

HFC - We Walk Together

by Charles Richards

In Australia right now we have fervent discussion about segregation and many of the people who are making comment about what needs to be done are middle class white Australians who supposedly represent all of us.

Questions are rightly being asked about whether enough is being done to bridge the gap between the native owners of this country and their plight. Questions about our shores and our boundaries and how they should be protected. These are the 'Elephant in the room' issues facing this wonderful country.

But the issue of segregation and racism, black and white, male and female, is often misguided. Sure there have been terrible atrocities on our soil and all over the world, and the way our fore fathers treated indigenous communities is just not on. We cannot meld the ills that went before us, but as a modern society we need to heed the words understanding and learning.

And maybe, just maybe, our little pocket of the world pioneered the way that people from varying backgrounds should interact and co-exist. In keeping with this, our friends when we grew up were not defined by where they came from, their wealth, or their heritage. These people were simply our friends because we wanted to be around them, spend time with them and learn from being with them. When times were good we shared them together, when tragedy struck we listened, consoled and supported.

It is not wrong to talk about the absolute air of disgust that accompanies segregation, it is wrong to ignore it and not talk about it.

We shouldn't negate discussion because someone wants segregation dispensed to the boundary like a four in a cricket match.

We need to spend time with people from different back grounds to learn about their plights and their struggles.

As an example, it is wrong not to talk about the needs of the owners of this proud land, but recognition leads to solution. Solution leads to better outcomes and better outcome are the objective.

My friends from growing up in Healesville are a diverse, eclectic group of ramshackle characters. People passed in and out of our lives that could have been characters in the great novels of our times. Every group was represented, warts and all.

**'Segregation go bugger off,
you have no place in our
team, go find someone else's
jumper to wear'**

School was probably the melting pot, you took a group of kids from all walks of life and representing every minority group, threw them in a room and they were no longer individuals, they became known as 4C or 3A. There was no diversification or segregation, just a bunch of kids, in a room, all there for one common cause...to learn.

And learn we did...about each other.

And learning about each other leads you down the path of understanding.

And maybe our answers lay in the hands of our youth, if young children can happily play together regardless of back ground then there is hope for the future.

As children, we learnt more about life in a few short years from being part of that diverse group than all the politically correct discussions held in Canberra.

And through understanding we learn that friends can come from anywhere and any walk of life.

And if you look at the Healesville Football Club it is very easy to see representation from every corner of the globe, names like Peters, Smith, Swindle together with Sotko, Bystersky, Noske and throw in Farrow, Howie, Ayres and you have covered some serious territory. And that is just the beginning Clark, Duddy, Dankert, Schmolling, Wandin, Mitchell, Halley, McKintosh, Fisher, Hill, Lionet, Hort, Dennehy, Pitto, Dryden, Watson, Bergin, Litchfield, Kirkham, Bates, and a hundred more...the biggest challenge is where to stop.

Every letter in the alphabet represented and every corner of the world has a representative. All thrown into a pot, mixed together, dressed in a Red and White outfit and thrown into the field of sporting battle. That's all folks. Pretty damn simple. Not a sign of segregation anywhere.

And throw these people together, no matter where they are from and wonderful things happen. It is the true measure of humanity that when tested we see the true mettle of people.

It is only when we look back later we see what was there the whole time. One big family with Red and White coursing through our veins. With a quirky little club song that sang about the 'Mud and the Muck' and the 'Red Legs playing their game'. And play they have, and sing the song they do, one and all, It doesn't get any more Australian than that.

This little club has achieved so much from humble beginnings 128 years ago. And standing alongside achievement is understanding. Our understanding of what it means to feel involved, what it means to be included, and what it means to stare down segregation and banish it from our lands.

Segregation – you can go get stuffed. You have no place on our side of the Yarra Bridge. You have caused enough trouble around the world and you will never have the pleasure of stepping foot in our Valley and wearing our jumper.

So our message to you is... 'Segregation go bugger off, you have no place in our team, go find someone else's jumper to wear';

We are the Blood Brothers and we walk together.