

Patua te hē ki te rangimārie

Let peace combat the errors of our ways

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He mihi poto...

I am honoured to be one among a number of scholars invited to contribute to this series of public lectures initiated as part of the progressive celebration of the 10th year of life for the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies here at the University of Otago.

I am proud to have been part of both the 'birthing' and the nurturing of the Centre for many of those years, especially over the past two years, where I have been tasked with ensuring the Centre is positioned more credibly to realize its original Treaty-based commitment to being bicultural – in other words to being a place of postgraduate scholarly endeavour where tangata whenua may flourish and succeed equitably as students, as Faculty, indeed someday perhaps, as Te Ahorangi.

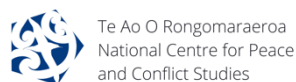
This is not an easy task as any one of you who have been similarly tasked will know. It is not easy for a number of reasons. For example, if we just think for a moment about the word peace and then ask ourselves what in postcolonial indigenous speak can this possibly mean in 2019 when so much of the unconscionable brutality of our shared colonial history here in Aotearoa has still yet to be properly taught and thus properly understood. Given this reality, then whose version of our shared history is informing our contemporary apprehensions of the concept and thus the word, 'peace'?

It is this dearth of historical consensus on history telling that remains problematic for Māori for it is largely from within these hidden/buried/silenced/sanitized narratives of colonial cruelty, cunning and connivance, that systemic and sustained injustice has accrued for Māori. Many of the conflicts, which have shaped and continue to shape the disturbingly uneven Aotearoa New Zealand society we have today, have their genesis in the colonial era.

And yet ironically while crucial aspects of colonial history have been set aside what has always also been hidden, only this time in plain sight, are the unerring, beautifully articulated aspirations of tangata whenua – aspirations which arise out of human resilience, a resilience characterized by deep inexorable yearning for peace with justice in spite of unspeakable suffering.

I am speaking here particularly of the Parihaka and Rēkohu Peace traditions both of which readily reveal profoundly gentle spiritually attuned notions of deep and abiding peace quite unique to nga tikanga a te Māori me te Moriori. How is it then that these two globally significant and globally unique peace traditions remain utterly peripheral to dominant peacemaking, peace building, peace affirming academic discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand

Ours is irrefutably a society where indigenous disadvantage across too many of the most basic human rights fronts is utterly disproportionate to our population status. It is utterly disingenuous therefore to even contemplate how to frame Māori discourses on peace say within the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies or indeed any other peace-based organization without first establishing a priority commitment to taking comprehensive account of the formative moments of our nation's history as these are recounted and thus recognized by both colonized and colonisers. Until this, alongside other more obvious systemic changes occur; Māori interests and presence will continue to be



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rendered institutionally marginal rather than integral, as they ought. As the irrefutable saying goes, Ka tika a muri, ka tika a mua. A genuine effort must be made toward healing the past before building a future.

The good news is that within the Centre at least some of that work has been underway for some years – long serving member of Faculty, Dr Heather Devere deserves recognition for her continuous efforts in this regard.

Today I believe there to be, an unequivocal commitment on the part of the Centre leadership, of all Faculty and students to realizing what it means to be Treaty facing in 2019 and beyond. The even better news is that this University has one of the finest Māori Strategic frameworks of any New Zealand University and so there is an implementation template to follow and appropriate accountabilities to measure progress against.

I raise these issues because I believe that these formative years of the life of the Centre have been immensely important – it has an incontrovertibly deserved place of scholarly pre-eminence among its peer global institutions, and it has achieved this through the judicious and determined leadership of former inaugural Director Professor Kevin Clements and supported by an exceptional Faculty.

Now under current Director Professor Richard Jackson I can only but imagine how unassailable its reputation will yet be as with confidence and clarity, the Centre is becoming steadily emboldened to articulate and enshrine a credible and innovative Treaty-based kaupapa, one based on mutuality not patronage, one that aligns justice with peace, one therefore that genuinely and urgently anticipates and undertakes to fulfil its bicultural responsibilities. That is my remit, and it is one I take very seriously.

Māori voices as kaitiaki and as peacemakers need to be heard and heeded more than ever as allies especially in the necessarily collective project to subvert what is now the dangerously omnipresent white supremacist movement with its evil penchant for violent conflict.

I raise these issues now because as an educator it always matters to me that all who need and deserve to participate in scholarly endeavour, including peace building ought to be able to do so, and to do so from a place of comprehensive knowledge and thus comprehensive understanding of what their academic choices are and even more importantly to know they are able to negotiate within those choices and thus to participate without first having to either forsake, to subdue or to compromise any aspect of their precious human identity.

I raise these issues because of their poignant resonance for me with the particular subject of this public lecture and that is to do with the traditional and contemporary role of religious communities as arbiters of moral and ethical propriety in the 21st century.

Now to some of you the premise I draw may seem either overly presumptuous, erroneous even, or both! I mean I do know of some who would say in a completely understandably cynical manner that it is such a stretch to suggest religious communities are still in any way arbiters of moral and ethical propriety, if indeed they ever were.

But I am not concerned here to debate the veracity of that claim for two reasons. Firstly, the recent events of Christchurch, Pittsburgh, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso, Poway, California and so on and on and on, all bear tragic witness to the deluded perceptions of every single one of the murderous terrorists behind the slaughters of the holy innocents who have lost their lives so cruelly and so needlessly. Each gunman indicated that somehow those they deliberately targeted were religiously immoral and unethical apostates who deserved therefore to die.

Second, I consider cynicism about religious communities to be a distraction. In this instance a distraction from what I consider to be the far more critical contemporary task of ensuring the public discourses emanating from within religious communities irrespective of their faith base are far more readily and credibly in alignment with what I believe to be among the simplest and yet surely most enduring and universally recognized faith based proclamations concerning the obligations of us all to be merciful and kind toward one another, to do justice, to live in peace and to nurture and protect the earth entrusted into our care.

In other words, I believe it is an educational response that is right now so desperately urgently needed across all religious communities. Religious education, theology, faith-based studies must be repositioned to retake the high moral and ethical ground once occupied by leading and respected scholars and sages, wise men and women of deep faith whose counsel was sought and given freely, whose humility was the hallmark of their gift of teaching, whose presence and guidance provided necessary stability and peace.

Paraphrasing the words of Indian scholar S. Rhada Krishnan, 'religion ought to be the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evil and sordidness, saves us from greed, lust and hatred, releases moral power and imparts courage in the enterprise of saving the world'.

I do not imagine there to be anyone here present who would disagree with the fundamental premise of this quotation or with the prospect of a world in which all may belong unconditionally, and all may flourish and know freedom accordingly, a world where none would ever seek or be enabled to dominate unjustly, a world where all of God's creation was nurtured and sustained as it ought.

Equally though I do not imagine there is anyone here who would not from time to time or more often, for good reason shake their head in dismay and say yeah right – the substantive empowering, compassionate, enlightened, inclusive divinely inspired rhetoric of all faith communities is indeed superb but what about the extant reality of leaders, of individuals and of enclaves within faith communities acting as harbingers and exponents of racism, sexism, homophobia, greed, child abuse, violence, hatred . . . and you are not wrong . . . and then we dare to wonder why young disaffected barbarically inclined malcontents are abroad in our communities spewing their unconstrained hate filled manifesto's and as in our own recent unspeakably horrific experience, acting out their murderous rage against a completely innocent religious community . . .

As some of you know, my life's work has been in theological education and that work was for me both a source of unspeakable joy, of unimagined professional satisfaction but more often than not it was one of exasperated outrage.

I came completely inadvertently into the theological academy. However, once inside thanks to the unerring tautoko of whanau together with the extraordinary encouragement I received from the very few radical thinking social, political, environmental, economic feminist activist theologians who were also my former teachers, I knew instinctively that in spite of and likely also because of my ostensibly perverse presence as the only lay, indigenous, divorced woman in both a key theological educational leadership role (i.e. Te Ahorangi or the Dean) and inside an elitist old guard bastion of white male privilege (St John's College), that I had a significant redemptive challenge to rise to.

During my entire tenure I struggled relentlessly as a pioneering minority woman leader in an elitist, patriarchally bound institution, I struggled as a theological educator, as a faith filled activist Anglican, to persuade my colleagues, my Governing body, my Church, that their traditional unapologetically Eurocentric means of devising, delivering, and validating theological education was systemically and culturally outdated, outmoded, unjust.

I insisted ad nauseum that their collective failure to recognize the monumental insufficiencies within their epistemological assumptions, institutional structures and skewed geographical frames of reference rendered us all complicit with the insidious oppressions of ongoing colonial imperialism.

I insisted ad nauseum that as self-respecting 21st century post-colonial Christians and theological educators we ought to be the first to be capable of articulating with faith-based confidence our understanding of how all elaborations of knowledge including theological knowledge always reflect dominant power interests. Following on from this we ought also to have been the first to adopt scholarly practices committed to equitable and mutually beneficial forms of collaboration with subaltern individuals and communities. How else could the longstanding Eurocentric hegemonies so deeply entrenched in theological curricula, pedagogy, assessment and accrediting ever be disrupted, exposed, then either set aside or at very least, radically transformed?

For good measure I suggested ever so politely that I thought the primary focus of theological education ought not be abstract theorizing about the meaning of God, the

history of the Church, the personhood of Christ, the complexity of Biblical Studies but should also and predominantly be about a search for peace with justice, for liberation and human transformation in the face of brutally dehumanising forms of oppression and of massively increased human suffering in the world.

It seemed self-evident to me that surely of all the academic disciplines, with its unsailable literary franchise on all the good words such as justice, freedom, liberation, equality, compassion, mercy, truth and so on, that theology in the hands of faith filled activist theologians ought to be opened to the post-colonial task of re-examining its hegemonic, North Atlantic dominated intellectual tradition, one so uncritically perpetuated within the theological educational systems of both the old and new empires.

Over the years I taught not only at St John's, but subsequently in ecumenical theological schools, in colleges and in universities in many parts of the world.

Surely (I figured) all would be concerned to critically address the colonial biases of their entire institutional base in order to become more appropriately polyvocal, receptive to and empowering of global cultures and epistemologies and in this way give abundant light and enduring strength to the possibilities inherent in 'patua te he ki te rangimarie.'

I was wrong. After almost 25 years of valiant struggle, I can confidently report that certainly theological seminaries generally speaking, are to the largest extent not open to the kind of radical critique I have long been suggesting.

I am still appalled at the extent to which empire, even in supposedly post-colonial institutions of higher learning, continues to render traditional theological and its close ally, religious education, so bereft of context, validity, creativity, relevance, transformative power.

It is still extremely rare to find leaders prepared to radically disrupt the received traditions of their teaching institutions especially since most who do dare, end up as I did, bullied out of the business.

And yes, politically it is to do with empire and hegemony, domination and oppression, patriarchy, and imperialism but all of these structural and attitudinal injustices are also increasingly finding expression in the personal. As a result, in today's completely skewed moral universe, even the personal within religious teaching institutions has so ironically also often become devoid of decency, kindness, courage, empathy, indeed often, of faith filled love.

The 'pain' of recognizing my 'wrongness' far from deterring me has only increased my determination to continue agitating, to continue searching for ways of redeeming my beloved academic field, my beloved academic profession, and my beloved academic institutions.

Just like Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's enduring novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I figured that although, 'I maybe licked before I begin, I am going to begin anyway and see it through no matter what'!

So, what might comprehensively inclusive, culturally expansive, contextually embedded, justice seeking theological and or religious education for the 21st century look like?

Before I answer I do not claim to have the definitive answer to this question and right here I need first to announce my own caveat. I am only speaking here of Christian based religious /theological education as this is taught both within seminary and universities such as this one. I do not, I would not ever presume to speak for others who teach within the Abrahamic faith traditions even as I know there are increasingly concerned and critical voices especially those of women emanating from within both Jewish and Islamic religious schools. Voices rightly and courageously seeking also for inclusion, recognition, affirmation.

I think one of the first things an effective religious educator needs is what I describe as a transcendent imagination. Or in other words, the capacity and the will to transcend the way things are; a determination to refuse to see history simply as what took place but rather to see it also as what all people irrespective of their particular context are now in the process of making and therefore requiring new responses to. This posture enables an instinctive ability to stop trying to normalize the present and to stop seeing the future as

a fait accompli. Both views negate the extraordinary political agency of real people and both therefore lack in any real sense of transformative hope.

Faith filled human beings are far from impotent. We have both freedom and obligation to act and think in new ways. As faith filled human beings of immeasurable God given agency, we have both the responsibility and the faith-based mandate to transform what is currently inequitable and thus unjust. Certainly, much seminary and university based theological and or religious education is currently profoundly inequitable and unjust in terms of its lack of representation, it is thus ineffectual in its reach or life-giving effect in the lives and upon the life chances of those traditionally marginalized, those who are the least in any given society. Surely faith-based leaders and educators would want to redress that inequity in order to ensure justice prevails within their academic fold?

Secondly, transcendent praxis. Societal transformation cannot occur from a position of educational stasis. I am with legendary Brazilian educator Paulo Freire when he insists that, 'Education itself must be an instrument of transforming action, a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation. This does not happen only in the consciousness of people, but it presupposes a radical change of structures, in which process consciousness itself will be transformed'.

In the new paradigm the role of expert must be repositioned; teachers and students together become inquisitive learners empowering one another by their ability to produce knowledge and to challenge the knowledge the old paradigm produced and presumed to be utterly sufficient. All existential realities have validity and are to be valued. It is in this way that curriculum deficit can be readily ameliorated in a mutually respectful and collaborative way.

Religious leaders and educators need have no fear only gratitude, because the form of authority the new paradigm promotes draws on a variety of religious traditions in its unequivocal assertions that the greatest among us must become servant of all . . .

Thirdly, theological education/religious studies requires declericalising and demystifying. Encouraging and enabling theological/religious education of the laity is not simply by way of a counter point to clericalism but as a pragmatic solution to enabling desperately needed wisdom, insight and critique from maybe up to 90% of the Church to enter into academic discourse and thus to properly disrupt so called theological/religious truths over which global elites have for too long maintained total control. Imagine what a radically different intellectual harmony, empowered and liberated lay voices, women's voices, young people's voices, might yet contribute into the religious academy?

Fourthly, contextualisation. Reinforced by the advent of globalization and thus increased demand for inclusion and diversity, contextualization quickly became a fundamental characteristic of contemporary secular education, fundamental to enabling multivalent voices and imaginings. Religious/theological education might otherwise have remained untouched had it not been for the vigilance and prophetic outrage of liberation theologians.

Globally the contemporary practice of contextualization within religious/theological teaching institutions is significantly uneven. As Whiteman suggests, the problem is often ethnocentrism and ecclesiastical hegemony. These two human constructs can however and must be intentionally deconstructed in order to avert the alternative phenomenon of contextual desolation. This insidious ideological phenomenon has translated itself into attitudes of intolerance and mistrust, of increasing ecclesiological conservatism and confusion, of increased academic elitism, of neoliberal flight from public responsibility. We can do so much better and the almost fail proof approach is still that of taking the incarnation as the best model for contextualization.

Surely after bearing first-hand witness to the desperately poignant ongoing struggles for dignified self-determination across the globe, I do not at this point imagine there is anyone among us wanting to resile from the unavoidably serious educational challenges, which are implicit in every cry for justice, every yearning for freedom.

How does any one of us for a moment remain unaffected by the starkness, the horror, the sheer outrage of what are so rightly described as the global obscenities of our times - the too many poor, a massively eco-damaged planet, monumental levels of political

corruption, wanton warmongering, human trafficking, preventable disease, religious bigotry, terrorism – the hate filled spectre of white supremacy.

What I remain utterly convinced of and I intuit this is a shared conviction - the status quo of all institutionally based religious and or theological education ought not remain as it is. I sense real agreement with Freire who insists that a radical change of consciousness can only be enabled 'through the existential experience of dying to the current reality and being resurrected on the side of the oppressed or by being born again with the beings who are not allowed to be'.

It is true therefore that any radically new religious studies/theological educational paradigm will undermine existing hierarchies of institutionally legitimated expertise. And so, it must, because while the majority emphasis of any educational discussion focuses of necessity on students and their learning needs, I remain adamant that teachers and leaders must never be exempt from responding to any of the extant challenges that are now being so eloquently and urgently laid out by those traditionally denied access to the academy.

Over the many years now of my academic leadership experienced I have found the greatest deterrent to radicalizing minds and thus behaviours in favour of the least among us is the steadfast refusal of church leaders, of elite academics, of people with power over others, to forsake any of the considerable privileges of their ecclesial offices whatever these may be. . .

It would seem necessary therefore that perhaps the hands, the feet, the hearts, and the minds of those with religious leadership responsibility are in need of being reconsecrated for the uncommon underside work of making all things here on earth to be as they are in heaven.

Remaking all religious teaching institutions as places 'where faith and scholarship meet to reimagine the work of justice' would be a very fine faith-based stance to beginning that work.

Otherwise, how can we ever hope to measure or assess the extent to which 'traditional' religious teachings are in alignment with or not, the social, cultural, political and economic context of Aotearoa New Zealand. How can we ever hope to discern critical trends within religious communities – growth and development, decline and disaffection and without any of this data how can accurate and care filled responses ever be devised and or implemented.

There is of course an additional difficulty arising in this country and it is that the academic study of religion has itself actually recently fallen rapidly into decline. This is especially disturbing when one considers that Aotearoa is one of the world's most religiously diverse nations, ranking 19th of 230 nations identified.

This incremental loss of critical scholarship inevitably leads to a commensurate decline in the availability of experts able to engage in public debates to do with religious diversity, let alone to do with religious conflicts. This decline is highly problematic for the nation especially in times of religious crisis such as occurred in Christchurch. Understanding social cohesion and the parameters for healing, understanding the historical, cultural, philosophical, and cultural aspects is imperative to helping faith leaders, teachers and scholars counter ignorance and instead to foster tolerance and understanding.

In conclusion then let me turn to the second of my own somewhat rhetorical questions, can the peace of Allah, ever combat the errors of our ways?

Yes, it can, yes it ought, yes it must. Let me reiterate however that I believe the corrective first needed is to our theological and or religious educational processes, such that for example the concept of peace itself is infused with far more expansive cultural and spiritual considerations. Similarly, the holy name of Allah might for example also begin to be more broadly understood as the standard Arabic word for God. .

In conclusion, and by channeling the late great Canadian educational philosopher Joe Kincheloe, let me reiterate my theory of education, it is a privileged indeed a sacred enabling role which requires relentless passion, a humanitarian vision and a critical posture. Education ought to stir the soul; expand the imagination; impart critical skills; energise the body; and secure justice, compassion, empathy, and ecological sustainability. Critical educators do more than simply study and transmit subject matter; they examine

and critique social structures, they are intimately acquainted with community issues, and they are powerfully committed to helping others especially those on the underside, to live meaningful lives...

Do you think that we have both individually and collectively, the passion, the vision and the posture to do this work? Do you think we have the requisite attitude of daring to imagine a completely radically new way of being as educators all? Have we the courage to act boldly in spite of the costliness of doing so, have we the depth and breadth of loving empathy needed to be fully, credibly present to any and all 'others', especially those on the underside and have we collectively the humility to be and not ever again simply seem to be, the peace-filled people of Aotearoa New Zealand? Patua te he ki te rangimarie – I'm ready when you are!

Kia ora tatou

Dr Jenny Te Paa Daniel (Te Rarawa) is Te Mareikura (Esteemed Indigenous Professor) at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Otago University, Dunedin. Previously she served for 23 years as Te Ahorangi (Principal) at St Johns Theological College in Auckland. During her lengthy leadership tenure she established herself as one of a very small group of leading Pacific women theological writers and teachers. Highly respected globally and nationally for her fearlessness in critiquing injustice and for her relentless advocacy for women's leadership, she has been awarded four international honorary doctorates and two prestigious Distinguished Alumni Awards in recognition of her own leadership example and her prolific scholarship. Te Paa Daniel lives in both Aitutaki and Auckland enjoying a perfectly balanced lifestyle which now prioritises affinity with and affection for, whanau (especially mokopuna!), whenua and moana.