation process.

I do not ask you to tell me –
 the entire history of your society
 or the customs of your ancestors
 or why *your* people can't seem to agree on anything.

I do not ask these questions not only because –
 they may make you feel uncomfortable
 but because it is important for me
 to determine *my own role*

my own place
in this world that we share.

So I wish you would start –
 asking yourself the same questions
 you ask of me
 and focus
 more on the 'self'
 rather than 'the other'.

Sydney, 2004

Making Aborigines
Inspired by Michael McDaniel

I was born and raised
a young girl

I went to school
I played with dolls
I ate McDonald's
I spoke English
I watched Romper Room
and Sesame Street

I fell I bled
I hurt I cried
Happy I laughed

One day –
you called me abo,
boong and coon
you spat at me
you said I was dirty

You made me
your idea of what
you thought
I was.

What *you* thought
an Aborigine was.

Why couldn't you just let me be?
I was just another little girl
skipping home from school

Instead, *you* created me,
You politicised me
You *made* me an activist
You *made* me have to be vocal
You *gave* me the chip you now criticise me for

My parents didn't create me
I didn't create me
You created me

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You made me different
Then asked me why I was so
You said I was an Abo
But I could only be half-caste –
To you I am not even be a whole person

I am not half a daughter
Or half a woman
And I am not half an Aborigine

Are you half-caste Australian?
Do you call yourself 'part-Australian' –
because of your mixed heritage?
No, you allow yourself a whole identity.

Well guess what?
So am I!

I am whole
I am complete

If you *are* struggling
with who *you* are
then deal with it.
But don't project
your own identity issues
onto me.

Sydney, 2004

Expectations **(with respects to Phil Kawana)**

I expect to be identified by my race forever –
to have to define my identity,
explain my Aboriginality
and my relationship with the land
and to categorise myself
to fit other people's stereotypes.

I expect to have to pronounce my nation
e-v-e-r-y s-i-n-g-l-e time
I am introduced
in public

I expect to continue
to challenge
the status quo of inequality

I expect to always surprise my opponents
with undervalued intelligence
unlikely beauty
unappreciated professionalism
unexpected dignity

I expect to be asked
the questions
the interviewer already
has prescribed answers to

I expect the prejudice
That has become the norm
I expect I will continue to cope
with society's accepted ignorance

I expect to jump through hoops
that are constantly moving
and to leap over hurdles
that needn't be there.

But most of all
I expect myself to be proud
and not to expect from others
what I wouldn't expect from myself.

Wellington, Aotearoa, 2003

The Creator's Prayer

Our Biami
Who is everywhere?
Honoured is your name
We are borne of your will
Beauty created by your hand
With all beings in this land
Thank you for blessing us
With food for the soul
And forgive us if we do not always appreciate
Or do not forgive those who wrong us
Guide us on the road to inner peace
And protect us from ill-will.
Amen

Aotearoa, 2003