



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

May 2023 No.91

Dear Friends,

This 91st Edition of ERCJCE Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations, refugees and people seeking asylum and environmental justice.

May we never forget those in this broken world for whom we strive to make things better. One must never lose hope and continue to hold dear to Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets: **COMPASSION LIBERATION & PRESENCE**

The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention ... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words. Rachel Naomi Remen

Please note that if you come up against a paywall in "any of the articles below - please contact me at: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org and I will send you the full article.

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

Peace & Blessings

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.

Director's Notes

I was reminded this week of the important role of the Edmund Rice Centre in supporting and amplifying voices from the community who otherwise may not be heard or in fact have no voice at all. My first reminder came as a result of a meeting I was asked to attend as part of our support to the Allies for Uluru CEOs forum. This was a wonderful meeting and opportunity to network with others who lead their organisations and are supporting the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including the establishment of Voice, Treaty and Truth. Apart from being a reminder of our Sydney-based First Nations heritage and the importance of knowing the country and the First Nations of the place we work and/or call home, the meeting also featured an important discussion of the upcoming referendum. There is a heavy burden on our First Nations communities this year and, as we undertake an important decision and process of change for our Constitution and country, we are seeing the process become politicised and used as a wedge rather than as an opportunity for a new beginning. Many of us in leadership roles were asked what more we could do to support our First Nations through this process.



Members of the CEOs Forum, Allies for Uluru Photo Credit: Fred Hollows Foundation

My second reminder came when I met with NSW parliamentarians to discuss and stand in solidarity with a range of community leaders from the Australian-Iranian community advocating for democratic reform in their country of origin and highlighting the challenges faced by their families and friends facing ongoing persecution in Iran. I was both moved and honoured to be invited to be part of this meeting and made aware of the atrocities but also of the ongoing hope for change for the people, particularly the younger generation in Iran.



Photo Credit: Mohammed Sadhgepour

In both of the meetings described above I was struck by the important role played by the Edmund Rice Centre not only through our research, programs and advocacy but simply, by being present and willing to amplify the voices of those we work with through what we do.



What is National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

The dates for NRW are the same each year; 27 May to 3 June.

These dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey— the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision respectively.

27 May 1967 On this day, Australia's most successful referendum saw more

than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Australian Government power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise them in the Census.

3 June 1992 On this day, the Australian High Court delivered the Mabo decision, the culmination of Eddie Koiki Mabo's challenge to the legal fiction of 'terra nullius' (land belonging to no one) and leading to the legal recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of lands. This decision paved the way for Native Title.

Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Link to ERCJE Reconciliation Week School Resource:

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/erc/pages/289/attachments/original/1684891951/Reconciliation_Week_Schools_Resource.pdf?1684891951



Gumatj dancers at the public memorial, which followed six days of private funerary ceremonies to honour the clan leader.

Photograph: Peter Eve

‘Eulogy for a giant’: Anthony Albanese leads tributes to Yunupingu at public memorial

Lorema Allen, The Guardian, 18th May 2023

Prime minister hails extraordinary Yolngu statesman as a ‘national treasure’ while daughter calls her father a fierce leader

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has led the tributes to Yolngu leader Yunupingu at a public memorial in remote north-east Arnhem Land on

Thursday, describing the revered elder as an “extraordinary Australian, who understood if you want to make your voice count you have to make sure that it is heard”.

Albanese travelled to Yunupingu’s homeland of Gunyangara to deliver what he called “a eulogy for a giant”. The service was also attended by the minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, opposition leader, Peter Dutton, US ambassador to Australia, Caroline Kennedy, and other dignitaries.

Yunupingu died in April after a long illness.

Thursday’s public service followed six days of private funerary ceremonies to honour the Gumatj clan leader, led by senior Yolŋu people with responsibility for ensuring Yunupingu was properly “sent on the next stage of his life’s journey”, according to a statement from his family.

Albanese said he was honoured to be at Gunyangara, where “the reminders of all he believed in and all that mattered to him are all around us, the profound cultural, political, social and economic legacies of a leader”.

“Of a statesman. A painter, dancer, singer and musician. Australian of the Year in 1978. Member of the Order of Australia. A national treasure. A remarkable member of a remarkable family,” he said.

Yunupingu was a strong supporter of the Uluru statement from the heart, a document Albanese described as “a masterclass of concise and unifying eloquence”.

“Now Yunupingu is gone, but the gurtha – the great tongue of flame and truth with which he spoke to us – is still here. And it lights the path ahead for us. We will never again hear his voice anew, but his words – and his legacy – will keep speaking to us.

“The finest tribute we can offer to his memory is within our grasp,” Albanese said.

Read full story:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/may/18/eulogy-for-a-giant-anthony-albanese-leads-tributes-to-yunupingu-at-public-memorial>



Warlpiri Dictionary contributors. Photo: Jeff Bruer, PAW Media, for Aboriginal Studies Press/AIATSIS, Author provided

Six decades, 210 Warlpiri speakers and 11,000 words: how a groundbreaking First Nations dictionary was made

Carmel OShannessy, Jane Simpson & Otto Sims Jungarrayi, The Conversation May 25th 2023

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised this article contains names of deceased people. The symbol † next to a personal name is a conventional respectful indicator that the person has died.

The first large dictionary of the Warlpiri language began in 1959 in Alice Springs, when Yuendumu man †Kenny Wayne Jungarrayi and others started teaching their language to a young American linguist, †Ken Hale.

Sixty years in the making, the Warlpiri Dictionary has been shortlisted for the 2023 Australian Book Industry Awards – a rarity for a dictionary.

Spoken in and around the Tanami Desert, Warlpiri is an Australian Aboriginal language used by around 3,000 adults and children as their everyday language.

Warlpiri artist Otto Sims Jungarrayi says:

In the old days when kardiya [non-Indigenous] people came, when they reached this continent, we had jukurrpa “law” here, not written on paper but true jukurrpa “law”, that the ancestors gave us. Now we put our language and our jukurrpa law on paper.

The dictionary and these materials represent the authority of elders, even if those elders are no longer present.

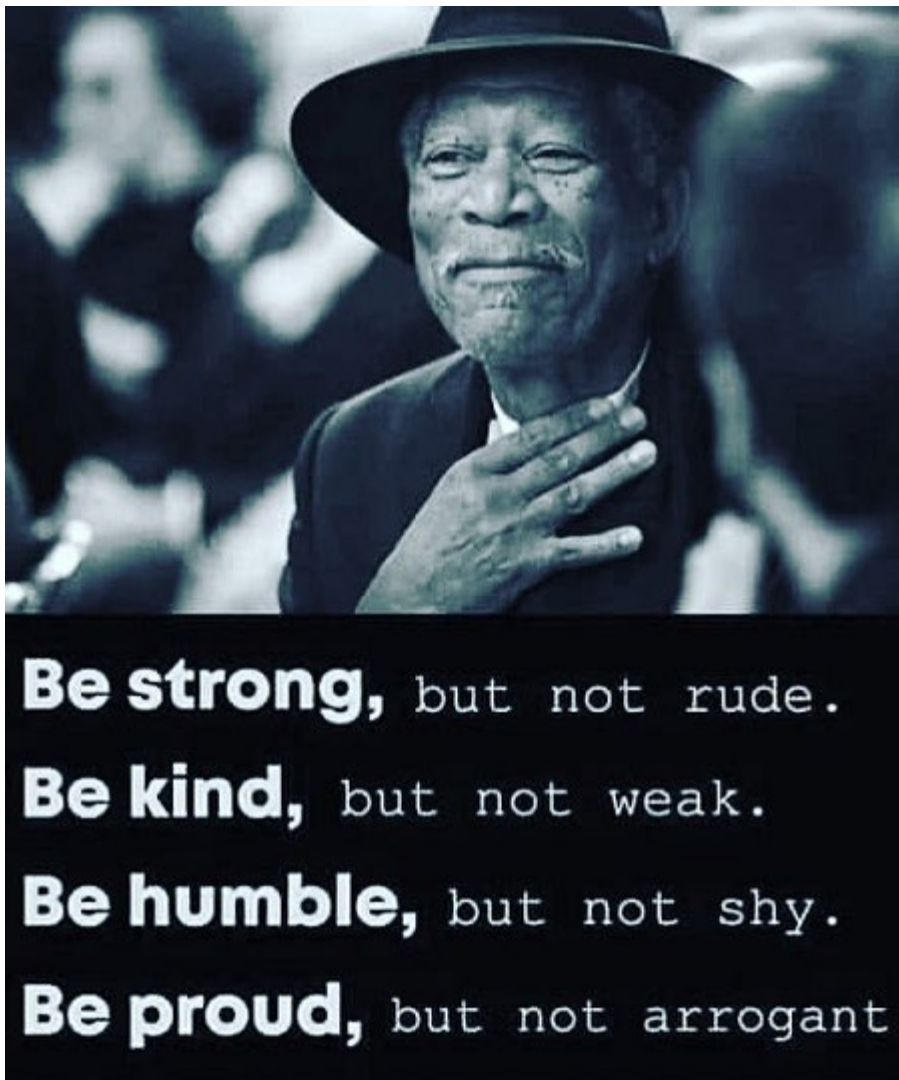
From the start of this project, Hale tape-recorded and transcribed many hours of Warlpiri people talking about language, country, kin and diverse aspects of traditional life.

The Warlpiri people he recorded came from different parts of Warlpiri country, speaking their own distinctive varieties of the language. From this material, Hale hand-wrote the words and meanings on small slips of paper that could be

sorted in different ways.

Read full story:

https://theconversation.com/six-decades-210-warlpiri-speakers-and-11-000-words-how-a-groundbreaking-first-nations-dictionary-was-made-205019?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20May%2025%202023%20-%202636326540&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20May%2025%202023%20-%202636326540+CID_9764be5d33a45cf7708c476a0516eb3f&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Six%20decades%20210%20Warlpiri%20speakers%20and%2011000%20words%20how%20a%20groundbreaking%20First%20Nations%20dictionary%20was%20made





UN special rapporteur on torture Alice Edwards says Labor is responsible for Australia's record on "inhumane" refugee policy.

Credit: Cordula Trembl

Limitless detention of refugees is inhumane and must end, says UN torture watchdog

Charlotte Grieve, The Age, May 18th 2023

The United Nations' torture watchdog has urged Australia to end its "inhumane", indefinite detention of asylum seekers and immigrants and make reparations for historical human rights abuses.

UN special rapporteur on torture Alice Edwards said Australia and the United Kingdom were outliers in not setting time limits on immigration detention. Figures released in March showed the average stint in detention in this country is 780 days, more than two years.

Edwards, who was both the first woman and first Australian appointed to the role, called for urgent action and said Labor was responsible for the longstanding policy.

"It's important to note in 1992 it was the former Labor government that introduced indefinite detention of refugees and asylum seekers," Edwards said.

"It was extended by the Liberal and Coalition government, but now I'm appealing to the new government. Australia has a lot to repair in this domain." "It is inhumane to allow never-ending, unreviewable detention," Edwards said.

Reparations were necessary for people harmed by the system, Edwards said, although she stopped short of calling for financial compensation.

"Six months allowable detention is the deadline in the majority of countries of a similar legal and socioeconomic background to Australia. That would be a massive improvement on the current situation.

"Australia needs to play its part in supporting people that are victims of

human rights violations.”

Read full article:

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/limitless-detention-of-refugees-is-inhumane-and-must-end-says-un-torture-watchdog-20230414-p5d0et.html>



A vice-chair of the subcommittee on prevention of torture, Aisha Shujune Muhammad. CREDIT:TWITTER

Exclusive: UN set to sanction Australia over human rights abuses

Denham Sadler, The Saturday Paper, May 20 – 26, 2023 | No. 450

Australia is on the verge of becoming the first OECD nation to be placed on a United Nations non-compliance list over its failure to implement a human rights agreement it signed onto more than five years ago.

The former Coalition government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in late 2017, under then attorney-general George Brandis, just months after Australia was elected to serve on the UN’s Human Rights Council.

More than five years later, however, Australia has failed across the board at implementing its obligations under the agreement, which s aimed at preventing human rights abuses in places of detention.

OPCAT requires signatory nations to set up independent inspection and monitoring bodies for all places of detention and to allow regular visits from a

group of UN experts to these places. Australia has done neither.

A funding deadlock between the federal and state governments has meant inspection and monitoring bodies have not been established. Similarly, a UN expert group suspended its visit to Australia late last year after being blocked from inspecting a number of prisons.

Speaking to The Saturday Paper, a vice-chair of the subcommittee on prevention of torture (SPT) who led the now-suspended delegation to Australia, confirmed Australia is likely to be placed on the UN's non-compliance list, known as the Article 17 list.

"There is a rough ballpark time line, then, depending on the situation, it's very much decided country to country," says Aisha Shujune Muhammad, who is also a justice of the Supreme Court in the Maldives. "Considering that Australia has had five years, I wouldn't be surprised if Australia makes it to the Article 17 list. That is something we could do and the plenary would make that decision.

"It is unfortunate, to put it very lightly, that Australia was unable to do it within five years. Once the obligation is not met in a timely manner, that is reflective of how seriously those obligations are taken at face level."

Australia would be the first OECD nation on this list, which features 14 countries including Nauru, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Philippines. These countries have been publicly shamed for breaking a "fundamental obligation" to the UN human rights treaty. The US has also not signed OPCAT.

The UN committee has written to the Australian government offering assistance in implementing OPCAT.

"The prohibition on torture is absolute. There are no circumstances in which it is permissible to engage in torture. It must be respected to the fullest with no exceptions carved out."

Subscribers: Read full article*

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/law-crime/2023/05/20/exclusive-un-set-sanction-australia-over-human-rights-abuses>

*** A paywall exists for non-subscribers, if you wish to read a full version of this article - please contact me: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org**



Atena Soltani / Instagram

Afghan Women Use Art to Resist the Taliban

Fatima Faizi, truthdig, 11th May 2023

As public spaces for women continue to diminish each day, some Afghan women have transformed a corner of their own homes into an artistic battleground to resist the Taliban's oppressive rule.

Husneya Saidi did not leave her home for two months after Taliban fighters stormed into Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 15, 2021. Her decision was driven by fear and uncertainty, as the city experienced the most significant shift in power dynamics in nearly two decades, resulting in an unstable political climate.

Afghan women's worst fears became their harsh reality. The streets of Kabul were devoid of women's presence. "Seeking shelter in a corner of my house, it felt as though the earth was shifting beneath me," says Saidi. "A sense of panic began to swell within me." For the women of Afghanistan, the Taliban's resurgence signified the potential erasure of all their accomplishments.

The 21-year-old Saidi, who was raised in Kabul, knew about the Taliban, but only from a distance. She was born just a few months after the United States invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, and ousted the previous Taliban regime. She had never seen Taliban fighters in her neighborhood. All she knew about the group was either from the news, or from stories her parents and others told her.

In Kabul, under the protection of the U.S.-backed Afghan government, Saidi found hope and opportunity as she pursued higher education during the war. She had a thirst for knowledge, and attended Kabul University, where she studied Islamic law and aspired to become a lawyer.

After its recent return to power, the Taliban claimed that the ban on women's

education was essential to prevent gender mixing in universities, and asserted that certain subjects being taught, such as agriculture and engineering, were in violation of Islamic principles. The Taliban's Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadeem, said repeatedly that Afghan women's behavior was in breach of the country's Islamic moral code of conduct, and that they dressed like they were "attending a wedding function." According to Saidi, men and women had already been segregated within educational institutions before the Taliban implemented its ban.

With the Taliban back in control, Saidi's dreams of furthering her education and pursuing a career in Islamic law have been shattered.

In the privacy of her home, Saidi found an online storytelling and writing course launched by Homeira Qaderi, an author and human rights advocate. As she delved into the world of narrative and storytelling, Saidi discovered a powerful medium through which she could give voice to the experiences of Afghan women living under Taliban rule.

With each lesson, she felt her skills as a storyteller growing, and she soon found herself weaving tales that captured the resilience, strength, and courage of women like herself who refused to give up on their dreams. These stories became tools in the arsenal of the students in the course, empowering them to challenge the Taliban's oppressive regime through the power of narrative. "They may have closed the doors of the university to me, but I will fight them with the might of my words," says Saidi. "My pen will serve as my unyielding weapon."

Read full story:

<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/afghan-women-use-art-to-resist-the-taliban/?fbclid=IwAR0xYMrj36vNkcV8MngDPM4Gwa9r7VyetXRxoqGNzeCplwpF2LABVIWpOZ4>



Hilda C. Heine, former president of the Marshall Islands, is part of the Pacific Elders Voice group that issued the warning to the Australian government. Credit: AP

Pacific pressure: Island leaders say security ties at risk unless Australia does more to cut emissions

Mike Foley, Sydney Morning Herald, 19th May 2023

Pacific leaders are warning the Albanese government it must raise its climate goals or risk harming Australia's security ties to the region, following an alarming forecast that global warming will almost certainly exceed a crucial temperature limit within the next five years.

The World Meteorological Organisation on Wednesday warned there was a 98 per cent chance that at least one of the next five years would exceed an annual average global temperature of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Australia signed the Paris Agreement in 2015, committing to make cuts to greenhouse emissions consistent with the global action needed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees – the level calculated by scientists to avoid the worst damage from climate change.

However, the government is failing this goal. Its target to cut emissions by 43 per cent by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 is consistent with at least 2 degrees of warming.

“Crossing the 1.5 degree threshold means people from low-lying island countries like mine will face significant challenge to their lands, livelihoods and survivability,” former Republic of Marshall Islands president Hilda Cathy Heine told this masthead.

She is part of the Pacific Elders Voice group – which also includes former Kiribati president Anote Tong and former Tuvalu prime minister Enele Sopoaga – that has called for Australia to increase its climate targets, arguing their island nations are bearing the brunt of extreme storms and sea level rises.

The group warned the federal government's funding package of nearly \$2 billion to counter China's growing influence in the region could fail if Australia did not increase its climate action.

Read full story:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/pacific-pressure-island-leaders-say-security-ties-at-risk-unless-australia-does-more-to-cut-emissions-20230518-p5d9d2.html>



41,000 People in Modern Slavery in Australia

25 May 2023 – The Global Slavery Index 2023 (GSI) published yesterday indicates that the number of people estimated to be experiencing modern slavery has risen by 10 million since the last report in 2018. The GSI is the most comprehensive measurement of modern slavery in the world. The 2023 edition has identified that conflict, climate change and the impact of the covid-19 pandemic have compounded this crisis and an intersectional response is needed. This includes actions in Australia, where an estimated 41,000 people are estimated to be in modern slavery – nearly triple the estimates since 2018. Slavery survivor advocate Moe Turaga who is supported by ACAN says, “The GSI confirms that a Commonwealth Anti-slavery Commissioner is urgently needed to hold all stakeholders accountable and to give the growing numbers of people living in modern slavery hope.”

For Australian Catholic Anti-slavery Network (ACAN) entities complying with the Modern Slavery Act(MSA) 2018, the updated GSI is an important resource for identifying at-risk products and services in their supply chains and operations. “The GSI helps ACAN entities determine where to focus risk assessment efforts and target specific categories of supply for risk management actions,” said ACAN Program Manager and Sustainability Specialist Carsten Primdal. For example, the GSI identifies solar panels in the top five products at-risk of forced labour. “This is a concern for ACAN entities planning or that have already invested in renewables. There are serious implications for procurement in terms of supplier risk, due diligence and demonstrating that Catholic funds are not contributing to people being enslaved, abused or exploited.”

Read full Media Release:

<https://cathnews.com/~documents/media-releases/media-releases-2023/230524-acan-41000-people-in-modern-slavery-in-australia/?layout=default>

REFLECTIONS



Facebook Post 24th May 2023

Sweet Spirit Songs

“When we’re too frustrated, angry or full of fear, we have no peace of mind. Money, fame and power don’t bring peace of mind, but paying attention to compassion does. Young children don’t care about their companions’ faith, nationality or race, so long as they smile and play cheerfully together. That’s the spirit we all need.” Dalai Lama

The disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:1-3).

Beloved

I come to you this morning

With sincere gratitude

For allowing me to experience

Enough years in this mortal realm

That I begin to understand the importance

Of becoming childlike.....

*My body is wizened
My physical reactions slower
But my heart, soul and spirit
Are alive with the joy of a child
Inhibitions gone
Freed to gambol through life
With the joy of a child
I am blessed.....
Amen*

~Jeanette Martin



Image ~ Karel K Hendee

Facebook Post Jamberoo Abbey 24th May 2023

Pentecost Novena - Day 4

A beautiful prayer to the Spirit from the Native American tradition...

*Oh, Great Spirit,
whose voice I hear in the winds
and whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me.*

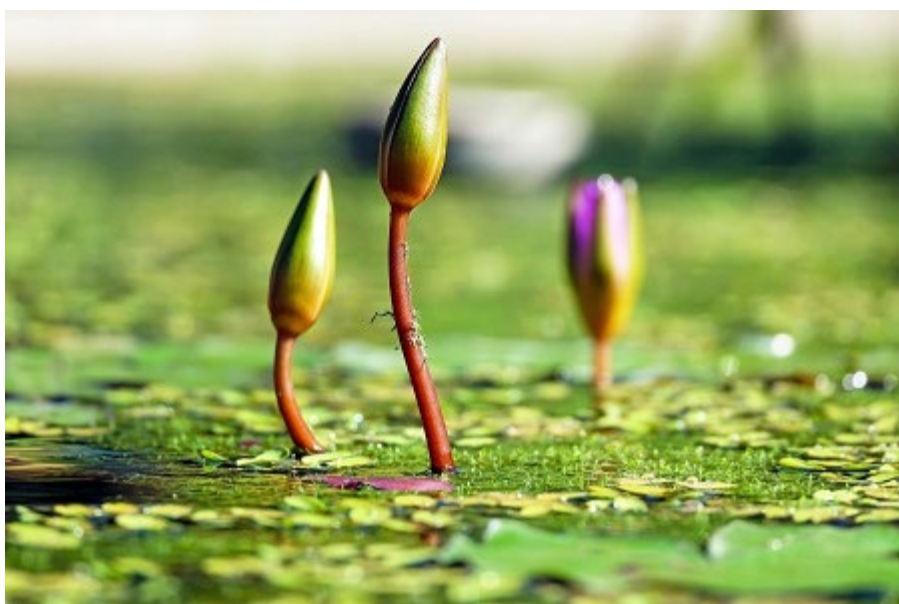
I am small and weak.

I need your strength and wisdom.

*Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes
ever behold the red and purple sunset.*

*Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.*

*Make me wise so that I may understand
the things you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.'*
*I seek strength, not to be superior to my sisters or brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.*
*Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes,
so when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit will come to you
without shame. Amen.*
Author unknown



Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

"The essence of nonviolence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally. Nonviolence is not a dogma; it is a process. Other struggles may be fueled by greed, fear, or ignorance, but a nonviolent one cannot use such blind sources of energy, for they will destroy those involved and also the struggle itself. Nonviolent action, born of the awareness of suffering and nurtured by love, is the most effective way to confront adversity." Thich Nhat Hanh

"Knowledge is power, but only wisdom is freedom." Etty Hillesum

"The fast was taken to impress upon the workers the truth that we can only win over the opponent by love, never by hate. Hate is the subtlest

form of violence. We cannot be really nonviolent and yet have hate in us." Gandhi, August 15, 1934, after breaking 7-day fast.

"The opposite of love is not rage. The opposite of love is indifference. Love engages all our emotions: Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger is the force that protects that which is loved. We cannot access the depth of loving ourselves or others without our rage."

Valarie Kaur, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*

"Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done. My work with the poor and the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice. Finally, I've come to believe that the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned." Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

"A war is always, always, the defeat of humanity. . . . There is no such thing as a just war. That does not exist." Pope Francis: March 18, 2022 talk to an international congress of educators



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.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.