

Dr. Anthony G. Reddie's Australian visit is underway

Dr. Anthony Reddie, Research Fellow in Black Theology at Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham UK has been in Australia for the past week as a guest of NATSIEC. During that time he has spoken to groups in Sydney, Brisbane and Cairns. Tonight, the third NATSIEC Christ and Culture Conference starts in Sydney, which Dr. Reddie will facilitate.

Dr. Reddie has already presented interesting and challenging workshops which have explored identity, contextualisation, racism and other issues. Through sharing his own experiences as the descendent of the slave trade and the son of immigrants to Britain Anthony has sparked lively discussion and inspired us to think about these issues in the Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context.



Dr.Reddie with Elders and community members in Brisbane.

After the forums in Brisbane and Cairns, I asked Dr. Reddie what were some of his impressions and highlights of his visit so far.

It has been the relative invisibility of Indigenous people. By that I mean as someone committed to working with oppressed people, it was only in my preparation to come here that I have become aware of how complicit I am in the invisibility of Indigenous people. An example is that people come to do an MA in mission studies at my institution and although Australians come an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person has never come and I haven't even been aware that they haven't come.

I have also been struck by the spirituality of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in spite of all they have been through, you still meet a sense of hope, resilience, generosity and kindness.

I particularly enjoyed the service at Wontulp Bi-Buya on Friday night. During the day I was struck by how shy and reticent the students were, yet in the evening when it came to the worship, which they organised, they came into their own. Their singing, their humour, and the dancing; their expressions of culture were absolutely



With students and staff at Wontulp Bi-Buya College - Cairns

fantastic, it was very contextual.



The "Is God Colour Blind?" workshop in Brisbane.

I was also pleasantly surprised in the workshop in Brisbane on identity. I have not done an equivalent event in Britain with both privileged and oppressed people in the same place. It was significant when the oppressed started speaking. The non-Indigenous people were shocked to hear the stereotypes about them. It was a stand out moment when Aboriginal people addressed the non-Indigenous people and asked them "what are you going to do?"

Graeme Mundine, the Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Sydney, is also accompanying Anthony on his trip. It was in his former role as Executive Secretary of NATSIEC that Graeme invited Dr. Reddie to come to Australia and facilitate the NATSIEC Christ and Culture conference and do a series of talks and forums.

For Graeme one of the highlights of the visit so far has been meeting other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and sharing ecumenically.

We are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples first. Our meetings this week have emphasised how in the last 20 years we have grown by working and talking together in dialogue. We have Catholics and Baptists and others, all working together in dialogue.

I have also been reminded of the important work of our Indigenous theological colleges and how they are encouraging their students to open their minds and get them thinking instead of closing them down. Many colleges are fixated on experts, rather than encouraging thinking.

I hope that non-Indigenous people are reflecting on their structures and ways of doing Church just like we are continually doing.



The Yarrabah dancers perform the Temptation of Jesus.

Spending a week with Anthony reminds me that we are not alone; there are other groups who have similar issues as us. Although we are not the same, the western imperial structures we live with are the same. We can all constructively fight against these structures. What people have been doing for the past 2000 years has not worked, if it has worked why are there so many groups upset? We have to ask questions about why these structures are continuing.

Anthony agreed with Graeme and said:

I see myself here to help or assist in the ongoing reflection. By sharing my experience of being a descendent of the slave trade – to be a mirror to help those to see what opportunities God may be placing before you, in your context, at this time in order to be agents of change in the future.



Principal Victor Joseph and students present gifts to Anthony at Wontulp Bi-Buya College.

I am very grateful to those who have helped organise and those who participated these wonderful events. In Brisbane, our thanks go to the Elders who met with us and also to Georgia Corowa of Queensland Churches Together Indigenous People's Partnership and Ravina Waldren at the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry who hosted the meeting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

We would also like to thank the staff and students at Wontulp Bi-Buya College in Cairns. The worship was a very special time for us all. Our thanks to all those who came to the workshops and helped make them such lively, interactive and thought provoking

events.

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You can still hear Dr. Reddie at forthcoming public events in Sydney and Canberra. Further details are on the NATSIEC website at ww.ncca.org.au/natsiec

Sydney

Saturday March 26th - A day with Anthony Reddie

The Myths of Whiteness: Truth, Knowledge and Power

United Theological College, North Parramatta: 10.00 am - 5.00pm.

Wednesday March 30th - Evening Forum - *Sameness, Similarity and Difference: An Intercultural Theology for Human Solidarity*

Dr Reddie will look at how we live together and what resources Christian theology provides us for how we go about doing this. Held in association with Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney Archdiocese.

Canberra

Tuesday March 29th Evening Forum - *Stakeholding: Towards a Christian Theology of Radical Inclusivity*

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Canberra.

Held in association with Christians for an Ethical Society and Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.