“ONE TIME AGO”: AN URBAN ABORIGINAL TRIBALOGRAPHY

JULIANNE BUTLER
DIPLOMA OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES, BACHELOR OF ARTS

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Abstract

I identify as Koori and belong to the Worimi and Bundjalung peoples of N.S.W. I grew up in the inner city suburb of Waterloo and spent school holidays at Port Stephens with my Grandparents who informed me of the world, the ways of the ‘Old People’ and our link with them. I also developed links to my Father’s north coast country and to a pan-Aboriginal community in Sydney. At a meeting at the Aborigines Progressive Association I met Wayne and we have been married for 41 years. We have one daughter Kathleen and we are enjoying a ‘second parenthood’ with grandchildren Phoebe, Andrew and Harrie. Through my writing I hope to contribute to overturn the myths, which continue to oppress my people.

This thesis uses the method of tribalography developed by Choctaw author LeAnne Howe (2002) to contextualise my life experience and research journey as part of the broader Indigenous encounter with modernity. In reviewing the literature relevant to this area I expand on the concept of tribalography to make this a foundational philosophy in approaching Aboriginal women’s autobiography. As such the three key works cited are part of my extended kinship network. I also engage with the debate on the differences between Western and Indigenous knowledges and a general historical overview of colonial and twentieth century attitudes and policies towards Aboriginal peoples to provide the external context of the life histories discussed.
Methodologically, I use different voices, from a naturalistic representation of oral history to a literature-based analysis of theory and historical events. This includes an analysis of the family photographs for their value in oral history and ethnographic insight. I also use other forms of primary source material such as newsletters from the organisations that I was involved in during the 1960’s and the Dawn magazine, which was the official newsletter for the Aborigines Welfare Board. I also include collaboratively written work with my daughter that exemplifies the multi-generational continuance of tribalography.
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