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TWENTYTWENTY

COVER IMAGE

Leafa Wilson/Olga Krause *Ich Heisse Olga Krause, Deutsche Kuenstlerin* 2005
Poster print (detail). Image reproduced in full below.



The life-long work of performance artist Leafa Wilson/Olga Krause began in 2005. These propagandist poster-styled works are loosely based around the Russian Constructivist design aesthetic adopted by the German band 'Kraftwerk'. With both Samoan and German ancestry, the artist reconciles their past and present by creating utopic race relations in the site of their body: I am Olga Krause, German artist (Ich Heisse Olga Krause, Deutsche Kuenstlerin)

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DIFFICULT HISTORIES.

In conference.

Leah Bell.

The following speech was delivered at the 2019 New Zealand Historical Association conference, after five years of work advocating for and petitioning Government to commemorate the ‘New Zealand Wars’ as a statutory day of remembrance. The kaupapa of the petition was primarily to have our Government, and the nation of Aotearoa New Zealand as a whole, acknowledge the conflict of Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa (the New Zealand Wars) and to resource education pertaining to the ongoing legacy of these wars.

Long before any sense of a national movement or media attention, this story began with a bunch of rangatahi, students aged between twelve and sixteen years old. We were pressed against each other in the dry heat of March 2014, choking on the dust of Rangiaowhia, and the battle of Ōrākau. Two of us, Waimarama Anderson and myself, felt compelled to question our ignorance first and foremost, and then encourage conversation within our communities of Waitomo and the North King Country respectively. We became co-signatories to a very formal national petition. As our families, community and networks mobilised around us, the Kīngitanga laid its full support for this campaign at the Ōrākau sesquicentennial commemoration. We stood as representative voices for young people with the gumption to share our aspirations for a country seeking a fully developed historical consciousness — 13000 conversations for 13000 signatures. Prominent academics Vincent O’Malley and Joanna Kidman supported the work of Rā Maumahara, the campaign to commemorate Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa. Public consciousness about this history broadened with the publication of Vincent’s treatise, *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800–2000*, published by the powerhouse of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand history, Bridget Williams Books. Vincent and Joanna campaigned in their own right, advocating for the teaching of Aotearoa New Zealand history in schools through academia and through their company, ‘HistoryWorks Ltd.’. The petition was tabled by Hon Nanaia Mahuta in 2015 and was presented in front of the Māori Affairs Select Committee in 2016. The outcome is Te Pūtake o te Riri, an annual national day of commemoration on 28 October for the New Zealand Wars. After the recent announcement by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern that Aotearoa New Zealand history would be implemented into the New Zealand School Curriculum in 2022 — a clause of our submission — Vincent and Joanna invited me to speak as part of their ‘Difficult Histories’ panel at the New Zealand Historical Association Conference in late 2019.

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I spoke on Thursday 28 November, however the events of Monday 25 November had forced me to reshape my speech in order to find my thread within a fragmented world of historical amnesia.

**NEW ZEALAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE: KANOHI KI
TE KANOHI: HISTORIES FOR OUR TIME, 'REMEMBERING AND
FORGETTING THE NEW ZEALAND WARS'.
THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2019.**

Before Monday, I had prepared the following introduction to my speech:

Giselle Byrnes claimed in *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, that the desire to reconcile with our history, onset in the 1980s, is a symptom of 'loss' — the 'desire to make an intelligible story out of the past as a way of soothing an anxiety and lack of confidence about the present'.¹ Byrnes stated that the motivation to revisit the past was not necessarily to examine cultural and national identities.² In this contemporary moment however, such examination is arguably in place. Undeniably for many Pākehā, comprehending our history manifests in somewhat of an identity crisis, perhaps a fearful arrogance. However, it is not the romanticising of our history that is fundamentally soothing, it is the freedom to have an honest conversation with each other and more importantly, ourselves. The campaign to petition government to have a National Commemoration Day for the New Zealand Wars, and advocating for the New Zealand Wars in the national curriculum, has required shedding paralysing shame and guilt. Empathy, with an ability to listen acutely and view the past with a transparent lens, is essential to reconciling the atrocities of the past with the present.

That was before Monday. It is bizarre that in a campaign to commemorate the New Zealand Wars, we, the petitioners, have only ever talked hypothetically about our tūpuna — our ancestors; to media, and with each other. This will be the first speech I give on the kaupapa of actively remembering the New Zealand Wars, Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa, that will use the word 'I' more than

¹ Giselle Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2001), p. 2.

² Ibid.

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any other speech I have given thus far. On Monday I was confronted with the fact that to engage with the New Zealand Wars inevitably demands a personal reckoning.

I wrote my pre-Monday introduction because I believed that the wrongs of the wars could not be traced through my family. I knew of my paternal lineage: from William Colenso, well-known for several courageous acts such as questioning the legitimacy of the translation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to Māori; from William Wilberforce — albeit distantly related — for helping abolish the slave trade through England; from Elizabeth Colenso and her daughter Fanny for whom Te Reo Māori was their first tongue. Elizabeth took her children to England during the 1860s to escape the heightened conflict and bloodshed in New Zealand. In England, Elizabeth advocated for Māori there during the Jenkins party tours and translated for Queen Victoria. Fanny wrote English letters in big baby script; in Te Reo Māori, tight and cursive. Fanny greeted Māori in England during those wars with karanga, ‘e te manuhiri e...’³ I knew where I stood.

I was proud of my Pākehā ancestors. Notwithstanding the anguish I felt as a four-year-old learning the implications of the word ‘confiscation’ — painting my mother’s Foreshore and Seabed protest signs. My overwhelming desire to be Māori at four years old, to not be responsible, felt remedied by understanding the activism of my ancestors. Monday changed a few things.

I’ve always said that guilt and shame are lifeless emotions to bring to history. But on Monday, that was all I felt.

There is a record series in the National Archives called the ‘LS69’, ‘Naval and military Land Claims Commissions, 1986 and 1910’. Thanks to having the privilege of a Summer Research Scholarship supervised by Victoria University of Wellington historian Charlotte Macdonald, I have been tracking the land claims of the Imperial soldiers post the New Zealand Wars for the past week. What I did not know was that I would find the files of two of my ancestors, outlining their entire military ‘careers’.

³ Elizabeth Colenso, 31 July 1863, ‘About Jenkins Party of Maoris in England, Hare Pomare also and wife’, Diary July 1863, MS-Papers-0557, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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Joseph Jones, 14th Imperial Regiment, wrote

I went on a special service under Captain Ross to Opotiki to avenge the death of Reverend Völkner We took 70 to 100 Maori prisoner.... I was there for four or five months of engagement.

He also wrote of volunteering under Von Tempski.⁴

I grew up with the legendary story of Reverend Völkner and Kereopa Te Rau. Two eyes eaten, utu for the death of Kereopa's family at Rangiaowhia — Rangiaowhia, the place that triggered our whole campaign. What irony that one ancestor would shed blood to make Te Whakatōhea culpable for the death of Völkner, when my other ancestor William Colenso, the one I grew up with, rallied to halt the hanging of Kereopa Te Rau — to no avail.⁵

On the 28th of October, I was in Waitara, Taranaki, for the second annual commemoration, Te Pūtake o te Riri: Wars and Conflicts New Zealand. Until Monday, I had no idea that I was directly involved in the mamae witnessed at the commemoration: a bitterly poignant demonstration of privilege. My ancestor John Edward Wright Hussey scorched the gardens of hundreds of Taranaki mana whenua, but when his house was burnt down by 'rebels' it was immediately built again and he was gifted sixty-six acres at Kakaramea by the Crown.⁶ Mana whenua in Taranaki still seek to build their houses again. Not 'knowing our history' shrouds ignorant privilege, insidious at its core.

After the announcement that Aotearoa New Zealand history will be in the curriculum in 2022, I had a fight with my uncle. He told me that we cannot keep focusing on 'the idea' that history is a source of hurt. We cannot pretend as a country that we are unique from anyone else. I told him that you cannot alienate history to be only that — just a story. Not when it is the lived reality of so many. I have discussed with my friend over and over how the confiscations and uproar from the killing of Völkner have left her community and people impoverished today. Until Monday, I did not know that my

⁴ Joseph Jones, R8097986, ACGT 18569 LS69/181049, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o Kāwanatanga, Wellington.

⁵ Steven Oliver, 'Te Rau, Kereopa,' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1990, updated June, 2014. Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t72/te-rau-kereopa>> (accessed 24 January 2020).

⁶ John Edward Wright Hussey, R8097928, ACGT 18569 LS69/17, Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o Kāwanatanga, Wellington.

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ancestor had helped disenfranchise her people. That is privilege. That is selective historical amnesia. ‘So tell me’, I said to my uncle, ‘how can you separate history from hurt?’

The history of colonial New Zealand is not just a story where tangata whenua are reduced to having no agency. It is a story pulsing with connection, love, and whānau across war-drawn boundaries. It is a story of colonial regiments yelling to their ‘enemy’ to duck as they fired ahead, and their ‘enemy’ doing the same; of wāhine toa cloaking the enemy that shot them down; of interracial families holding each other tight as war forces new loyalties upon them. The New Zealand Wars can be examined and taught through a social history paradigm, in which the human story of land, language, love and loss are viewed through enduring human relationships.

Judith Binney wrote about the courage of Pākehā female teachers resisting the violence of military men at a Native school in Waikaremoana. Her illumination of this story exemplifies what can be found beyond the binaries of our history, she said: ‘it is a fragment — a tiny chip — in the vast mosaic of narratives which, when brought together, reveal light and dark co-existing in our colonial history’.⁷ Matua Rāhui Papa said at the announcement of the 2022 New Zealand Curriculum change, in the Debating Chamber that the history of the New Zealand Wars ‘is what Hollywood movies are made of’.⁸ Our history is that and more, for it is our story.

Therefore, we must let our children learn.

Let them trace the
battle sites,
hand in hand,
This time.
Plant a peach tree where
bullet-pips are buried in the ground.
Settle the dust
with their tears
to mingle with,
not dilute,

⁷ Judith Binney, *Stories Without End: Essays 1975–2010* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2010), p.313.

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the blood drawn there.

Let them write treaties.
For the future.
For the past.
Debate what words should have
bound us then.
Debate what words should
bind us now.

Let them build
popsicle-stick land courts.
Paint each panel.
The stories of
their ancestors
Pākehā me Māori.
Glued together with
Shared honesty.

Me Maumahara Tātou

Leah is embarking on an honours degree in history at Victoria University of Wellington. She is an ambassador for Te Pūtake o te Riri: Wars and Conflicts in New Zealand, held in Waikato on the 28th of October 2020.