

Initially, I felt unequal to the task of entering into this debate (such as it is) in such illustrious company. Having since witnessed the thoroughly entertaining, yet wholly unedifying, spectacle of academic egos in contest - Lattas, Austin-Broos, Davis and Langton spring to mind mostly – I now feel my concerns unwarranted. Against this backdrop and acting on Altman’s advice – who it seems to me has provided the most measured commentary to date – I feel compelled to avoid ‘...polite silence...’ and note the following:

1. As just about anyone who has worked with or in close proximity to the Professor will attest – and even those who have simply followed various debates from afar – Marcia Langton appears free to deploy at will the argumentative and rhetorical device taught and learned in a Western philosophical/academic tradition, but when challenged in kind will invariably resort to accusations of racism, often couched in terms of "what would a whitefella know?". Don't mean to be boorish, but I see no evidence of rigour or objectivity in this form of argument or for that matter any semblance of a level playing field, or indeed a way out of the ‘...sandpit...’. It seems that Professor Langton’s response to Boris Frankel’s review of the Boyer Lectures was motivated more by this self-serving and uneven form of political posturing than by any real substance. In this regard I again concur with Jon Altman’s argument: whilst I don’t subscribe to everything Frankel espouses, his commentary constitutes a ‘...critical review...’ not a racist diatribe.

2. As a Territorian, I find sympathy for Langton's frustration with interfering southerners but also share some for Frankel's critique of that position. To elaborate with reference back to another debate (involving another prominent Australian commentator) I confess I found it difficult to warrant Langton's criticisms of Germaine Greer as an expatriate – who for this reason alone, something like the whitefellas alluded to above, has no legitimate voice – when the latter dared to publish *Whitefella Jump Up*. with reference back to the subject at hand, I find it just as difficult to fathom - as do many of the people I work with in remote parts of the country – Professor Langton's generalizations regarding southerners when the good Professor herself is every bit as much a “breeze in breeze out” expatriate as Greer, with respect to Aboriginal Australia at least. The point here is not to discount the invaluable work that Professor Langton undertakes, but instead to highlight that many other sincere and just as competent individuals work with Aboriginal people in various contexts "up north" but reside "down south" – as does Langton herself, correct me if I'm wrong – but do not warrant pejorative labelling as southerners. Indeed that labelling would render Langton subject to her own critique, unless of course, different rules apply to the Professor than to others, as the previous point might suggest. If so, I think there’s a name for that.

3. With reference to Professor Austin-Broos, and the suggestion that we ‘...pass over in silence...a range of Indigenous views...’ I presume the ‘...prominent...leaders...’ to which she refers are of the Professor Langton and Noel Pearson ilk. If this is the case, I respectfully suggest the reverse, which is, that this ‘emerging Aboriginal intelligentsia’ as Sutton would have it, receives more airplay than just about any other Aboriginal “representative” group in the country, at least in mainstream politics and press. Moreover, I would further suggest that this monopoly of the airwaves often comes at the expense of “voices from the bush”; those remote dwelling “cousins” who increasingly often, say and aspire to quite different things but just as often find it difficult to articulate those aspirations in the language of dominance. Incidentally, I make no apology for the use of the term ‘language of dominance’ which is neither melodramatic nor theatrical but precisely what it is and precisely why those individuals alluded to above command such a receptive mainstream audience - they speak in a

language we understand and say the things we want to hear. In anticipation of criticism on that score, there is ample evidence of '...empirical stuff that grounds a real exchange of views...' to back up this supposition. One merely needs to talk to countrymen in the bush who have been subject to the "my way or the highway" style of policy making advocated by some of these individuals.

4. Picking up on the point above, it is worth noting that in the past both Professor Langton and Noel Pearson, amongst others, made truly enlightened commentary on the need to acknowledge particular history and cultural difference within Aboriginal Australia. They certainly opened this author's eyes to a number of his own race based and taken-for-granted universal assumptions. I wonder what happened over the years? Now it seems that solutions are to be universally (and arbitrarily) applied from on high – from Redfern to Borroloola and all parts in between – with a "one size fits all" mentality. I do wonder whose purpose this serves? And I also bridle at the dismissal of individuals with a casual, imperious wave, who have fought long, hard and well for their people in urban and remote spaces, as some kind of old world 'gerontocracy', past it or just plain redundant? In this world where cultural diversity itself is mere convenience or relic, what hope for diversity of opinion?

5. This point may be more a question. I challenge anyone to tell me why a call to transparency, to avoid any suggestion of conflict of interest, is considered "scurrilous". This is a call I (and many others like me) answer on a regular basis and rightly so. As a consultant anthropologist I too receive funding from a mining company but do so at the behest of the people I work for and under their tutelage have no qualms about revealing my sources. Scurrilous? Racist? Pshaw!

One final note...whilst an iPhone may facilitate an immediate "rush of blood" response it appears to contribute little towards clearly defined argument. Amidst the tortured grammar and syntax found in some of the AASNET responses it is sometimes difficult to determine on what side of the argument any particular author stands. That may be an easy fix; wait until the blood subsides, return to the office, think about the world outside of Id and when that arrives, if it arrives, craft a response. This used to be called "objective" debate and I also remember the word 'dialectic' which once promised a constructive way forward but I suspect is now unfashionable in the academy, unsullied as it is by political or any otherworldly considerations.