

Today I Woke Up

Contributed by Anon.
Monday, 31 March 2008

Today I woke up with a bit of headache. Today I woke up, as I do any other day, with either a child or the dog jumping on me. Getting ready for work, finding out who was dropping who at childcare, looking for the car keys and 'has anyone seen my phone?'

Just like any other day. Except it wasn't like any other day. Ever.

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Today was the first day. The first day I woke up knowing my country accepts me for who I am. The first day I woke up secure in the knowledge that there is no longer a debate about my story, my life, about me.

No, I had not changed overnight. I still have the same feelings I had on Tuesday. I will never be able to speak of a mother I never knew without crying. I still love my adopted Mum and Dad and family, who have made me the good person I am. I still celebrate the joy of finding my birth brothers and sisters and wider family everyday. I still worry about being a good father and husband. I am still proud of being both a Hamm and a James. And always proud of being a Yorta Yorta man. None of this has changed, nor will it ever.

But today, when I woke up, I felt just a little different – and it just wasn't because of the couple of beers I had last night. It wasn't the emotional drain from yesterday. I can tell you by the end of yesterday I don't think I had a single feeling left untouched inside me. Exhilaration, joy, sadness, worry, happiness – all these and more went through me at some time yesterday. Contentment was probably the constant.

Standing by myself at Federation Square during the lunch time concert, just taking it all in, was a very soul pleasing time. Sitting with my sisters, Cherie and Jane, listening to bands. Thinking about my sister Treahna in Canberra. These and so many other thoughts of people who matter to me and have been part of my life.

Where we go from here is an undiscovered country. Certainly, Kevin Rudd has spoken of vision and I for one am signing up. His words, the construct of the Apology and his speech – surely the gods had blessed me that I was able to witness it, in all its magnificence, at the most important place to me, the Aborigines Advancement League. And when he said 'Mr Speaker, I commend this motion to the House', I cried. I'm crying now as I write, just replaying that moment in my head.

The Prime Minister connected with me personally yesterday in way no other leader has. I am sure he connected with a great many people because he confirmed that he got it, understood it and knew what had to be done.

I have renewed energy, renewed hope, renewed faith and a desire to do. I work in Aboriginal Affairs and some days it can be battle – what are we doing, where to we want to get to? But not today. Today is the first day of the next chapter in the story and path of my people and my country. I want to be part of that journey, to help lead us all to a better place, to build a better future for my children. And it all began this morning.

Today I woke up.

Anon.

