

In the clamour for an Indigenous voice, true suffering is being drowned out

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price

It is hard to hear the softest of voices in a room filled with clamouring chatter. Only in silence can the quiet truly be heard. Thus, the genuine voices of Indigenous suffering are being drowned out by the virtue-signalling calls for a “voice” and “recognition”.

Indigenous recognition has become the latest virtuous fad; where on any given day in our nation you can be confronted with non-Indigenous Australians vying to have their virtues heard when they monotonously and mechanically pay their “respects to elders past, present and emerging”. Simultaneously, Australians with Indigenous heritage purport to be “proud” members of some – or a number of – tribes belonging to the fashionably termed “First Nations”.

Labor prides itself on acknowledgments to “First Nations” Aboriginal Australians and there is nothing more “virtue-signalling” than Anthony Albanese’s self-gratifying act of flanking himself in the parliamentary press room with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has made a big change to the backdrop, but is it enough when Indigenous women and children are still being victimised by domestic and family violence and sexual assault at many times the national rate.

There is a stark difference, however, between “big-noting” oneself and actually acknowledging and committing to act on the fact that Indigenous women and children are still being victimised by domestic and family violence and sexual assault at many times the national rate.

What becomes stark is the lack of “recognition” for the reality of the Indigenous voices of victims of violence and sexual abuse, which are blatantly ignored by the virtue signalling class.

There is no mention in the voice to parliament about how we as Indigenous Australians, along with the wider Australian community, are going to confront this reality and start protecting and supporting victims.

There is no mention in the Uluru Statement from the Heart how we as Indigenous Australians are going to confront the crisis of family violence and child sexual abuse.

There is no mention in treaty talks of how Aboriginal Australians are going to work to end violence and sexual abuse in their communities suffering the highest rates of DV and sexual violence.

In all of the fallout from the police shooting death of my nephew in Yuendumu, and the demands of “justice” for his death, there has never been a single demand from my family’s community for justice in response to the countless other homicides, sexual assaults and cases of horrific interpersonal violence caused by those we are related to as kin.

I sat in a courtroom two years ago to support my niece as she and my cousin, her aunty, gave evidence in her case brought against her own father for [raping and violently abusing her](#). Aside from my aunt, her aunt, my mother and my father, not once during the trial did our other family members come to her side in support of her as a victim, or to demand justice for the horrifying trauma inflicted on her by her own father. Instead, she and her aunt came under immediate threat for reporting the horror to police.

It was the perpetrator who received and continues to receive support from family. So much so, his brother took it upon himself to attack my cousin, my niece's aunt, with an axe while she worked at the primary school – simply for supporting her niece to fight for justice.

The attack was witnessed by schoolchildren. If the brother of an accused rapist and abuser took it upon themselves to attack a woman with an axe in a school in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide or Perth, it would have made national headlines. The perpetrator would have been called out, marches for women would have taken to the streets of cities and there would have been grand demands to smash the patriarchy.

But unfortunately for my cousin and my niece, they are voiceless Aboriginal women who are easily controlled and abused in communities that are out of sight and out of mind of the “virtue-signalling” class. These attacks cannot be fixed by “Welcome to Country” or elders past, present and emerging. Certainly the elders in my niece's and cousin's community did not acknowledge nor demand justice for the crimes committed against them.

My niece has had to flee to another state for fear of further violent reprisals. She has been dispossessed of her community because her own family would side with the perpetrator. Yet no excuse exists for such violence and abuse to be acceptable. Nor does any excuse exist for any person – no matter who they are – to not call out this horror, stand up for victims and let them be heard.

These raw and unpleasant truths must be dragged out of the darkness and into the light so Aboriginal women and girls – Australian citizens like my niece and cousin – might one day have their silenced voices heard.

Yet still atop of the Labor government's list of priorities for supposed betterment of our first people is recognition, treaty and – most ironically – voice.

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