

# WE ARE SURVIVORS!

by Jim Everett

SATURDAY 1 DECEMBER

8 pm

World Premier performance — "We are Survivors"  
by Jim Everett — Peacock Theatre

## TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL THEATRE



CAST: MERLE MOORE  
: ROD GIBBINS  
: CHERYL FULTON  
: BRIAN MANSELL  
: **BOBBI DILLON**  
: ROBERT ARNOL  
: LEEANNE BURGESS  
: JAMIE EVERETT  
: JIM EVERETT  
GUEST ACTOR: - CLIFF BARWICK

8 P.M. - PEACOCK THEATRE  
SATURDAY 1 DECEMBER

**Friday,**  
**30 November -**  
**Sunday,**  
**9 December, 1984**

*Salamanka Arts Festival*

WE ARE SURVIVORS

The old whiteman enters, walking with some difficulty. He stops at Centre stage, shaking his head and mumbling loudly. He is directly in the spotlight, all the other lighting is faded out. The old whiteman looks at the audience and speaks loudly, as if talking to himself.

**OLD WHITEMAN:** Ah! But I was young and headstrong then ..... I believed it was for the good of science ..... all that grave-robbing. Poor wretches ..... those Blacks ..... poor unfortunate wretches. Now I think of it there was nothing I could do ..... ha! Comes to that there is nothing they can do now to put their people's bones back at Oyster Cove. Oh God forgive me! I have carried this shame with me for too long you know ..... I believed in my father ..... still it matters not, they are not of our kind anyway. It is my conscience that bothers me, I'm not able to do anything but regret my actions. Anyhow ..... it's out of my hands now ..... the bones are in the Museum's keeping and I'm no longer responsible.

HE BEGINS WALKING OFF STAGE, STILL TALKING

Yes, I'm no longer responsible, my mind is clear ..... but I'm sad ..... poor wretches ..... poor Black wretches.

HE LEAVES THE STAGE.

**ROY, A CONSERVATIVELY DRESSED ABORIGINAL TASMANIAN, WALKS ON STAGE, HEAD LOW. HE STOPS AT CENTRE STAGE, IN THE SPOTLIGHT, AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE:**

**ROY** Today, we, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people are part of a Government cremation ceremony for our esteemed ancestor, Trugganini. We are allowed to be part of the scattering of the ashes in the sea ..... I was the one to actually scatter her ashes. Yes! The battle to bring this about was hard, bloody hard ..... Tasmanian Aborigines had to win recognition this year ..... 1976 ..... but I'm not rejoicing ..... I know they lied .... they have more of our people boxed up in the Museums ..... I just know it. We really don't understand this christian science ..... this christianity which preaches good-will to all people and fails to count us as people ..... as having

the same rights under the christian faith. One day my people will get our ancestors remains back ..... and we'll return them to Oyster Cove ..... it is there that their spirits will rest ..... will be at peace.

SPOTLIGHT OUT

**STAGE VOICE:** Act one set in the mid 1960's.

LIGHTS BRIGHTEN ON STAGE

THE SETTING IS IN A FAMILY HOME KITCHEN, THE TABLE LOOKS A BIT RICKETY AND THE CHAIRS CONSIST OF TWO 'BANANA BOXES', A KEROSENE TIN AND ONE OLD WOODEN CHAIR. THE MAIN 'CUPBOARD' IS MADE UP OF 'BANANA BOXES' ARRANGED ON TOP OF EACH OTHER IN TWO ROWS, SIX HIGH AND ALL NAILED BACKS TO THE WALL, MAKING A GROUP OF SHELVES. AUNT AMY HAS AN OLD CURTAIN NAILED ALONG THE TOP WHICH HANGS DOWN AS A DOOR IN FRONT OF THE CUPBOARD. A DUBIOUS LOCKING RADIO-CASSETTE IS ON THE TABLE. **ROLY**, **AUB** AND **SYKAS** ARE SEATED AT THE TABLE, READING THE RACING PAGE OF A NEWSPAPER AND DISCUSSING THE 'BETS' OF THE DAY. **AUNT AMY** IS COOKING A JOHNNY-CAKE, BUSILY MIXING UP THE FLOUR AND WATER ON AN OLD KITCHEN BENCH, WHERE A WATER TAP IS POKING OUT FROM THE WALL. THERE IS NO SINK, ONLY AN OLD CHIPPED ENAMEL DISH. **AUB** HAS A GRIN BEGINNING TO WIDEN ON HIS FACE AS HE LOOKS AT **SYKAS** AND HE SAYS:

**AUB:** 'Ey Sykas! Goin' birdin' this year Old Man?

**SYKAS:** Not me Aub Ole Coe, bugger the birdin'.

**AUNT AMY:** Says that every year 'e does, still goess tho', it's in the blood.

**ROLY:** (SLIGHTLY DRUNK) Yeah, bugger the birdin', last season that bloody Luck bastard kicked me off Trefoil.

(ROLY ALWAYS HAD HIS GROWL ABOUT BEING KICKED OFF TREFOIL ISLAND WHEN HE HAD A FEW DRINKS IN. HE JUST HATED BEING SACKED BY A WHITE PERSON, ESPECIALLY WHEN, ASHE PUT IT, 'MUTTONBIRDIN' BELONGS TO BLACKFELLA'S AND TREFOIL'S OUR ISLAND).

**DEENA:** (WALKING INTO THE KITCHEN) Serves you self right, only work you done was chasing them girls.

**ROLY:** (HURT VOICE) No I didn't, least not 'til night time anyways.

**DEENA:** Well if you come to work in my shed next season you'll only get a job cuttin' legs off birds.

(AUB AND SYKAS LAUGH OPENLY AT THIS, CUTTING LEGS OFF MUTTONBIRDS IS A JOB NORMALLY DONE BY THE KIDS. ROLY DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND AND MERELY SMILED BACK AT THEM. Aunt Amy, having just put the johnny-CAKE ON THE STOVE, IN A CAMP OVEN, WAS WASHING HER HANDS AS SHE SPOKE).

**AUNT AMY:** Who's going to the shop for me?

**AUB:** What d'you want Aunty?

**AUNT AMY:** Need some chewin' chops and a lettuce.

**ROLY:** (LOOKING SNEAKY) I'll go Aunty.

(AUNT AMY, LOOKING SHREWDLY AT ROLY, WIPES HER HANDS AND GETS HER BAG FROM OFF THE TOP OF THE CUPBOARD AND PULLS OUT SOME MONEY. SHE LOOKS REAL STERN AS SHE WALKS OVER TO ROLY.)

**AUNT AMY:** Alright, but watch out for the p'lice and stay away from the pub, here's \$5.

(ROLY TAKES THE MONEY AND, WITH A SLY LOOK AT AUB AND SYKAS HE ALMOST RUNS OUT THE DOOR - OFF STAGE.)

(DEENA, SYKAS' WIFE ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM (STAGE DOOR) AND LIFTING THE CAMP-OVEN LID SHE PEEKS AT THE JOHNNY-CAKE BEFORE LOOKING AT THE GROUP THEN SAYS..)

**DEENA:** S'pose that no-hopin' lot from the coast will be comin' our way soon. Expect'm any day now.

**AUNT AMY:** Yes, well they needn't think they campin' here, c'n go to their own 'lations.

(JUST AT THAT MOMENT THERE IS A LOUD KNOCK AT THE DOOR. EVERYONE LOOKS AT EACH OTHER, AUNT AMY WALKS OVER AND OPENS THE DOOR.)

**AUNT AMY:** Well, Well! Look who's here, all the way from the coast, it's Bob and Ryla with the kids. Come in my girl come in.

(RYLA AND HUSBAND BOB ARE A COUPLE FROM THE NORTH-WEST COAST, THEY ENTER FOLLOWED BY THEIR SON BILLY, A FOURTEEN YEAR OLD. EACH OF THE VISITORS CARRIED A 'CAPE BARREN SUITCASE', WHICH IS JUST A BEER CARTON PACKED WITH BELONGINGS AND TIED UP WITH STRING. SOMETIMES A SUGAR BAG WAS USED, BUT IT WAS STILL A CAPE BARREN SUITCASE. THEY ALL MOVE INTO THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM, BILLY STAYING IN THE BACK-GROUND, SORT OF SHY LIKE. RYLA IS THE FIRST TO SPEAK.)

**RYLA:** 'Ullo Aunty Amy (GIVING HER A BIG HUG) It's good to see you, we was 'oping we could stay a while, we're off to Babel this season.

**AUNT AMY:** Course you can stay my girl, you know our home is your home. Take hoff your coat.

(EVERYONE SAYS THEIR HELLO'S AND THE CAPE BARREN SUITCASES ARE PUT IN A CORNER. AUB AND SYKAS LOOK AT EACH OTHER KNOWINGLY, BUT NOT GAME TO SAY ANYTHING. BOB GETS A SEAT, ANOTHER BANANA BOX OVER BY THE WALL, AND JOINS THE MEN AT THE TABLE, BILLY SIDLES UP NEXT TO HIS FATHER. RYLA HAS HER EYE ON THE STOVE, SHE CAN SMELL THE JOHNNY-CAKE, AND SHE COMFORTABLY LIFTS THE LID OF THE CAMP-OVEN FOR A LOOK. DEENA IS ALL MOVEMENT AS SHE FILLS THE OLD CAST-IRON KETTLE.)

**DEENA:** It's so good to see our 'lations from the coast, just make yourself at home and I'll make a cuppa tea.

YOUNG BILLY QUICKLY LOOKS UP AT RYLA, REAL CHEEKY LOOKING, AND BUTS IN WITH....

**BILLY:** Hey mum, we not 'lations are we?

**RYLA:** Well ..... no not real like, but all us fella's are just like 'lations.

RYLA'S FACE TURNS ROSY RED AT THIS. BUT BILLY'S NOT FINISHED.



**BILLY:** Yeah, well how come you told Dad that Aunty Amy's not 'lated to us and damn pleased too?

**RYLA, QUICK AS YOU LIKE, MOVES TO CLIP YOUNG BILLY UNDER THE EAR, BUT MAKING SURE SHE MISSES HER MARK MAKES A SHOW OF REBUKING HIM.**

**RYLA:** Billy! I didn't say no such thing, and if I hear you swear again I'll rip your hears hoff.

**BILLY SKEDADDLES OUT OF THE WAY, A BIG GRIN ON HIS FACE, AND RYLA LETS HIM GO. SYKAS AND AUB WINK AT THE OTHERS AND LAUGH RIGHT OUT LOUD IN GOOD HUMOUR. SYKAS POURS HIMSELF A GLASS OF WINE FROM A FLAGON ON THE TABLE AND LOOKS AT BOB.**

**SYKAS:** Want a toddy Ole Man (TO BOB) 'Elp yourself.

**BOB NODS AND GETS A GLASS AND FILLS IT FROM THE FLAGON.**

**BOB:** Goin' birdin' Ole Man? (TO SYKAS)

**SYKAS:** Bugger the birdin', bloody white fella's don't pay 'nuff money.

**BOB:** Never do Ole Man but you been birdin' all yeh' life.

**SYKAS:** Yea, I know but it's about time we got our land back. 'Bout time them white fella's gave us somethin' back and the Islands 'll do for a start.

**AUB:** What're yeh talkin' about Ole Man, them white fella's reckon the only time we're here is when birdin' time comes and then only to work for 'm.

**AT THIS TIME A FUMBLING OF THE OUTSIDE DOORHANDLE HAS EVERYBODY LOOKING AT THE DOOR. THE DOOR OPENS AND ROLY SSTAGGERS IN, HE'S GOT AN OBVIOUS BULGE UNDER HIS JACKET. ROLLY HAS THE SLY LOOK OF A NAUGHTY CHILD AS HE MOVES ACROSS THE ROOM TO A MATTRESS ON THE FLOOR IN A CORNER. HE SITS ON THE MATTRESS AND, WITH A SURPRISED START HE SEES THE VISITORS.**

**ROLY:** G'day Bob, Ryla, it 'as been a long time, how yeh been keepin'? Why look at my Billy, simple little sing you 'ore.

**BILLY:** Hullo Uncle Roly, where've you been?

**AUNT AMY:** Not where he's been boy, where's me chewin' chops and lettuce?

**ROLY GETS TO HIS FEET AND PUTS THE TABLE BETWEEN HIM AND AUNT AMY.**

**ROLY:** Gee Aunty, I clean forgot what you wanted and I was sinkin' well not much use goin' back hempty handed ..... so I got a bottle 'a cream.

**AUNT AMY:** Cream (AUNTY AMY LOOKS PUZZLED)

**ROLY:** Yeh ..... cream, cream sherry Aunty ..... do yuh wanna toddy?

**DEENA HOLDS HERSELF STEADY BY LEANING ON THE TABLE WITH HER ARMS LOCKED STRAIGHT AND SAYS TO THE MEN...**

**DEENA:** O'my ..... that Coe does give me the nerves, o'my ..... o'my.

**AUNT AMY:** (IN A LOUD VOICE) I'll give 'im the nerves. (PICKS UP THE BROOM)  
You damm jungin's ..... drinkin' all the time. Go on, get hout.

AUNTY AMY, WIELDING THE BROOM, STARTS AROUND THE TABLE AFTER ROLY. ROLY'S NOT QUICK ENOUGH AND AUNTY AMY WHACKS HIM ACROSS THE BACKSIDE AND, STILL HOLLORING AT HIM SHE CHASES HIM OFF THE STAGE.

SYKAS DEFTLY PICKS UP THE FLAGON OF WINE ROLY LEFT BEHIND AND MOVES OVER TO THE MATTRESS AND SETTLES DOWN, READY FOR A GOOD DRINK.

THE WOMEN QUICKLY PREPARE A LUNCH OF JOHNNY-CAKE AND DRIPPING, AND A BIG POT OF TEA. WHILE THEY EAT THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES AS DEENA, OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED THAT ROLY DIDN'T GET ANY FOOD, SAYS TO AUNTY AMY ....

DEENA: Well, s'pose I better go down the street for some chops and a lettuce  
Aunty, do we need anything else?

AUNT AMY: (WHISPER) Get me a little flask of gin my girl, help calm me nerves.

DEENA GIVES AUNTY A NERVOUS SMILE AND NODS, SHE PUTS HER COAT ON AND LEAVES.

AUNT AMY: You sendin' the kids to school while you're waitin' to go birdin'  
my girl? (TO RYLA)

RYLA: S'pose I better Aunty, they gotta learn somethin'.

SYKAS JUMPS UP FROM HIS SEAT, CLEARLY ANGRY, AND PACING THE FLOOR SAYS TO ALL AND ONE ...

SYKAS: Not much good goin' to school 'round here, they treat us half-castes  
somethin' awful at schools round here.

IT'S BILLY AGAIN WHO JUST CAN'T HELP HIMSELF, WITH THAT CHEEKY GRIN OF HIS HE BUTS IN.

BILLY: Yeh Mum, the other day the teacher made me stand out front and told  
all the white kids not to play with me, 'cause Black people was dirty  
and had nits.

AUB TAKES THIS UP, NOT SMILING HE SAYS TO BILLY...

AUB: Did yeh?

BILLY: Did I what?

AUB: Did yuh have nits?

BILLY: 'Cause not Uncle you actin' like a white fella now.

AUB: Ha Ha not me boy, I c'n beat any whity in a fight, they not like us  
fullas.

AUNTY AMY WALKS OVER TO THE TABLE AND TOWERS OVER AUB, HANDS ON HER HIPS. AS THIS IS GOING ON, ROLY SNEAKS IN, UNSEEN, AND MAKES HIMSELF COMFORTABLE ON THE MATTRESS. AUNTY AMY PULLS THE ARGUMENT UP SHORT WITH ...

AUNT AMY: Stop it you fulla's, white fulla's not all that bad.

SYKAS IS STILL PACING AND MUTTERING TO HIMSELF. HE STOPS IN MID-PACE AND IMPLORINGLY ADDRESSES AUNTY AMY ...

**SYKAS:** Oh No! Well what about when I went for that job at the 'cancel', first there I was and he give me the job ..... then took it off me when I told him I was a Mansell. Said 'e couldn't put anyone on until 'e saw all the applicants.

BOB COMES INTO THE CONVERSATION, GIVING HIS STORY.

**BOB:** Yeah, same's us when we went to the 'ousing department and filled a form for a 'ouse. The fella there said we'd get a 'ouse soon ..... then he says look I'm sorry Mr. Maynard but it could take awhile to find a place. I could tell by his face what he was thinking.

**AUNT AMY:** Well it wouldn't be like that if yeh wasn't such a pack of no hoppers.

**SYKAS:** We wouldn't be no hoppers if the bastards would give's a fair go. Look at the bloody schools, they treat our kids like shit. Look at the jobs, bloody whites got all the good jobs.

**AUB:** Yeh, they are are a crazy lot of rummin's. We' al white when it comes to bein' equal, 'n' all black when we down 'n' out y'know, I tried bein' white once .... the buggers wouldn't have it, but when I said well look, I'm Aborigine they says come on now, you're only a descendant ..... just like it meant I wasn't a whole person.

SYKAS' SHOULDERS DROP, HE SLUMPS INTO A STANCE OF DEJECTION AS HE SPEAKS IN A LOW VOICE. STILL, HE SHOWS AN AGER AND STRENGTH IN HIS VOICE.

**SYKAS:** Welll I reckon if we're descendants then we must be Aborigines ... Bloody white fella's all sorts of mixtures and 'e calls 'imself Australian. Bloody pommy descendants witha bit of german and they calll 'mselves Aussies!

**AUB:** Aussies my black arse! Bloody foreign invaders I reckon.

**AUNT AMY:** You know, my grandfather wrote a letter tot he government once, askin' for Chapel Island so the corner coes could go birdin'.

SHE WAS OFCOURSE REFERRING TO THE TIME BACK IN 1866 WHEN A GROUP OF ABORIGINES SOUGHT TO HAVE THE GOVERNMENT HAND BACK CHAPEL ISLAND, A MAJOR MUTTONBIRD ISLAND NEAR CAPE BARREN ISLAND.

AUB: What happened?

AUNT AMY: Oh, they sent this fella over and he was askin'all sorts of questions  
.....Granpa said 'e was surprised when they told 'im that white  
people should be payin' us rent for Tasmania.....anyway we didn't  
get Chapel.

RYLA: If only we could do somethin'.....s'pose our kids might be  
able to if they get a better edjagation.

EVERYONE IS NODDING IN AGREEMENT AS DEENA COMES IN WITH THE GROCERIES AND BEGINS  
TO UNPACK. SHE DOESN'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB OF SNEAKING AUNTY HER FLASK OF GIN.

SYKAS: Let's play a game of cards you fulla's.

WITHOUT A WORD SAID A PACK OF CARDS IS PRODUCED AND EVERYONE HELPS TO CLEAR THE  
TABLE. THEY SETTLE IN QUICKLY, READY TO PLAY.

ROLY GET'S UP FROM THE MATTRESS AND BUSTLES A PLACE AT THE TABLE, DECLARING IN  
A LOUD VOICE.....

ROLY: Yeah! .....Right's my deal.....two bob limit, keep yah 'ands  
above the table.....Billy my boy, pour me a toddy, quick!

ROLY MAKES A BIG SHOW OF DEALING, THE ATMOSPHERE IS TENSE. DISCARDS ARE THROWN  
OUT AND "BOUGHT" CARDS ARE DEALT OUT. IF ANYONE WAS TAKING NOTICE THEY WOULD SEE  
ONE BIG GRIN STARTING TO GROW ON ROLY'S FACE, HE'S GOT A GOOD HAND.

ROLY MAKES HIS MOVE, BET'S BIG, AND EVERYONE THROWS THEIR CARDS IN. ROLY LOOKS  
REAL HURT BUT SAYS NOTHING AS HE RAKES HIS BET IN.

AUB DEALS, AND ROLY HAS NOT LOST HIS SMILE.

AS THE CALL FOR BETS GOES AROUND THE TABLE EACH PLAYER THROWS THEIR HAND IN,  
AND THE CALL COMES TO ROLY.

ROLY: Bet a quid.

AUB: Alright, cover you and up't five quid.

ROLY: Smart arse 'ey! Alright, cover that and up another seven quid.....  
that's all I got! So you might's well look.

AUB: Okay, I'm lookin'.

ROLY: Sorry Ole Coe, but I got a full 'and, kings up.

ROLY REAL CONFIDENT LIKE, REACHES FOR THE POT. AUB SLAMS HIS HAND DOWN ON ROLY'S  
BEFORE HE CAN SCOOP THE MONEY TO HIM.

AUB: "Ang on a minute twinkle fingers, look at this.

AUB THROWS HIS CARDS OUT ONE AT A TIME, A 2 OF CLUBS, A 2 OF HEARTS, ACE OF HEARTS, 2 OF SPADES , AND, 2 OF DIAMONDS WITH A GRAND SLAM, LAUGHING.

AUB: Four two's Old Man, can't play cards 'ey? Ha ha ha, what, simple ole card player aint I, let's play again?

ROLY: Bugger the cards! Not playin' with you bastards anymore.

ROLY JUMPS UP FROM HIS SEAT AND THROWS A HANDFULL OF CARDS IN THE AIR AND STORMS OF STAGE. EVERYONE IS USED TO ROLY'S PERFORMANCES AND ALL HAVE A GOOD LAUGH. NEVERTHELESS, IT'S THE END OF THE CARDS FOR THE TIME BEING.

AUB AND SYKAS SETTLE INTO DRINKING WINE WHILE THE WOMEN MAKE THEMSELVES COMFORTABLE AND CHAT OVER A CUP OF TEA. SYKAS IS SOON SHOWING SIGNS OF BEING TIPSY, AND HE NOISILY PREPARES TO ENTERTAIN AUB.

SYKAS: I'll sing yuh a song Ole Man, (HE LOOKS AT DEENA) 'ow 's that song go again woman, (HE WHISTLES A FEW BARS) 'ey woman! 'Ow's that song go again? (WHISTLES AGAIN) I, I , I, I'll sing yuh a song Ole Man...  
.....that's right Ole Man..... I'll sing yuh a song.  
(HE LOOKS AT DEENA).....Know what I mean?

DEENA: Yes; I know what you mean.

**everyone freezes on stage,  
EVERYONE FREEZES ON STAGE, THE LIGHTS DIM TO OUT, THE SPOTLIGHT IS ON THE CENTRE.**

SYKAS STEPS TO THE SPOTLIGHT, HE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE:-

SYKAS: Am I Tasmanian Aboriginal, my bloody oath I am,  
What! Not black enough, well that don't mean a damn.  
Only part Abo is what you say, you really are a charm,  
Is it my leg my head my foot, or is it my right arm?  
Oh! I see, I'm not full blood, well that's a funny thing,  
Always thought I was full of blood, a pumpin' like a spring.  
What's that you're sayin' friend, I know what you mean?  
You're not the first one friend, yes I know what you mean.  
Well look friend I'm a whitey, you're not disputin' that,  
Hey! That's not what you meant, well now I smell a rat.  
Why is it that if I get drunk, and stagger down the road,  
I'm called a drunken blackfeller, that boozin' is my code?  
But! If I conform and show my wit, and still claim I'm a koorie,  
Whites deny my right as one, and deny me my identity.  
Oh! You say I'm not one of those, and I know what you mean,  
Then how come you distinguish "those," yes I know what you mean.

DURING THE POEM THE CAST QUIETLY CHANGE THE STAGE SETTING TO GIVE A MORE MODERN IMAGE, THE 1980's. THIS WAS ACHIEVED BY TAGARI - LIA HAVING CONTEMPORARY POSTERS ON THE STAGE KITCHEN WALL, AND COVERED BY OLD IMAGE PICTURES FROM MAGAZINES OR WHERE-EVER: THESE WERE QUICKLY RIPPED OFF EXPOSING THE CONTEMPORARY POSTERS. THE BANANA BOX SEATS ARE REPLACED WITH REASONABLY GOOD CHAIRS AND A MODERN LOOKING TABLE CLOTH IS PUT ON THE TABLE. THE CAST QUICKLY CHANGE TO MORE MODERN CLOTHING.

**AFTER THE POEM SEQUENCE THE SPOTLIGHT GOES OFF, LEAVING THE STAGE BLACKED OUT.**

SYKAS LEAVES THE STAGE AND QUICKLY CHANGES TO MORE MODERN CLOTHING.

e.g. A LANDRIGHTS "T" SHIRT.

**THE BLACKED - OUT STAGE IS FOR ONLY A MINUTE.**

**STAGE VOICE:** Act two set in the 1980's.

AUNT AMY IS ON STAGE.

**STAGE LIGHTS BEGIN TO BRIGHTEN TO FULL LIGHTING.**

AUNT AMY IS IN THE KITCHEN MAKING A SANDWICH USING SLICED BREAD FROM A SHOP.

DEENA ENTERS AND BEGINS TO UNPACK THE SHOPPING SHE BRINGS WITH HER, SHE SPEAKS TO AUNT AMY WITH CONTROLLED EXCITEMENT IN HER VOICE.

**DEENA:** I called into the Centre today Aunty, they goin't put up some tents at Parliament in Hobart tomorrow.

**AUNT AMY:** 'Spose we better get ready then.

**DEENA:** Yes! Got a bus goin' this afternoon.

SYKAS COMES AMBLING IN, AUB CLOSE BEHIND, SYKAS HAS HALF A CARTON OF BEER. AS HE PUTS THE BEER ON THE TABLE DEENA SPEAKS IN A STERN VOICE, HIDING HER EXCITEMENT.

**DEENA:** You two comin' to demonstration at Hobart tomorrow, 'cause the bus leaves soon?

**AUB:** Who's doin' it?

**DEENA:** The Centre, who else Old Man.

**SYKAS:** Bloody oa's I'm in it, let them fella's know we not layin' daan.



**AUB:** Yeah, me too, if it wasn't for the Centre we'd never 'a' got Trefoil....  
.....and we got a lot more to get yet.

IN COMES ROLY, DRUNK AND EXCITED, TALKING QUICKLY.

**ROLY:** Guess what Ole Man.....I'm gonna be on television..... Mick said so.

**AUNT AMY:** Oh yes! Simple blackfella aint 'e. An' what're you gonna say Old Man?

**ROLY:** Well I jus' been talkin' to'm.....they ask me what the main difference is between us an' th' white Coe's.

**AUB:** What'd yuh say Ole Man?

**ROLY:** I said the difference is that they say "good morning" ..... an' we say 'ow are yuh!

AUB AND SYKAS LET OUT LOUD SNIGGERS, BUT DEENA IS NOT IMPRESSED AND SAYS

**DEENA:** Yes.....well yuh wanna be better than that at Hobart!

EVERYONE LOOKS KNOWINGLY AT EACH OTHER, BUT ROLY DOESN'T LOOK THE LEAST BIT PUT OUT. NEVERTHELESS, THE EXCITEMENT IS CATCHING AND SYKAS APPEARS TO GO INTO A TRANCE AS HE RECALLS PAST EVENTS OF THE ABORIGINAL STRUGGLE IN TASMANIA.

**SYKAS:** Say! Yuh remember when we went daan to the Hobart court 'cause Mick 'n' Ros was in jail for goin' daan the caves?

**AUB:** My bloody oa's.

**SYKAS:** Old Man, I never been so proud to be Aborigine as I was then; yuh know ..... these bloody white fella's never goona make me 'shamed I'm a blackfella ever again.

**ROLY:** Me eaver!

**AUNT AMY:** Now you look here Roly my lad, if you gonna go drinkin' you're not goin' daan with us.....so you better get sober.

**ROLY:** Orright, orright!

RYLA ENTERS, AFTER KNOCKING, AND BILLY IS CLOSE BEHIND TALKING QUICKLY TO RYLA.

**BILLY:** Mum, can I go to Hobart for the demo' tomorrow.....can I .....one or two days from school wont matter.....can I?

**RYLA:** Might's well.....they only tryin't teach you to be a white fella anyway.

**SYKAS:** Bloody black grapevine's quick ain't it? We only just found out'n they know at school already.

**AUB:** O' .....that's 'cause now we got blackfella's goin' to school all official like. You know, cultural speakers 'n' public servants Ole Man.....christ aint it marvellous?!

**AUNT AMY:** It is so, not like it was years ago y'know. Why with all the things we already won back all we need now is land rights 'n' we damn near equal to the white Coe's.

SYKAS IS STILL IN THE PAST, THINKING ABOUT HIS YOUNGER DAYS, WHICH REMINDS HIM.

**SYKAS:** Which reminds me, the paint's peelin' off the ceilin' of this place, I'll tell young Keisy boy, 'e'll stir the buggers, can't give us blackfulla's houses now like them shacks they use ta hand out.

**ROLY:** Shacks Ole Man! My father lived in a place once that if he wanted a log of wood for the fire.....all 'e 'ad't do was reach through a 'ole in the wall 'n' grab one. Simple 'ouse that was.

**AUB:** That's nuthin' Ole Man.....

WITH THIS AUNT AMY WHIRLS AROUND AND

**AUNT AMY:** Knock off! Knock off.....never seen fella's like 't for tellin' yarns, proper yarns you fella's tell.

YOUNG BILLY CAN SEE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY WHEN HE SEES ONE, AND HE MAKES THE MOST OF IT. HE HEADS FOR THE BEDROOM (OFF STAGE) AS HE CALLS OVER HIS SHOULDER. RYLA HAS TO YELL AN ANSWER TO HIM AS HE GOES.

**BILLY:** I'll go pack Mum.

**RYLA:** Orrright, take plenty warm clothes, yuh know what it's like daan there, 'n' don't forget your land rights "T" shirt.

MEANWHILE, ROLY IS INTENT ON HAVING HIS SAY

**ROLY:** One o' these days we gonna do somethin' in th' summer.....

AUB BUTS IN

**AUB:** Yeah, proper blackfella's we ore, .....gotta bloody do it in the middle - o - winter.

**SYKAS:** Everytime Ole Man, no wonder the gubs think we're crazy.

**DEENA:** Yeah; well I wouldn'tcall them fella's sane like.....diggin' up our dead people 'n' lockin' th' bones away in th' museum.

**AUNT AMY:** 'Oly ghost My Girl, don't talk like that.....next thing we'll have Kuti Kina orfter's; does give me the nerves yuh know.

AUNT AMY CAN REMEMBER HER ELDERS TELLING HER TO BE GOOD OR KUTI KINA, AN ABORIGINAL SPIRIT, WOULD GET HER.

HER NERVOUSNESS MADE HER JUMP AS A LOUD KNOCK AT THE DOOR SAW IT IMMEDIATELY OPEN, AND BOB FROM DOWN THE COAST WALKS IN.

**SYKAS:** Well, 'ullo it's Bob. G'day Old Man.

**BOB:** G'day you fulaa's, I've just come over to get Ryla and Billy, I drove over from Smithton with Dougy and Sue, bloody long drive that.

BOB WALKS TO A CENTRAL POINT IN THE ROOM, KEEPING AN EYE ON ROLY AS SYKAS SAYS

**SYKAS:** What d'yah know Ole Man?

**BOB:** Got a job Ole Man, Aboriginal Liaison Officer; wouldn't've got it without the experience at the Aboriginal Centre as Field Officer.

BILLY WALKS IN FROM THE BEDROOM CARRYING A SCHOOLBAG AND MOVES CLOSE TO HIS FATHER,  
(BOB)

BILLY LISTENS INTENTLY

**BOB:** Yeah, and the kids schoolin' looks good too since I straightened them buggers out. Anymore of this 'no Tasmanian Aborigines' business 'n' I told 'm that we'd demonstrate at the school. Been pretty good since. Couple'a teachers need a bit of a razz though.

**ROLY:** What're yuh talkin' abaat you fulla's, bloody edjucaction never did me any bloody good.

**AUB:** Yeah. Well what grade did you go to Ole Man?

**ROLY:** Grade three Ole Man, 'n' I still aint got a job.

**DEENA:** Well well; ;ook at what we got 'ere, I didn't know we 'ad someone so 'teligent livin' 'ere, why.....

**ROLY:** 'Teligent! Why I'm so brainy girl I gotta drink most days ju' to stop myself from thinkin' too much, me damn brains near poppin' right outta me 'ead.

**AUNT AMY:** Y'ask me it popped out a long time ago.

BILLY MISSES ALL THIS, HIS MIND IS IN HIS WORLD AS HE KNOWS IT. ALL HE CAN THINK ABOUT FROM THE CONVERSATION GOING ON IS THAT REFERENCES ARE MADE TO SCHOOL

**BILLY:** They even holdin' seminars for us Aboriginal kids in high school now so's we can learn more about why we need education, and Aboriginal people from all over Tassie come to talk to us. It sure is good to know our fulla's are speakin' for our rights.

**SYKAS:** Yeah, well I wish that young Clydey would come'n talk to t'me, we should see about gettin' Billy on a NOOSA.

**BILLY:** You mean NESAs Uncle Sykas, that's a training program.

**SYKAS:** NOOSA NESAs! What's the difference? Can never catch that young Clydey anytime, always got a bloody conference in Canberra or somethin'.

**DEENA:** So's that 'fella Keisy Boy, works in welfare or somethin', never there when y'want 'im, soon's all the works done 'e knocks on the door for a bed for the night.

AUB: Yeah! All these bloody black public servants, won't be long now 'n' we'll ave a blackfella pullin' teeth out.

BOB: Got one Old Man, workin' down at DAA, not gettin' into teeth much nowadays though, 'e's in the office.

AUNT AMY: Well he better not think 'e's from somewhere else. That fella better remember 'e's black.

ROLY: I got a doctor who's black! A Pakistani or somethin', when I asked 'im if 'e believes in land rights 'e says "It jolly well good in my country, but no good heah, you got too many bally whites to make it stick."

EVERYONE HAS A REALLY GOOD LAUGH AT THIS, EXCEPTING AUNT AMY, WHO LOOKS ON REAL SERIOUS LIKE, WIPING HER HANDS ON HER APRON SHE SAYS IN A LOUD VOICE

AUNT AMY: Well, we all gotta do our bit for our rights; 'n' I'm all for leavin' our jungin' with the truth, if nothin' else.

AUB: Me too Aunty, we mightn't really get land rightsbut our kids'll know the truth no matter what.

SYKAS: Yeah, an' if any of our fulla's sell us out to th' gubs our jungins will know about that too.

BILLY: How come Uncle?

SYKAS: Jus' by our way of yarmin' an' tellin' the stories boy.

BOB: Yep; and we got some of our people look like writin' them stories too.

AUNT AMY HAS BEEN LISTENING WITH INTEREST TO ALL THIS, AND IS QUITE INDIGNANT WHEN SHE SPEAKS

AUNT AMY: Well they better not go writin' any stories abaat me; I'll take'm t' court for damnation I will.

BOB: You mean defamation Aunty.

AUNT AMY: Orrright! Defecation, I don't care what yuh call it, aint writin' abaat me.

DEENA: Not writin' abaat m either, I've always stuck up for my people, why I even went and talked to all them Aboriginal preachers up at Darwin last year.

ROLY: Ha ha ha.....Yeah'n I heard that Sykas got so jealous that when you came back 'e called you darlin for a whole week.

SYKAS: Don't you talk Old Man, seen you daan the mall, different little sing on y'r arm ever'time.

ROLY: Naa don't talk like that Ole Man.

RYLA: Well, we better get movin' if we gonna catch the bus.

DEENA: Turn th' radio on Sykas, get the right time.

SYKAS TURNS THE RADIO ON(CASSETTE TAPE PRE-TAPED) THE RADIO IS PLAYING MUSIC, THE TIME BEEPS SOUND AND THE BROADCASTER ANNOUNCES A NEWS FLASH

RADIO: THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT MADE FIRM IT'S POLICY ON ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS WHEN CABINET MET THIS MORNING. MISTER QUERIE, MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS SAID THERE WOULD BE NO LAND RIGHTS FOR TASMANIAN ABORIGINES. EQUAL RIGHTS, HE SAID, DOES NOT MAEN LAND RIGHTS.

AUB: What! Is that equality?

THE ACTORS FREEZE IN THEIR POSITIONS AS THE LIGHTS DIM TO ALL OUT, THEIR HEADS LOWERED. THE SPOTLIGHT COMES ON AND SYKAS MOVES INTO THE SPOT.

equality (by karen brown)

SYKAS: White man's,  
Got,  
Our land,  
Black man,  
He aint,  
Got,  
No ground,  
Whie man,  
You,



Got the law,  
Black man,  
Has laws too,  
Whiteman's laws,  
Are legal,  
Blackman's laws,  
Is illegal,  
Whie man,  
You,  
Got the majority,  
Black man,  
Well,  
He's just another minority,  
White man,  
Likes,  
Flash things,  
Black man,  
Can't afford,  
Atin of beans,  
Whiteman's,  
Never wrong,  
Black man,  
He aint ever right,  
Whie man,  
He's been here two hundred years,  
Black man,  
Just a mere forty thousand years,

SPOTLIGHT OUT, ALL LIGHTS NOW OUT.

DURING THE POEM SEQUENCE THE ACTORS USE THE LIGHT FROM THE SPOTLIGHT TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES IN CLOTHING AND PROPS.

AT THE END OF THE POEM THE LIGHTS ARE ALL OUT FOR ABOUT 30 SECONDS, SYKAS HAS TO GET OFF STAGE AND MAKE A QUICK CHANGE INTO A MODERN DAY LAND RIGHTS JUMPER.  
AUNT AMY IS ON STAGE WITH AUB AND DEENA.

**STAGE VOICE:** Act three set in nineteen eighty five .

LIGHTS BRIGHTEN TO FULL ON.

THE SETTING IS A FAMILY KITCHEN, TIME EARLY 1985. ALL THE CHARACTERS ARE IN APPROPRIATE POSITIONS IN THE KITCHEN.

**AUNT AMY:** Yuh know, I can remember great Granma talkin' 'bout our people daan in Hobart,...Ole Grannywas sayin' 'ow lucky that was,..... not bein' seen as tribal people,.....you know,.....not bein' put there with the rest at Oyster Cove.  
'Er mother married a whiteman yuh know, a Smith 'e was.

**AUB:** Yeah I know,..... there was lot's of our fella's that missed the round up that way.

SYKAS ENTERS AND SITS DOWN

**DEENA:** Yeah,.... well they still got Aboriginal skeletons in the Museum yuh know,.....from Oyster Cove.

**SYKAS:** True, true, but the Council of Aboriginal Organisations are tryin' to get 'm back so's we can take 'm back t' Oyster Cove.

**DEENA:** They dead against it Ole Man! Let me tell you,.....that damned Government,.....why only last christmas they said we was just doin' a political ceremony.

**AUB:** Same thing with Kuti Kina cave, they said we makin' it up jus' so the white public won't stick up for us. I bet if it was the big church in Murray Street they'd think different.

**SYKAS:** Strange thing with white fulla's,.....isn't it?  
They can jus' come along and build their churches where they like an' that's it,.....ours are just natural 'n' they jus' won't believe it,.....talk about pagans, they beat the bloody band they do.

**DEENA:** Well, we been sittin' at Oyster Cove now for over a year.....I reckon that should show we not make believe.

**ROLY:** Did yuh see the paper t'day Aunty Amy? Th' 'torney General says 'e's gonna cremate our dead at the City Cemet'ry, you know , over at Cornelian Bay,.....bloody white cemet'try that is,..... no place for our tribal people at all it aint.

**AUB:** Yeah, that'd be right, take no notice of us,.....we don't 'ave the same rights as the white fella's at all.

**AUNT AMY:** Well I didn't know they was doon' that, but it sounds like Truganini all over again t' me,.....oh it does give me the nerves.

THE ACTORS FREEZE THEIR POSITIONS, THE LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM ALL THE WAY TO RIGHT OUT, AND REMAIN OUT FOR 30 SECONDS.

THE LIGHTS SLOWLY RISE TO FULL ON, THE ACTORS ARE STILL IN THEIR POSITIONS.

BOB AND RYLA KNOCK AND ENTER IMMEDIATELY, BOTH ARE EXCITED.

**BOB:** Hey listen you fella's, listen, the Government has accepted the NAC's idea to survey our people about our Aboriginal remains,.....you know, whether to do it at Oyster Cove or not.

**RYLA:** So what! They already been told by the Aboriginal Council, they represent us,.....the Council is elected by the community so why'd the NAC want t'do that for?

**AUB** Yeah, big problem that, it let's the damn Government off the hook.

**BOB:** Don't matter, the survey will show what our Council said is right.

**RYLA:** Yes,.....and spits in the face of the Aboriginal community and the people we elected into our Council,.....just great Ole Man,..... just bloody lovely.

**AUNT AMY:** Terrible it is, he should know,.....he's one of us,.....it's like workin' to save the Government from 'barrassment that is.

**SYKAS:** That's right, we had their backs to the wall and along he comes and help's 'em out of a sticky mess,.....damn it,.....why didn't he come and ask the people that question first?

**RYLA:** No status in that Ole Man, us community fella's know the difference between black status and white status.

THE ACTORS FREEZE THEIR POSITIONS AS THE LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM TO ALL OUT.

THE LIGHTS REMAIN OUT FOR 30 SECONDS, AND SLOWLY BRIGHTEN TO FULL ON.

ALL THE ACTORS ARE ON STAGE EXCEPTING BILLY, THEY ARE PLAYING CARDS.

BILLY COMES RUNNING THROUGH THE DOOR AND STANDS NEXT TO HIS FATHER, WATCHING THE GAME.  
AUNT AMY GIVES BILLY A BIG SMILE AND ASKS

**AUNT AMY:** Billy! Turn the radio on my boy.

BILLY TURNS THE RADIO ON(CASSETTE TAPE) THERE IS MUSIC AND THEN A NEWS RELEASE

**RADIO:** The Tasmanian Government has backed down on the Aboriginal remains issue and has agreed to hand back all Aboriginal remains held in the Tasmanian Museum and Launcestons Queen Victoria Museum.  
A spokesperson from the Aboriginal community congratulated the Government on it's decision.

**BOB:** (TURNING THE RADIO OFF) What'd I say you fulla's,.....whoopeee,.....  
let's get a carton of beer 'n' whoop it up.

SYKAS IS NODDING HIS HEAD ENTHUSIASTICALLY, SMILING EAR TO EAR.

**AUB:** (YELLING) Yeah, good idea!

**DEENA:** Well the Governments high and mighty attitude to the science thing was soon dropped when it looked like they'd lose a few votes.

**BOB:** Yeah,.....'n' their little snipes at our identity aint holdin' too strong either, I reckon they'd hand our people's remains over to the CWA if they thought they could win votes.  
Anyway,.....let's celebrate, let's rage,.....we got somethin' to be happy about at long last.

ACTORS FREEZE THEIR POSITIONS AS THE LIGHTS DIM TO ALL OUT AND IMMEDIATELY RISE TO DIM LIGHTING. COLOURED SPOTLIGHTS ARE ON DESIGNATED AREAS OF STAGE.

AUB MOVES TO THE BACK OF THE STAGE KITCHEN, ABOUT MID-STAGE, WHERE ON THE KITCHEN WALL THE ABORIGINAL FLAG IS ROLLED UP (PRE-PERFORMANCE) SHOWING ONLY A BLACK LINE OF CLOTH. A DRAW STRING WILL RELEASE IT AT THE RIGHT MOMENT.

AS SOON AS THE LIGHTS ARE ON THEIR FINAL SETTING THE ACTORS MOVE IN SEQUENCE, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, FORMING A SEMI-CIRCLE TO THE AUDIENCE, AUB IS LAST AFTER RELEASING THE FLAG. AUB IN POSITION, BEGINS THE FINAL STATEMENT.

AT THE END OF EACH SENTENCE THE ACTOR NEAREST JOINS IN CHANTING THE STATEMENT, AND ON IT GOES UNTIL THEY ARE ALL CHANTING.

FROM THE TIME AUB BEGINS THE STATEMENT TO THE FINALE, THEY HAVE SAID IT THROUGH TWICE.

THE WHOLE CAST:

We are still here  
There are over four thousand of us  
We have an unbroken link with the past  
We are a people  
We are survivors

We are still here  
There are over four thousand of us  
We have an unbroken link with the past  
We are a people  
We are survivors

AND THEN WITH A FINAL EXTRA LOUD EXCLAMATION, GIVING THE BLACK SALUTE

We are still here  
We are survivors!

ALL LIGHTS OUT QUICK.

LIGHTS STAY OFF 10 SECONDS, :LIGHTS ON

CAST TAKES A BOW

LIGHTS DIM TO ALMOST OUT, CAST LEAVES STAGE, LIGHTS ALL ON.

TAPED MUSIC, AND  
FINAL CURTAIN.

## GLOSSARY

### TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL LINGO:

birdin' or birding	: muttonbirding, an Aboriginal cultural activity, now a cultural enterprise.
Old Man or Ole Man	: meaning friend or mate, a term from the early island people.
Coe	: similar meaning and origin as Old Man.
'the coast'	: North-west coast of Tasmania.
hoff	: off.
sing	: thing.
'ore	: are.
jungin's	: young ones.
cancel	: council.
The Centre	: Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.
oa's	: oath.
daan	: down.
Kuti Kina	: Aboriginal Spirit.
gubs	: Aboriginal term for whites, mainland Australia.
abaat	: about.
sing	: thing.



GLOSSARY(Cont.)

naa

: now.

\*\*\*\*\*

A general lingo terming within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community is the tendency to sound an "h" before some words, although it is not necessarily used before any particular words and can appear in speech at any time. It is a form of lingo which is more likely to be evident when the speaker is excited.  
e.g. hoff for off, and horange, hoven, hofthen.

GENERAL:

- Trefoil : Trefoil Island is a major muttonbirding island owned and operated by the Aboriginal community. It was purchased by the ADC for the Aboriginal community.
- Babel : Babel Island, a long standing historical muttonbird island which holds many memories for Aboriginal muttonbirders, especially the Elders.
- NESA :National Employment Strategy for Aborigines. A Commonwealth employment scheme.
- DAA :Department of Aboriginal Affairs.
- NAC :National Aboriginal Conference, an elected body of Aborigines from around Australia. The Hawke so called Labor Socialist Government sacked the NAC in 1985.
- CWA : Country Womens Association, a non-political national women's group which publicl opposed Aboriginal Land Rights, so ending the farce. This action by the CWA occurred at a meeting of the CWA in Hobart in 1985.

THE FINAL STATEMENT OF THIS THEATRE PERFORMANCE, "WE ARE SURVIVORS" IS A STATEMENT WHICH WAS INTENDED FOR USE IN A CURRICULUM BOOKLET BEING DEVELOPED BY THE TASMANIAN

GENERAL GLOSSARY (cont.)

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT DURING THE EARLY 1980's. CAROL RUFF AND MERRALYN FAIRSKYE, TWO WHITE MURALIST FROM SYDNEY WANTED TO USE THE STATEMENT ON A MURAL THEY WERE CONTRACTED TO DO FOR COLES STORES AT KINGSTON, SOUTH OF HOBART. BUT THE STATEMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN USED BY MAX BINGHAM, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION TO SACK THE TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE TOO POLITICAL. THE STATEMENT WAS USED BY BINGHAM TO STOP PUBLICATION OF THE CURRICULUM BOOKLETS, AND THE ARGUMENT WHICH ENSUED BETWEEN BINGHAM AND THE TAECC WAS THEN USED AS PART OF HIS REASON FOR SACKING THAT BODY.

THIS THEN CAUSED COLES STORES TO GET COLD FEET AND THEY EVENTUALLY STOPPED RUFF AND FAIRSKYE FROM COMPLETING THE MURAL AND PAINTED OVER THE ANFINISHED WORK WITH A ONE\_ COLOUR PAINT.

THEIR EXCUSE WAS THAT THE STATEMENT WAS TOO CONTRIVERSIAL.

BINGHAM'S EXCUSE WAS THAT THE STATEMENT WAS RACIST.

MY EXCUSE FOR USING THE STATEMENT IS THAT IT IS TRUE ,IT IS POSITIVE AND IT SAYS IT ALL IN A FEW SHORT WORDS.

jim everett

