

## Rectifying 'the Great Australian Silence'? Creative representations of Australian Indigenous Second World War service

Noah Riseman

School of Arts and Sciences, Australian Catholic University

**Abstract:** Until the publication of Robert Hall's landmark book *The Black Diggers* in 1989, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were essentially 'written out' of Australia's Second World War history. Still, more than 20 years since the publication of Hall's book, Australian Indigenous participation in the war effort as servicemen and women, labourers, scouts, in wartime industries and in various other capacities continues to be on the periphery of Australia's war history. The Second World War remains part of what WEH Stanner referred to in 1969 as 'the Great Australian Silence' of Indigenous history.

Notwithstanding the lack of significant academic histories of Indigenous military history, there have been a few creative depictions of Aboriginal participation in the Second World War. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have used creative mediums, such as poetry, short fiction, film, musical theatre and music, to portray Aboriginal Second World War service. This paper examines these creative cultural representations and how they position Australian Indigenous war service within a wider narrative of the Second World War and Indigenous history. Though the portrayals of Aboriginal service vary, the majority of creative works present the Second World War as central to Australian Indigenous history. Moreover, the creative representations depict Indigenous servicemen's hopes for a better life after the war, only to be crushed when they returned to ongoing discrimination. Even so, the creative depictions use the Second World War as an early marker of reconciliation in Australia, portraying the conflict as a time when ideals of liberty and equality overruled prejudice to unite Australia. Such a message continues to resonate, as creative representations of the Second World War contribute to contemporary understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizenship and reconciliation.

[MAIN TEXT]

On 19 February 1942 — four days after the fall of Singapore — the Japanese launched two air raids on the northern Australian port of Darwin. The two raids represented the first foreign assault on white Australia. The attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 243 people, crippled the harbour and led to widespread panic that Australia was on the verge of invasion. The Commonwealth Government subsequently censored reports of the attack to

minimise its impact on the public consciousness (Grose 2009; Lockwood 1992; Powell 1992). The bombing of Darwin is well known in Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory, where it forms a significant part of the region's collective memory. What is less well known, though, is that amidst this raid, a Japanese Zero airplane was damaged and crashed on Melville Island, about 40 kilometres north. The Japanese pilot encountered a group of Tiwi Islanders who ran into the bush, leaving a baby behind. A Tiwi man named Matthias Ulungura snuck up behind the Japanese with a tomahawk and said, 'Stick 'em up!' This is the story of the first Japanese prisoner of war ever captured on Australian soil — captured by an Aboriginal man (*No Bugles, No Drums* 1990). The story is celebrated within Australian Indigenous circles, yet has received little dissemination among the wider Australian community. This remarkable story has, for the most part, been what anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose refers to as a 'hidden history' (Rose 1991).

Hidden histories of Indigenous people in the Second World War reflect a wider Australian cult of forgetting Indigenous history. In 1969 the anthropologist WEH Stanner referred to the absence of Aboriginal people from Australia's popular consciousness and history as the 'Great Australian Silence' (Stanner 1969). Since the 1970s both non-Indigenous and Indigenous historians have worked to document Indigenous contributions to Australia's history. This rise of Aboriginal history, though a fraught process, has been one of the great strides of Australian historiography. Yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the armed forces is still under studied and under documented. Robert Hall's landmark book *The Black Diggers*, first published in 1989, remains the defining academic work about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions to the Second World War (Hall 1997). Recent works by other historians have aimed to expand understandings of Indigenous military service (*Aboriginal History* 1992; Ball 1991; Huggonson 1993, 1989; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Riseman forthcoming; *The Forgotten* 2002; Winegard 2009) or the links between military service and 1930s–40s activism for citizenship rights (Horner 1994). Indigenous organisations, too, have arisen since 2001 to commemorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service in ANZAC Day marches and Reconciliation services across Australia.<sup>1</sup>

The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Second World War service has been documented in several other non-fiction forums and formats. In addition to the aforementioned texts, there have been several published Aboriginal autobiographies that discuss life during the Second World War (see Briscoe 2010; Kruger and Waterford 2007; McGinness 1991; Tucker 1977). Permanent displays in mainstream museums, such as the Australian War Memorial, only haphazardly address the topic of Aboriginal military service,<sup>2</sup> while Aboriginal keeping places such as Brambuk Cultural Centre in the Grampians/Gariwerd

contain displays highlighting Indigenous military service. Museums have hosted special exhibitions on Aboriginal military service, most famously the Australian War Memorial's travelling photographic exhibition *Too Dark for the Light Horse* in 1993 and 2000. The Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, too, organised an exhibition on Koori military service in 2010, which began touring regional Victoria in 2011–12.<sup>3</sup> There have also been news reports (particularly around ANZAC Day), television documentaries and occasional features on current affairs shows such as *Stateline* and *Living Black*.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the increasing academic and Indigenous interest in the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service, the topic still remains on the periphery of Australia's popular memory and there have been few explorations of the theme of Indigenous military service in creative works. The aforementioned primary and secondary sources are certainly significant, but this paper focuses exclusively on creative representations that would *not* be classified as 'non-fiction' or documentaries, even though the cultural productions are often based on true stories. This also does not include documents such as cartoons or newsreels published *during* the war, as those were contemporaneous representations that did not contribute to post-war memorialising of Indigenous service.<sup>5</sup> Canvassing several creative representations of Indigenous service in the Second World War, the only identified portrayals include a country song performed in 2011, a children's book written in 1947, a musical performed in 1999, some poetry composed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous veterans, Baz Luhrmann's blockbuster *Australia* (2008) and Richard Frankland's short film *Harry's War* (1999).<sup>6</sup>

This paper examines these creative representations of Aboriginal Second World War service, analysing ways in which cultural productions have situated Indigenous service within wider narratives of Aboriginal or Second World War experiences. This paper does not engage debates about constructions of Aboriginal identity in these cultural products. Such a topic is certainly worthy in its own right, but this paper instead analyses the varying portrayals of Aboriginal service — focusing in particular on representations of Aboriginal agency, motivations to serve, genre, audience and historical contexts. Several themes permeate most depictions of Aboriginal service — especially ideas of brotherhood in the ranks and persisting inequality in post-war Australia — but representations of Indigenous agency vary across the materials. The depictions that most effectively challenge the invisibility of Indigenous service are those that portray Second World War service as central to Australian Indigenous history and as part of their wider history of oppression. These representations express Aboriginal agency by exploring personal motivations to serve and the impact of the war on Aboriginal individuals and communities. This contrasts with other examples that portray the Second World War as an isolated experience and Aboriginal involvement as an

aberration or exception to the norm. Though varying in their accuracy and the extent to which Aboriginal characters are active agents in their own right, all representations portray the Second World War as a moment that united Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. This message especially had resonance for those cultural products of the 1990s and 2000s, when the Reconciliation Movement sought to promote better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Understanding constructs of Indigenous military service is important because of the traditional links between military service and citizenship, national identity and unity.<sup>7</sup>

### **Film portrayals: *Australia* and *Harry's War***

To date the only films to portray Aboriginal contributions to the Second World War are Baz Luhrmann's romantic historical fiction *Australia* (2008) and Richard Frankland's short fictionalised biography *Harry's War* (1999). The Second World War emerges late in *Australia*, and within the war narrative Luhrmann presents Aboriginal service as a sidenote to the white characters. The Aboriginal character Magarri is, in fact, the only representation of Aboriginal military service in mainstream Australian cinema. By contrast, Frankland — who is a Gunditjmara man from south-west Victoria — examines the whole-of-war experiences of Aboriginal soldiers; the relationships among the Aboriginal soldiers, their friends and family are the thrust of *Harry's War*. Moreover, through the incorporation of other Aboriginal characters and various dialogic references, it is quite clear that Harry's wartime experience is not isolated, but rather is one shared by thousands of other Aboriginal servicemen.

Luhrmann's *Australia* is a love story between the Drover and Lady Sarah Ashley, played by Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman respectively. The romance is set against the backdrop of a remote cattle station and the Stolen Generations in 1939.<sup>8</sup> The movie generated significant interest in academic circles because of the portrayal of Australia's history, particularly the Stolen Generations,<sup>9</sup> and there was a series of high profile debates between feminist expatriate Germaine Greer and Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton about how the movie depicts frontier relationships and Aboriginal child removal (Greer 2008; Langton 2008a, 2008b). Late in the movie the main characters happen to be present for the bombing of Darwin and the Drover must — with his Aboriginal sidekick Magarri — rescue some Aboriginal children from impending Japanese invasion on the fictitious Mission Island. Interestingly, the incident on Mission Island is almost the reverse of what actually happened in history; rather than an Aboriginal man capturing the crashed Japanese pilot, in the film a group of Japanese shoot Magarri as he sacrifices himself in a moment akin to Archie's death in Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*.

*Australia* portrays Aboriginal contributions to the war effort as an isolated experience on the margins of a wider war effort. Mission Island is not the site of the main action — Darwin is — and the Aboriginal residents under attack are not as significant to the white authorities as the main township. Moreover, the only reason that Mission Island is of any concern to the characters in the film is because Nullah — the child at the centre of the Stolen Generations narrative — is housed there. The actual white administrators care nothing for Mission Island and it is the Drover — the white hero — who goes to rescue Nullah and the other children. Magarri, the embodiment of Aboriginal military service in *Australia*, is the white man's friend and companion. The Drover drives the action and is at the centre of the war effort. Magarri nobly sacrifices his life so that the children and the Drover can escape, but as he dies his final words are 'Drive 'em home, Drover'. Thus, even as he is dying, he is lauding the Drover as the central figure who becomes the protector of the Aboriginal children.

The representation of Magarri's military service in *Australia* challenges the 'Great Australian Silence' about Aboriginal military service. The problem, though, lies in the limitations imposed on Magarri and his role as an exception to the norm of white service. Magarri is the *only* Aboriginal person in the film who contributes to the war effort, even though historically there were large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women. Hall has estimated that at least 3000 Aboriginal people and 850 Torres Strait Islanders served in the armed forces during Second World War, and more recent estimates place the number around 5000 (Hall 1997:60). These estimates do not include those men and women who contributed to the war effort on the home front and, in the Northern Territory especially, Aboriginal people served in unofficial capacities as scouts, labourers in work camps and wharf workers (Berndt and Berndt 1987; Hall 1997; Saunders 1995).<sup>10</sup> In a city such as Darwin, which had a large Aboriginal population, Aboriginal contributions to the war effort were pronounced and visible; they were the norm, not the exception. *Australia* therefore leaves the audience with a perception of the Second World War in the Northern Territory as primarily a battle between white Australians and Japanese.

These examples of Magarri as the (albeit positive) aberrant Aboriginal person are in sharp contrast to the manner in which Richard Frankland constructs Aboriginal service in *Harry's War*. The plot of *Harry's War* follows Harry Saunders — the filmmaker's uncle — as he enlists in the Army in south-eastern Victoria, befriends both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal servicemen, and is ultimately killed by a Japanese sniper in Papua New Guinea. Indeed, the Saunders family has a long history of military service; Harry's father served in the First World War and Harry's brother Reg famously became the first Aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian Army, serving in both the Second World War and Korea.<sup>11</sup> As a

biographical work, the film reflects genres of Aboriginal writing and history telling, which meld historical narrative with poetic licence. This genre of Aboriginal life writing, which in Western discourse may be classified as ‘fictionalised biography’ or ‘fictionalised autobiography’, reflects Aboriginal literary epistemologies (Haag 2008; Shoemaker 2004). Unlike *Australia*, Aboriginal military service is the explicit focus of *Harry’s War* instead of a side plot within a larger narrative. *Harry’s War* is about friendships among soldiers and Harry Saunders represents an archetype for Aboriginal servicemen. As early as the opening scene, when the new enlistees are farewelling family at the train station, Harry is not the only Aboriginal serviceman. Throughout the film Thomas Green, and both Harry’s family and Thomas Green’s wife, make references to fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins fighting and dying for Australia in both the First and Second World Wars. Thus in *Harry’s War* it is quite clear that the Second World War has affected every Aboriginal family by sending their men off to war, the same as for white families.<sup>12</sup>

A big difference for Aboriginal people, however, would be their motivations to serve and their expectations for outcomes from the war effort. In *Harry’s War* there are a wide range of reasons for Aboriginal enlistment, which reflect the testimonies of Indigenous war veterans (Hall 1995; Jackomos and Fowell 1993). They include earning a better wage, equal pay to non-Indigenous soldiers, hoping for equal rights during and after the war, and desiring an easing of colonial restrictions. These hopes are expressed most effectively during a discussion among Harry, Thomas and Maude Green on the train:

Maude: Don’t you go making excuses for me, Thomas Green. You fellas make me sick. You think it’ll all be one big adventure, that everything will be fine when you come home. You’ll get your equal pay, live in a fine house in town; you won’t need a permission slip to leave the bloody mission. What about cousin Johnny over there fighting? They still took his kids away. Listen up, you two. This war won’t make us equal, because wars kill. They kill a lot of good Black men who should have been home looking after their families, and my father and brother were just two of them. Joining won’t change nothin’. They’ll still take our kids away. You won’t get to drink in their pubs. And the only time you’ll get to vote, Mr Saunders, is while you are being cannon fodder for their war. Why don’t you wake up to yourselves?

Harry: Look, you’re right, ok. Is that what you want to hear? You think this is easy? Being regarded as half a bloke by blokes who make up the rules as they go? About where you fit in their lives? Look, I’m sorry if I upset you, Mrs Green, Maude. But a bloke’s gotta have a go. That’s why I’m goin’, that’s probably why Thomas is goin’ too. Because we reckon it’d be wrong not to.

Not to have a bloody good crack at it — to have a go at being looked at as equal (*Harry's War* 1999).

The reason this scene is so significant is because it succinctly summarises the hopes of Aboriginal servicemen and their families, while concurrently presenting the wider context of Indigenous affairs circa the Second World War. Issues confronting Indigenous people — child removal, apartheid-like restrictions and inequality — are still in the minds of the Aboriginal residents of Australia. Thus *Harry's War* places the Second World War as a key moment in the collective history of Aboriginal Australians. Military service is commonplace among Indigenous communities just as much as ongoing discrimination. Nonetheless, the Aboriginal people themselves — Harry and Thomas — are agents trying to improve their status within this wider, complex framework.

Discrimination common to Aboriginal people manifests in a scene from *Harry's War* that has a counterpart in *Australia*. Harry, Thomas and their white friend Mitch enter a bar and Mitch orders drinks for all three. The bartender refuses to serve Harry and Thomas, which angers Mitch. Then Harry speaks up against the discrimination, saying to the entire bar, 'I'm thirsty...And I reckon, if I can wear this uniform, then I can bloody well have a beer!' (*Harry's War* 1999). The bartender relents and serves Harry and Thomas. In a similar vein, *Australia* has a scene in a bar after the bombing of Darwin. As the Drover enters with Magarri behind him, the bartender remarks, 'No Boongs in here'. The crowd stops as the Drover, shocked, retorts, 'You didn't say that, did you? Give him a fucking drink.' The Drover invites Magarri inside in an Aboriginal language, but still the barman only serves one drink. The Drover again says, 'Short one glass...one more glass.' Finally, the publican pours a second glass and toasts to 'the Japs, who are not the Boongs'. Throughout this entire exchange, Magarri says nothing, but cries after being served (*Australia* 2008). Magarri's tears can be read either as happiness for finally being served, or as sadness for still confronting discrimination. The contrasting manner in which these two scenes play out is striking. In both situations the war circumstances lead to challenges against the ban on Aboriginal people drinking — laws that were in place in every state and territory except Tasmania until well after the Second World War (Chesterman 2005; Chesterman and Galligan 1997). Yet in *Harry's War* it is Harry who speaks up for his rights and uses his position as a soldier to demand equal treatment. He does this with the support of his white ally, but it is still his own agency and he is an empowered individual. By contrast, in *Australia* it is the good white man who speaks for the Aboriginal person and represents his interests.

Ultimately, what the viewers of *Australia* and *Harry's War* receive are two different versions of Australian history and the position of Aboriginal people within the Second World War. *Australia* presents as a pop cultural imagination of the Northern Territory frontier,

which, according to Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton, contains the complexities of interpersonal and intercultural relations that characterised this historical era (Langton 2008a, 2008b). But the movie presents Aboriginal military service as tangential to the war effort and as beholden to the whims of the white men. By contrast, *Harry's War* examines Aboriginal military history from the Aboriginal perspective, with service central to the experiences of Aboriginal families. Admittedly, it was not Baz Luhrmann's intention to present an historically accurate depiction of Aboriginal people in the Second World War; his purpose was to direct an epic about the Australian outback, the bombing of Darwin and the Stolen Generations (Luhrmann 2008, 2011). That is why most of the debates regarding *Australia* have centred on his portrayal of Stolen Generations. Moreover, his intended audience was mainstream moviegoers, particularly in the United States. Frankland, on the other hand, planned to make a short film about Aboriginal military service. *Harry's War's* expected audience is Indigenous people, but also school children who are studying Aboriginal history.<sup>13</sup> Luhrmann's *Australia* reached cinematic audiences worldwide, earning more than \$49 million in the United States alone, and \$161.7 million dollars in other countries — not to mention the tourism tie-ins and DVD sales (Box Office Mojo 2012). *Harry's War* has screened only at a few film festivals and on the National Indigenous Television channel in Australia, and occasionally airs on the SBS network. Thus mainstream cinema audiences in Australia and around the world are yet to be exposed to the critical position of the Second World War in Aboriginal histories.

### **Verse expressions: poetry and songs**

One form in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have portrayed Second World War service is through poetry and song writing. Several Australian poets have written about memories of wartime, returns home, difficult readjustments and the legacies of war. Works relating specifically to Australian Indigenous Second World War service, by two poets and one singer songwriter, focus on other themes: mateship during war and discrimination in civilian life. For the Aboriginal writers, poetry and song writing are forms of expression adopted as a contemporary form of traditional storytelling and sharing of Aboriginal knowledge (Shoemaker 2004; van den Berg 2005).<sup>14</sup>

The non-Indigenous author Sapper Bert Beros (1943) — who is most famous for his poem *The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels* about Papua New Guineans in the war — also wrote the poem *The Coloured Digger* in 1943 about fellow soldier Private Harold West, who died of malaria in Papua New Guinea. Though Beros wrote the poem during the war, it has come to prominence primarily in recent years and thus represents a significant creative representation memorialising Aboriginal military service. Beros' poem has been well



received by the Australian Indigenous ex-service community, and is read regularly at Indigenous commemorative services. Katie Beckett — the great-niece of Harold West — has even written a one-woman play entitled *Coloured Diggers*; she performed the short play at the 2010 ANZAC Day March in Redfern (*Coloured Digger* 2010; *The Last Post* 2006).

*The Coloured Digger* describes the patriotism of an Aboriginal soldier serving alongside white men. The particular soldier being described is clearly a metaphor for all Aboriginal servicemen, their dedication and their dreams. The first third of the poem focuses on the soldier's devotion, answering the call of service.

He waited for no call-up,  
 He didn't need a push,  
 He came in from the stations,  
 And the townships of the bush.  
 He helped when help was wanting,  
 Just because he wasn't deaf;

He is right amongst the columns of the fighting A.I.F (Beros 1943:18).

The invocation of patriotism generates a feeling of connectedness for the reader. The Aboriginal Digger is one of us — another Australian — who is answering the call of duty to one's country. Such a message bridges the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It was a progressive message for 1943, particularly being written by a non-Indigenous man.

The final 12 lines of the poem make the poem's purpose clear, advocating equal rights for Aboriginal people:

He'd heard us talk democracy—,  
 They preach it to his face—  
 Yet knows that in our Federal House  
 There's no one of his race.  
 He feels we push his kinsmen out,  
 Where cities do not reach,  
 And Parliament has yet to hear  
 The Abo's maiden speech.  
 One day he'll leave the Army,  
 Then join the League he shall,  
 And he hopes we'll give a better deal  
 To the Aboriginal (Beros 1943:18).

The poem depicts the links between military service and citizenship and encourages the Australian public and politicians, in particular, to reward service with equality. In the process

the poem also acknowledges an 'us' and 'them' division, with the white Australians as the oppressors. Beros' advocacy for the rights of Aboriginal people displays sympathy for the dispossession of Aboriginal people. This was a progressive stance for 1943 and positions Beros and other returned servicemen as allies in the struggle for Aboriginal equality.

Aboriginal country singer Troy Cassar-Daley's short song *That's Why I'm Your Friend* expresses similar sentiments of brotherhood between Indigenous and non-Indigenous soldiers, but from the perspective of the Aboriginal soldier himself.<sup>15</sup> Cassar-Daley writes:

As the battles raged around us  
 We would watch each other's backs  
 two soldiers in the jungle  
 so weary from attacks  
 We'll see this through together  
 And on me you can depend  
 That's why, that's why I'm your friend (Cassar-Daley 2011).

By writing the song in the first person, Cassar-Daley portrays the Aboriginal soldier as an active agent whose decisions and motivations are quite clear rather than speculative. Unlike Beros' poem, the song does not dwell on the notion of inequality experienced within Australia. This is a significant difference from other cultural representations, and the reason seems to be the audience for which Cassar-Daley wrote *That's Why I'm Your Friend* in 2011. The lyrics, 'We'll see this through together/And on me you can depend/That's why, that's why I'm your friend', reflect the contemporary ideals of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Cassar-Daley 2011). Cassar-Daley's song thus represents the Second World War as an early marker of reconciliation and invokes that spirit, still relevant in 2011.

Aboriginal Korean War veteran Cec Fisher's poems, written during the 1990s, pose messages about yearning for equality and disenchantment with the post-war situation. The message of Fisher's poem *Black Anzac* is clear from the opening line: 'They have forgotten, need him no more' (Fisher 1993). The Aboriginal serviceman who Fisher describes is, like the Coloured Digger, representative of all Aboriginal servicemen. Even more so, Fisher's poem invokes not just the Second World War, but all conflicts in which Australia participated, including the frontier wars. The sentiments Fisher expresses are longstanding because Aboriginal people regularly answered the call for service but were denied equal rights upon their return. This theme of disappointment of Aboriginal ex-servicemen reflects the status of military service within a wider context of discrimination. With the conflict over, the goals of equality unachieved, the veteran is left with only his medals and his unfulfilled hopes: 'His

medals he keeps hidden away from prying eyes/No-one knows, no-one sees his tears in his old black eyes/He's been outcast — just left by himself to die' (Fisher 1993).

Another poem of Fisher's effectively demonstrates the paradoxical pride of the families of Aboriginal servicemen in conjunction with the disappointment over continuing discrimination. He writes in *Anzac Day*:

Granny was treated like a Queen Anzac Day  
See the shiny medals flashing from far away  
Next day they crossed the street, racism was back  
Didn't treat her equal just because she was black (Fisher 2001).

Fisher's approach in this poem centres around the Aboriginal families and the impact of military service on them. The grandmother is proud of her husband's achievements in war, yet it is only on ANZAC Day that the Australian public are willing to treat her as an equal. Such experiences have resonance across Australia; the 1965 Freedom Ride to outback New South Wales exposed one of the more high profile examples at the Walgett Returned and Services League, where Aboriginal people were only allowed to enter on ANZAC Day (*Blood Brothers: Freedom Ride* 1993; Curthoys 2002). Thus, unlike Beros and Cassar-Daley, Fisher focuses on the lingering post-war racism confronted by Indigenous servicemen and their families. Fisher's poems express the emotions of the Aboriginal veterans and their families to highlight injustice. Beros and Cassar-Daley, on the other hand, appeal to sentiments of brotherhood among soldiers to elicit non-Indigenous support for Aboriginal civil rights. Both devices are effective in their own right, and they reveal the potential for poetic representations of Indigenous war service to promote greater understandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

### **Children's fiction**

One of the more intriguing depictions of Aboriginal participation in the Second World War effort is Owen Griffiths' children's book *Dhidgerry Dhoo: A tale woven around fact* (1947a). Griffiths was a serviceman stationed in Darwin during the war, and he is best known for his published eyewitness account of the bombing of Darwin in 1942 (Griffiths 1947b). Griffiths' story follows the war experience of a remote Aboriginal man named Dhidgerry Dhoo as he assists in the war effort in the north. Dhidgerry Dhoo is ultimately kidnapped by a Japanese submarine crew and dies escaping from a prisoner-of-war camp. Griffiths includes several contemporaneous aspects of Aboriginal life in the period leading up to the Second World War, including contact with settlers, life on a mission at Bathurst Island, continuing cultural connections, and the hostile relationships between Aboriginal people and Japanese pearlers (see Austin 1997; Oliver 2006; Pye 1977).

Griffiths introduces the book with a foreword grounding the significance of Aboriginal contributions to northern defence. He writes, 'The Australian Aborigines of the North-west responded magnificently to the calls made upon them by the various armed services during the critical months of 1942, when a Japanese invasion seemed imminent. They were widely employed as coastal pilots, bush-runners, scouts, trackers and plane-spotters' (Griffiths 1947a:7). Griffiths' statement is quite accurate and reflects the diversity of tasks performed by Aboriginal people in the north (*No Bugles, No Drums* 1990; Riseman forthcoming; Saunders 1995). Moreover, Griffiths' narrative makes it clear that Aboriginal people are aware of the wider war situation and are active agents who choose to assist in the war effort. Dhidgerry Dhoo worries about how the war will impact on Aboriginal people, and for this reason the Aboriginal people choose to work as allies with the white men. This is clearly their own initiative, as the text states: 'A scheme was put forward *by the elders* under which the Aborigines would patrol the countryside and act as scouts and guides for the white man' (Griffiths 1947a:28, emphasis added). The motivations given to serve include distrust of the Japanese, loyalty to missionaries, hope for a better future with white settlers, and desire for goods and payment from white men. Investing the Aboriginal Elders with agency and desires to serve in the war effort was progressive at the time, given that many post-war non-Indigenous histories of the Second World War suggest that white men were the principal organisers of Aboriginal support for the war effort (Riseman 2010).

Dhidgerry Dhoo travels throughout the north to garner the support of other Aboriginal men and women. Thus Griffiths is positioning Indigenous service not as an isolated experience, but as one central to remote Aboriginal Australia. Dhidgerry Dhoo witnesses Japanese submarines and airplanes, and watches the bombing of Darwin from across the harbour. As the war progresses, his own settlement at Bynoe is bombed. The story continues: 'There were no casualties but by morning, panic-stricken and afraid, some were hurrying inland to different parts and only the steadfast example and wise counsels of the elders of the tribe prevented a mass exodus' (Griffiths 1947a:39). Griffiths' language invokes a real sense of fear among the Aboriginal population, highlighting the war as a serious threat to their existence, just as it was to white Australia. Such an approach to the story creates a sense of connection, common purpose and shared humanity between a non-Indigenous reader and the Aboriginal communities of the north.

The potential impact of Japanese invasion on Aboriginal lives receives further attention in the book when Dhidgerry Dhoo encounters a Japanese landing party. He follows the tracks and finds that the Japanese have abducted his wife and child. The book says, 'There [at the waterfront] he found his wife lying on the ground tightly clasping her little girl and moaning piteously' (Griffiths 1947a:47). What ensues is a peculiar storyline where

Dhidgerry Dhoo attempts to rescue his other son from the Japanese, only to be abducted himself. Meanwhile, within the bowels of the Japanese submarine, his baby son dies. The story describes Dhidgerry Dhoo's reaction: 'He wondered what his wife and daughter were doing and if the [American] airman had been rescued. He remained thus seated, with his dead child in his arms, for a long while, too ill and broken-hearted to care what happened next' (Griffiths 1947a:51). The Japanese callously toss his son out of the submarine. They subsequently torture Dhidgerry Dhoo before sending him to a prisoner-of-war camp on an unknown island. He successfully escapes from the camp only to die at sea, his body picked up by a vessel returning to Darwin. This entire storyline portrays the cruel Japanese, but it also demonstrates the impact of the war on the Aboriginal north. Aboriginal people, too, are subject to torture; their families, too, are at risk; they, like white Australians, are in danger of invasion and thus should have the empathy of white Australia.

Unlike many of the other cultural representations of Aboriginal service, there is no reference in *Dhidgerry Dhoo* to the ongoing discrimination facing Aboriginal people. The book considers white Australia preferable to Japanese rule, but it does not actively interrogate the impact of colonialism on the Aboriginal north. Rather, Griffiths subtly questions Aboriginal people's status when he posits one of the motivations to serve to be the defence of liberty and freedom; the text states, 'the white man's cause was, at the moment, his [Dhidgerry Dhoo's] cause — a struggle for life and liberty' (Griffiths 1947a:43). Although there is no mention of what liberty would mean to Aboriginal people, this subtle differentiation between 'the white man's cause' versus Aboriginal people's implies an unjust situation for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Thus *Dhidgerry Dhoo* represents a sympathetic portrayal of Aboriginal people in the Second World War and it imbues the Aboriginal characters with their own agency. Though it does not actively question the wider social context of the war, colonialism and discrimination, the language subtly subverts the status quo — quite a skilful feat for a children's book in 1947.

### **Musical theatre**

Performed in 1999–2000, *The Sunshine Club: A Very Black Musical* (Enoch 2000) takes place after the Second World War in a settled part of Queensland, most likely urban or suburban. The story centres on an Aboriginal veteran named Frank Doyle, who returns to a Queensland that continues to discriminate against Aboriginal people. With his family's help he sets up The Sunshine Club for social dances on Saturday nights, where Aboriginal and white youth can dance together. The subplots include a doomed romance between Frank and the white clergyman's daughter, Rose, and an unplanned pregnancy between Aboriginal girl Pearl and

non-Indigenous womaniser Peter. The musical sets the Aboriginal characters on a trajectory of hope for an equal future amidst the contemporaneous discrimination.

The role of the Second World War is explicit, particularly in the early part of the musical, because the Aboriginal servicemen and their wives express hopes that they will receive fairer treatment at the war's conclusion. The opening number presents the sentiments of several demographics — non-Indigenous men, non-Indigenous women, Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women. The non-Indigenous men sing about their joy to be home, and state, 'We want it all again/The world we knew before the war'. This is in stark contrast to Frank's verse, 'Give us our freedom/Now the fighting's done/We fought for freedom/The same as everyone' (Enoch 2000:8–9). The juxtaposition of the two verses reveals a tension to the audience — that Frank and the other Aboriginal veterans will not be returning to a changed world, but, rather, one in which they still confront racial prejudice.

It is early in the musical that Frank realises just how much Queensland has not changed. A doorman refuses to let Frank enter a concert at Cloudland, and the following dialogue ensues:

Doorman: You're not going in there.

Frank: I'm a guest of...

Doorman: I don't care who you're with...You know the rules.

Frank: Things have changed...

Doorman: No one's told me.

Frank (stronger): Things have changed...

Doorman: Nothing's changed (Enoch 2000:20).

Frank is ultimately let in at the insistence of Reverend Percy Morris, but told to stand in the back. This exchange epitomises the shattered hopes of Aboriginal veterans. Even so, what Enoch expresses through *The Sunshine Club* is the determination of Aboriginal people in the post-war era to fight for their rights. Frank continues to stand up for himself against the doorman, and ultimately he founds The Sunshine Club as a place for Aboriginal and white people to socialise harmoniously. The integrated nature of The Sunshine Club, similar to Cassar-Daley's song, fits with the message of reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians promoted during the 1990s. *The Sunshine Club* presages the Aboriginal activism of the 1960s, during which many Indigenous Second World War veterans were active leaders in the movements for civil rights and the 1967 referendum.<sup>16</sup> Thus, like the other Aboriginal-authored representations of Second World War service, the war does not sit as an isolated experience but fits into a wider context of Indigenous history. Enoch successfully weaves the connections between returned servicemen, discrimination and activism through his narrative about one particular time and place.

## Conclusion

This paper has considered the extent to which a range of creative cultural representations have confronted the 'Great Australian Silence' about Aboriginal people in the Second World War. Whether through film, poetry, songs, fiction or musicals, the examples presented have made some strides presenting aspects of Aboriginal participation in the war effort. Though by no means universal, some of the common themes include notions of interracial brotherhood, hoping for equality after the war, a return to discrimination and the centrality of Aboriginal service. The ways in which the authors have represented Aboriginal service vary, with some representations taking a broader approach to the war as one component in a wider Australian Indigenous history.

The question of audiences is a complex factor at play when examining the cultural productions. With the notable exception of Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, most of the examples presented in this paper have had a limited distribution. Indeed, the Aboriginal-authored works — Richard Frankland's film, Cec Fisher's poetry, Troy Cassar-Daley's song — have reached predominantly Indigenous audiences because of their places of publication and/or performance. They portray how the Second World War bridged the gap between the two races only for a short while. As they were all published since the 1990s, the implication of such portrayals is that war service was a moment of reconciliation that teaches lessons relevant in the present. Non-Indigenous portrayals of Aboriginal service — Luhrmann's *Australia*, Beros' poem and Griffiths' children's story — vary in their portrayals of Aboriginal service. Even so, the reconciliation message through common enemies, common sacrifice and hopes for a better future are present in the texts. Thus, the cultural representations certainly have challenged the absence of Aboriginal military history, but much work remains to redress this aspect of the 'Great Australian Silence'.

## Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of colleagues at the Australian Catholic University who read earlier drafts, and especially Dr Maggie Nolan.

- 
1. The most high profile Indigenous march is the Redfern ANZAC Day March, begun in 2007. Commemorative services now run in all capital cities during Reconciliation Week in May of each year. Honouring Indigenous War Graves also co-ordinates commemorative services and marches in Western Australia.
  2. One of the more intriguing museum examples is a plaque in the Melbourne Jewish Holocaust Museum honouring Yorta Yorta activist William Cooper for protesting against Nazi treatment of Jews after Kristallnacht in 1938. Cooper was the founder of the Australian Aborigines' League and fought for Aboriginal citizenship rights. See Attwood and Markus 2004; Markus 1988.
  3. For more information about *Too Dark for the Light Horse*, see the 'Travelling exhibitions — completed' page of the Australian War Memorial website at

- 
- <[www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/toodark/](http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/toodark/)>. For the Shrine of Remembrance exhibition, entitled *Indigenous Australians at War from the Boer War to the Present*, see the web page of the same title on the Shrine of Remembrance website at <[www.shrine.org.au/Exhibitions/Travelling-Exhibitions/Indigenous-Australians-at-war](http://www.shrine.org.au/Exhibitions/Travelling-Exhibitions/Indigenous-Australians-at-war)>.
4. The most widely distributed documentary is arguably an episode of *Who do you think you are?*, featuring Torres Strait Islander singer-songwriter Christine Anu's grandfather, who served in the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion. See 'Christine Anu' 2009. *Stateline WA* did a story on the organisation Honouring Indigenous War Graves in 2010. See 'Remembering Australia's Indigenous Soldiers' 2010. Stories air on *Living Black* regularly around ANZAC Day, including 'Coloured Digger' 2010 and 'ANZAC Day Commemorations' 2011.
  5. Several cartoons that appeared in the *Bulletin* or *Wings* in 1942–43 actually mocked Aboriginal contributions to the war effort. See Hall 1997:16, 82, 178, 184. Newsreels include a 1941 segment entitled 'Aborigines are True Soldiers of the King'. See AWM 1941.
  6. Representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service in non-Second World War conflicts are even sparser. They include one Aboriginal-authored play about Vietnam (Bostock 2001), an Aboriginal-authored fictionalised autobiography about Vietnam (Laughton 1999), an Aboriginal character in the First World War docudrama *Pozieres* (2000) and a non-Indigenous-authored country song about Aboriginal service in the First World War (Coggan 2008).
  7. Several studies have addressed the theme of racial minorities' participation in the armed forces and links to citizenship. Among them are Janowitz 1976; Krebs 2006; Young 1982.
  8. For a history of the Stolen Generations, see National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Australia) 1997; Haebich 2000.
  9. In 2009 there was a conference convened entitled 'Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* Reviewed' at the National Museum of Australia. Some papers from the conference have been published in a special issue of *Studies in Australasian Cinema* (Nugent and Kinoshi 2010). See also Kinoshi 2011.
  10. The Australian War Memorial is full of photographs and films of Aboriginal workers in Darwin and across the Northern Territory. See the website at <[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)>. For government records on employment of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, see National Archives of Australia (NAA) Melbourne, series MP508/1, item 82/710/2, box 126, Employment of Aborigines by Defence/Army in Darwin [contains information re conditions, rates of pay, finance authorities, etc]; NAA Canberra, Series A431, item 1946/915, Employment of Natives on Work for Army (N.T.); NAA Melbourne, series MP742/1, item 92/1/302, Employment of Native Labour in NT (Northern Territory) [Re disbandment of No. 10 Employment Company and proposed formation of NT Employment Company of Aborigines]; NAA Melbourne, series B1535, item 929/19/1049 [Proposals to utilise the services of male Aborigines for Defence purposes].
  11. For more information about Harry Saunders and the Saunders family, see Gordon 1965; Hall 1995; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Ramsland and Mooney 2006.
  12. For a list of ex-servicemen and women from Western Australia, see James 2010. Genealogical work among the Ngarrindjeri revealed similar high rates of enlistment in the First World War. See Kartinyeri 1996.
  13. A study guide for *Harry's War* is available for purchase through Richard Frankland's production company, Golden Seahorse Productions. See <[www.goldenseahorse.com.au/education/harrys-war-study-guide](http://www.goldenseahorse.com.au/education/harrys-war-study-guide)>, accessed 28 June 2011.
  14. Tony Mitchell (2006) writes about how hip hop is a similar contemporary expression of traditional knowledge sharing.
  15. Troy Cassar-Daley has not released the song, but he performed *That's Why I'm Your Friend* at the Brisbane Commemoration Ceremony Honouring Indigenous Veterans, Reconciliation Week 2011. The author thanks Troy Cassar-Daley for providing the lyrics and permission to use the song in this paper.
  16. Three high profile examples include Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Joe McGinness and Stan McBride, who were veterans active in the Queensland branch of the Federal Council for the Advancement



---

of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. See Cochrane 1994; McBride 2000:18–20; McGinness 1991.

## References

*Aboriginal History* 1992, 16, part 2.

'ANZAC Day Commemorations' 2011, *Living Black*, SBS Television, 24 April (television program).

Attwood, Bain and Andrew Markus 2004 *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Austin, Tony 1997 *Never Trust a Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal policy 1911–1939*, Northern Territory University Press, Darwin.

*Australia* 2008, directed by Baz Luhrmann, 20th Century Fox, Beverly Hills, CA (DVD).

AWM (Australian War Memorial) 1941 F00519: 'Aborigines are True Soldiers of the King' (Cinesound news No. 488), 1 min, 44 sec., 7 March.

Ball, Desmond (ed.) 1991 *Aborigines in the Defence of Australia*, Australian National University Press, Sydney.

Berndt, Ronald M and Catherine Berndt 1987 *End of an Era: Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

Beros, Bert 1943 *The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels and Other Verses...*, FH Johnston Publishing Company, Sydney.

*Blood Brothers: Freedom Ride* 1993, directed by Rachel Perkins, produced by City Pictures in association with SBS Indigenous Unit (documentary, DVD).

Bostock, George 2001 *It Seems Like Yesterday*, provided to author courtesy of George Bostock (play).

Box Office Mojo 2012, 'Australia', <[www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=australia.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=australia.htm)>, accessed 28 June 2011.

Briscoe, Gordon 2010 *Racial Folly: A twentieth century Aboriginal family*, ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Incorporated, Canberra.

Cassar-Daley, Troy 2011 *That's Why I'm Your Friend*, performed at Brisbane Commemoration Ceremony Honouring Indigenous Veterans, Reconciliation Week 2011, lyrics provided courtesy of Troy Cassar-Daley.

Chesterman, John 2005 *Civil Rights: How Indigenous Australians won formal equality*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld.

- and Brian Galligan 1997 *Citizens without Rights: Aborigines and Australian citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- ‘Christine Anu’ 2009, *Who do you think you are?*, SBS Television, 18 October (television program, season two, episode four).
- Cochrane, Kathy 1994 *Oodgeroo*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld.
- Coggan, Darren 2008 *Too Dark for the Light Horse (Too Light for the Clan)*, *War Stories*, produced by Ben Edgar and Darren Coggan, Cognoscenti Entertainment Pty Ltd.
- ‘Coloured Digger’ 2010, *Living Black*, SBS Television, 26 April (television program).
- Curthoys, Ann 2002 *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider remembers*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Enoch, Wesley 2000 *The Sunshine Club: A Very Black Musical*, originally performed by the Queensland Theatre Company at Cairns Civic Theatre, 4 November 1999.
- Fisher, Cec 2001 *Anzac Day*, *Koori Mail*, 2 May, p.6.
- 1993 *Black Anzac*, *Koori Mail*, 5 May, p.12.
- The Forgotten* 2002, directed by Glen Stasiuk, Black Russian Productions, Perth (DVD).
- Gordon, Harry 1965 *The Embarrassing Australian: The story of an Aboriginal warrior*, Cheshire-Lansdowne, Melbourne.
- Greer, Germaine 2008 ‘Strictly fanciful,’ *Age*, 17 December, <[www.theage.com.au/opinion/strictly-fanciful-20081216-6zs0.html](http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/strictly-fanciful-20081216-6zs0.html)> accessed 28 June 2011.
- Griffiths, Owen 1947a *Dhidgerry Dhoo: A tale woven around fact*, P & S Press, Sydney.
- 1947b *Darwin Drama*, Bloxham & Chambers, Sydney.
- Grose, Peter 2009 *An Awkward Truth: The bombing of Darwin*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Haag, Oliver 2008 ‘From the margins to the mainstream: towards a history of published Indigenous Australian autobiographies and biographies’ In Peter Read, Frances Peter-Little and Anna Haebich (eds), *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*, ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Incorporated, Canberra, pp.5–28.
- Haebich, Anna 2000 *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, WA.
- Hall, Robert 1995 *Fighters from the Fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders recall the Second World War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 1997 *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War* (2nd edn), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Harry’s War* 1999, directed by Richard Frankland, Australian Film Institute, South Melbourne, Vic. (videocassette).

- Horner, Jack 1994 *Bill Ferguson: Fighter for Aboriginal freedom* (2nd edn), J Horner, Dickson, ACT.
- Huggonson, David 1993 'Aboriginal DIGGERS of the 9th Brigade. First AIF-Australia. Army. Australian Imperial Force, (1914/ 1921 )', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 79(3-4): 214-25.
- 1989 'The dark Diggers in the AIF', *Australian Quarterly* 61(3): 352-7.
- Jackomos, Alick and Derek Fowell 1993 *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at war from the Somme to Vietnam*, Victoria Press, South Melbourne, Vic.
- James, Jan 'Kabarli' 2010 *Forever Warriors*, J James, Northam, WA.
- Janowitz, Morris 1976 'Military institutions and citizenship in Western societies', *Armed Forces and Society* 2(2):185-204.
- Kartinyeri, Doreen 1996 *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs*, Aboriginal Family History Project, South Australian Museum and Raukkan Council, Adelaide.
- Kinoshi, Shino 2011 'The four fathers of *Australia*: Baz Luhrmann's depiction of Aboriginal history and paternity in the Northern Territory', *History Australia* 8(1):23-41.
- Krebs, Ronald 2006 *Fighting for Rights: Military service and the politics of citizenship*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, and London.
- Kruger, Alec and Gerard Waterford 2007 *Alone on the Soaks: The life and times of Alec Kruger*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, NT.
- Langton, Marcia 2008a 'Faraway Downs fantasy resonates close to home,' *Age*, 23 November, <[www.theage.com.au/articles/2008/11/23/1227375027931.html](http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2008/11/23/1227375027931.html)> accessed 28 June 2011.
- 2008b 'Why Greer is wrong on *Australia*,' *Age*, 23 December, <[www.theage.com.au/opinion/why-greer-is-wrong-on-australia-20081222-73kk.html](http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/why-greer-is-wrong-on-australia-20081222-73kk.html)> accessed 28 June 2011.
- 'The Last Post' 2006, *Message Stick*, directed by Adrian Wells, produced by the ABC (DVD).
- Laughton, Kenny 1999 *Not Quite Men, No Longer Boys*, Jukurrpa Books, Alice Springs, NT.
- Lockwood, Douglas 1992 *Australia's Pearl Harbour: Darwin 1942*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic.
- Luhrmann, Baz 2008 "'Australia" interview with Baz Luhrmann (Part 1)', *7:30 Report*, interviewer Kerry O'Brien, 19 November, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWken-DQObM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWken-DQObM)> accessed 28 June 2011.
- 2011 'Historical Inspiration', 23 January, <[www.bazmark.com](http://www.bazmark.com)> accessed 28 June 2011.
- Markus, Andrew 1988 *Blood from a Stone*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

- McBride, Stan 2000 in *They Spoke Out Good: Indigenous Elders tell their stories of struggle and achievement*, proceedings of forum, 18 November 1999, Nundah Reconciliation Group, Wavell Heights North, Qld.
- McGinness, Joe 1991 *Son of Alyandabu: My fight for Aboriginal rights*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld.
- Mitchell, Tony 2006 'Blackfellas rapping, breaking and writing: A short history of Aboriginal hip hop', *Aboriginal History* 30:124–37.
- National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families 1997 *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney.
- No Bugles, No Drums* 1990, directed by John Burnett, Seven Emus Productions in association with Australian Television Network (videocassette).
- Nugent, Maria and Shino Kinoshi 2010 'Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* reviewed', *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 4(2) (special issue).
- Oliver, Pam 2006 *Empty North: The Japanese presence and Australian reactions 1860s to 1942*, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin.
- Powell, Alan 1992 *The Shadow's Edge: Australia's northern war* (2nd edn), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Pozieres* 2000, directed by Wain Fimeri, produced by Lynda House, Ronin Films (DVD).
- Pye, John 1977 *The Tiwi Islands*, JR Coleman Pty Ltd, Darwin.
- Ramsland, John and Christopher Mooney 2006 *Remembering Aboriginal Heroes: Struggle, identity and the media*, Brolga Publishing, Melbourne.
- 'Remembering Australia's Indigenous Soldiers' 2010, *Stateline WA*, ABC Television, 22 October (television program).
- Riseman, Noah 2010 'Contesting white knowledge: Yolngu stories from World War II', *Oral History Review* 37(2):170–90.
- — forthcoming *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous soldiers in the Pacific War*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE.
- Rose, Deborah Bird 1991 *Hidden Histories: Black stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Saunders, Kay 1995 'Inequalities of sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour in northern Australia during the Second World War', *Labour History* 69:131–48 (article republished in Ann McGrath and Kay Saunders with Jackie Huggins (eds), 1995 *Aboriginal Workers*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney).

- Shoemaker, Adam 2004 *Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal literature 1929–1988* (2nd edn), ANU E Press, Canberra.
- Stanner, WEH 1969 *After The Dreaming: Black and white Australians—an anthropologist's view*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney.
- Tucker, Margaret 1977 *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret Tucker*, Ure Smith, Sydney.
- van den Berg, Rosemary 2005 'Aboriginal storytelling and writing', *Altitude: An e-journal of Emerging Humanities Work* 6, [www.thealtitudejournal.com/past-issues.html](http://www.thealtitudejournal.com/past-issues.html) accessed 27 March 2012.
- Winegard, Timothy 2009 'A case study of Indigenous brothers in arms during the First World War', *Australian Army Journal* 6(1):191–206.
- Young, Warren 1982 *Minorities and the Military: A cross-national study in world perspective*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT.

Dr Noah Riseman completed his PhD in History at The University of Melbourne in 2008 and currently lectures at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. His research focuses on the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the armed forces and the links between military service, national identity and Indigenous rights.

<Noah.Riseman@acu.edu.au>