

TIMMAH BALL – On the Inside “Out”: The Architecture of Inclusion in the Diversity Economy

The Urban Interface

A pale green circle on a statutory planning map marks the point where Aboriginal heritage is likely to be contained. The mark intersects with the property parcel containing the building where I currently work in Melbourne’s central business district (CBD), formally known as Narrm or Birrarung-ga in the language of the Woiwurrung. Staring into the cadastral image, which meticulously illustrates the boundaries of ownership, carving country into parcels, the likelihood of Aboriginal culture feels strangely euphemistic. The map is explicitly fixed to the colonial creation of Melbourne, which makes the reference promising (suggesting continued cultural life in the presence of city skylines) and historical (a reminder of what was once here). If the map is honoring something that the architecture of cities has eroded to the point of invisibility, what does it mean to the white property developers who occupy decision-making powers?

I try to imagine what a radical incision would look like, where these markers of Aboriginality indicate a new map-making methodology, where Western city-making confronts what was lost and considers meaningful forms

Citation: Timmah Ball “On the Inside “Out”: The Architecture of Inclusion in the Diversity Economy” in the *Avery Review* 43 (November 2019), <http://www.averyreview.com/issues/43/on-the-inside-out>.



Planning Property Report of 2 Lonsdale Street, Victoria. © State of Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning. All or part of this property is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity. Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity are defined under the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 and include registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places and land form types that are generally regarded as more likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage.

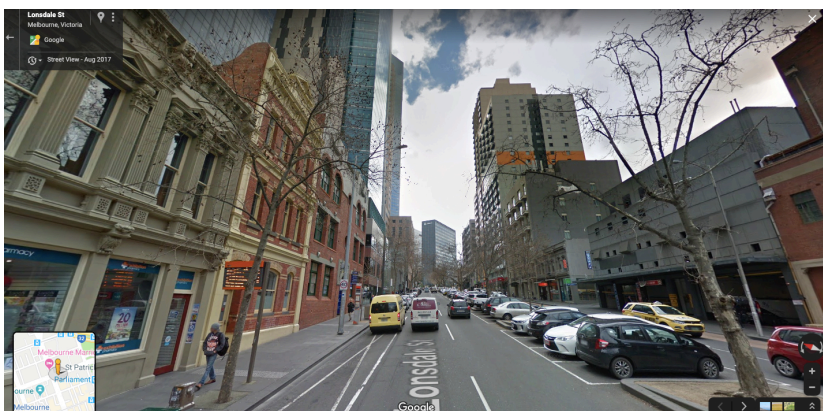
of reparation. As it stands, simply highlighting that an area is “more likely to contain” Aboriginal culture is open to interpretation. Many Aboriginal people would prefer to recognize that the continent is in its entirety an Aboriginal place where culture exists everywhere. But under Western law, traditional owner groups must claim a particular location of cultural significance under a Registered Aboriginal Party. The current system of acknowledgment is important, but it also reminds me of architectural approaches to Aboriginal design, which often lack a deeper understanding of the politics of place. Firms are quick to integrate Aboriginal culture into projects, usually in the form of public art or exterior treatments to building facades. But little recognition is given to the impacts of colonization—to what it means to build and prosper on land that was claimed without a treaty.

Writing about these complexities in the English language often feels like a double irony not dissimilar to working in an industry directly implicated in the division, zoning, sale, and reordering of land. Dividing land into the categories of “Crown” and “freehold” (the terms of a Commonwealth country) shows the extent to which discussions of land rights and Native Title are cleverly obscured.[1] And very few legal precedents favor traditional owner groups’ claims to their land. Goenpul professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes that “cities signify with every building and every street that this land is now possessed by others; signs of white possession are embedded everywhere in the landscape.”[2] In Melbourne’s CBD, Aboriginal cultural heritage exists within a planning map marking what was here, as the contemporary cityscape reaffirms what is here now. Office buildings, corporate culture, chain stores, and cafes stratify white Western capitalism, which asserts ownership within spatial systems that acknowledge the other cultural existences that quietly survive within the omnipresence of Westernization.

These urban spaces are both familiar and disorienting for those of us born in cities with the markings of Westernization and the presence of our Indigenous ancestry wrapped into each other. While Aboriginal culture does not appear in obvious ways in Lonsdale Street, Aboriginal people work here in mainstream industries attempting to fuse the Western iconography of “the city” with the known and ongoing presence of their culture. I choose to work on the intersection of these disparate spaces, a choice that remains important to me. At a time when universities, boutique design firms, and decolonial architecture trends actively desire Aboriginal culture, it feels increasingly valuable to

[1] Crown land broadly refers to all land that has not been “alienated” from the Crown (typically by way of a land title). Victorian Crown land can be either unreserved or reserved and is managed to provide environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits to the people of Victoria.

[2] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Introduction,” in *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 8.



Google Street View, Lonsdale Street, Victoria, August 2017. Map data © 2017 Google. Google Street View illustrates how cities change the presence of Indigenous cultures on land now dominated by white capitalism.

distance myself from these movements, choosing to work in mainstream planning roles. This feels grounding even as my own aspirations to contribute to the design of cities or university research projects disintegrate.

For a brief moment before I could imagine myself pursuing a career in urban planning, the Koorie Heritage Trust surfaced in Lonsdale Street among the austere office buildings where I would later work. There, the Trust proposed a major museum celebrating the culture and people of the Kulin Nations, which was almost complete when it was tragically gutted by an arson attack in 1999.

[3] While the center was reimagined and relocated to Melbourne’s prominent Federation Square, where it continues to thrive, the act is a reminder of the ongoing fragility of our existence. There is nothing to mark where the museum should have been, but its vicious disappearance exists as a ghost that only some of us see: an uncomfortable invisibility, which reflects the desire to both include and exclude our existence in the landscape. Lonsdale Street’s lost museum has increasingly come to symbolize my relationship with the architecture industry and academy in an era that wants to “include” Indigenous culture and knowledge systems without deeper reflection. Like the museum, a promising idea or Indigenous project can dissolve just as it is beginning to materialize—just as those of us invited to engage with universities and design firms are left out of these critical decision-making processes as we struggle to understand what being “included” actually means.

[3] “Projects: Koori Heritage Trust Cultural Centre,” Gregory Burgess Architects, 2003, [link](#).

Increased inclusion and interest in Aboriginal perspectives has meant that there are more First Nations people working in the industry, creating opportunities to connect and understand what this relatively new phenomenon means. Indigenous design networking events enabled me to meet a Gadigal practitioner who was working for a planning consultant just a few blocks from my own work. Our connection was an opportunity to unravel both the privileges and burdens of what was happening in our careers. While both relatively early in our practice, we were experiencing a meteoric rise in attention in the form of public panels, speaking events, and forums at major institutes and universities desiring an Indigenous perspective on design—something that seemed puzzling to our white co-workers, who were in senior roles but never offered the platforms that were bestowed to us.

As we unpacked the mix of elation and disappointment that came with the perception of being wanted, the unsettling nature of our inclusion began to reveal itself. We were becoming aware that it was possible to build a prominent role discussing our relationship to the built environment as Indigenous practitioners, in public spectacles that ultimately remained hollow. Our participation wasn’t about destabilizing a colonial profession by imagining and implementing an Indigenous design movement; we were there to make the industry’s overwhelming whiteness appear momentarily diverse. Speaking invitations from universities, design festivals, and architecture firms continued, but the interest never extended into tangible opportunities such as mentoring, tutoring, scholarships, or job offers as we watched the non-Indigenous peers we graduated with rise into senior roles.

Cultural ignorance also permeated the design industries’ curatorial decision-making, which meant that I was often asked to speak on issues that were not my business. My Ballardong ancestry was connected to communities in other regions of Australia, making it culturally and ethically unsound to

speaking about built form matters on Wurundjeri/Boon Wurrung land. These conversations needed to center traditional owners of the Kulin Nations, while my role should have been to facilitate and support their wishes through administering robust processes that would deliver tangible outcomes for Victorian Aboriginals (Koorie mob). But in a design industry quick to appear diverse, Aboriginal voices were carelessly selected by white institutions eager to perform progressiveness while remaining ignorant of the inappropriateness, and whiteness, of their choices.

The tokenism of these engagements was best captured at an event curated by the Monash University Art Design and Architecture faculty in partnership with the MPavilion, a space in Melbourne's arts precinct designed to "to foster discussion and debate about the role design, architecture, and culture have in creating cities that are livable, creative, and equitable." [4] I was invited to speak at a program titled *Queer Some Space*, which asked "how can we think about accessibility in a broader sense to be more inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community?" [5] As the participants and organizers were all white, it was immediately obvious through email correspondence that I was expected to provide an Indigenous perspective on the topic, something that I was happy to bring. But as the event unfolded, any interjection I made was met with such hostility that I understood that the interest in Aboriginal culture was minimal. It was not something that the industry could conceptualize as an opportunity to contribute to social justice initiatives. The event left my Aboriginal partner at the time with a look of exhaustion, which mirrored my own deflation. Later I would reflect on the experience in a speculative nonfiction essay called "The City We Unbuilt with Blak Design": [6]

AS I ATTEMPTED TO RECENTER THE CONVERSATION—WHICH HAD FAILED TO OPEN WITH AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY—I REALIZED THAT, FOR MANY PEOPLE, ABORIGINAL DESIGN WAS INTERESTING BUT NOT URGENT. I REMINDED THE PANEL THAT THE QUEER MOVEMENT OFTEN NEGLECTED FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE—A CUTTING IRONY GIVEN THAT IT WAS OUR LAND. I QUOTED YUGAMBEH WRITER AND ACADEMIC MADDEE CLARKE WHO WROTE AT THE TIME, "HOPEFULLY, THERE WILL EVENTUALLY BE A PUSH FOR NON-INDIGENOUS QUEER PEOPLE TO LOOK AWAY FROM MOMENTS OF US QUEER HISTORY—AND TO REFOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON THE LOCAL STRUGGLES EXPERIENCED BY INDIGENOUS QUEERS THEMSELVES." [7]

The argument seemed lost on the other panelists, who struggled to understand that Aboriginal queer people and Indigenous people in general were still disempowered in their own environment. As the discussion drew to a close, I assumed that I must have been invited to fill some sort of quota. [8]

As Yuin designer Linda Kennedy wrote in her blog, *Future Blak: Decolonizing Design in the Built Environment*, "how do we flip the power play and stop indulging in the frameworks that continue to oppress and control us?" [9] Referring to the way architecture firms and academia look for simple solutions by "sprinkling on some blakness," she articulated how these inclusionary tactics were superficial and static. [10] The industry was curious

[4] "About," MPavilion, 2019, [link](#).

[5] "MTalks: Queer Some Space Architecture and Design," MPavilion, 2018, [link](#).

[6] In the Australian context, *Blak* is a vernacular word, which Aboriginal people use to refer to themselves and to identity more generally. The c has been dropped for distance from the English language usage. Through processes of colonization and racial mixing, Aboriginal people might not physically appear as black or "blak" anymore; however, the world still describes our identity and culture.

[7] Timmah Ball, "The City We Unbuilt with Blak Design," *Blak Design Matters National Survey of Contemporary Indigenous Design*, Koori Heritage Trust, 2018.

[8] The cited passage is from Maddee Clark, "Decolonizing the Queer Movement in Australia: We Need Solidarity, not Pink-washing," NITV, 2016, [link](#).

[9] Linda Kennedy, "Sovereignty + Spatial Design," *Future Blak Blog*, 2017, [link](#).

[10] Kennedy, "Sovereignty + Spatial Design."

about Indigenous perspectives on terms that suited them, not strategies that could radically shift the frameworks that continued to marginalize us. As I began to withdraw from public platforms, it became obvious that the attention I'd experienced at events like *Queer Some Space* were belittling, attempting to lull me into the false perception of being heard. Instead I chose to bury myself in the conventions of everyday work, refusing to speak on Indigenous issues at industry events.

Refusal to participate meant that other ways of being and practicing resurfaced. Moments as simple as spending more time with family on ancestral country, building new connections with community, and forging friendships beyond professional networking quickly replaced the illusion of recognition that public events created. As scholar Audra Simpson demonstrates in her book *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, "refusal is an alternative to recognition."^[11] I began to see refusal as an alternative to the recognition that had initially been desirable. It became a method of personal validation and freedom, no longer bound to universities that curated Indigenous voices on terms that boosted their agenda.

As I refused invitations to symposiums and industry events, diversity programming continued with ecstatic energy. Another friend started describing the situation as "diversity Olympics," where institutes competed to include us in order to appear the most inclusive. Diversity was becoming a trend, as organizations and institutions understood that appearing diverse had value. As Sara Ahmed articulates in her book *On Being Included: Racial Diversity in Institutional Life*, "diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only of marketing the university but of making the university into a marketplace."^[12] Aboriginal people entered universities and other institutions that they were traditionally excluded from through the intensification of inclusion policies intended to break systemic barriers. Schemes varied from affirmative action and diversity quotas to targeted scholarships and increased funding for cultural events and activities. On the surface, institutional spaces were opening and malleable to change from our inclusion. But moving "in" often felt like we were further "out" from where we started.

The University Website

IF DIVERSITY BECOMES SOMETHING THAT IS ADDED TO ORGANIZATIONS, LIKE COLOR, THEN IT CONFIRMS THE WHITENESS OF THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY IN PLACE.^[13]

—SARA AHMED

An image of myself appeared on the Melbourne School of Design website after I graduated with a master's in urban planning. It was accompanied by an early career biography outlining my achievements, that without sounding condescending was fairly minimal. The page was created to celebrate Indigenous alumni and presented the university as a space that fostered our growth and long-term career development. When I was approached, it was flattering to feel valued as I carefully selected an image for the website, embellishing what I had

[11] Audra Simpson, "Conclusion," in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 179.

[12] Sara Ahmed, "The Language of Diversity," in *On Being Included: Racial Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 52.

[13] Ahmed, "Institutional Life," in *On Being Included*, 33.

done in the year since graduating. The immediacy of representation erased feelings of inadequacy that I was experiencing in my role within a conservative organization, which lacked career development. I was hopeful that appearing on the website also meant that the university had changed and Aboriginal students were safer in expressing their cultural identities without the stigma or challenges I had experienced. But looking back it is clear that I lacked the awareness of what my role signified. Later on, as I began to use writing to document these experiences, I would reflect on my education at the design school in a narrative nonfiction essay titled “Gillard and Guacamole.” The extract below highlights the harsh binaries in which race was conceptualized through the degree, which themselves would not change by adding profiles of Indigenous students on the website. Rereading it reminds me of how little progress has been made despite the proliferation of inclusion schemes.

I STILL REMEMBER BEING IN A SOCIAL POLICY CLASS AT UNIVERSITY WHEN A LECTURER ASKED US TO PRETEND WE WERE ABORIGINAL. MY SKIN BURNED, I COULDN'T PLAY THE GAME BUT WAS TOO SCARED TO EXPLAIN WHO I WAS, AFRAID OF THEIR SUSPICIOUS LOOKS AND SCRUTINY. SO I JUST SAT THERE WATCHING THE OTHER THIRTY STUDENTS PRETEND. A WOMAN ANNOUNCED THAT SHE WAS DOING HER FINAL ESSAY ON INDIGENOUS HOUSING. SHE WANTED TO RESEARCH HOW MINING COMPANIES BENEFIT COMMUNITY. HER UNCLE MARRIED AN ABORIGINAL WOMAN FROM ALICE SPRINGS, SO SHE HAD A REAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ISSUE. I TRIED TO PUT MY HAND UP AGAIN. I WANTED TO TELL THEM THAT I DIDN'T NEED TO PRETEND, BUT COULDN'T.[14]

The ignorance of the lecturer remains troubling and makes being profiled on the university website both hurtful and absurd. University diversity agendas remain stuck in visual representations of inclusion rather than understanding the structural changes that are needed. But the minor recognition nonetheless espoused hope, which enabled me to ignore the feeling that the image was not about me but simply a tool to make the university look good. As Ahmed demonstrates, “in the diversity world, there is a great deal of investment in images. Diversity might even appear as an image, for example in the form of the multicultural mosaic.”[15] My image on the website alongside the other Aboriginal students’ felt like a mosaic of Aboriginality that enabled the university to appear or even be diverse without having to go any deeper or do any work. As Ahmed suggests, the image of diversity is often enough. And as a website is usually the first interaction we have with an organization, the placement became a clever marketing strategy.

Inclusion on the university website marked a point where interest in Indigenous design and culture in the built environment was gathering momentum. But as opportunities appeared, they remained on the surface, something I was added to in order to “color” an organization or event, which only confirmed the whiteness that remained fixed. I was invited to join Indigenous advisory committees for university research programs that sought opportunities to

[14] Timmah Ball, “Gillard and Guacamole,” University of Iowa, International Writing program, 2016, [link](#).

[15] Ahmed, “Institutional Life,” 33.

incorporate Indigenous knowledge, while architecture firms regularly contacted me for advice on how to integrate Indigenous culture into their design tenders. These opportunities were mostly unpaid, and when they were, fees were small and my inclusion stayed on the periphery; decision making always rested with those in senior roles who were never Indigenous. As Ahmed writes, “people of color are welcomed on condition they return that hospitality by integrating into common organizational culture or by ‘being’ diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity.”^[16] My inclusion was always about integrating into an established white power structure where my identity was celebrated in design briefs or promotional material but never allowed to influence change.

[16] Ahmed, “Institutional Life,” 33.

At the start of this year, I was invited to apply for tutoring within the faculty where I completed my master’s. Email invitations go out to alumni and are notoriously competitive to obtain; however, I believed that I had a strong skill set and academic record and an important perspective to bring that the university would appreciate. Six weeks after applying for tutoring, I received an automated email notifying me that I had not been successful but thanked me for applying. The rejection elicited feelings that cut more than usual. I had applied to tutor the subject “Inclusive Cities,” believing that inclusive design should begin from an Indigenous perspective. A quick Google search identified that the subject was coordinated by a white academic, which wasn’t really surprising. And while it undoubtedly arose from a genuine need and interest to reduce racial and other inequalities in cities, the lack of representation felt unbalanced. The subject overview described how case studies and theoretical perspectives were used to highlight planning for “specific population groups like youth, aboriginals, the disabled, older persons, refugees and women.”^[17] The groups were listed as if they were distant anomalies, an opportunity for “examining the lived experience of disadvantage in the city” as the course description read. ^[18] The framing felt overly simplistic, as I worried that the representation of Aboriginal communities would be reduced to images of poverty. Students were being offered an insight into “lived experience” yet engaging an Indigenous tutor in my circumstance was not of value, and I could only hope that the subject at a minimum involved Indigenous guest speakers and tutors from other diverse backgrounds. Without these contexts, diverse groups could be interpreted as a problem to be fixed; we were disadvantaged until the city decided to include us.

[17] “Inclusive Cities (ABPL90266),” 2019, [link](#).

[18] “Inclusive Cities (ABPL90266),” [link](#).

While the origins of diversity policies may have been genuine, this revealed how it could quickly morph into an opportunity for white institutions to build research careers into the practice of including the “other.” Often remaining blindingly unaware of how this diluted the impact of what diversity should actually aspire to. Subjects like “Inclusive Cities” offered white practitioners opportunities to feel that they were contributing to change, improving cities for those of us who were described as “disadvantaged.” And while this came from a virtuous place, it also skewed the ability to address the power dynamics that led to disadvantage.

In the initial days of rejection, two things happened. I contacted the university and asked them to immediately remove my image and bio on their website, and a Facebook post by another Indigenous tutor and friend appeared. The post outlined the cessation of payment for lecture attendance by tutors in the School of Culture and Communication, which meant that they would only receive payment for delivering tutorials. Any additional preparation

work, such as engaging in the lectures given by the other academics, was to be done without remuneration. Her post outlined how “the integrity of the tutorial space was in question when lecture attendance is neither expected of tutors, nor paid.”[19] In this context my decision to stop the university from using my image felt revengeful and self-satisfying, given that it was unlikely to affect the institute’s wider problems. In a large establishment that uses images of diversity on its website—which may deflect the exploitative treatment of tutors, which included Indigenous friends, on the inside—my actions felt limited and self-aggrandizing. I signed the petition that accompanied her post, supporting tutors’ right to be appropriately paid, and remained realistic but hopeful that small acts might mean something over time.

The rejection from “Inclusive Cities” came to symbolize the complex spaces that diverse people exist within. While I felt excluded from the university, I still knew some Aboriginal people who were beginning to develop important careers on the inside. As these changes felt relatively new, I anxiously worried that my anger may diminish the work that Aboriginal people were achieving. This tension or sense of unbelonging was uncomfortably caught when a friend invited me to the conference “Black-Palestinian Solidarity: Contesting Settler Nationalisms.”[20] Given the nature of the conference, I assumed that it would be held at one of Melbourne’s smaller universities or a not-for-profit center but was surprised that it was being hosted and sponsored by the University of Melbourne. One of the sessions included “Racialized Statehood, Carceral Architecture, and Military Nationalism in Settler States,” to be chaired by the Darumbal and South Sea Islander journalist Amy McQuire whom I greatly admired. On one level the university’s willingness to enable vital discussions about architecture’s ongoing role in colonialism redeemed my criticisms. I worried that my concerns were connected to ego, which tarnished my ability to view what had happened to me rationally. But as I discussed the conference with friends from diverse racial backgrounds, feelings of ambiguity lingered. We were grateful to attend the event supported by the university at affordable ticket prices but aware of people experiencing challenges on the inside. Resolved or willing to accept the possibility that institutions contained a peculiar synergy where progress and discrimination operated simultaneously.

On some level the conference represented what Ahmed describes as “changing the perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organizations.”[21] The conference helped appease my own doubts about university institutions while remaining aware that events centered on decolonialism wouldn’t necessarily dismantle whiteness from within. These complexities are disorienting, leaving me unable to judge whether they signify a clearer pathway “in” for minority groups and whether my concerns directed at these institutes are unfair. I remain grateful for opportunities to attend events, which shift Western framings of architecture, but confused by the lack of structural change occurring on the inside—and increasingly cautious of critiquing institutions that I can also gain from, especially when these conferences may suggest the beginning of change, if only from the margins.

My image no longer exists on the university website, a decision I remain comfortable with. This act of refusal enables me to control the use of my own identity, even if its disappearance lacks the power to unsettle diversity policies, by asking that the sector do more. Moreton-Robinson writes that “the

[19] National Tertiary Education Union, “Petition for Payment for Lecture Attendance,” 2019, [link](#).

[20] “The Black-Palestinian Solidarity Conference Melbourne,” University of Melbourne, November 6, 2019–November 8, 2019, [link](#).

[21] Ahmed, “Institutional Life,” 34.

workforce can be a place of great stress and anxiety because of the added burden of being the known and knowing stranger in a space where we are both in and out of place.”[22] Caught in the cycle of inclusion, which clings to the illusion of change, I refuse participation in the most malignant of these processes. Refusal becomes a survival method in a landscape where we are invited in but are always out of place.

[22] Moreton-Robinson, “Leah’s Story: White Possession in the Workplace,” in *The White Possessive*, 99.

Writing from the Inside Out

WHEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE RAISE CONCERNS OF RACISM WITHIN THE WORKFORCE, THEY ARE MORE OFTEN THAN NOT POSITIONED AS “TROUBLEMAKERS” OR REPRESENTED AS BEING “TOO SENSITIVE.”[23]

— AILEEN MORETON-ROBINSON

Critical writing that engages with the structural whiteness in Australian architecture and academia slips onto the page with ease. This is evidence of an Indigenous writing scene that is flourishing as more Aboriginal writers expose the issues we face. Gomerioi Fulbright legal scholar and poet Alison Whittaker writes “we’re in the midst of a renaissance in First Nations literature—so why do I feel this restlessness?”[24] Whittaker’s comment captures the situation I find myself in, where opportunities to write are abundant but I’m often left restless and wondering if I could be doing more, as I slowly begin to question whether writing about architecture might be as superfluous as appearing on the panels that I continually refuse.

[23] Moreton-Robinson, “Leah’s Story,” 99.

[24] Alison Whittaker, “White Critics Don’t Know how to Deal with the Golden Age of Indigenous Stories,” the *Guardian*, March 15, 2019, [link](#).

Earlier this year I attend an In Conversation with Akala, the author of *Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire*. [25] When asked about how the book evolved, it was clear that it sprung from an urgency to address the black body in the British Empire and the enduring impact of colonization. But it was also evident that this style of writing is specifically placed on colonized bodies. If racial equality and social justice was systematically addressed, writers like Akala would be free to write about other things, to pursue other things. As Akala explained, “you never grow up wanting to write books about race, you shouldn’t have to, I wanted to be an architect or a scientist.” His feelings articulated concerns that had been growing about my own career, frustrations that I was only capable of writing criticism about the industry but lacked the skills to take on challenging roles—opportunities that might over time lead to tangible change.

[25] Natives in conversation with Akala, The Wheeler Centre, 2019, [link](#).

As I read over this essay, my confidence in the role of critical discourse is beginning to unravel. The immediate catharsis of documenting incidents that were unjust offers validation and deserves analysis, which is why I accepted the opportunity to write for the *Avery Review*. But a troubling feeling persists that I’m simply listing events that reflect the structural racism of design industries without offering solutions, partially because it’s difficult to know what real change looks like. And as I write, I am cognitive of the fact that the platform that enables me to critique Australian universities is connected to Columbia University, which I would be remiss to assume has not at some point participated in the kinds of structural whiteness that I have experienced

elsewhere. These contradictions often feel unresolvable, but, within the unease that they elicit, there is also hope.

Writing in the current social climate often feels futile, but it allows me to imagine an industry where the pale green markings on a map will eventually have transformative impacts on Aboriginal culture and people. I remain hopeful that future generations will create a new system, which dismantles the preoccupation with “letting us in” while maintaining white authority, even if such imagining comes with risk. Critical writing may affect my ability to move into the kinds of roles that would enable immediate action, but I remain optimistic that I will find a nexus between radical thought and conventional industry practice.

I exist at the very beginning of change and am conscious of the complexities that Moreton-Robinson describes. Writing about the architecture industry’s deficits has power, but it may also position me as a “troublemaker,” someone who is just “too sensitive.” If we are to imagine a map, which marks a shared future, it may take a measure of subtlety, or adherence to the current system too. Writing will contribute to this future allowing us to visualize concepts the industry is not ready to acknowledge. But as we gradually find ourselves further inside institutions, change may also come from using the “master’s tools” to create something new.[26]

[26] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1984).