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Silencing the voice of cartoonists

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Plight of asylum seekers a major focus for PEN International's forthcoming Make Space campaign

Since the 83rd PEN Congress in Lviv last October, the author and human rights lawyer Philippe Sands, who was its key-note speaker, has visited Sydney off the back of his phenomenal tracing of the main terms of international law – back to the Nuremberg trials which followed WW11 atrocities. It becomes necessary to ask: what is the state of international behaviour at the present moment that concerns PEN?

The newly elected president of English PEN, Sands, naturally raised the issue of Australia's Indigenous population and our country's sad past of mounting our isolationist White Australia Policy. It was also unsurprising that he raised the issue of Manus and Nauru – Australian acts against our obligations as a signatory to the UN declaration on the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers.

What's that got to do with PEN's mission to pursue universal freedom of expression? These Australian policies and their ramifications are central PEN business. They seek to silence comment on draconian and unnecessary detentions implemented in the name of Australia's security, and also attempt to silence the asylum seekers who are still effectively imprisoned and marooned in camps built by Australia but in territory where they are not welcome. The patronising attitude of Australia to the independent PNG as a sort of client state paid to commit Australian defiance of international law is shameful. History will record this as shameful, much as it has condemned the White Australia policy.

What should we do? The plight of asylum seekers will be a major focus for PEN International up to its centenary year 2021 – in the Make Space campaign – as it has always grappled with major world issues. Many writers are caught up in the mass migration the world is seeing. For Australia, we have a hero Behrouz Boochani who is acting out Freedom of Expression despite manifest difficulties and attempts by the Australian Government to silence him and move him on. Our duty is to support his efforts and to campaign for the repeal of these laws, along with the overblown surveillance laws that attempt to terrorise people from speaking out about detention.

We commenced our special 2018 lecture series with the PEN International Writers in Prison Chair Salil Tripathi, in conversation with the editor of the *Griffith Review*, Julianne Schultz, discussing both imprisoned writers and former colonies and their attitudes to Britain and the Commonwealth post-Brexit. In this issue, Salil writes about the oppression of writers in India. And our Free Voices event at the Sydney Writers' Festival features Peter Greste who explores how the War on Terror gave governments an excuse to use national security to clamp down on freedom of speech.

Zoë Rodriguez

Boxed in and loving it

Acclaimed cartoonist Cathy Wilcox delivered Sydney PEN's Free Voices address on the 2017 Day of the Imprisoned Writer

Cartoonist Cathy Wilcox considers whether she might be addicted to the news. Initially she thinks not. But after a minute or two reflection, she says, "Yeh, I am a news junkie."

Every morning, Cathy, the award-winning cartoonist with Fairfax, wakes up listening to ABC radio news. After coffee, she takes her miniature schnauzer Tilly for a walk around her leafy neighbourhood on Sydney's lower north shore. While Tilly sniffs her way along the pathways, Cathy mulls over the news she heard earlier.

She makes notes of ideas for cartoons on her mobile phone. Many of those notes turn into inspired, insightful narratives that give a nuanced, unexpected interpretation of the news of the day contained in a small box.

Cathy Wilcox grew up and went to school on the upper north shore where her parents still live. She says she started drawing before she knew what she was doing. "When I was about two, I found a bobby pin and scratched a little face on a bedhead. It's still there. I tended to make the best of what I could scrounge. My sister, who is six years older, had all the art supplies."

Cathy says she drew on anything. She honed her skills in the margins of school textbooks — always an eye out for squarish blank spaces. Eventually her stockbroker father started bringing home paper and note pads for her, anything one supposes to save the furniture and the walls.

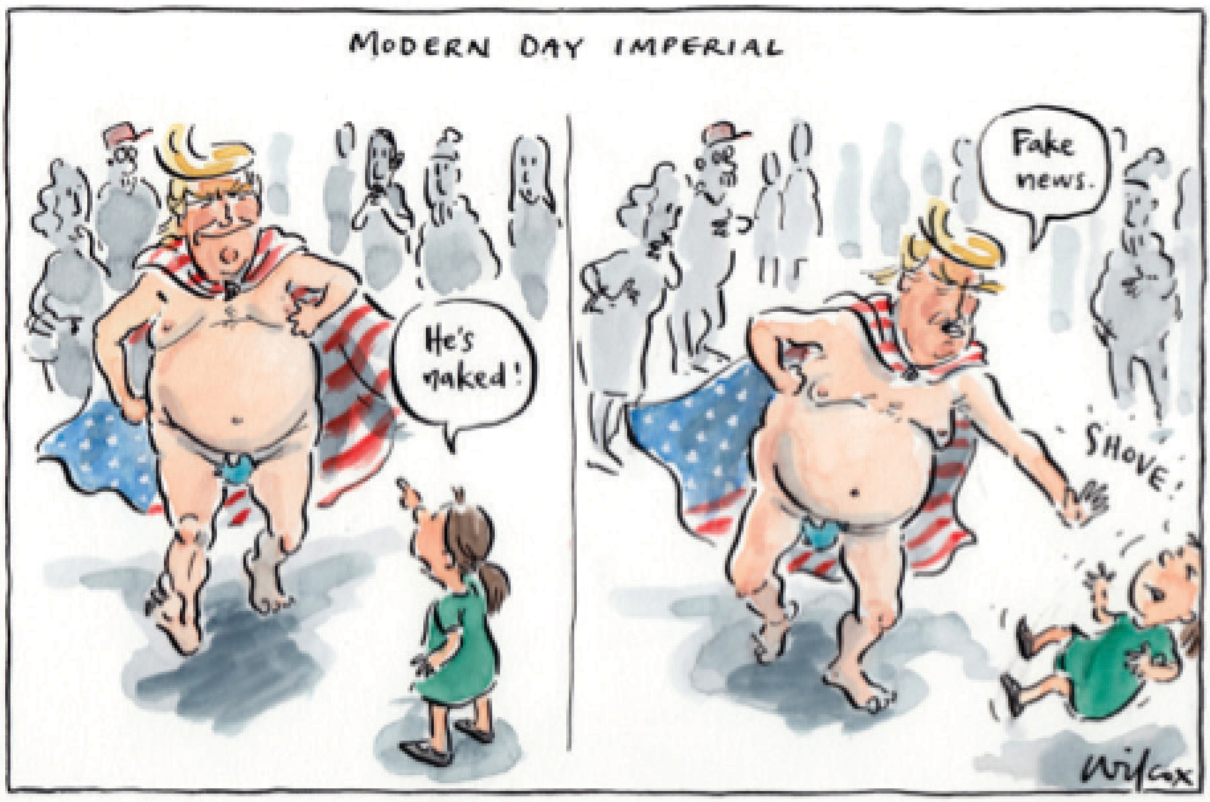
She says her mother was good at drawing and would describe things by sketching on paper. "I was always interested. I always did art at school and liked drawing people. I used to try hard to make my drawings better."

Not surprisingly, she was attracted to books with lots of illustrations and at one stage particularly fancied the drawings by Eileen Soper (*The Famous Five*) and George Brook (*The Secret Seven*) in the Enid Blyton books.

She also liked the comics in the weekend newspapers. She says her father first prompted her interest by reading the comics to her before she could read. Soon she liked to look at the pictures.

"I liked looking at *Peanuts*, thinking about how it was drawn. I wasn't much of a reader as a child; we were shamefully unliterary," she says.

Although she had no thoughts of what career she might pursue, much less art, she decided at the last minute to apply to enrol at the Sydney College of the Arts. She says she had a facility for writing and thought she might take up journalism. However, she was really focused on fine art studies, "something



that involved drawing but would engage my brain". She discovered visual communication and undertook the degree that included graphic design, industrial design, interiordesign, photography, film, video, and typography.

After she graduated in 1985, Cathy travelled to Paris because, she says, she had studied French at school and had heard much about French cartoonists. She also chose France because she wanted it to be harder than going to London, as many of her friends and acquaintances had done. "I was," she says, "ridiculously over-confident." She enrolled in a (third-year) literature course and found her French was not as advanced as it should have been. She struggled with the subject but it got her immersed in the French language and culture.

She started knocking on doors of French newspapers and magazines in Paris, hoping for cartoon and illustration work. She describes it as "a fermentation period in the cultural petri dish of Paris". But she kept hearing the refrain, "Tell her she's dreaming", and while she almost got work on *Le Monde*'s education supplement, it fell through as winter descended. At the end of 1987, she came home.

Once back in Sydney, she started the old routine of approaching magazines and newspapers, especially the section editors at Fairfax. Journalist and feature writer Michael Visontay, then editing the TV guide, gave her a few illustration jobs and by 1989, Alan Kennedy and later Philip Clark, section editors of the daily Stay In Touch column, an amusing and satirical take on the news of the day, started giving her regular cartoon-like illustration jobs.

Alan Kennedy says it was her quirky sense of humour that suited the column. "She can be ironic and subtle; she is well read and picked up immediately what was needed for that day's column and her illos are hilarious," he says.

"I loved it," Cathy adds. "It was a matter of one message in a square. It was like a gymnasium for cartoon thinking. I used to do two or three cartoons a day; I could be as lateral as I liked."

She describes it as a golden era that saw the emerging work of great cartoonists and illustrators like Matthew Martin and Reg Lynch. "They really played around with the format in a way that loosened it up and made it fun."

Nowadays she continues to cock a "sceptical eyebrow and poke her inky nib" at pretty much any subject you care to name. She regularly draws socio-political cartoons for Fairfax. She won the 2013 Walkley for Best Cartoon for her *Sydney Morning Herald* illustration "Kevin cleans up". The cartoon depicted the fallout of the Labor leadership contest, specifically the overarching Rudd/Gillard tension.

She has received several Stanley Awards organised by the Australian Cartoonists Association, a Walkley Award in 2009 and the National Museum of Australia's Political Cartooning award. Cathy has also published two collections of cartoons, *Throw Away Lines* and *The Bad Guys are Winning*, and drawn for many other

publications including children's books such as the *I Am Jack* series, the *Ella Kazoo* series, and *Enzo the Wonderfish* (which she also wrote) – she has twice won the Australian Children's Book Council of Australia's 'Picture Book of the Year' award.

She says she has two stages in her development of a cartoon. "One might think there is a formula but I try to define what is not the cliché, thinking all the time of an 'this is like that' analogy."

With her Trump 'fake news' cartoon, she fastened on Hans Christian Andersen's children's story *The Emperor's New Clothes* with its message of a made up notion that people have been induced into believing is real.

"I get a jolt of satisfaction when it works," she says, adding that her use of the Twitter logo to cover his genitals suggested Trump's onanistic, that is self-congratulatory and self-absorbed, approach.

She seeks as many narrative layers as possible. When working on her recent cartoon published at the height of the Barnaby Joyce furore, entitle Barnaby does the laundry, she says she was looking for the grey area in the continuing news saga of Joyce's private life, much of it prompted by Joyce himself.

She says she extended the notion of 'hanging out one's dirty laundry' to the idea of 'hanging them out to dry', referring to the people in Joyce's life whose privacy had been violated. Plus there was the issue of possible misuse of public funds.

Peter Fray, former editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and now Professor of Journalism Professional Practice at the University of Technology, Sydney, has been a keen observer of Cathy's work for over 20 years. He says it has been wonderful to see how she has grown and matured as a cartoonist.

"She has gotten a bit tougher, darker but has maintained her wry and amusing take on the world and tells a great joke. She has great observational skills; her people come off the page," he says. "I have great admiration of her longevity, her sense of like, her sense of humour. Long may she reign."

Academics Robert Phiddian and Haydon Manning, of Flinders University, who describe themselves as cartoon scholars, see cartoonists as providing both comic commentary on politicians and darker and more serious satire. "Their capacity to tell truth to power, demonstrate that the kings and queens of political life have no clothes, and to entertain the public remains undiminished. While this particular mode of satirical representation may be in retreat before the forces of digital media, graphic satire is not going to die while it has such fit meat to feed on," they say in a piece for *The Conversation*.

Sandra Symons

When cartoonists are in the line of fire

In her Free Voices address on the 2017 Day of The Imprisoned Writer, award-winning cartoonist Cathy Wilcox looked at the ways in which cartoonists suffer and are punished, imprisoned and even killed for speaking out and drawing truths that the powerful – or fanatical - would rather not be seen.

Since the famous Danish 'Mohammed' cartoons (the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 editorial cartoons in 2005 claiming they were an attempt to contribute to the debate about criticism of Islam and self-censorship) prompted a discussion of where and whether to set the limits of free speech, and the cold-blooded killing of 14 people, including several cartoonists, at the French satirical weekly newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* made us all the more aware of the potent danger of funny drawings, we have seen increasing examples of how seriously some people take cartoons, and the lengths to which they'd go to silence their creators.

Let me begin by giving you some international examples of cartoonists currently or recently in trouble. These cartoonists are victims of a kind of state censorship – their governments are the ones with an interest in keeping them silent.

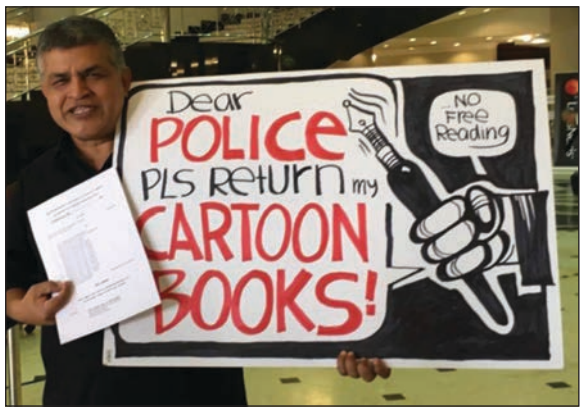
The Cartoonists Rights Network International (CRNI) has helpfully supplied the following information.

Firstly, there's Zunar, from Malaysia, whose cartoon book *Sapuman: Man of Steal* has been banned since October 2017 because authorities declared it "detrimental to public order".

According to Zunar: "This is just one of the long list of harassments and intimidation by the BN (National Front) government. Since 2009, my office in Kuala Lumpur has been raided a few times and thousands of my cartoon books have been confiscated. The printers, vendors, and bookstores around the country that carry my cartoon works were also raided. I was arrested several times and am now facing nine charges under The Sedition Act. The government also bans me from traveling abroad since June 2016."

Turkish cartoonist Musa Kart was one of 11 journalists from Turkey's *Cumhuriyet* newspaper to be arrested under President Erdogan's crackdown on dissenting voices. They were held for nine months without trial.

His trial was held in September and he has been released pending sentencing .



Top: Malaysian cartoonist Zunar makes his protest public. His legal challenge to the ban on his books will be heard in June.

Above: Turkish cartoonist Musa Kart's statement at his opening trial in July 2017: To accuse cartoonists of aiding and abetting a terrorist organisation and to punish them with a heavy prison sentence is not only a great misdeed to cartoonists but to this country itself. In actual fact, caricature is synonymous with critical thought.

Ali Dorani, a 25-year-old Iranian asylum seeker on Manus Island, who goes by the name of Eaten Fish, has drawn harrowing cartoons of his experiences in detention.

My colleagues and I, in particular Andrew Marlton (First Dog on the Moon), with the support of The

Cartoonists Rights Network International (CRNI), sought to raise awareness of the plight of Ali Dorani, a 25-year-old Iranian asylum seeker on Manus Island, who goes by the name of Eaten Fish. He drew harrowing cartoons of his experiences in detention. He suffered rape and abuse both prior to his fleeing Iran and since being in detention and is beset with mental illness, requiring treatment.

As Marianna Giannacopoulos says in *Overland* magazine: "Eaten Fish draws imminent harm: his artwork exposes for all who care to look the violence that will occur in conditions of detainment and secrecy. In doing this, his art also historicises the camp by, for example, embedding into his drawings the headstones of those who have already suffered harm to the point of death."

In an update to his story, Ali Dorani thanked supporters after being granted artist's residency through International Cities of Refuge, in a Norwegian city. "He reports that people have been unbelievably kind to him, and that his world is changing quickly," according to CRNI.

Most recently, we have heard of Ramon Esono Ebalé from Equatorial Guinea, an outspoken graphic novelist and cartoonist, who was until recently a resident of Paraguay. He was arrested in the streets of Guinea and jailed for months because he draws cartoons critical of the country's ruling family, but they held him on "unspecified", or trumped up, charges of money-laundering and currency counterfeiting. He has just recently been awarded CRNI's Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning.

While he has been cleared of charges he remains in prison despite being slated for release on 2 March.

What do these examples indicate to us? That people in power having something to hide, that they see cartoonists as powerful in exposing their deception or undermining their power base.

Cartooning for Peace

In 1991-92, the French cartoonist Jean Plantureux (Plantu), of *Le Monde*, hatched an idea along with Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the UN.

In 1991 Plantu met Yasser Arafat of Palestine and in 1992 he met Shimon Pérès, of Israel, and had them successively sign the same cartoon. For the first time, the signatures from both sides of the Middle East conflict appeared on the same document, one year before the Oslo agreements. The meeting was filmed. Reuters described the meeting as "cartoon diplomacy".

Later, the bloody reactions to the publication of the Mohammed cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* led to the founding meeting of 12 international cartoonists

Outspoken graphic novelist and cartoonist Ramon Esono Ebalé, from Equatorial Guinea, goaled for months because of his cartoons critical of the country's ruling family.

in October 2006, called together by Kofi Annan and Plantu, for a seminar on "Unlearning Intolerance".

Thus Cartooning for Peace was founded, an international network of committed media cartoonists who aim to fight with humour for the respect of cultures and freedoms.

As a member of the network, I have had the opportunity to meet cartoonists from many different countries, cultures and conditions. Some have told of more subtle examples of cartoonists navigating their boundaries. Sometimes they – and their governments – know better than to be obvious in their opposition.

I met two Iranian cartoonists some years ago and I wanted to know how they got away with making strong statements in their work while the threat of suppression loomed. They explained to me their mastery of "deniable ambiguity" – they could say a lot in a cartoon that was purely visual – but they could also deny that was what they meant when called into question, as interpretation is up to the beholder. Ironically, working within constraints is sometimes what makes our cartoons more powerful, as we find ingenious ways to say the unsayable.

Another cartoonist, an Algerian who now lives and works in France, spoke on a panel about how he was quite regularly arrested and hauled before a judge for offending the president or the military. He would even spend the odd week in prison, but would always be allowed back to his job. In this way, he acknowledged, the authorities could be seen to be taking action, but not alarming the public by definitively removing a key indicator of the freedom of their society: the publication of cheeky cartoons in their newspapers.

The cartoonist, when praised by his freer European colleagues for being so brave to go through what he did, declared that he didn't want to be thought of as brave – he just wanted to be free to have fun, like we did!

The Danish cartoons

Cartoons have attracted controversy since caricaturist Charles Philippon drew King Louis Philippe as a pear. Propaganda drawings of perceived enemies, stereotypes of tyrants, rude depictions of clerics in humiliating positions, silly caricatures of my scripture teacher – they have always sought to push boundaries and transgress society's niceties.

Before the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, the Mohammed cartoons were the most obvious reference point for cartoonists discussing their free speech. They were commissioned initially as an experiment to see the degree to which professional illustrators felt threatened. The culture editor was interested in the idea and wrote to the 42 members of the newspaper illustrators' union asking them to draw their interpretations of Mohammad.

Fifteen illustrators responded. Publication of their work led to protests around the world, including violent demonstrations and riots in some Muslim countries. However, it triggered a discussion about freedom of expression regarding religion, in a notionally secular society.

Among cartoonists at international gatherings I attended, there was a fair spectrum of views between those from secular western countries that don't recognise blasphemy as a legitimate offense, and those from countries where the place of religion in government and society is dominant so cartoonists would tread more cautiously around it, if not out of respect for the religion, then out of care for their lives. And there were those who declared: you just shouldn't touch religion.

What bothered me was this – it appeared there was no middle ground between believing certain criticisms can be made of Mohammed and his teaching, using the standard cartoonist vernacular of a depiction of the character in question, amidst the ad absurdum extension of his logic and the notion that the mere depiction of this prophet is blasphemous and punishable, potentially by death.

In this case, a discussion of the rights and wrongs of the cartoon, its quality of artistry, or the validity or persuasiveness of its point is of no use, since the assessment of blasphemy is absolute.

This means that any attempt at nuanced criticism of the sacred must steer carefully around boundaries that don't exist in secular society in order to avoid the charge of provocation. Or put another way, I must refrain from offending your god, whether I believe in it or not.

At one conference I attended, a young Moroccan cartoonist declared that "of course the Danish cartoonists should not have drawn what they drew, as they knew it would all blow up!". Thus all responsibility for consequences was placed with the cartoonists.

To me, this is unsatisfactory, as I would like to be able to separate the criticism of a cartoon on its own merits from a charge of blasphemy. I would like room for discussion over whether provocation or shock value is a good enough justification for a cartoon. Was the purpose noble or base, illuminating or destructive? Did it seek to expose the hypocrisy in a way that might persuade the unconverted, or just galvanise opposing sides?

Still, even these things don't reduce a cartoon to an assessable point of whether "punishment was or was not warranted". A cartoonist lives in society and is subject to the laws of that society regarding, say, incitement to

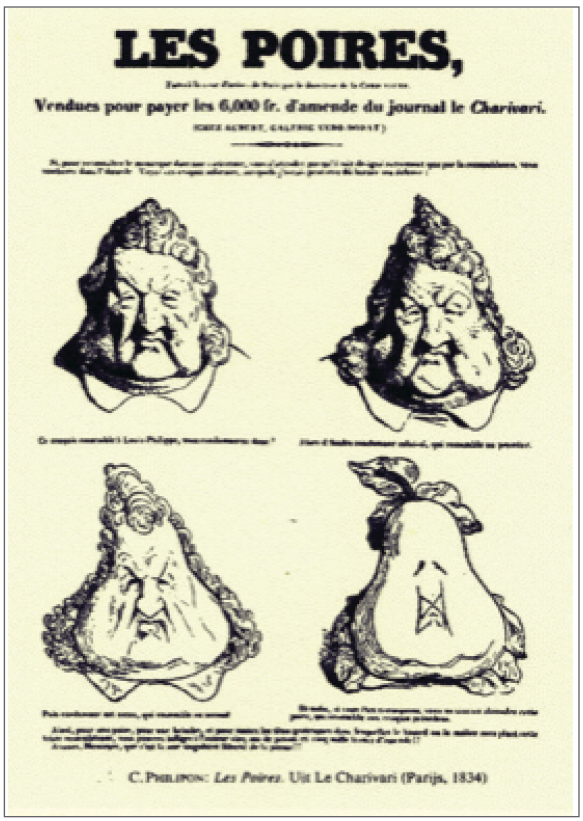
violence. Offending someone's extremely held beliefs is one thing; responding violently to provocation is another, and no cartoon, drawing, scrawl, or scribble, no matter how offensive you find it, justifies a violent response.

I would like to have been able to say that about the Danish cartoons, as I could in the case of, say, Bill Leak's infamous Indigenous father and son cartoon "I see what he was trying to say, but the point didn't stand up to scrutiny." Instead, one had to be on the side of the mediocre cartoons to not be on the side of the terrorists!

The *Charlie Hebdo* attack

The *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris in 2015 brought the power and danger of cartoons to our consciousness in a way the Danish cartoons had not. This felt much more like "us", probably because the French and their culture of comics and satirical magazines are much more familiar to us than the Danish press.

It affected me personally. I had lived in France, been a disciple of French cartooning since my college days and only the year before the attack, I'd attended a Cartooning for Peace conference where I got to know Bernard Verlhac, known as Tignous, who was one of the cartoonists killed.



The period 1830–1832 witnessed a remarkable series of cultural and political milestones in France. In 1830, a revolution overturned one monarchy, only to replace it with another. In 1831, Charles Philippon's caricature of Louis-Philippe, the new monarch, as a pear achieved extraordinary popularity. Drawn on walls from one end of France to another, the pear caricature became a national obsession.

I spent the day following the attack talking to radio and TV, writing a piece for the newspaper and generally intellectualising the whole event. It wasn't until the evening that it sank in in an emotional way. "They were killed for doing what I do."

Thirty years ago, while living in Paris, when I told people drawing was my thing, they would point me in the direction of the various "grands" of the cartooning world. There was the gentle social observation of the bourgeoisie by Sempé, the wicked skewering of the intellectual classes by Claire Bretécher, political satirist Plantu, and the rabid political satire of the satirical weekly newspapers *Canard Enchainée* and *Charlie Hebdo*. And there was the vast array of comic book art for all ages. You didn't have to like them all or agree with them but they were part of their cultural heritage.

Ten years ago, while attending a cartoonist conference in France and having established a career of my own as a political cartoonist, I was struck by how differently the French treated and regarded their cartoonists. There would be media with TV, radio and newspaper interviews, and a public keenness to attend talks and exhibitions far greater than we could ever drum up at home. French kids would be brought along by their parents to ask questions, as if learning about cartoons were a vital part of their education. And it is.

In comparison, it always felt like we were lesser creatures back home – an amusing sideshow, but not a serious part of the public discourse.

I think the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, and the international politics of free speech, has changed that. We're no longer the affable larrikins or clowns. Perhaps seeing our own kind pay such a price made us take ourselves more seriously – or as the world became more serious, and our jobs more rare, we found ourselves obliged to justify our existence and consider the power of what we do.

Charlie Hebdo was again a case of religious limits to freedom of expression with the sensitivities of a fanatical religious minority justifying violent retribution in a secular majority country.

Navigating identity politics

How we navigate these various sensitivities – be they religious, racial, cultural or other diversity – has become the minefield of our time, for cartoonists as well as writers.

We can find ourselves as easily on either side of an argument depending on whether we identify with the minority or are comfortable with the idea that they don't enjoy the support of our society in general.

I feel I need a run-up and a clear awareness of where the exits are before I go anywhere near identity politics. But I watch how it operates, and how it occasionally consumes the unwary, including some of my colleagues, and I exercise extreme caution. There but for the grace of God. It could be my turn any day. Today? This is about the fraught and febrile area of social or self-censorship.

We're living in a time of "culture wars". Interestingly, this can seem to be waged more virulently from one side against a perceived enemy, resembling more the social politics of Britain and the US than our own. But it keeps

columnists and commentators from the Murdoch stable gainfully employed, so we are left to navigate our way around real or confected outrage.

I have learned the value of suspended judgment. Refraining from buying in to conflict is the new Pilates work-out. There has never been a more exciting time to self-censor.

Yassmin Abdel-Magied and her fateful and outspoken Anzac day social media post (that many believed diminished the important significance of Anzac Day) is a case in point. I theorise that the attack on Ms Abdel-Magied was, at least in part, pay-back for what conservatives felt were her many attacks on their "comfortable white" privilege – their right to be who they had always been and assume what they had always assumed.

The Bill Leak/18C cartoon saga (when the cartoonist was investigated by the Human Rights Commission for breaching section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act after publication of his cartoon that depicted an Aboriginal man holding a beer can and was unable to remember his son's name) was not far behind in stoking this resentment, and the wounds were still fresh.

Abdel-Magied was made to experience the "other end of the pool" regarding her own dramatic denunciation of cultural misappropriation a year before, when she walked out of author Lionel Shriver's Brisbane Writers Festival keynote speech, offended that the author would dare to write from the perspective of a less privileged character. Those of us from Shriver's generation (and privilege) pondered this question with some discomfort as we considered all the pieces of culture we had unquestioningly grown up with which would, in retrospect, be deemed unacceptable by the new cultural adjudicators.

Thus, Abdel-Magied's Anzac posting ("Lest we forget: Manus, Nauru, Syria Palestine...") was a flashpoint opportunity for telling this Sharia-defending-minority-warrior that she dare not offend our sacred beliefs with offensive disingenuity. Suddenly, the great defenders of free speech were the ones ready to punish the blasphemer.

Of course, Leak was entitled to draw his cartoon and I defended his freedom to draw cartoons that have the potential to offend. Considered in the light of our current hyper-sensitivity to offence, the wording of 18C including "offend and insult" is perhaps onerous, especially with regard to satire and cartoons. Fortunately we artists are protected by 18D! Am I ready to die on a hill for the right to offend and insult somebody because of their race? I find it hard to be moved to fight. But this might all look very different in the light of a more censorious regime, and we need to remember that the right to express dissent applies equally to those we disagree with.

Bill Leak had previously faced death threats from Islamist fanatics, such that he actually had to move house, so he was probably in no frame of mind to be nice about offense.

World Press Freedom Day, Jakarta 2017

Thanks to my connection with Cartooning for Peace, and again because the work of cartoonists and artists is now being seen within the wider scope of press freedom, I was invited by UNESCO to participate in the World Press Freedom Day conference in Jakarta in May 2017. Specifically, my commission was to "draw the gist of the talks".

This was a great opportunity to step away from Australian politics and to see how the world is dealing with the phenomena of fake news, hate speech, rampant manipulation of social media, dangers and risks for practitioners of journalism, photography, film-making, art and so on.

Most interestingly for me, it was a chance to listen to discussions across a wide range of perspectives regarding where the responsibility for the protection of journalistic and artistic freedom lies.

The rise of hate speech, fake news and the threats to traditional news media are global concerns. Most interesting was the juxtaposition of the whole theme of Press Freedom in a country still boasting of being a secular democracy yet where there is rising influence of religious authority. That week, the Christian ex-mayor of Jakarta was being handed his sentence for blasphemy after widespread Muslim protest against him during the mayoral election campaign.

I was prepared to hear how this could be handled, how they viewed the rights of artists under such a government. There were proud statements from representatives of Indonesia, Bangladesh and other non-western countries about how much they love and respect artists, and how much freedom theirs enjoy. This was politely countered by an expat Bangladeshi film-maker, who said, "This is a wonderful picture you paint – if only it was not completely unlike the reality...". He went on to detail his own experience of the state-sanctioned restrictions in place.

During one discussion, after hearing an Indonesian Ministry of Culture representative speak proudly of new laws in place to protect and promote artistic freedom, I posed a question: "Is it possible to have artistic freedom while there are blasphemy laws in place?" After some hesitation, the government representative admitted that laws to punish those who would take punishing blasphemy into their own hands – be they clerics or fanatical mobs – had not been passed.

The other panelists answered my question, unequivocally. This protection, such as it is, is inadequate. So long as there is tacit approval or permission from the state for vigilantism or civilian enforcement, the artist or writer is not safe.

So there it is. It turns out that leadership and strong, independent governance is important.

Trump

I could do a whole talk on Trump, but I think there's already a great deal that's been said, and with greater expertise – I note Justin Gleeson's Free Voices address at the 2017 Sydney Writers Festival explored the very serious side of the Trump era.

I won't deny that the cartoonist experiences a special kind of glee when a public character emerges on the scene offering such a rich resource of material with which to work. We have all had, and continue to have, our fun with Tony Abbott, while exposing his ignoble motivations.

But the thing about Trump, as we all know, is that what

Yassmin Abdel-Magied's outspoken Anzac day social media post fuelled payback comment seemingly for what conservatives felt were her many attacks on their "comfortable white" privilege – their right to be who they had always been and assume what they had always assumed.

he does is no game, and we would be foolhardy not to take his actions and utterances seriously in what they seek to do while looking out for those whose interests he serves. The power and abuse of social media is still greater than we can quantify, and we do well to be especially sceptical.

I don't believe I have lived through an era before where truth and facts have been so comprehensively devalued and undermined – and with them the credibility of the news media. America has effectively been bamboozled into an abusive relationship with a narcissist who seeks to gaslight and confuse the public such that they no longer know what or who to believe.

Therefore I believe it is the job of cartoonists to remember, while we make fun of the absurdity of Trump's antics, to maintain the mindset that 'this is not normal', and it's a long way from harmless. We in Australia have never been so attentive to the goings on in American politics, because we can see it affecting the whole world, and its antecedents in history, and we can see its tricks being willingly appropriated by some of our more cynical politicians.

The local situation

Finally, I'd like to talk about the situation in Australia. It would be easy to point a finger at all the awful abuses of freedom elsewhere and assume that we have it all worked out here. Of course, we only need to look at how the government has controlled and limited access to and reporting about this country's offshore detention, to know that it's relatively easy to curtail freedom where there's sufficient will on both sides of politics.

We have long been aware of the various commercial interests juggling for control of our media, and the undermining of our public broadcaster, to know that a free press can never be assumed.

When Gina Rinehart held a majority stake in Fairfax, I took every opportunity to draw cartoons critical of her various mining conflicts of interest, just to make sure there was no editorial power being exerted. A droll colleague used to call these my "letters of resignation".

At Fairfax, I have enjoyed what I consider to be enormous freedom, occasionally having a cartoon questioned for legality or taste, and extremely rarely having them denied publication. I joke that I've been there for so long that I know where the boundaries are with my eyes closed.

I also receive the occasional cranky letter – often addressed to "Mr Wilcox", and I sometimes have to explain myself to unhappy members of the clergy who feel I'm sometimes a bit mean to the Catholics.

However, the area of most contention, throughout my 27-odd years and particularly since 9/11, has been Middle Eastern politics. This is a universally shared experience, when speaking to cartoonists from other countries. Any cartoon referring to Israelis and Palestinians must be parsed and questioned, lest it might be seen to unfairly criticise Israel.

If a cartoon makes it into the paper, it will receive letters or the editor will receive phone calls from a well-organised lobby, letters and rights of reply will need to be published, the "record corrected" and occasionally the cartoonist in question will be asked to apologise and agree to have a "chat" and be educated as to the rights, wrongs and "facts" of the situation, perhaps including a visit to the Jewish Museum.

As I say, I have a keen sense of where the boundaries lie in my newspaper, I am accorded a great deal of trust and I will always argue to publish a cartoon where I stand by what I'm saying in it. The other thing is, I've often worked for two mastheads at once, so when the one paper has said no, I've given it to the other to run. No problems! Ultimately it is my editor's choice, but a good cartoon will find a way to be seen.

Cartoonists in Australia don't generally face the kinds of threats affecting some of our less-free international colleagues. The biggest challenge for cartoonists here is to retain a job in an ever-shrinking traditional media landscape. Assuming you have a job, the next biggest challenge is maintaining your independence of voice from commercial, political, religious and social pressure.

Without it, there is no freedom to fight for.

Silencing of women's voices leads to impoverished literature

The denial of fundamental human freedoms to millions of women, such as the right to literacy and education, equality, participation in political discourse as well as vilification of their ideas and scorn of their bodies is extreme. Victim-blaming also has a silencing effect on women, as it can lead to self-censorship as a way to cope and survive. At its 2017 Congress, PEN International tabled and passed unanimously the PEN Women's Manifesto as a public statement of its commitment to work towards a world where women and girls can express themselves safely, fully and freely.

The Women's Manifesto has been written in accordance with the ideals of the PEN Charter that calls for one humanity living in peace and equality. It acknowledges the important work undertaken for 25 years by the PEN International Women Writers Committee.

PEN International president and writer Jennifer Clement said: "In the manifold varieties of violence – from murder and domestic violence, to stolen girls who are sold and trafficked, to female students at universities who are rated and slut shamed on social media – one common result is to silence the voices of women and hamper the transmission of their words and stories leaving unfilled pages and impoverished literatures. This manifesto is our commitment, as the world's largest writers' association, to achieve gender equality."

The historical lack of freedoms for women and girls has almost always been defended by reference to culture, religion and tradition. These arguments underscore that few groups have suffered greater violations of human rights in the name of culture than women. Women are killed every day because they write or speak out.

In a truly equal world, pledging to uphold the PEN Charter protects the right to freedom of expression for women and acknowledges that women and girls need to be witnesses of their own lives. However, the use of culture, religion and tradition as the defence for keeping women silent as well as the way in which violence against women is a form of censorship needs to be both acknowledged and addressed.

The first and founding principle of PEN International's Charter asserts that "literature knows no frontiers". These frontiers were traditionally thought of as borders between countries and peoples. For many women in the world – and for almost every woman until relatively recently – the first and the last and perhaps the most powerful frontier was the door of the house she lived in: her parents' or her husband's home.

PEN International president Jennifer Clement

For women to have free speech, the right to read, the right to write, they need to have the right to roam physically, socially and intellectually. There are few social systems that do not regard with hostility a woman who walks by herself.

PEN believes that violence against women, in all its many forms, both within the walls of a home or in the public sphere, creates dangerous forms of censorship.

Across the globe, culture, religion and tradition are repeatedly valued above human rights and are used as arguments to encourage or defend harm against women and girls.

PEN International believes that the act of silencing people is to deny their existence. It's a kind of death. Humanity is both wanting and bereft without the full and free expression of women's creativity and knowledge.

PEN endorses the following principles

1. NON-VIOLENCE
End violence against women and girls in all of its forms including legal, physical, sexual, psychological, verbal and digital; promote a non-discriminatory, safe and enabling environment for women; and ensure that all gender-based violence is comprehensively investigated and punished and compensation provided for victims.

2. SAFETY
Protect women writers and journalists and combat impunity for violent acts and harassment committed against women writers and journalists in the world and online.

3. EDUCATION
Eliminate gender disparity at all levels of education by promoting full access to quality education for all women and girls and ensuring that women can fully exercise their education rights to read and write.

4. EQUALITY
Ensure that women are accorded equality with men before the law, condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and take all necessary steps to eliminate discrimination and ensure full equality of all people through the development and advancement of women writers.

5. ACCESS
Ensure that women are given the same access to the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to enable the full and free participation and public recognition of women in all media and across the spectrum of literary forms. Additionally, ensure equal access for women and girls to all forms of media as a means of freedom of expression.

6. PARITY
Promote the equal economic participation of women writers and ensure that women writers and journalists are employed and paid on equal terms to men without any discrimination.

Gender equality essential for free expression to be reality

Margie Orford, former PEN South Africa President and current PEN South Africa and PEN International Board Member, was on the Advisory Committee that drafted the Women's Manifesto. She spoke with PEN South Africa President Nadia Davids about the genesis of the Women's Manifesto, what the reception to it has been like and more.

Nadia Davids: Congratulations on the Women's Manifesto being passed at PEN! An historic moment. Can you tell us a little about its genesis.

Margie Orford: Jennifer Clement, the current president of PEN International, is the first woman to hold that position. Women and their stories, women and the violence they face, violence as a form of gendered censorship has been a central to her writing and her work with PEN Mexico as they have to my writing and my work in South Africa.

The Women's Manifesto grew out of the conviction – one that is widely shared across the global network of PEN – that gender equality is not only essential for free expression to be a reality but that the vitality and beauty of literature is diminished if women's stories are not told. Women are silenced not only by laws but by custom, religion and culture too. The ties that bind women's tongues are often so intimate that they are difficult to see. The Women's Manifesto is a way to address that complexity. These issues are outlined in the preamble to the Manifesto – the motivation and explanation – that was put before the PEN International Assembly at the Congress in Ukraine in 2017.

The Women Writers' Committee has worked tirelessly since its inception to champion women writers and to address the deep fault lines of discrimination and – too often violence – that women who write and speak face in both their personal and professional lives. The members of the Women Writers Committee, drawn from PEN centres on all the continents, helped draft and guide this Manifesto, as did the wonderful Advisory Committee who gave the collective input that was so vital in ensuring that this Women's Manifesto was passed unanimously.

Nadia Davids: It's a document that calls for systemic change but deliberately avoids the language of policy-makers. Why is this?

Margie Orford: We are writers. Language – its power, resilience and beauty – is the material from which we fashion our dreams and our political ambition. We wanted something that both inspired and set out clear and pragmatic goals. It is easy to write with grace when one knows what one wants, that is one thing. The other is that this document, like all PEN documents, needs to travel across each and every linguistic frontier. It is being translated into the 'official' PEN languages – French, Spanish, English – and also into the many different languages used by writers around the world. Poetic language crosses frontiers and it dissolves them too because even if the languages vary the spirit is carried across by poetry.

Margie Orford (l) discussed the Women's Manifesto with Nadia Davids (r)

The language – the jargon – of policy makers goes in and out of fashion but embedded in the Women's Manifesto is a deep commitment to human rights and equality and a belief in the uniqueness and value of each and every person.

Nadia Davids: The response at this year's PEN's Congress in Lviv was a heartening, unanimous and resounding 'yes' to the Women's Manifesto as an adopted resolution. It was a wonderfully moving moment to witness. I know it was the result of months of careful crafting and consultation and working to find a language that was both inclusive and inspiring, so I imagine you must have been utterly elated?

Margie Orford: I was so thrilled I cried. I felt that the unequivocal endorsement of the Women's Manifesto by PEN Centres from around the world – so many languages, religious and ethnic backgrounds, histories – countered the frightening resurgence of misogyny and racism that characterises so much of contemporary politics and political discourse. It was wonderful to see so many men vote for this Women's Manifesto and for a reassertion of the importance of feminism and equality.

PEN International has worked over the last few years to ensure that free speech is a reality for all people and the Women's Manifesto builds on this. There was the wonderful Girona Manifesto on Linguistic Rights that was passed some years ago. This has proved to be a vital tool for minority linguistic groups – for example Kurdish and Uighur speakers – and for the people of Tibet who face sustained persecution and the erasure of Tibetan culture. As important is the Resolution on anti-LGBTQI legislation passed in 2014 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Nadia Davids: Speaking of language, one of the queries from the South African discussion around the Manifesto was about the use of the word 'women' as opposed to 'womyn' or 'womxn' and that the chosen word might read as trans-exclusionary. What are your thoughts about this?

Margie Orford: The Women's Manifesto – like all PEN International's documents – goes into a multiplicity of languages. There are two key elements to this question. The first is practical and, in a way, technical, and is to do with the global dominance of English. English is one of the very few languages in the world where the word 'woman' is a variant of the word 'man' thus making the play on the vowels in 'womyn' and 'womxn' work towards destabilising or questioning the category or concept of 'woman'. In most languages this does not work at all. In Catalan, for example, woman is 'dona' and man is 'home'. In Turkish woman is 'kadin' and man is 'adam.' In isiXhosa woman is 'umfazi' and man is 'ndoda'. The examples are endless and in PEN's other official languages – French and Spanish – we have 'femme' and 'homme' or 'mujer' and 'hombre'. So the current usage of 'womyn' or 'womxn' would not carry into other languages. That said, the Manifesto has been drafted with great care to be inclusive and welcoming to all women. It is also there as a powerful tool to challenge patriarchal power structures and the narrow and confining definitions of gender and speech that go with that.

Nadia Davids: There have been terrific and concrete responses from outside of PEN. Can you tell us a little bit about those?

Margie Orford: The Women's Manifesto has been welcomed by publishers, writers and activists. It can and will be both a catalyst for action to expand whose voices we hear and how and a focus for those of us who are working towards inclusivity and diversity

The Manifesto has already been translated into Finnish, Spanish, Esperanto, Turkish, Italian and Arabic to mention but a few – we get translations sent in all the time and it is wonderful to see it. I am so looking forward to having it translated into all of South Africa's national languages too.

Nadia Davids: What does the committee plan to do with the Manifesto?

Margie Orford: The first thing to be done is the translation work – to have this manifesto in as many languages as possible so that women writers have this to hand if they face discrimination or silencing or the outright violence that so many outspoken women face. We are looking at how to ensure that gender equity and non-violence is guaranteed in all PEN Centres.

Digital media is powerful means of fulfilling fundamental right of freedom of expression

The promise of digital media as a means of fulfilling the fundamental right of free expression is acknowledged by PEN. Yet poets, playwrights, essayists, novelists, writers, bloggers, and journalists are suffering violations of their right to freedom of expression for using digital media.

Citizens in many countries have faced severe restrictions in their access to and use of digital media, while governments have exploited digital technologies to suppress freedom of expression and to spy on individuals. The private sector and, in particular, technology companies have at times facilitated government censorship and surveillance.

In response, PEN has described its position on threats to free expression in the digital age in the following way:

1. All persons have the right to express themselves freely through digital media without fear of reprisal or persecution.

(a). Individuals who use digital media enjoy full freedom of expression protections under international laws and standards.

(b). Governments must not prosecute individuals or exact reprisals upon individuals who convey information, opinions, or ideas through digital media.

(c). Governments must actively protect freedom of expression on digital media by enacting and enforcing effective laws and standards.

2. All persons have the right to seek and receive information through digital media.

(a). Governments should not censor, restrict, or control the content of digital media, including content from domestic and international sources.

(b). In exceptional circumstances, any limitations on the content of digital media must adhere to international laws and standards that govern the limits of freedom of expression, such as incitement to violence.

(c). Governments should not block access to or restrict the use of digital media, even during periods of unrest or crisis. Controlling access to digital media, especially on a broad scale, inherently violates the right to freedom of expression.

(d). Governments should foster and promote full access to digital media for all persons.

3. All persons have the right to be free from government surveillance of digital media

(a). Surveillance, whether or not known by the specific intended target, chills speech by establishing the potential for persecution and the fear of reprisals. When known, surveillance fosters a climate of self-censorship that further harms free expression.

(b). As a general rule, governments should not seek to access digital communications between or among private individuals, nor should they monitor individual

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use of digital media, track the movements of individuals through digital media, alter the expression of individuals, or generally surveil individuals.

(c). When governments do conduct surveillance — in exceptional circumstances and in connection with legitimate law enforcement or national security investigations — any surveillance of individuals and monitoring of communications via digital media must meet international due process laws and standards that apply to lawful searches, such as obtaining a warrant by a court order.

(d). Full freedom of expression entails a right to privacy; all existing international laws and standards of privacy apply to digital media, and new laws and standards and protections may be required.

(e). Government gathering and retention of data and other information generated by digital media, including data mining, should meet international laws and standards of privacy, such as requirements that the data retention be time-limited, proportionate, and provide effective notice to persons affected.

4. The private sector, and technology companies in particular, are bound by the right to freedom of expression and human rights.

(a).The principles stated in this declaration equally apply to the private sector.

(b). Companies must respect human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and must uphold these rights even when national laws and regulations do not protect them.

(c). Technology companies have a duty to determine how their products, services, and policies impact human rights in the countries in which they intend to operate. If violations are likely, or violations may be inextricably linked to the use of products or services, the companies should modify or withdraw their proposed plans in order to respect human rights.

(d). Technology companies should incorporate freedom of expression principles into core operations, such as product designs with built-in privacy protections. (e). If their operations are found to have violated the right to freedom of expression, technology companies should provide restitution to those whose rights were violated, even when governments do not provide remedies.

CPJ launches 2018 Free the Press postcard campaign: Five imprisoned journalists highlighted

The Committee to Protect Journalists launched its annual Free The Press campaign to raise awareness of journalists imprisoned worldwide in April. This year, the campaign highlights five journalists gaoled for their work. Supporters are encouraged to send physical or digital postcards so that the journalists know they are not forgotten and the governments jailing them know that the world is watching.

The 2018 #FreeThePress journalists are:

- **Blogger Alaa Abdelfattah, gaoled in Egypt in 2014.**
- **Zehra Dogan, from the all-women's Jin News Agency (JINHA), gaoled in Turkey in 2017.**
- **Internet reporter Azimjon Askarov, gaoled in Kyrgyzstan in 2010.**
- **Ghys Fortuné Dombé Bemba, editor of the privately-owned newspaper Talassa, imprisoned in the Republic of Congo in 2017.**
- **Ding Lingjie, editor of the human rights news website Minsheng Guancha, imprisoned in China in 2017.**

"These intrepid journalists come from different backgrounds and covered a variety of beats, but they were all gaoled simply for doing their job," said CPJ Advocacy Director Courtney Radsch. "CPJ demands that they be released immediately and that the governments holding them rescind the harsh laws that led to the journalists' imprisonment."

CPJ documented a record 262 journalists behind bars globally in its most recent prison census, the highest number since it started keeping records in the early 1990s.

Join #FreeThePress and stand up for press freedom. Send a digital postcard to a journalist in prison and learn more about hosting your own #FreeThePress postcard event. For more information, contact Bebe Santa-Wood, Communications Associate, press@cpj.org

Failure to remove the refugees from dire circumstances will result in more harm and more death

Mark Isaacs, author of *The Undesirables: Inside Nauru* and *Nauru Burning*, was commissioned to visit Manus Island last November by the Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin as part of an anthology for the 'State of Refugees' project. This article is adapted from an essay he wrote for *Foreign Policy*.

I entered the Manus Island Detention Centre and was confronted by an apocalyptic scene. Toilets overflowed with urine and faeces, campfires burned in litter-filled corridors, blood-red graffiti riddled the walls, and zombie-like figures lay slumped in odd angles on dirty mattresses and tables. I had arrived in the midst of a stand-off between the Australian Government and the refugees it had imprisoned there.

In April 2016, the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court ruled the detention of refugees on Manus Island was unconstitutional. Because the asylum seekers held there did not arrive in Papua New Guinea of their own volition, the court ruled they had not broken immigration law, therefore keeping them in indefinite detention violated their constitutional rights.

Eighteen months later, the Australian Government was trying to circumvent Papua New Guinea's domestic laws by transferring detainees to three new "open" centres on the island. By allowing refugees free movement outside the centres, the Australian Government could claim the people weren't imprisoned.

After four years of incarceration, 600 refugees refused to leave the centre, claiming it was not safe for them to live outside its walls. Many of them had fled war and persecution and now Australia was placing them in danger once again.

Every refugee I met already living in the Manus community had a story of violence at the hands of locals. Joinul Islam, a frail Bangladeshi man, had been hit with a machete, fracturing his arm and slicing his skin. The refugees claimed they were the targets of robberies from local people who demanded money, cigarettes and mobile phones. A Rohingya man I met had his right wrist in a brace. It was the fourth time he had been attacked since leaving the detention centre.

In response to the refugees' refusal to leave the centre, the Australian Government cut off the centre's water, electricity, and food supplies, evacuated staff and terminated medical services in an attempt to starve the men into submission. Having been brought to Manus Island by the Australian Government, and without viable third country resettlement options, the refugees were completely dependent on the authorities for their survival.

This is what we have come to expect from Australia, a country that has been persecuting refugees for decades. Since 1992, Labor and Liberal governments have implemented increasingly strict border control policies to deter people seeking asylum by boat from reaching our shores and engaging our protection responsibilities according to the 1951 UN refugee convention and its protocol. Nowadays people who arrive by boat without a visa are either transferred to offshore detention centres or returned to their point of departure before they can lodge an asylum claim.

Australia's recent appearance at the ASEAN summit highlighted the issues the region faces in relation to refugees. Currently in the South East Asia region, there are 2.7 million people of concern including 1.4 million stateless people. Most of that number either reside within Myanmar (close to 1.3 million people), or have fled the country and are now dispersed throughout the region seeking protection and resettlement. There are close to 150,000 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia, and almost 600,000 people of concern in Thailand. The UNHCR Budget for the South East Asia region in 2018 is over US$300 million but typically they will only receive a quarter of that money. Meanwhile, Australia spends over $1 billion per year detaining just over 2,000 asylum seekers in offshore detention centres.

While ASEAN struggles with this crisis on our doorstep, the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, is publicly considering a special refugee intake for persecuted white South African farmers. We can only imagine what our asylum seeker policy would look like if the people arriving by boat were white.

It has become clear that Australia's deterrence system does little to alleviate the refugee burden in our region and instead shifts Australia's responsibility for protecting these people to other, less wealthy countries. Deterrence does not "save lives", it merely stops people from drowning in waters near Australia.

However politicians justify deterrence, the effect is still the same. Australia's offshore detention system has become synonymous with abuse and is a humanitarian disaster. Children have been abused; women raped; the most desperate have set themselves on fire; and there have been numerous deaths including the murdered Reza Berati.

Two weeks after my visit to the centre, Papua New Guinea police and immigration staff forcibly removed the remaining men from the centre and relocated them to the transit centres. They used metal poles to beat resisters and arrested over 30 men including Behrouz Boochani, the Iranian journalist and refugee who had been reporting to the Australian press from within the centre. Their resistance was suppressed, the media attention dissipated, the world stopped watching. The men were returned to the inertia of detention centre life.

There is little difference between the new transit centres and the closed detention centre. The transit centres are still closed to the public, guarded by security, and refugees are not allowed visitors. If anything the men have become more susceptible to attacks. Where before, imposing detention centre fences protected the men from outside attacks, the new transit centres are bordered by an easily scalable fence.

"We feel that we are living in a political game," Behrouz Bouchani said to me. "Many refugees have been separated from their families for five years and it's very hard for the refugees who have wives and children to endure this situation."

Just two weeks after the forced relocation, it was reported that drunk local men tried to enter the transit centres and threatened refugees with weapons and violence. In January 2018, I read that Joinul Islam (the Bangladeshi victim of a machete attack) was hit in the face and robbed. And then neighbouring residents to the transit centres barricaded the road four times in protest about the centre's sewage overflowing onto their land.

Behrouz Boochani believed these incidents were representative of the local Manusians' growing anger regarding the forced relocation of refugees into their communities.

"The problem is that these two places are located in a place exactly beside some of the locals' village and it's really high risk," Behrouz said.

While refugees struggle to live in the island communities, the impoverished local people are also forced to accommodate them.

Manus Island's population is 50,000. It has high unemployment, limited resources and health facilities, and is dependent on Australian aid. There is one small hospital on the island. A person with a serious health issue will be sent to Port Moresby or overseas for treatment. There are no mental health facilities in Manus, a bitter irony considering for the last five years Australia has operated a factory for mental illness. The best

Abdul Aziz Muhamat, Manus Island Regional Processing Centre. Image credit: Mark Isaacs

medical facilities on the island were inside the detention centre, but those facilities were closed (including the island's dental clinic) and the resources taken with them.

There are currently over 100 sick refugees and asylum seekers housed in the Granville Motel in Port Moresby awaiting medical treatment.

"It's like a jail," Ben, one of the sick refugees in Port Moresby, tells me. "There are only refugees in the entire motel. There are security guards in front of our rooms and they open and close the door for us. We are not allowed to keep our room keys. The motel is located in a dangerous area of Port Moresby, so we are afraid to leave."

Australia is spending a further A$20 million on building a new detention facility in the outskirts of Port Moresby. Until that new facility is built, asylum seekers who were given negative refugee assessments are being detained in squalid and putrid conditions in Bomana jail in Port Moresby or Lorengau prison in Manus Island. They then face deportation back to their home countries.

It is clear that long-term settlement of refugees on Manus Island is unlikely and unsustainable, and yet, there are currently hundreds of refugees who have been offered temporary protection visas living in the island community fearing violence at the hands of locals.

The Australian Government's stance on resettlement remains consistent: anyone attempting to enter Australia by boat without a visa will never be settled in the country. The only other realistic solution is third-country resettlement of the refugees. But Australia has achieved little in this regard since the centres were opened in 2012.

In 2014, Australia and Cambodia reached a A$55million deal to transfer refugees from Nauru and Manus. Only seven refugees have taken up the offer. Four of them left Cambodia within a year.

New Zealand offered to resettle 150 refugees, but the Australian Government rejected the offer, with Prime Minister Turnbull saying, "settlement in a country like New Zealand [situated well over 6,000 kilometres from Indonesia] would be used by people smugglers as a marketing opportunity".

Above: P Block, dormitory accommodation for refugees in the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre
Below: Peaceful protest signage inside the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre
Image credits: Mark Isaacs

Yet in November 2016, Canberra negotiated a deal in which the United States agreed to resettle up to 1,250 refugees from Manus and Nauru. In return, Canberra agreed to resettle an unspecified number of Central American refugees.

Thus far, the US Government has resettled 139 refugees from Nauru and Manus. But the future of the arrangement remains uncertain with Trump famously panning it as a "dumb deal".

And as Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull advised Trump in a leaked phone transcript: the US is ultimately not obliged to resettle 'any' of the refugees.

It is clear the Australian Government needs a safe resolution to the offshore legacy of cruelty, a resolution that ensures third-country resettlement and permanent protection for refugees. The Australian Government has proven its inability to provide adequate care for people seeking protection. The relationship between the refugee communities and the local communities of Manus Island and Nauru is not salvageable. Failure to remove the refugees from these dire circumstances will result in more harm and more deaths. However, it appears that the Australian Government is willing to sacrifice as many refugee lives as they need in order to maintain the illusion of safe borders.

Fear of the mob

Salil Tripathi is Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee. Born in India, he is based in London. His books include *The Hindu Case*, *Detours: Songs of the Open Road*, and *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent*. He was in Sydney recently discussing his work on the committee and his commitment to freedom of expression as part of Sydney PEN's special lecture series. Here he reports on the continuing fight for freedom of expression in India.

The struggle to protect freedom of expression is difficult in India not only because the law is unhelpful, not only because most politicians don't see any value in defending writers or artists, and not only because judges and police place the preservation of law and order above an individual's right to express freely, but also because many Indians seem to think that is how it should be. They like freedom of expression when they are doing the talking, but their minds change when those they disagree with get to exercise their rights.

The law is bad enough: while Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right, it immediately places caveats and "reasonable restrictions" on the right. Those restrictions cover many areas — the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence. This is a ridiculous list, poorly defined and infantilising a population.

Two other laws make it worse – s.295(A) of the Indian Penal Code makes it a criminal act to "outrage religious feelings" with malicious intent. And s.153(A) outlaws "promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony". Can you write about anything provocative at all in such circumstances?

During the Emergency of 1975–77, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had imposed press censorship and some journalists were jailed, the late Behram Contractor, who wrote under the pseudonym Busybee, wryly noted that the only safe topics left to write about were cricket and mangoes. Another pernicious section – s.66(A) of the Information Technology Act of 2000 widened the reach of offences further, and bizarre prosecutions followed, against people who clicked "like" on controversial posts on Facebook. The Indian Supreme Court declared the section unconstitutional in a March 2015 judgement challenging specific provisions of the act.

But the threat does not emerge only from the laws. India, in fact, bans relatively few books (although censorship is more rampant and arbitrary with films), and the trend is downward. The more dangerous trend is of religious and other busybodies from most faiths and castes protesting against books or articles, threatening or sometimes committing violent acts against writers or publishers, filing lawsuits in distant local courts, and demanding that the state take action against the writer.

The recent case of Perumal Murugan, a Tamil writer who wrote a novel called *Madhorubagan* (which Penguin published in English as *One Part Woman*) set in the village of Namakkal. In the novel, Perumal Murugan writes of a childless couple's attempts to conceive, and refers to a custom within a community which permits sexual permissiveness on a specific day. Village elders and community leaders were incensed, and they protested against the novelist. The state intervened – not to protect the author, but to assuage the community's feelings – and arranged a meeting with the community, at which it got Perumal Murugan to sign an undertaking not to offend the community and to withdraw the novel from circulation. Perumal Murugan decided to withdraw not only that novel, but all his previous works; he wrote a post on Facebook, saying that the author Perumal Murugan had died.

Perumal Murugan had little choice because the state and its officials were unwilling to do anything to protect his right to express; they were there to protect self-selected representatives of a community who claimed they had been offended, and the only remedy for that

Top: Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry and Perumal Murugan: banned, banished, censored
Left: Salil Tripathi, Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee

was the withdrawal of the book and an apology from the author.

Perumal Murugan did get justice in the end. The Madras High Court issued a stirring judgement which, in effect, affirmed and restored his rights to write, and the court said, in no uncertain terms, that people who feel offended cannot intimidate writers and seek to silence them. During the months of silence, Perumal Murugan wrote over a hundred poems, which have since been published. The experience has rejuvenated him; he has written new fiction as well. But every story cannot bank on such positive outcomes. When I met Perumal Murugan in his village in 2016, he was philosophical about the reaction to his writing, upset over being misunderstood, and grateful for the support from writers around the world.

Mob violence continues, meanwhile. The home of Kumar Ketkar, a noted Marathi journalist, was attacked when he wrote a column in which he criticised the tax-payer funded expenditure to build a statue to commemorate the seventeenth-century warrior-king, Shivaji, in the Arabian Sea. The mob has become the arbiter of taste, and the state does nothing; it acquiesces with the mob.

Many Indians don't seem to mind that. India abounds with people who are part of what Salman Rushdie describes as the "but brigade," or people who say "free speech is good, but…" and find ways to place limits on the freedom. He was writing in the immediate aftermath of the attack on the office of the satirical French magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, where terrorists killed twelve cartoonists and staff in Paris.

Perumal Murugan's decision to withdraw his books follows Penguin's decision to withdraw Wendy Doniger's book on Hinduism because of a prolonged case against the book filed by a Hindu nationalist organisation that showed no sign of ending anytime soon. While there were no public threats of violence against Penguin, the political environment is sufficiently charged for demonstrations to get out of hand, and at such times, police officers and politicians admonish the writer or the publisher for inviting the wrath of the mob by provoking them. Mumbai University's vice-chancellor complied with the outrageous demand by an aggrieved student to remove Rohinton Mistry's acclaimed novel, *Such A Long Journey*, from the university syllabus. He was no ordinary student; his grandfather happened to be Bal Thackeray, whose political party, the Shiv Sena, has become the de facto heckler in Mumbai, with veto rights about what can be seen, shown, or said in the city. In Delhi, a rowdy group of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (the student wing of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party) succeeded in censoring *Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts* in Translation, an essay by the late poet, A.K. Ramanujan, which pointed out the rich diversity in the Ramayana tradition.

It would be futile to expect Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act: when he was chief minister of Gujarat state between 2001 and 2014, his government banned two biographies – Joseph Lelyveld's *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and his Struggle with India* and Jaswant Singh's *Jinnah: India, Partition, Independence*. And India has the dubious honour of being the first country in the world to act against Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, whose importation was banned soon after its publication in 1988. The fear of the mob is so palpable that even after a court order lifting restrictions on James W. Laine's book on Shivaji, bookshops are unwilling to stock it. They remember that Laine's associate, Shrikant Bahulkar, was physically assaulted, and the renowned Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, where Laine did some of his primary research, was vandalised and rare manuscripts destroyed.

The bullies are winning because the state has turned timid.

Salil Tripathi

Award recognises the ways in which Indigenous writers enrich Australian literature and culture

The main purpose of the Patrick White Award is to encourage the winner to continue writing, and to provide some financial support to enable that. As Debra Adelaide reports, with his award White supported a basic human right, which is the freedom of expression through the written word.

Patrick White, as far as I am aware, was never a member of Sydney PEN, and at first glance was perhaps not the sort of activist author one might imagine. While notoriously defensive of his privacy, White held strong political opinions, and became a joiner when his convictions stirred him into action. At times he supported causes both global and local, as his outrage and sense of justice dictated. For instance, he lent his name and presence to the anti-nuclear campaign of the early 1980s.

In 1972 he became patron of the Save the Parks Campaign, advocating on behalf of local resident groups in a fight against development at Moore Park and Centennial Park. White's posthumous unfinished novel *The Hanging Garden* is, amongst other things, a tribute to Sydney's wild gardens studded with magnificent fig trees. Sadly, it is all too possible to know what he would have thought of the desecration of those trees along Anzac Parade just around the corner from where he lived.

In 2017, the 44th Patrick White Award was given to Indigenous novelist and short story writer, Professor Tony Birch. It was awarded to Birch because of his talent and standing as a writer, however it is also of vital importance that such a prestigious award has finally been given to an Indigenous author.

Writing in her capacity as chair of the Awards, Dr Bernadette Brennan observed that Birch's "impressive body of work, across various genres, make him an outstanding choice for the Patrick White Award. The judges are particularly pleased that for the first time in its 44-year history, the Award has been given to an Indigenous author".

The recognition of Indigenous writing and writers here and now is a vital part of contemporary culture. It is part of what I imagine White himself would have recognised, simply, calmly, without fuss or argument: Indigenous authors enrich our culture in countless ways, and proper recognition of that should go without saying.

The perennial dilemma for the judges of the Patrick White Award is which one author of standing deserves it. Of the great field of Australian writers, many have persuasive potential claims to a modest share of White's generous legacy, which he established using the funds from his Nobel Prize back in 1973.

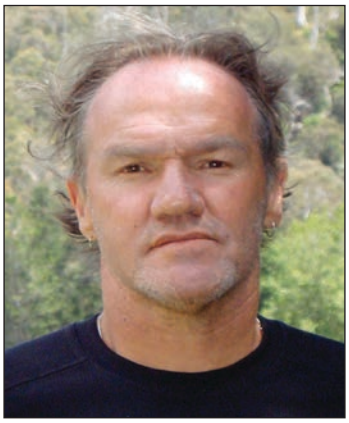
This particular award does not solicit entries or require submission of publications, and it has no formal shortlist as such. Instead, a list of potential winners is maintained, added to, edited, and trimmed as circumstances dictate. There are no quotas, no equal opportunity policy, and no rules that mean it has to be equally shared between female and male writers, poets and novelists, rich or poor, or black or white.

A common misconception is that it is only awarded to aging writers, and/or to a writer who has been neglected. It is true that when White established the Award it was with the specific intention to award it first to Christina Stead, whom he considered had been neglected in her own country. But its main purpose is to encourage the winner to continue writing, and to provide some financial support to enable that.

The judging committee exercises a great deal of discretion in this respect, and it might take into consideration the relative status of an author, as the terms of the Award stipulate that it may be given to an author who 'may not have received due recognition' for their contribution. However, that is only a 'may not', and a look at recent winners will reveal that none is necessarily neglected, nor should they be regarded as elderly: Joan London, David Foster, Louis Nowra, Carmel Bird, and Robert Adamson.

In some ways Birch is the polar opposite of an author like White. His latest book, *Common People*, contains stories that, to quote the citation, express "small unexpected gestures of kindness or compassion, investing the whole collection with a quiet optimism in human nature".

Birch's unsentimental and sometimes gritty realist style is also light years from White's distinct literary voice. But that is hardly the point. White, of course, had a broad appreciation of literature, and for all his well-known grumpiness was a person of immense generosity



Professor Tony Birch,
2017 winner of the Patrick White Award

whose many charitable acts were often performed unknown.

Enabling an author to write is one of the greatest charitable acts that can be bestowed. Given all White's wide-ranging topics and understanding of human nature and its moral complexity, and of puny individuals' place in the world, I imagine him nodding in approval from whatever literary afterlife he inhabits — and waiting with only slight impatience for Tony Birch's next book.

Whether he consciously realised it or not, in establishing this award White supported a basic human right, which is the freedom of expression through the written word. In this he was, as David Foster said in his acceptance speech in 2010, "a class act". Tony Birch's writing has given us back some of the story of race relations that has been buried or ignored in this country. Hopefully he will be able to continue doing that, just as White intended.

The 2017 Patrick White was judged by Dr Bernadette Brennan, Professor David Carter and Associate Professor Debra Adelaide. The 2018 Award will be announced in November.

THE WALKLEY FOUNDATION

The Inaugural Walkley Fund for Journalism Dinner
May 11, 2018
6.00pm - 10.30pm
Doltone House, Hyde Park, 181 Elizabeth Street, Sydney

There has never been a more important time to fund journalism. Which is why the Walkley Foundation is bringing together Australia's best true storytellers for a night devoted to fundraising for great Australian journalism and the impact it has on all of our lives. In 2018 the Walkley Foundation is taking a new strategic direction, broadening its work and scaling up its programs to provide the support the industry needs.
We owe it to future generations of Australians.
Show your support for journalism that makes a difference.

Hosted by: Melissa Doyle, Seven
Hear about the stories that made a difference from Walkley-winners:
Steve Pennells, Kate Geraghty, Ross Coulthart and Louise Milligan.
Moderated by **Kerry O'Brien**.
Be entertained by the sensational drummers **Taikoz** and a live auction, with items including: Be papped at dinner with Kate McClymont; Grill Fran Kelly and Peter van Onselen over a hot political flame at a fancy Sydney restaurant; Star in a podcast with Dennis Atkins and Malcolm Farr.

Tickets
Tickets Per Person (includes a three-course meal and entertainment): $165 (including GST).
Visit: eventbrite.com.au/e/the-inaugural-walkley-fund-for-journalism-dinner-tickets-43956104893
Generous donations welcome.
For table sponsorship please contact Barbara Blackman:
barbara.blackman@walkleys.com / 02 9333 0921

Dress: Cocktail

RSVP: Friday April 27, 2018

Proceeds from the dinner go towards the Walkley Foundation Public Fund.
This fund has been created to help ensure Australia continues to benefit from the kind of groundbreaking public interest journalism so important to our communities and democracy, and to strengthen the bonds of trust between the media and the communities they serve.

Censorship, surveillance, and harassment: China cracks down on critics

Hours after the Chinese Communist Party proposed a constitutional change last month to lift presidential term limits, any words or phrases that remotely suggested President Xi Jingping was seeking a life term were blocked from social media. Censors targeted everything from *Emperor Xi*, *The Emperor's Dream*, and *Dream of Returning to the Great Qing*, to *Winnie the Pooh*, a reference to Xi's apparent resemblance to the cartoon character, the *China Digital Times* reported.

Censorship is not new in China, but in recent months the country has increased its grip, regulating tools such as virtual private networks (VPNs) that can bypass the country's infamous firewall, issuing lists of "approved" news outlets, and disbarring lawyers who represent jailed journalists.

On January 30, the Cyberspace Administration of China announced a list of 462 websites and social media handles granted permission to provide online news services. Outlets that create a news website without permission face a fine of up to 30,000 Chinese yuan (US$4,700). The following month, the administration announced regulations for social media users that will legally require users to disclose their name, personal ID, organization code, and phone number before being allowed to post content online. The new regulations came into effect on March 20.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology also announced that from March 31 it would regulate unlicensed VPNs to "maintain a fair, organized market order". The move means that individuals and foreign companies whose operations require the use of VPNs will only have access to state-approved VPNs.

A veteran reporter for an English-language media outlet told the Committee to Project Journalists that VPNs are crucial to its reporting in China. Without them, the reporter said, reporters would not feel safe to file stories and pictures or to communicate with editors, colleagues, and interviewees.

This is not the first time authorities have attempted to regulate circumvention tools or social media. Pu Fei, a volunteer at human rights news website 64 Tianwang, told CPJ that since 2016, most of the site's volunteers found they were blocked from opening Weibo accounts when they tried to register using their ID.

As well as attempts to regulate and censor social media platforms, authorities appear to be using the technology to track journalists.

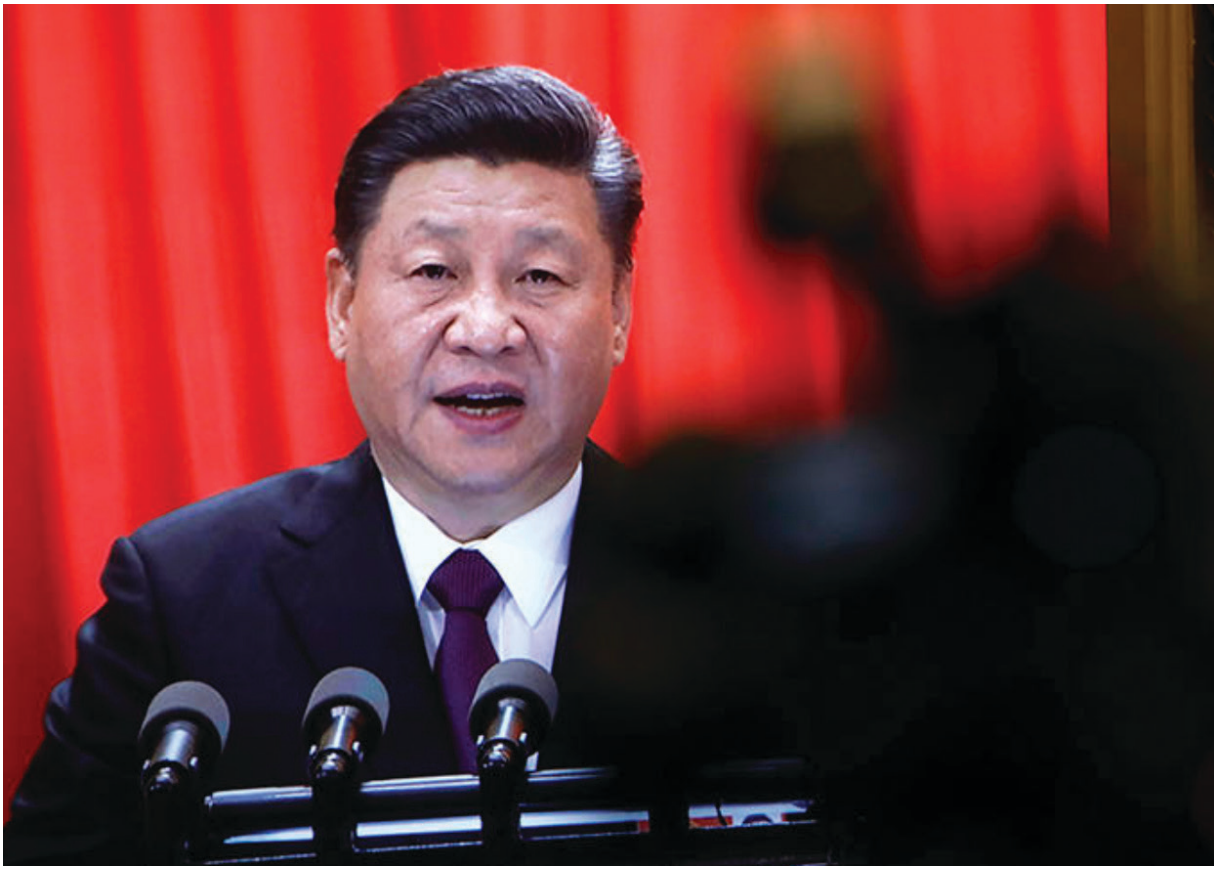
The reporter, who asked to remain anonymous told CPJ they believe their WeChat messages are being watched. "In more hostile circumstances, my WeChat account has been forcefully logged out, and I was banned from using my WeChat account for over a week," the journalist said. "As for Weibo, my private message function might have been permanently disabled or filtered."

The reporter added that journalists believe officials accessed their WeChat accounts to surveil journalists. The reporter said that after using WeChat to discuss visiting a friend in another city, local community officers approached the friend's family and warned them not to let the journalist stay. The reporter told CPJ the officers had his full name and the name of his news outlet.

The impact of such surveillance means that reporters are becoming more reluctant to use WeChat and Sina Weibo.

"It makes China reporting very costly, in terms of manpower investment as well as security measures," the journalist said. "It would also greatly endanger the safety of my interviewees. But it doesn't mean we can stop doing it just because it's hard. It calls [for] more professional, creative and persistent reporting."

China's crackdown is not just confined to the internet



A TV screen shows Chinese President Xi Jinping delivering a speech at the closing session of the annual National People's Congress in Beijing on March 20. China's censors last month removed from social media any words suggesting Xi is seeking a life term. (AP/Andy Wong)

and social media. Earlier this month, police in Beijing detained French journalist Heike Schmidt, the China correspondent for the French Foreign Ministry-funded outlet, Radio France Internationale, for about an hour and confiscated her voice recorder, the journalist told CPJ. Schmidt said she was stopped and questioned after interviewing people in a mall about the constitutional vote.

While international journalists are more likely to be deported than detained for a long period, local journalists or media sources-along with their families and the lawyers-face greater risks.

CPJ documented in January how the wife of Chinese American journalist Chen Xiaoping disappeared from her home in Guangzhou city, apparently taken by authorities in retaliation for Chen's reporting. And on February 10, police detained Xu Qin, an independent human rights researcher whom news agencies rely on as a source, according to Radio Free Asia. Xu's arrest came just days after Radio Free Asia interviewed her about the detention of Sun Lin, a journalist jailed for reposting articles critical of the Communist Party, according to a detention notice officials provided to Xu's family. Both are still in custody, according to reports.

Lawyers representing jailed journalists and critics also face harassment. On February 12, the Guangdong Department of Justice disbarred Sui Muqing, the lawyer who represented Huang Qi, the publisher of human rights news website 64 Tianwang. A notice from the Guangdong Department of Justice, sent to the lawyer, said he was disbarred for "using uncivilized, offensive wording" and other poor behavior while representing a fellow lawyer, and for bringing cell phone to take photos of a rights activist in a detention centre whom Sui was representing.

Sui told CPJ he believes his disbarment will intimidate other lawyers into not representing human rights activists or people charged with political crimes. "Although there will still be lawyers brave enough to take on rights cases the flexibility of what lawyers can say and how they handle these cases will be very confined," said Sui.

Lin Qilei, a lawyer who represented jailed journalist Wang Shurong, told CPJ that he feels the pressure after Sui's disbarment, but is mentally prepared for anything that could happen, including jail. "I think, as a lawyer, my duty is to defend for my clients. Most of my clients are persecuted for defending public interests or speaking out about social issues. I admire them," Lin said.

Iris Hsu, Committee to Protect Journalists China Correspondent

Thirty eight Nobel laureates oppose oppression of writers in Turkey

Until Turkey frees detained writers and returns to the rule of law, it cannot claim to be a member of the free world, write JM Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro, Svetlana Alexievich and others.

We wish to draw your attention to the damage being done to the Republic of Turkey, to its reputation and the dignity and wellbeing of its citizens, through what leading authorities on freedom of expression deem to be the unlawful detention and wrongful conviction of writers and thinkers.

In a 2017 Memorandum on the Freedom of Expression in Turkey, Nils Muižnieks, then Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, warned, "The space for democratic debate in Turkey has shrunk alarmingly following increased judicial harassment of large strata of society, including journalists, members of parliament, academics and ordinary citizens, and government action which has reduced pluralism and led to self-censorship. This deterioration came about in a very difficult context, but neither the attempted coup, nor other terrorist threats faced by Turkey, can justify measures that infringe media freedom and disavow the rule of law to such an extent.

"The authorities should urgently change course by overhauling criminal legislation and practice, redevelop judicial independence and reaffirm their commitment to protect free speech."

There is no clearer example of the Commissioner's concern that the detention in September 2016 of Ahmet Altan, a bestselling novelist and columnist; Mehmet Altan, his brother, professor of economics and essayist; and Nazli Ilicak, a prominent journalist, all as part of a wave of arrests following the failed July 2016 coup.

These writers were charged with attempting to overthrow the constitutional order through violence or force. The prosecutors originally wanted to charge them with giving "subliminal messages" to coup supporters while appearing on a television panel show. The ensuing tide of public ridicule made them change that accusation to using rhetoric "evocative of a coup". Indeed, Turkey's official Anatolia News Agency called the case "The Coup Evocation Trial".

As noted in the Commissioner's report, the evidence considered by the judge in Ahmet Altan's case was limited to a story dating from 2010 in Taraf newspaper (of which Ahmet Altan had been the editor-in-chief until 2012), three of his op-ed columns and a TV appearance. The evidence against the other defendants was equally insubstantial. All these writers had spent their careers opposing coups and militarism of any sort, and yet were charged with aiding an armed terrorist organisation and staging a coup.

The Commissioner saw the detention and prosecution of Altan brothers as part of a broader pattern of repression in Turkey against those expressing dissent or criticism of the authorities. He considered such detentions and prosecutions to have violated human rights and undermined the rule of law. David Kaye, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression, concurred and dubbed the legal proceedings a "show trial".

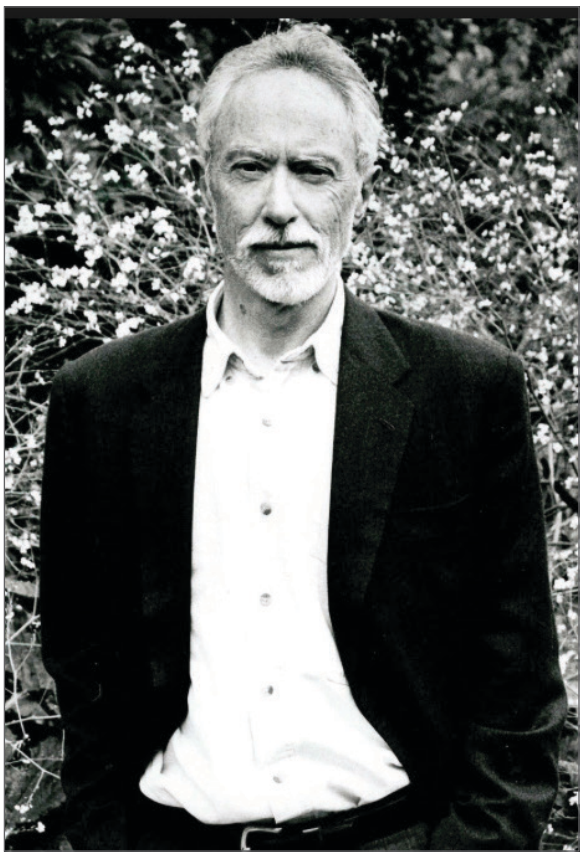
Turkey's own constitutional court concurred with this criticism. On 11 January this year, it ruled that Mehmet Altan and fellow journalist Sahin Alpay's rights were being violated by pre-trial detention, and that they should be released. Yet the first-degree courts refused to implement the higher constitutional court's decision, thus placing the judicial system in criminal violation of the constitution.

Mr President, you must surely be concerned that the lower criminal court's defiance and this non-legal decision was backed by the spokesperson of your government.

On 16 February 2018, the Altan brothers and Ilicak were sentenced to aggravated life sentences, precluding them from any prospect of a future amnesty.

President Erdogan, we the undersigned share the following opinion of David Kaye: "The court decision condemning journalists to aggravated life in prison for their work, without presenting substantial proof of their involvement in the coup attempt or ensuring a fair trial, critically threatens journalism and with it the remnants of freedom of expression and media freedom in Turkey."

In April 1998, you yourself were stripped of your position as mayor of Istanbul, banned from political office, and sentenced to prison for 10 months for reciting a poem during a public speech in December 1997



JM Coetzee, VS Naipaul, Kazuo Ishiguro, Wole Soyinka and Mario Vargas Llosa.

through the same article 312 of the penal code. This was unjust, unlawful and cruel. Many human rights organisations – which defended you then – are appalled at the violations now occurring in your country.

Amnesty International, PEN International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Article 19, and Reporters Without Borders are among those who oppose the recent court decision.

During a ceremony in honour of Çetin Altan, on 2 February 2009, you declared publicly that "Turkey is no longer the same old Turkey who used to sentence its great writers to prison – this era is gone for ever." Among the audience were Çetin Altan's two sons: Ahmet and Mehmet. Nine years later, they are sentenced to life; isn't that a fundamental contradiction?

Under these circumstances, we voice the concern of many inside Turkey itself, of its allies and of the multilateral organisations of which it is a member. We call for the abrogation of the state of emergency, a quick return to the rule of law and for full freedom of speech and expression. Such a move would result in the speedy acquittal on appeal of Ms Ilicak and the Altan brothers, and the immediate release of others wrongfully detained. Better still, it would make Turkey again a proud member of the free world.

Nobel laureate signatories: Svetlana Alexievich, Philip W Anderson, Aaron Ciechanover, JM Coetzee, Claude Cohen-Tannoudji, Elias J Corey, Gerhard Ertl, Albert Fert, Edmownd H Fischer, Andrew Z Fire, Andre Geim, Sheldon Glashow, Serge Haroche, Leland H Hartwell, Oliver Hart, Richard Henderson, Dudley Herschbach, Avram Hershko, Roald Hoffmann, Robert Huber, Tim Hunt, Kazuo Ishiguro, Elfriede Jelinek, Eric S Maskin, Hartmut Michel, Herta Müller, VS Naipaul, William D Phillips, John C Polanyi, Richard J Roberts, Randy W Schekman, Wole Soyinka, Joseph Stiglitz, Thomas C Südhof, Jack W Szostak, Mario Vargas Llosa, J Robin Warren, Eric F Wieschaus

Silenced in ways that no-one hears your shouts and screams

Behrouz Boochani, 35, is a Kurdish journalist, poet and film producer. He holds a master's degree in Political Geography and Geopolitics from Tarbiat Modares University. As a freelance journalist he wrote about Middle-East politics, minority rights and the survival of Kurdish culture. He co-founded and produced the Kurdish magazine Werya. In February 2013, the offices of Werya were raided by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and he went into hiding for three months before fleeing Iran. On his second attempt to make a boat crossing from Indonesia to Australia he was intercepted, detained on Christmas Island and after one month was transferred to the Manus Island detention centre in August 2013 where he remains. This is his latest report from detention.

It is one of those hot, sweltering days in Manus Prison. A guard takes me to a room located deep within a cluster of offices. The imprisoned refugees know these rooms as spaces for the immigration officials, and they are also places for interrogation.

No windows.

Totally grey.

A CCTV camera installed on the ceiling.

Two chairs.

One table.

One room. Like a typical interrogation room.

One of the officers stands in front of the door. He stands like a dutiful soldier. The other officer sits on the opposite side of the table to me. He places a parcel on the table. He looks up at the CCTV camera and opens it. The parcel contains dozens of letters and postcards. The officers smile at each other. One of them says in amazement: "It seems that a lot of people really love you. This huge batch of letters is pretty amazing."

The letters were from members of PEN; the organisation had sent me letters from people living in different cities and who wrote directly to me. I must admit, that at moment I was like a little kid at a party who had just received gifts from all his loved ones. I experienced that simple feeling of joy particular to childhood. However, more than anything else, I felt proud. I felt proud as I confronted the smiles of the prison wardens. I felt proud as I stared back at the astonished prison warden guarding the door.

You see, the pride I felt represented something special, a remarkable feeling that signalled I am a human being. It confirmed that there are people who love me, that I was worthy of love just like everyone else. Without a doubt, for people looking at this prison from the outside, for people who are not incarcerated, there may not seem to be anything particularly significant about this scene. It is like one of those same encounters one goes through thousands of times a day, the same for thousands of people, in thousands of places around the world. But for me, imprisoned here in a remote and forgotten prison, this was no everyday experience. It was a source of an incredible realisation, I was reminded that I am still alive, I am still a worthy human being, and there are people who are watching out for me.

Actually, this scene revealed something unique; it evoked a particular emotion in direct opposition to the dehumanising politics of the Manus prison, a system that has made an example of my body and soul for years, made an example of the bodies and minds of thousands of other refugees, and tried to exclude us from the very category of human being.

Living in Manus prison is nothing other than extermination of the self through rules and regulations, erasure in accordance with a system that lasts for years. The system implements its method with the objective of distorting your sense of self so you forget that you are human. In fact, this encounter with the parcel of letters was an existential challenge to rise up against a system

that has clearly tried to experiment with and destroy our personal identities over the years.

In that setting, the prison wardens represented the system and I represented the human beings who have been incarcerated in Manus prison, humans who have been debased to such an unfathomable extent, debased to the point where one has no identity, reduced to nothing but a number.

However, this is just one side of the coin. The other side is as significant. The fact is that this experience – or similar such experiences – should have occurred many years earlier. I am a writer and for years I have felt the same way a young schoolboy feels when he gets into a fight with an older kid but knows that he has a big brother in the playground. The schoolboy expects that at any moment his older brother will come to back him up. But on every occasion the big brother never turns up to help.

I am like this schoolboy, left to fight against a giant bully. What I am saying is that like many people in the world, PEN was not able to understand or believe what Australia, a so-called democracy, was doing to us in the Manus prison and so was slow in supporting our cases and promoting our voices.

I have shared this feeling with poet and writer Janet Galbraith and writer Arnold Zable. They are my best friends and have been my greatest supporters for years. They have had a pivotal role in the journey, they have traversed this path with me throughout the years. They know how I wrote critical letters on a number of occasions. They know that I threw them in the rubbish every time and did not publish them for one reason or another.

Let me put it in simple terms, as an imprisoned writer I am adamant that the organisation has not supported me in the way that it should have.

I am an imprisoned writer from a country controlled by a religious dictatorship and I have experienced five years of living and writing unrelentingly in Manus Prison. I have arrived at a unique understanding of concepts such as politics, liberty and freedom of speech. In a country like Iran you do not have the freedom to write what you wish, but in a liberal democracy you are relatively free to write as you like. However, the system can censor you with ease, censor you in a systematic way, silence you in ways that even if you were to shout no one would hear. And even if they hear you, they do not have the capacity to understand. This has been my experience on Manus Island.

The two major Australian political parties practically control ninety percent of the media landscape, they have the power and dominate the Australian political sphere. For nearly five years they have conducted a program of systematic censorship against me and the other imprisoned refugees on Manus Island and Nauru. During these years I have basically been able to work with ten percent of media organisations, the only space I could access to scream out and convey the suffering in this prison. The forms of systematic censorship are various. Sometimes, I am ignored; other times I am insulted; and other times the censorship is accompanied by political propaganda. When combined, the distortion becomes so intense that the Australian people cannot receive any correct information.

During all these years I have tried to break through the barriers of systematic censorship with the support of the other refugees and human rights advocates, including PEN Melbourne which has been active in promoting my work, active in re-telling some of the suffering inflicted in this prison. But I must admit that after five years I have been unsuccessful. The Kyriarchal System has determined that we must remain forgotten, remain wretched. Throughout this time I have pursued the same path. And now, after so much struggle, I feel I am still at the very beginning.

It is this systematic form of censorship, this understanding of the Kyriarchal System that needs to be examined by PEN in order to understand the evolving forms of torture and censorship by liberal democracies like Australia and to inform new critical and creative actions.

Manus prison is a product and logical conclusion of a system that also creates the institution known as PEN. This system produces the university, academia, and cultural industries; knowledge production and cultural production are integral parts of the system. I truly believe that if the cultural industries that function within liberal democratic countries were to critique the system appropriately and adequately the Australian-run prisons on Manus Island and Nauru would not have emerged.

Manus prison is a dangerous phenomenon. It impacts on other liberal democratic societies and has influenced the character of civil society in these countries. PEN and other literary and cultural organisations have not been able to grasp the philosophy driving Manus prison and its historical legacy.

Although the institution of PEN has not accompanied me on this path, for years it has played a central role in giving me a sense of safety in this prison. Due to the presence of PEN, I was sure that the Australian government could never get away with killing me like it did 10 other refugees in Manus Island, Nauru and Christmas Island. And I know that there are also many writers all over the world who are in significant danger.

Perhaps it is better to describe this as a letter from a younger imprisoned brother to his older brother. After years of resistance in Manus prison I have come to the conclusion that it is better to fight like the young schoolboy who is up against a much bigger bully, and not wait for my older brother to come help. I must remain independent. I must fight on my own. The only thing that stands with a writer is the pen, just the pen… the pen and nothing else.

In the coming weeks my first book will be released titled *No Friend But The Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison*. We are the forgotten people of history… we have no friend other than the mountains.

Behrouz Boochani is a non-resident Visiting Scholar at the Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre at University of Sydney. Translation by Omid Tofighian, American University in Cairo/University of Sydney.
Editing by Janet Galbraith

PEN's response overleaf >>

Projecting a rebellious voice that gives plenty of lip

Award-winning novelist Melissa Lucashenko will deliver the next PEN Free Voices address on the Day of the Imprisoned Writer on November 15.

Indigenous writer Melissa Lucashenko is tough and resolute. Her award-winning novels reflect the powerful force of their author. Her books are, she says, a reflection of modern Aboriginal life. And so the subject matter may be seen to reflect something of her own life.

"Yes," she says, "there is truth in my work because I do not write very far from my own experience." She gives one example. "Two of my brothers have been in prison; that gives me insight into the prison experience."

She says she sees her job as a writer as not rebelling against the orthodoxy but rather paying attention to the life around her. Her new novel, *Too Much Lip*, to be published in July, is described as partly inspired by Ned Kelly and partly by a hillbilly sensibility – it looks at Aboriginal life in the bush and addresses intergenerational trauma in an honest and hopeful way.

"I wanted to write about the grassroots mob who are constantly living on the edge of things – the law, racist violence, family implosion."

Ms Lucashenko, who won an $80,000 Copyright Agency Cultural Fund Author Fellowship to work on the manuscript, says she found inspiration in American Pulitzer Prize winning writer Alice Walker. "I thought if she can write with searing honesty about her culture, I could do the same in an Australian context."

Publisher Madonna Duffy describes it as a novel of dissent and social commentary, written with Melissa's razor-sharp wit and fearless eye. "Just like *Mullumbimby* before it, it will be a game changer for Australian Indigenous writing," she says.

Ms Lucashenko says she had many conversations with people while preparing the book. Her research was prompted by the methodology of Alice Walker whom she met when she facilitated a conversation between the American writer and Australian author Alexis Wright at the 2015 Sydney Writers' Festival.

She found writing *Too Much Lip* difficult, she says. "I usually plot the narrative to the end. This was the first time I did not know where I was going. It is a complex book."

She wanted to write a powerful antidote to narratives of the depression and family violence in much Aboriginal life. "I've knocked around a lot with women, and men including my brothers, who have done time and I wanted to portray those women's defiance."

While she was writing the novel, the image she kept in mind was of her protagonist Kerry giving a finger to the world as she rides off on her Harley. "It's a very gritty novel but I like to think it's pretty damn funny, too," she says. "No doubt some readers will find it shocking but I am not writing to make people feel warm and comfortable." When readers enter her world she wants them to feel they can find a place to belong in her story.

She says that when she first started writing, she was fuelled by egotism and neurosis as much as by creativity. Now she seeks an emotional truth that avoids voyeurism and sensationalism. She found she was writing more in the vein of a memoir than she had imagined.

"Readers must judge for themselves how much I might resemble my protagonists," she says. She takes the risk of alienating the reader with a dialogue that is slang, rough, partly Indigenous, deceptively unsophisticated rather than formal English. "It is the voice I talk to myself in. It is my internal voice."

Melissa Lucashenko is a Murri woman of European and Bundjalung descent. She was born in Brisbane in 1967 and grew up on its southern outskirts. After working as a bar attendant, housepainter and martial arts instructor, she graduated with an Honours degree in Public Policy from Griffith University and has since lived in Canberra, Darwin, Tonga and the north coast of NSW.

When asked if she is a writer or an Aboriginal writer, she says it is complex. "The word 'Aboriginal' means something different to outsiders. When I say 'Aboriginal' or better yet, 'Goorie' or 'Bundjalung', I assume things like being of mixed race, being literate, and having a wide appreciation of modern Western culture and so on. But to most outsiders, 'Aboriginal' implies something different, usually something much more restricted and restrictive. So the question runs into a difficulty of semantics. That doesn't happen quite so much with say, Indian or African American writers, because there is more familiarity with their subcultures."

When asked why she describes herself as an Aboriginal when she has European heritage, she says being Aboriginal is about culture and family links, not just biology.

Melissa Lucashenko

"I know very little about my Russian/Ukrainian forebears although I hope to one day change that. But the essence of who I am is far more about being proudly Goorie than about being white.

"You have to remember there was an official government policy of assimilation for many decades. That was intended to wipe out the Aboriginal culture and people by 'breeding out the colour'. We were often forced to marry whites. Mixed-race children were stolen up until the 1970s and placed in institutions to grow up white.

"Our family oral history tells us that our great-grandmother was removed from Bundjalung lands and sent to Kabi country just north of Brisbane – a vast distance in those early times. Then they attempted to remove my grandmother as well. As a result of these assimilation policies, many of us have fair skin. There are plenty of blond, blue-eyed Aborigines out there as well as all shades of brown and black.

"But you have to understand the culture before you call yourself Aboriginal. If you have ancestry without the understanding or connections, you have a very big journey in front of you. And people must make their own choices. Nobody has any right to tell stolen generations descendants who they must be or become.

"Not everybody belongs in a neat little box marked 'Aboriginal' or 'white' and it is very dangerous to think they do. 'Of Aboriginal descent' is a perfectly okay place to be, for instance. Peoples' humanity must take priority."

Sandra Symons

PEN was not able…

Dear Behrouz,

These are your words and they haunt PEN members.

We have so little to fight the system, the "giant bully". Only the conviction that governments can be shamed, that liberty and freedom of speech are irreducible conditions for civilised society and human fellowship. And our writing.

We write letters – to the newspaper, to ministers, to departmental heads. We demonstrate in the streets – memorials alas, protests. PEN verified your case (despite difficulty in getting details from "the giant bully"), recorded it in our Writers in Prison Casebook, and continues to coordinate our protests. Work that has verifiably brought about the release of prisoners and changes of policy.

Few in PEN have connections and political influence to stop the enactment of laws of surveillance and detention, but writers need not to give in to the worst, the silencing. We were not supposed to know about Manus and Nauru – no-one who had been there, was supposed to talk or write about it. But they DID talk. No-one was supposed to talk about navy and border force manoeuvres, conducted covertly.
You have achieved the miracle of direct communication.

It's hard to express our frustration, at a time when bigoted politicians have promoted an inhuman belief: that resisting desperate immigrants is necessary for the nation - and, it seems, works for their electoral advantage. I can only answer, I don't know anyone who believes that. Behrouz, thank you for telling us of the disappointment, the despair added to your burden - how could it be otherwise. We shall continue to work – to do what we can.

Judith Rodriguez
Vice-President of International PEN

In a story well told, the filmmakers feel hearts and the tide changing

It has been eight years since producer Charlotte Mars and director Maya Newell began making *Gayby Baby*, an award-winning feature documentary starring four young people whose parents are gay. Hindsight got Maya Newell thinking. Certainly, the film caused a stir and got people talking, but what change did it make?

Gayby Baby, known across Australia as "that film that got banned", hit a conservative nerve and triggered a national backlash. For some, the censorship of a PG-rated film in NSW schools seemed a surprise. However, as a child raised with same-sex parents, this charged response was in line with the many instances of unchecked prejudice I have experienced throughout my life.

It hit the place from where our values, ethics and political standpoints derive – the family. As described by political theorist George Lakoff in his analogy of "strict father" conservatism and "nurturing parent" liberalism, family values are the centrefold of every issue that divides right and leftist views.

Through the perspective of four children, *Gayby Baby* asks us to reconsider what a family is – it breaks down the differences between genders and ignites conventional fears that both mothers and fathers can equally offer a child what they need to grow into healthy, well balanced adults.

The film offers a fresh way of seeing. It states the obvious: that raising kids requires far more complex inputs than simply parents of opposite sexes. Raising kids depends on individual triumphs and defeats, unwavering love, stability, perseverance and the quality and texture of our relationships. Moreover, when we are ready to acknowledge the enormous challenge of parenting, we can begin to channel our collective energy into what matters most – supporting parents from all walks of life to raise healthy, happy children.

The growing new wave of impact-orientated films pushes us to measure success on the basis of clean and precise outcomes. "Impact reporting" celebrates the number of screenings, records broken, laws changed, articles written or social media clicks counted.

However, the *Gayby Baby* experience reminds me that numeric terms fall far short of a meaningful description of the film's reach and impact. For me, evidence of change is in the minutiae. It's in how we got there, or as English critic John Berger says, "the countless personal choices, encounters, illuminations, sacrifices, new desires, griefs, and finally, memories, which are, a strict sense, incidental to that movement". But hold everything, dear Berger, I want to explore the transformations that we have to lean in close to see, feel and hear. I want to take you inside *Gayby Baby*, and share some stories of change as I remember them.

Maya versus Barnaby Joyce

In early 2012 on the ABC television program *Q&A*, I asked the panel of politicians and public figures to acknowledge the perspective of the thousands of children with same-sex attracted parents in the fight for Marriage Equality, and consider that, we too, were denigrated by this exclusionary legislation. We wanted our parents to have the right to marry just like everyone else.

I asked the panel to recognise my parents' 27-year relationship and put our family as equal to theirs. To my dismay, this was met with a close mind by politician Barnaby Joyce who stared me and told me that he and his wife were better parents than mine. As happened, as he was saying my family was worth less, he was cheating on his wife and daughters with a colleague.

This run-in with Barnaby Joyce was disappointing, but also strategic. On the T-shirts that Charlotte and I wore was the URL of our crowd-funded campaign to fund the initial stages of *Gayby Baby*. After an explosion on Twitter, @gaybybaby was nationally trending and the campaign raised over $20,000. The campaign went on to reach over $110,000, which was the most of any film in Australia at that time. Barnaby Joyce's unabashed conservatism gave us the push that set us on our way to making Gayby Baby.

Banned in schools

Gayby Baby is a film about kids, so Charlotte and I decided that the kids of Australia would see the film first. We partnered with Wear it Purple, a youth-led support group for LGBTIQ+ students to host screenings in school halls a week before the films' theatrical release.

Days before the screenings were to take place, the front cover of the Daily Telegraph printed a story with the heading "Gay class uproar" featuring a picture

Filmmaker Maya Newell.
Photograph by Jacquie Manning

of 10-year-old Gus applying lipstick and an editorial speaking directly to the children in the film saying "your family will never be normal".

NSW Premier Mike Baird and Education Minister Adrian Piccoli said "issues covered in the film do not belong in the classroom" and then banned the film based on a newspaper article that claimed there were complaints – but there were none.

The absurdity of the national debate that followed was that none of the critics, including politicians and public figures, had watched the film. On the other hand, a previous NSW State Parliamentary Screening and targeted previews meant that Alex Greenwich, an independent state politician, had seen the film and battled a conservative minister on the Channel 10's *The Project*, op-eds were written in the following days by Tim Wilson and Senator Penny Wong, the issue was raised on the floor of Parliament, a State vs State battle erupted where the Victorian and Queensland Premiers welcomed the film in their states schools, a rally was organised in support of the film and cafes, fire brigades and cinemas all over the Sydney erected signs that read "calm down and watch *Gayby Baby*".

A language to describe ourselves

At the launch of our education resource (The *Gayby Baby* School Action Toolkit hegaybyproject.com/schools), Rowena Allen, the Victorian Gender and Sexuality Commissioner, read a speech about a conversation she overheard her 8-year-old daughter having in the schoolyard. A boy approached and said, "you're gay cause you're mums are", she turned to him and proudly said "Nah, I am not gay, but I am a Gayby" and walked away. Rowena thanked the film for giving her daughter, along with this new generation of kids, a language of pride to describe themselves.

Film subjects to filmmakers

One of the most sustaining impacts of *Gayby Baby* has been watching the children in the film rise to the challenge of being experts on their lives and leaders in their community. During the Marriage Survey in 2017, we were asked to collaborate with the Guardian Australia on a short film about the perspectives of Gayby children during this time. Charlotte and I invited Ebony and Gus, now 16 and 18, to direct the film. The teens interviewed the next generation of Gayby children about family, marriage, love, and politics with poise, skill and empathy learnt from being the subjects of a documentary themselves.

The film got 289,000 views on release, but Gus and Ebony's personal sense of achievement at creating something meaningful was undeniably the lasting heart-sing for me.

You will be a great parent

Developments in reproductive technology, policy, and the slow but sure lifting of social stigma have led to a Gayby boom. Now, there are thousands of Gaybies growing up and spreading their wings and for the first time in history, gay and lesbian people can expect to have a family.

As possibility opens up, what remains are the remnants of such scrutiny – internalised homophobia and pervading insecurities about being able to parent at all. We have loved receiving messages from Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia, the UK, Poland and many more countries from LGBTIQ+ people, for which *Gayby Baby* sparked a new confidence in building families where there was none.

Finally, will you marry me

Gayby Baby and the rights of children in same-sex families hit the public eye as Marriage Equality moved into the headlines and gained public support. The campaign saw the end of marriage and adoption discrimination in Australia. Real change happens slowly and collectively as a result of the efforts, discomfort and sheer tenacity of many individuals, campaigners, NGOs and organisations. In a story well told, we can feel the tide changing. The greatest power of cinema is to peel back assumptions about minorities of race, sexuality, gender, disability and belief. When I think about *Gayby Baby*, I remember Peter, a heterosexual farmer in north-Queensland who independently hosted a cinema-on-demand screening in Mackay because he felt his community was homophobic and needed to know about Gaybies.

Then there was the nine-year-old boy who followed me through the Victorian Art Gallery for an hour to tell me he was proud to be a Gayby, too. As I grow older and Marriage Equality settles as a battle fought and won, these will be my lasting memories.

Maya Newell

sydney
PEN

Make a difference, join us

Any true democracy respects and protects freedom of expression. Without this, social justice is at risk.

Yet this freedom is great danger. Every day, people are persecuted simply for speaking out, and governments and others in positions of power continue to gag, imprison, murder and silence individuals who have the courage and honesty to speak and to write about what is happening in the world around them.

By joining Sydney PEN you will be supporting the work of an historical Australian organisation, with a focus on advocating for these rights in our Asian and Pacific region.

You will be the first to receive invitations to hear our guest speakers participate in local letter-writing evenings, and receive campaign alerts to take action. Join today at www.pen.org.au/join

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