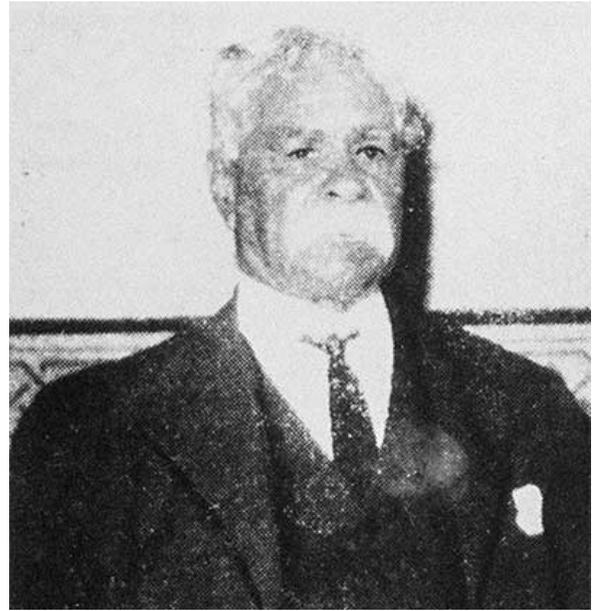


# Day of Mourning:- Déjà vu!

Written by Mark Waters, State Manager, Reconciliation SA (25/01/18)



You know when you get that spine-tingling feeling that you've seen or heard something before. Well I get the sense that we have been here before. We are hearing conversations about January 26th as if it is a new conversation.

In reality, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been raising the issue of the meaning of the day that acknowledges the colonising of their land for years.

**#Dayof Mourning** presents a social media commentary that takes us back to the 1930's.

Aboriginal activists such as William Cooper (pictured), Doug Nicholls (who became the Governor of South Australia), William Ferguson and Fred Maynard wanted to make sure that the 26th January in 1938 was known as a day on which "aborigines will be in mourning for all that they have lost" (as cited on the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS] website) (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/day-mourning-26th-january-1938>).

The AIATSIS article outlines the work of the Australian Aboriginals League and the Aborigines Progressive Association. It continues: -

***"January 26 1938 marked the 150th anniversary of the landing of the First Fleet in Australia. For some this was a day to celebrate, for others a day to mourn (Editor's note –does this sound familiar?). On that day a group of Aboriginal men and women gathered at Australia Hall in Sydney.***

***The participants at the first Day of Mourning came from across Australia to continue a struggle that had begun 150 years previously."***

The 1938 gathering communique is instructive. It reads: -

***"WE, representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the Whiteman's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, we ask for a new policy which will raise our people TO FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY."***

Eighty years later, the Uluru Statement from the Heart is still calling for full citizen status and equality within the community.

And so, this January 26th brings us to a point of reflection. Wherever we go with the conversation around a national day, we need to keep striving for whatever unites us and binds us together with common purpose and identity.

Last week on Radio National Hon Linda Burney MP called for more truth telling in the community to support our reflections.

Reconciliation SA believes in this conversation continuing and hearing from all points of view. But please, let's not pretend that this is a new conversation. It has been going on for years. And to do it justice and honour, we need to remember and accept our history.

Eighty (80) years of history cannot be wiped out as if it never happened. Two hundred and thirty (230) years of history will not be expunged because it is not a convenient truth that is easily palatable for the community learner.

We stand with the Aboriginal community as they mark Survival Day and remember the leaders and activists who have bravely stated their truths (again, and again, and again, ad infinitum). Will you pause with us as we have that sense of déjà vu and remember all that has occurred before. **#remembering80years**