

A year of encounters with privilege

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June 16th, 2020. My privilege today screams out even louder as I sit safely in a café, writing, drinking coffee, in New Zealand. On social media I watch as the world battles with COVID-19, and #Blacklivesmatter makes the headlines. Is this what it takes, a global pandemic to realise that black lives matter! I think this is my last foray with this particular chapter. I need to sew it together, this mish mash of entanglements with privilege. I wonder how relevant my story is now, my own (ongoing) storied entanglements with recognising privilege. This chapter stories my interactions with friends/colleagues, over one year, to highlight the ongoing work of bicultural/multiethnic relationships and the notion of becoming an ally. Importantly it threads in echoes of the past to demonstrate how our daily ongoing interactions are haunted by our colonial histories. I use writing as a method of inquiry, dropping into moments of reflection of the past and present, writing research poems, conversing with theory, pushing toward a decolonizing method. It is my story of recognising privilege.

April 8th, 2019. My birthday is tomorrow. My daughter told me today I should be happy. “Look how much you’ve done and the wonderful life you’re living.” And I suppose I am — mostly. But I can’t believe I’m still alive. It’s not like I’m really old. It’s more like I spent a childhood wondering if the world would still be there after December 31, 1999. But, lo and behold, it is. “Just here,” some would say, “but not *just*.” My mother must be up there in heaven wondering where we all got to. She left early in 1992, a fantastic conspiracy theorist who was forever looking for signs of the “end of days.” I remember praying as a child that I would get to 20. And I did. And then I even got to the “fuck it fifties,” as some of my friends call it.

I put a lot of effort in my early years to earning a mansion in heaven. I even pondered at one stage if I was working hard enough to sit at *the* table, after I got through the pearly gates. My mum ran an “open home” for wandering strays. Consequently, her four girls would wake up some mornings to find strangers sleeping in our room. As the eldest I was often in

charge of making sure everyone got fed, because mum would be busy saving their souls whilst dad was busy in the garden. In the evenings it was meeting time: Bible studies, sing-songs, gatherings of some sort or another. Today I wistfully wonder if she had a tally somewhere of the souls she saved. Her presence haunts me always. Going to university was not encouraged for a working class, white, Pentecostal, hell and brimstone, Pākehā girl, like me. But I did (see Fitzpatrick & Heyward, 2020, on imposter syndrome in the neoliberal university).

I am a Pākehā, an indigenous term used in New Zealand to describe the descendants of colonial settlers; Māori (normal) is the term for the Indigenous people. When Deborah Britzman (2013) talks about “difficult knowledge,” I get it. Being poor, living on other peoples’ hand-me-downs, reliant on charity, afraid of the knock at the door from the money lender, having your card rejected at the counter, and so on. So, it’s hard to swallow when someone turns around and calls you privileged. Yet I am; I am privileged. The concept of being “privileged” is difficult for many Whites to comprehend, claiming ignorance and resistance. H. James Garrett and Anver Segall (2013) critique the belief that ignorance is simply a “lack of knowledge” (p. 295) and resistance an active *not doing* what is asked of (p. 297). They redefine ignorance as a strategy of avoidance, which they link to psychoanalytic theories of “unconscious knowing” (Britzman, 1998) and “difficult knowledge.” Garrett and Segall argue that Whites have raced ways of knowing through living in a raced society (p. 295). Further, alluding to Leonardo (2009), this knowledge is uninterrogated white racial knowledge. Likewise, de Heyer and Conrad (2011) describe Whites often occupying a “privilege-ignorance nexus” where they are in a position of luxury and able to employ ignorance as a resistance strategy to a conscious acknowledgement (p. 297). Ignorance, redefined as a dynamic of knowledge, is a matter of choice. It is an active “forgetting,” a “dismembering,” a refusal of information and a desire not to know (Garrett & Segall, 2013; Leonardo, 2009; de Heyer & Conrad, 2011).

On June 16, 2020, good friend and colleague Avril Bell published an article “The truth is not set in stone” as arguments erupted globally, and monuments were being destroyed in response to #Blacklivesmatter. Splashed on the front is a photo of a monument in Auckland commissioned by my great great Grandmother (1920)³ to ‘remember’ the colonial forces and ‘friendly’ Māori who fought in the Māori/colonial wars 1845-1872. The irony of

this monument is never lost on me, my great great Grandmother was the daughter of Jewish settlers with a history of dislocation and rejection. Hers here is a “selective forgetting” of her own story and that of Indigenous Māori who fought against the crown, it is, as Avril Bell argues, a move “to create stories of themselves as New Zealanders (not colonizing migrants) by forgetting the violence by which they acquired this identity”. I agree with Avril who contends these troubling monuments provide us with possibilities to speak to the ghosts of our painful pasts.

My writing this autoethnographic chapter is an active re/membering (Connerton, 2009) and deliberate noticing of privilege. To notice privilege, I suggest, is to become aware of our inherited colonial hauntings. Derrida contends we are obligated to summon the ghost to find justice ‘for a fault, a fault of time and of the times’ (p.23). He reminds us that:

If [we] love... justice at least, the “scholar” of the future, the “intellectual” of tomorrow should learn it and from the ghost. [We] should learn to live by learning not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech ...(Derrida, 1994, p. 221).

My writing is an active re/membering through restorying my conversations with others, juxtaposing their experiences alongside mine, becoming through an entanglement of hauntings. This recognition is resonant with Barad’s idea of quantum entanglement (Barad, 2010) and has resulted in, what Derrida might call, ‘a summoning of ghosts’ into our conversations, making them both deeper and more evocative. This entanglement is not ours alone. As a *critical* autoethnographic work this chapter speaks to, and is entangled with, critical identity theories, woven through and juxtaposed alongside the narratives, where speculation and wonderings are performed on the page “as a living body of thought” (Holman Jones, 2016, and her reference to Della Pollock, p. 228).

My privilege is highlighted to me when I engage closely and lovingly in the lives of my friends. The privilege of belonging to the imagined but materially real white “race” (Flynn 2010; Carter & Fenton, 2010; Fenton, 2010), of belonging to the imagined homogenous dominant group of people in a colonized land, of speaking the dominant language, of being assumed “normal” (Bell, 2009; Webber, McKinley, & Hattie, 2013). But, I would also like to complexify this privilege of mine, because I am also privileged to have grown up alongside and entangled closely with Māori (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Said, 1993), the

Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. My relationship with others is what nourishes me, challenges me, and enables me to grow.

Privilege is tricky. Recognition of the complexity of privilege takes account of the various intersecting identities, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, class, race, sexual orientation, nationality, education and occupation that shape our multiple lived experiences (Grieshaber & Canella, 2001). In this chapter my privilege is located in my Pākehā (White) identity, although the intersections with my other identities (female, well educated, heterosexual) are also relevant. Postcolonial research on identity explores the complexity of historical legacies of colonisation with the emergence of hybrid identities, and other research explores the impact of globalisation where ‘strange new conjunctures emerge’ (Wetherell, 2010, p. 20). These approaches open up ways to make sense of how ‘social, cultural and technological changes produced new kinds of people, new ways of life, new social groupings and new modes of identity production’ (Wetherell, 2010, p. 19).

Perhaps because in academia we most often define privilege through a Western lens the notion of privilege has become, almost, distasteful. Echoes of Monty Python and the Four Yorkshiremen skit come to mind as they jostle for whose childhood was most impoverished: “You were lucky. We lived for three months in a brown paper bag in a septic tank!” I have found that privilege is understood, but often hidden through a series of strategies where people seek to undermine their privilege. Another complexity of privilege too is the assumed privilege others might cloak you in. Such as how white skin can dominate how others ‘read’ you, because you look a certain way, hold a particular position in an elite university, are of an age, ... assumptions are made about your history and how you are located in the world.

I remember an afternoon in 1979. My Uncle growled me “why can’t you speak normal, like you were on the stage?” I turned and looked carefully at him, mulling over the words he had just directed at me. What was he meaning? I thought about the character I had been playing for the past few weeks, some posh English lass who had fallen in love with a Pirate from Penzance. Penzance, a make-believe place where Pirates and maidens sang woefully about love. I understood this English accent was something he admired. “I live in Ōpōtiki” I replied slowly, my accent resonant of a hybrid multiethnic working class, blended with indigenous soft edges, “this is my normal”.

Years later I remembered his question as I sat in a local café working quietly in my corner. This was a ‘classy’ part of the big city of Auckland, a café where you could find academics like myself tucked away working, and also the local residents who had stopped in after a morning shopping for a coffee and chat. After a few weeks, or months, I started to notice something about the way these ladies talked. It wasn’t the English accent of the Pirates maiden, and yet there was a resonance there. After I had noticed, I couldn’t un-notice. The lilting accent ended with a soft lisp. And I supposed that wherever they found themselves, these ladies, they would recognise each other through this lisping accented end to their stories. Kind of a pass to acceptance in a particular group. I don’t lisp, but I do have a particular Pākehā accent from Ōpōtiki, developed from a childhood engaged in relationship with Māori. Slipping in and out of stories of Te Kooti, Maui, Whakaari, and Noah, Moses, and Solomon, demanded different enunciation of the vowel sounds. However, this is only recognised by those who have also been privileged to have such a rich experience.

Te Kawehau Hoskins (2012) writes poignantly of the complexity of Māori-settler relations in Aotearoa. Drawing on Linda Smith (Mead, 1996), and Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkin’s work (2008), she describes significant historical and ongoing Māori-settler relational engagement, and a social intimacy where they have not and “do not always understand or behave towards one another in politicised oppositional terms” (Hoskins, 2012, p. 85).

However, she argues

[f]oregrounding the divide between colonised and coloniser, and the reification of Māori identity by Māori, has been crucial to making space for internal processes of decolonisation and cultural reclamation ... To point to the ongoing effects of colonising structures and logics remains an important task for indigenous theorisation and activism. Yet, to *uncritically* evoke binary relations as the essential ‘truth’ about cultural identities and relations of power is, as Spivak ... suggests: regressive, destructive, and addictive. (Hoskins, 2012, p.87)

As a Pākehā in close ongoing relationship with Māori, understanding of these different privileges is important to how I interact with others. I often meet my colleagues and friends over coffee, sharing, listening, learning. As is illustrated in the work below I wrote with Indigenous Māori scholar, Virginia Tamanui (2020).

To sit and wait

To wait without agenda

To sit *with* and listen

Our breath meets in the space between, our two bodies facing each other, seated at an old table in the corner of the café, our local. The steam rises from our matching coffee cups and the rich bitter aroma is familiar, we sip and we chat, circling around the agenda without an agenda. How to do this thing – write about relationship as it emerges through the hauntings of our past; through the hauntings of the ghosts of our ancestors; through the haunting of colonization. You Māori (Indigenous New Zealander) and me Pākehā (descendent of settlers). We pause, we sigh, we stop and we start up again. Intense, emotive, a gentle tapping at the glass door to open but not smash and the fragile material that binds us together. (Tamanui & Fitzpatrick, 2020)

I think of Zeus Leonardo (2009a, 2009b, 2015) and his recognition of the fear of fumbling words and Martin Tolich's (2002) Pākehā paralysis¹. And so with Virginia, together, we took our chat deeper, carefully dancing towards an understanding: pausing, checking, not wanting to step on the other's toes; conscious always of the difficult dance. This dance with colleagues and friends is demonstrated also in the stories below.

For many years one of my key roles in the University has been to lead and lecture in a course on diversity. I have consequently had a keen interest in how, as educators, we practice our commitment to a bicultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā and are culturally responsive to others. Hence, I have been exploring, in collaboration with Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā colleagues, what it means to be bicultural and culturally responsive. This search also extends further to both my academic and personal relationships with others who live with the daily experience of discrimination based on the colonizing impact of our histories in today's society; discriminations based on ideas around race, religion and gender. Not that any of this is new, it is again, something I inherited, something I grew up with, something that is an integral part of who I am, a descendent of Jewish, Sami, Danish, German, Scottish, Cornish, Welsh and Yorkshire ancestors. Living between and entangled with the Indigenous Māori religion, travelling Pentecostal preacher grandparents, strict Brethren grandparents, and a mother who imported wine from Israel and ran an open home – my touchstone stories cross continents, cultures, language and religion. As an educator I am aware of my role as a

teacher, and as a teacher of teachers. Britzman (2013) contends the ‘fragility’ that many white educators and students experience

... is that larger historical and cultural forces that have not been metabolized and have not been worked through affect the imaginary of the teacher and student (p. 100). ... the main point comes in the form of a phantasy: for everyone the boundaries of self are porous and the transference of emotional states is what makes the difficult knowledge difficult to know. The safe bet is that teachers ... are always transmitting what is difficult to know, namely unconscious emotional situations that already direct the actors. (p. 115)

Britzman (2013) further argues that uncertainty may be a space for something new, where we begin to understand the in-between of love and loss, and presence and absence. It may also be a space where we can ask the unknowable question pertaining to the place of the pedagogue in the pedagogy, where difficult knowledge is welcomed.

What is to come.

The following is a collection of poemish narratives that focus on the encounters I had with privilege between March 2018 and March 2019. These were moments when my privilege was highlighted through interaction with my friends and colleagues, where they have generously shared their experiences, and I have been confronted, because I chose not to hide. I wonder about the notion of being an “ally” and then about being an “advocate” – or possibly I am both. What are these labels anyway? It all begins to sound a little romantic as well, but it isn’t in reality. And I am no saint. Tatum (2007) describes a White ally as a White person who understands the possibility of using one’s privilege to create more equitable systems, to create deep structural changes. Lisa Spanierman and Laura Smith (2017, p. 608) provide an in-depth synthesis of current literature and provide us with a summary of what they consider are the roles and responsibilities of White allies:

- a) Demonstrate nuanced understanding of institutional racism and White privilege
- b) Enact a continual process of self-reflection about their own racism and positionality
- c) Express a sense of responsibility and commitment to using their racial privilege in ways that promote equity
- d) Engage in actions to disrupt racism and the status quo on micro and macro levels
- e) Participate in coalition building and work in solidarity with people of colour

Many of these statements resonate with the purpose and work of this chapter. Especially to the work of autoethnography where, as Spanierman and Smith argue (2017), a commitment

to racial justice can be actioned through exploration and sharing of the stories of White allies (p. 611).

Each of the stories in this chapter are not remarkable in themselves, unfortunately; they are the lived reality of so many of my friends and colleagues. Through drawing on my ongoing journaling and note-taking from many conversations, Facebook posts, and reading of academic texts, I have crafted these encounters into brief re-storied narratives and poemish narratives (Lahman, Richard, & Teman, 2019), using writing as my method of inquiry (Richardson, 2008). By re-storying these experiences and how they enabled me to recognize privilege, I hope to create a way for others to disclose and juxtapose their own life experiences alongside mundane everyday occurrences of discrimination.

I begin with three scenes that occurred early in 2018, recalled from my conversations with three close friends, who are also my colleagues. Although these poems and dialogue are my restorying of our conversations, Mohamed Alansari, Fetaui Iosefo and Melinda Webber have read through, edited where necessary, and agreed to their purpose here.

Scene One

Scene: American Embassy New Zealand

Who: Dr Mohamed Alansari, colleague and friend of Dr. Esther Fitzpatrick

What: Going to conference in the USA.

The security guard shouts “go back home”

In his uniform.

They shuffle on by,

The Asian family looking for a home.

He sits quietly, trying not to stare,

To draw attention.

The Asian family shuffles on by.

It has taken weeks for him to get this interview.

I get an email, a gentle reminder

*Dear Esther, your
ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) needs updating.
I sit in a café
I update my ESTA.*

He later waits, he rings, he emails.
“It’s being processed,”
Says the man in India.
He prepares his presentation.

*I sit in the café and type
Another electronic form.
Frustration, wasting moments
Finally submitting the form.*

He finally goes to the desk
The woman speaks through the glass wall
He cannot hear
She rolls her eyes and leaves.

*I leave the café to walk to work.
30 minutes frustration of
Filling in an electronic form.
Going to a conference in the US.*

He sits at the desk and answers all their questions.
He is an award-winning scholar.
The man grins and ticks a box.
Under administrative process.

*I walk back to work and see him.
He smiles, still waiting, still in process.
Hotel paid, conference fees paid.
Time passes - no conference in the USA.*

What does injustice feel like?
 How does privilege work?
 I know injustice, but...
 My friend knows these things too well.

Scene two

Scene: Office at the University of Auckland

Who: Fetau Iosefo colleagues and friend of Dr Esther Fitzpatrick

What: Contemplations on everyday encounters with privilege?

Fetaui is on the other end of the phone.
 It has been a difficult few weeks.
 I have shared my sorrows.
 She has shared her tribulations.
 A colleague with racist undertones.
 We pause.
 She says – in an almost shameful whisper:
 “Today I wished I was white;
 Again.”
 We pause.
 In my office, far away from her in this instance. Far away from her in my everyday
 experience of *being* white. I am both stranger and friend.
 How do I respond to this?
 The paralysis starts to seep into my bones, I can feel it.
 I don’t want to fumble my words. Or give some sort of token response.
 What I really want to do is take her and cradle her in my arms – and scream with her out loud
 – to break something – I always fancied the idea of being Russian, drinking a glass of vodka
 and then throwing the glass into the fireplace.
 Instead I say, “Fuck them!”
 She laughs, “Fuck them!”

Together we will watch our backs.

We are family. Or so I hope.

I ponder on our shouting ‘fuck them’ down the phone to each other, and the energy and daring that comes in using this profane word. I imagine my grandmothers and mother turning in their graves. I use it sparingly. The word provides emphasis to my disgust with the situation (McEnery & Xiao, 2004). In saying ‘fuck them’, I am simultaneously saying ‘I give a fuck about you’, and inviting her to join me in ‘fucking them’ together. She does.

Later I see her, the colleague with racist undertones.

I am working with a Doctoral student from the Bahamas in our Campus café.

He is *not* white.

The colleague gives him a BIG hug.

It is all show.

He answers her questions with lies.

Smiling at the same time.

But I can see the line he has drawn.

The measured answers with a full stop.

We sit down with our coffees at the other end of the café.

Keeping safe.

He looks up at me.

“I don’t trust her,” he says.

“Neither do I,” I answer.

We complain for five minutes, sharing our disapproval and our fury.

And then we talk about decolonising research through critical autoethnography.

How critically interrogating our own stories is a way to speak back to power, to make our small stories count and disrupt the dominant narratives of university life, enables us to build connection between our stories and other/s stories and theory stories, and how in the *doing* it speaks and writes us toward hope.

A breathe of fresh air swirls around us, the potential to dream becomes a reality.

We laugh together.

Scene Three

Scene: Tent café on the University campus

Who: Colleagues and friends, Associate Professor Melinda Webber and Dr Esther Fitzpatrick

What: Those daily encounters

She is tired today. Tired she tells me. Tired of having to explain herself. Tired of the “doing,” those small tasks that she gets asked to do because she is the ‘Māori’ in the room.

Melinda could you:

begin the meeting with a karakia (prayer)

lead the waiata (song) at the end of the speech

translate this into Māori for me

advise on what is appropriate Tikanga – culturally acceptable in this place

send us an article that represents a Māori perspective for this course

and so on.

I tell her about the Disrupting Dominant Identities seminar I participated in – about Brandy who works for the Independent Māori Statutory Board for our local government. About her fierceness and how lonely it is for many Māori in these positions. I tell her about Brandy’s insistence that we needed to “raise capacity of non-Māori to speak” at the tertiary level – as allies.

She tells me about becoming over-sensitised to moments of racism – or not racism.

About being—becoming—woke

I am a colleague

I am a friend

I am an ally.

What does this mean?

It means

listening without needing to speak

listening to learn with humility

Sha Rhonda writes a blog to speak the truth about racism in the US, in a post late 2018 she echoes Melinda, saying, “I’m tired” ...

Tired of having to explain myself.

Tired of the ‘doing’,

Exhausted.

Whites [can] take on the work

So [I] can have a holiday.

Confronting a racist, one time, is **not enough**.

A list of five actions.

Do something to change white people.

Teach white people how not to be.

Support something led by people of color without trying to lead.

This involves humility.

Read something.

Something written by non-white people.

And last,

Write something.

And I am.

I am writing with my colleagues exploring bicultural and culturally sustaining practice, writing with colleagues who are Indigenous, Pasifika, Pākehā, Asian (after long conversations), writing with my Doctoral students as they explore their own complex immigrant becoming's ... and writing in corners of cafes and on trains ... and writing here today. Writing in collaboration with others to better understand how we might become ally's, advocates, or friends in this struggle together. Sha Rhonda's post links clearly to work exploring the challenges experienced by Whites committed to antiracism:

In reality, there remains a lack of empirical guidance for aiding Whites in best executing antiracist practices ... suggesting multiple complications [such as]... difficulties in gaining trust and rapport with communities of color ... struggles to manage negative feelings toward personal privilege and racism. (Mallot, Schaeffle, Paone, Cates, & Haizlip, 2019, p. 87)

Decolonising our privileged minds

Critical Autoethnography Conference July 2018

Tami Spry gifts me a small beautiful journal that fits perfectly in my bag. I carry it with me and write. The journal has quotes from famous writers scattered through it. The Critical

Autoethnography conference is a celebration of our wayfaring with autoethnography. I continue to write stories of my encounters with privilege. I become even more conscious of how others/visitors to New Zealand begin to define who I am in Aotearoa different from how my colleagues and friends define me. I am no longer understood as Pākehā, someone who is in relation with Māori; instead their own histories of colonisation, slavery, racism, are cloaked upon me. As these others define me, according to their own histories, assumptions of my privilege have also been redefined. It takes me many months to even begin to understand any of this, as all of my energy had been toward the conference, and other stresses in the university. Later comes a time of self-reflection as I sit with my close indigenous friends and talk through the experience. I continue to write.

National Writers Conference September 2018:

Albert Wendt sits comfortably in his chair on the stage. The famous Samoan writer Albert Wendt is 79 with a shock of white hair sitting high on his polished brown head. I am star struck like a young girl at a rock concert. Sitting up the front with my pen and paper, I've taken a photo, thinking perhaps later I can ask him for a "selfie" with me.

And I do.

I somehow climb out of my guilty White shoes and approach him as a reader, because he is an author whose work I have admired for a long time.

For now I am hanging on his every word. He speaks about family, oral stories, and writing fiction as a way to express political ideas. He speaks of having courage, and needing to grapple with the tension of speaking openly but in consideration of family. He speaks of tackling systems that stereotype and that Pākehā also are colonised, and that one way to save yourself from crisis is to write about it.

And I am.

I am noting down in my small book all the words that resonate with me. I am noting down how I am feeling and what it links to in my histories, in my readings, in my work. There are arrows, and names of theorists inside cloud bubbles, and memories.

He tells me it, "helps you to read your life but it is not your life" and that, "we are all shit scared of having no meaning or worth."

I wonder about this. I think I am shit scared about speaking, but my silence is a privilege. Somehow I need to write these stories.

Wendt reminded me how the minds of both the Indigenous and settlers are colonised. Immediately I thought of Zeus Leonardo (2015) who described the process of colonising the mind, where children were subjected to an education that was filled with white intentions and civilised ways (p. 90), and where the dominant ideology of white superiority was written on children's minds. Earlier, Ruth Frankenberg (1993) had described the impact of race thinking on our social geographies, how our physical landscapes, our material environments and our conceptual frameworks, all have traces of this political history (p. 54):

The landscapes of childhood are important because, from the standpoint of children they are received rather than chosen ... the landscapes of childhood are crucially important in creating the backdrop against which later transformations must take place. ... once in a landscape structured by racism, a conceptual mapping of race, of self and others, takes shape, which follows from and feeds the physical context.
(Frankenberg, p. 55 & 77)

The concept of 'landscapes of our childhood' resonates for me with Traue's (1990) work on a Pākehā whakapapa and ancestry of the mind, and Maddison-Macfayden's (2013) articulation of the touchstone stories of our childhood. I wonder in what ways does our conceptual mapping of race, of self and others, impact on the assumptions we still make when we meet people in new environments?

Professionail October 2018: noticing privilege in the mundane of a pedicure

It's been a difficult year. My Faculty went under a year-long review where many of us had the neoliberal beast (Ball, 2012) breathing down our necks. We spend our days writing for publication, writing for grants, writing reports, writing the results of our publishing, writing a portfolio to argue why we should stay. We have meetings, teaching and supervision, and try to appear sane. I know we are not alone. Yet we are now 30 colleagues less and the same workload to be completed.

Others not in the review keep asking, "you doing OK?"

The beast shuffles and snuffles down the hallway.

Counting, evaluating, reducing us all to a number.

Outside an apricot sunset morphs into the night.
 The fluffy black bundle we call dog hugs tight.
 And we reach into our soul to rekindle hope.
 Friends and family feast on memories
 Of aroha, faith, hope, charity -
 We will be alright.

In the midst of the up downs of the world we now knew, an emotional mess, I escaped one weekend to have my nails painted at Professionail. And I wrote...

Outbreaks of foreign laughter,
 A broken massage chair,
 Lights of promise but no movement.
 The water is cold.
 A moment of pampering stolen
 From a day of marking.
 Nails painted the wrong colour!
 Bright red versus deep purple.
 AAAHHH!!!
 What a waste.
 Apologies sung out loud to
 Convince me it looked pretty.
 Time was against us.
 I really don't like the pretty red.
 I am not in a pretty red mood,
I am deep purple.

The irony of privilege is it does not safe guard you from hurt, from discomfort, or from the privilege of others. Privilege is tricky.

Research writing retreat Vaughan Park November 2018: the privilege of friendship

Te Kawehau said, "Friendship." Yesterday. It was meant to be a quick gathering of ideas from the group of ten scholars. To sum up and go write, with one or two ideas also for going

forward. I was exhausted after two days of talking about bicultural and culturally responsive practice, or culturally sustaining practice. But NO we began at 9am and finished about 12.30, in time for lunch. We had become immersed in thinking, listening, sharing, going deeper into those difficult conversations/knowledge, becoming engaged, becoming ‘in relation’ to each other, entangled. Tillman-Healy (2003) describes friendship across social groups where...

The bonds take on political dimensions. Opportunities exist for dual consciousness-raising and for members of dominant groups to serve as advocates for friends in target groups. As a result, those who are “just friends” can become *just* friends, interpersonal and political allies who seek personal growth, meaningful relationships, and social justice . (Tillman-Healy, p. 732)

Friendship. Mulling over this as I crawled up the hill to get coffee early in the morning. Remembering the research design I had/was creating depends on friendship. I suppose in some way I was inviting these colleagues to sit with me in a collegial *just* friendship.

To understand how this might be possible I went back to Te Kawehau Hoskin’s argument on relationality where she explores the Māori concept of love – aroha.

At the foundation of such relationships is *aroha* (love), and “inherent in love ... is a deep comprehension of another’s point of view” (Durie, 2000, p. 98). Aroha is ... the *prerequisite* for the possibility of any productive social or political alliance. ... is *unconditional* concern and responsibility for others that operate in excess of who (culturally, socially, economically) others might be, or what they may have done. (Hoskins, 2012, p. 91)

How might friendship through aroha speak to our notion of being, becoming an ally?

Auckland November 2018 Being an Ally or an Advocate: owning up to privilege

They are just words – but they are useful words – ally and advocate. I don’t think I can call *myself* either of these, but they provide me with some sense of purpose. I was fortunate to be accepted as a guest editor with the wonderful Rosemary Reilly for a special issue of *Arts Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* to create a place for a group of scholars to publish their work on “craft” with a focus on “making as method.” I had been fortunate to meet Rosemary at the Critical Autoethnography conference (CAE) in Melbourne in 2016.

This community of scholars, led by Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris, had become increasingly important to my work. From opposites side of the world, across a distance of 16,726 km, craft created a connection between Rosemary and me. We also shared a relational, pedagogical and academic passion for Indigenous rights and worked with decolonising methods.

Ever the ideas person (which gets me in trouble by ending up with too much to do!) I also thought it would be wonderful for the reviews section to invite poet scholars to write an Ekphrastic² poem in response to a few of the beautiful “craft” works represented in the journal. As a consequence, I found myself reading the thought-provoking ekphrastic review from Fetaui Iosefo (2019). In the introduction to her poetic work she described the ethical method she employed to first communicate with the author of the original work and referred to me, calling me “an ally of indigenous people at our Faculty.” It is quite a different experience having others name you. In that moment, reading her words, I remember pausing and reading the words several times over, reading closely. I had been having a conversation with my close friends about these terms ally and advocate – now it all seemed more real. These had been quiet conversations over coffee, now in print, what does it mean to be *labelled* ally? I agree with Di Angelo who earlier argued we cannot label ourselves ...

I am a White woman whose academic, professional, and personal commitment is to antiracist practice; however, I do not call myself an ‘antiracist White’ because I believe that is for people of color to decide if, in any given moment, I am behaving in antiracist ways. (cited in Melton, 2018, p. 84)

What it means to be an ally or advocate is problematic. Mallot et al. argue...

There is a dearth of literature specific to effective race-based, antioppression actions practiced by Whites. [and further] This void affects the ability of educators and counselors to understand and better maneuver the often complex and challenging process of engaging in antiracist practice. (Mallot et al., 2019, p. 86)

Writing this chapter is one way to begin exploring and filling this void, revealing the complicated difficult process of becoming an ally. Understanding it as an ongoing journey.

Truth is there were times during this year when I wondered what it would be like just to pack up my bags and walk away. Have a holiday from all this mahi (work). Because of my privilege I get to choose whether I am an ally/advocate or not. I don't need to wish I was white. Going to the US is just a troublesome 30 minutes updating my ESTA on an electronic form. I am not a Muslim. I don't get called on every day to represent my Indigenous whanau. I'm just another white female academic edging toward old age. Allyship, according to Mallot (2018), is when we recognise this privilege of being an "individual in a sociopolitical demographic group on the upside of power" and we use it to "publicly demonstrate a supportive stance" to advocate for others (p. 84). Likewise, Corey Ponder (2018) importantly argues that being an "ally" is not a label or something we can get a "badge" for and critiques the danger of words that become "hip" and lose their power. Rather he draws our attention to allyship as a journey where we are consistently

...recognizing common humanity—having the difficult conversations because it is right and challenging unfair norms because they should be challenged. Whatever term you ascribe to it—ally, advocate, warrior, accomplice—they describe consistent action over time on behalf of others. (para 10)

Through the work of critical autoethnography I am able to confront, explore and engage with those difficult conversations. Employing writing as a method of inquiry I interrogate my year of encounters with privilege; writing, crafting, reading, deleting, theorizing, and so on. I carry my notebooks with me, read blogs and news items, listen carefully in my deep hanging out moments with friends. It is a cyclic iterative process, and I am well pleased I said 'a year' because in reality this story is bigger than my lifetime.

Kia kaha

Be strong

We are not alone.

We have allies.

Footnotes:

1. For many Pākehā the legacy of whiteness hangs over them as an unwelcomed inheritance in which they are unsure how to act; they become paralysed (Tolich, 2002). Pollock (2004) described how individuals are consciously concerned about being labelled “racist” if they fumble race words, such as white and black, and instead they become ‘colormute’.
2. Ekphrasis is a form of poetic inquiry using one art form to respond to another art form.
3. Family history recalls my great great Grandmother Kate Keesing, close friend of Governor George Grey, commissioned the statue.

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