

48. Decolonise Aotearoa.

In 1835, rangatira Māori ratified *He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni*,³⁹⁷ declaring sovereign independence for Māori. *He Whakaputanga* uses the term “rangatiratanga” to refer to the right to Māori sovereignty, a term later used again in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in 1840. In 2014, the Waitangi Tribunal confirmed that Māori have never ceded this sovereignty to either the British or New Zealand states.³⁹⁸ The New Zealand government’s claim to state sovereignty, implicitly based on its interpretation of, requires this not to be true. In practice, the New Zealand state secured its right to govern by militarily destroying all Māori attempts to resist it, as in the Flagstaff War against Ngāpuhi and the New Zealand Wars against the Kīngitanga. In both those instances, first northern Māori, and then Waikato Māori, exercised their autonomy and challenged the British state’s sovereignty. The New Zealand state owes its continued existence to these repeated wars of invasion, conquest and genocide³⁹⁹ waged against Māori. The New Zealand state, therefore, is in essence maintaining a military occupation of Aotearoa.

The term ‘military occupation’ is used specifically to identify Aotearoa as a colony. The acts of military violence used by the New Zealand state to secure its sovereignty were not departures from a civility to which it gratefully returned at the conclusion of the Land Wars. Rather, the colony’s existence depends on the New Zealand government’s acts of warfare against Māori – violence which continues to this day. Only our ability to recognise this violence as warfare has changed. Over the last century, the New Zealand state’s warfare has changed from the overt violence of mass military action to the systematic violence of poverty and societal racism, enforced by the Criminal Injustice System.

This racist violence is not an accident, but the necessary outcome of the historical processes from which the New Zealand state emerges. Racism is an essential component of the New Zealand government – it cannot exist without the racist suppression of tino rangatiratanga. No racism, no New Zealand. Finding this racism incompatible with social justice, and recognising that racism is an intrinsic component of the New Zealand state, *No Pride in Prisons* affirms that a complete restructuring of social, political, and economic power is necessary, culminating in the overturning of the New Zealand government.

Within tikanga Māori, rangatiratanga is qualitatively different to the Eurocentric concept of nation-statehood. The nation-state is a specific political tool developed to centralise state power in a governmental body. Rangatiratanga, by contrast, operates on the level of relationships within a community and bears more in common with participatory or radical democracy than with state sovereignty. By calling for decolonisation, *No Pride in Prisons* is advocating not for a Māori nation-state, with all of the abuses of power that by definition a nation-state entails, but a communal, relational society based in tikanga Māori.

³⁹⁷ Translated as ‘A declaration of the paramount authority in respect of New Zealand.’ Margaret Mutu, *The State of Māori Rights*, (Wellington: Huia, 2011), 205.

³⁹⁸ Waitangi Tribunal, *Te Paparahi o te Raki: Wai 1040*, (Wellington: Waitangi Tribunal, 2014).

³⁹⁹ Ani Mikaere, “Three (Million) Strikes and Still Not Out: The Crown as the Consummate Recidivist,” in *He Rukuruku Whakaaro: Colonising Myths, Māori Realities* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2011).