

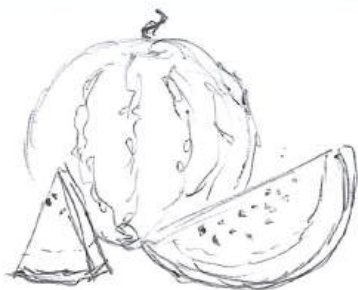
mellow
yellow

2024



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I can't say we'll check it regularly.
But we'll probably check it eventually.



Hello hello! It's been a hot minute. I don't know how long it's been since I did the first Mellow Yellow, but here I am. I'm about to turn 43, and revisiting Mellow Yellow because of this latest whinging colonial govt and their current assault on Te Ao Māori. There's so much to say, and at the same time not much to say on the Principles Bill. But here's some short lines.

Under international law, *contra proferentum*, the indigenous text takes precedence.

The treaty principles were made up in 1987 because settlers and the govt didn't want to honour Te Tiriti, but they wanted to look like they were.

The Treaty Principles, 1987, is a crappy cowardly sneaky nod towards Te Tiriti. Sort of if like there were very clear house rules, but you just made up your own vague ones because you didn't want to do any of the chores or abide by any rules, but you still wanted people to think you were a good house guest.

This latest proposal by the Act Party, wants to ditch even those crappy vague cowardly principles. It's really just a colonial rebrand, using liberal multiculturalism to further undermine Te Tiriti and indigenous rights. ASTR (asians supporting tino rangatiratanga) has resources and more details about this, and how asian tauiwi are yet again being manipulated into being pitted against Māori.

There's also a whole lot of other shitty things the current govt is trying to roll out and roll over. Various acts and cuts around environment, water, climate, infrastructure and societal services.

There is info a plenty out there. And in here I'm interested in what's changed for you between the first Mellow Yellow and today. And also what needs to change and be done differently to resist this current assault.

One of the things I've noticed is how much more engaged govt, private and NGOs are with Te Tiriti / Treaty Principles or whatever the current buzzwords are. For better and for worse, whether it's a rebrand to look good or something more meaningful and deeper.

And the prevalence of Te Reo Māori in use everywhere. Which is kinda maybe why monolingual settlers are having a last boo hoo. Because they've been well left behind by people with superior language skills, and it irks them deeply. Te Reo Māori is being spoken by heaps of people across a whole bunch of areas and outlets with no sign of stopping or even slowing down.

The Warehouse sold out of their Te Wiki o Maori merch in less than an hour. Te Matatini is just cranking, and finally being funded closer to the levels it deserves. The boohoo 'Speak English' crowd might be vocal, but are dwindling and being left in the dust.

What I've been up to in the last decade or two.. Of note probably, I transitioned and became a guy. That was a whole trip. More on that in the next episode.

I do feel like my smarts have diminished, whether because of testosterone or age I don't know...

Heteropatriarchy is alive and well, and being a guy now I see the other side of things and it's disgusting also.

I lived in London for a patch and did sex worker rights stuff. Heart of the empire and fortress Europe, and the violence of borders and documentation and xenophobia and economics in a different light.

I became a mainstream builder, renovations and alterations in very hilly Welly. Then, because building is pretty much unaffordable to the average person, I've been learning earth/eco building. Like the Three Little Pigs. Straw and sticks and clay. It's a very bodily and visceral experience. Not unlike cooking in kitchens, which I did in my teens and 20's.

Sometimes I feel so living in my flesh body, it's hard to put things into mouth words, let alone text on a page. This feels very clunky and inept to write. Possibly because I hardly write anymore, maybe just the scribble of building material orders on a bit of timber.

And maybe because lots of things feel insurmountable, war, climate, capitalism. I don't have any words for Palestine and that genocide, only deep rage and nausea.

But I do take heart that people have always resisted and struggled, thru slavery, genocide, invasion and occupation. And the trees and plants and birds and insects and microbes continue to grow.

By Wai Ho

Tell me the story of Te Tiriti without telling me the story of Te Tiriti

By MZ

Imagine you and your family are visiting someone's home and community. They are hosting you, feeding you, sheltering you despite you just showing up uninvited. But during your stay, your siblings keep misbehaving, they keep breaking things on purpose, messing up the house, pissing in the kitchen, raiding the alcohol cabinet, and being inappropriate and disrespectful to the hosts. Being the worst kind of guest.

They try to get you to follow their house rules, but it doesn't work. Instead of just kicking you out of their community altogether, the hosts give you some space to build your own house next door. They ask that you sort out your family members and stop them from behaving in this way.

You even sign a contract to say that you will respect their ultimate authority, their house, and everything that is precious to them. You agree that you will only manage your own family, not theirs. You agree that you will treat them as equals. You already knew this is their house, and they make the rules, and your patriarch recognised that formally several years earlier.

But instead of sticking to that agreement and living life in your own house, holding your own people accountable for the harms they are causing, you decide to invade their house.

You ransack their home, re-arrange their furniture and renovate it to your liking, and proclaim it as your own. You displace your original hosts, steal their belongings, and poison their food supply. When they resist, you kill them, you imprison them, starve them, and make up laws to take even more houses from their community.

While you are doing all this, elsewhere you force opium down the throats of a people who have tea and silk but you have nothing they desire. After you bomb and devastate their lands, you invite them to build your houses, and build big, and build more. You get them to do the hard and dirty work because you can pay them less. For decades, you make them pay you to come and work, you stop their families and spouses joining, you do not want them permanently in your house.

Then you tell the first people you displaced not to associate with these workers because they are immoral drug-addicted heathens, and the source of all the problems, fearing their alliance might threaten your power.

Meanwhile, you don't just displace one family, you take over the homes of their cousins, grandparents, extended relatives, neighbours, the whole community, you continue until you have almost full control. You bring in diseases that decimate their families. You tell them they can't speak their language, they can't heal each other using their own medicines, and you steal their children. You bring in more of your family members to settle in their homes.

The first people whose home you invaded gather their families together and try to find ways to hold you accountable for the contract you signed. They bring in their lawyers, their elders, they rebuild a house on the little space they have left. They bring people together and try to negotiate with you to take their house back. They tell you, once again, to sort out your own people, teach them what the agreement was and to uphold it.

From their pressure, you let them have one bedroom and access to the bathroom. You tolerate their language, and give them a room to teach their children, and you selectively incorporate some of their culture to spice up your bland identity. But you still do not relinquish your power, you still control the house and their families. You partially listen only when they come with their cousins on your doorstep.



After all this violence you have unleashed over centuries, they are still reminding you of the original contract that you have had 184 years to honour.

In that time, you already tried to redefine the agreement and dilute it to meaningless 'principles'.

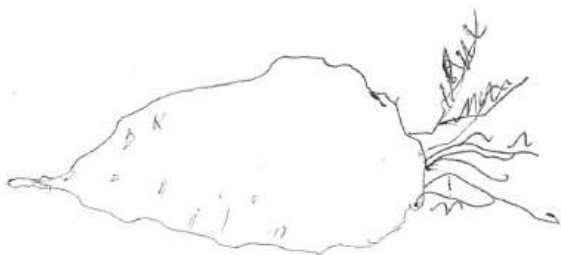
Now, you want to redefine the agreement again so you can continue to violate the original contract over and over.

The agreement was not complicated, you had one job: take accountability for your own people and respect their houses which generations have lived in. They did not have to offer you any space or delegate any authority or jurisdiction to deal with your own people, they could have taken that authority upon themselves. They could have kicked you out in the beginning.

Imagine your grandchildren learning the truth of all this. Imagine they do not want to inherit and continue your violence. Imagine if they all retreated back in the house you were originally given space to build, and to rebuild a humble home where their peace is born of justness and accountability.

Imagine if those you tolerate from other places (where your family has also ransacked and ravaged) start seeing through your lies of this place as a peaceful paradise. Imagine they no longer want to aspire to become you, or to worship you, or to see you as their hosts. Imagine that they are making those alliances and connections that threaten your power and refuse to be used as pawns in your power trip. Imagine they learn the truth of your abusive patterns of power and control and understand what it means to be guests in someone else's house.

You don't have to imagine this, because it's already happening.



Similarity is not solidarity.

I KEEP HEARING THAT ASIAN PEOPLE AND TANGATA WHENUA SHARE CULTURAL VALUES THAT ARE "SIMILAR", AS THOUGH THAT SETTLES THE QUESTION OF AND GUARANTEES DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITY.

Nabilah

I see news story after news story romanticise ideas of communal cultures, family-centric cultures, shoes-off-in-the-house cultures, my-community-loves-food cultures.

5 things Māori and Asian cultures have in common

4 Mar 2019 — 5 things Māori and Asian cultures have in common. Valuing older


I HEAR CLAIM AFTER CLAIM THAT "ASIANS" IN AOTEAROA ARE SURELY IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, BECAUSE "ASIANS ARE INDIGENOUS TOO" OR "ASIANS HAVE EXPERIENCED COLONISATION TOO".

AS SOMEONE WHO IS INDIGENOUS (AND ASIAN) (AND, UP TILL 4 YEARS AGO, HAS ONLY EVER LIVED IN MY ASIAN HOMELAND), THIS WATERING DOWN OF POLITICAL HISTORY/REDUCTIONIST VIEW OF 'CULTURE' IS A LITTLE GRATING. CULTURAL SIMILARITIES DO NOT GUARANTEE POLITICAL SOLIDARITY.


NOT ALL ASIANS ARE 'INDIGENOUS' OR HAVE BEEN OPPRESSED BY COLONIALISM. THE WILDLY DIVERSE, CONSTRUCTED REGION OF "ASIA" CANNOT BE REDUCED TO A SINGLE EXPERIENCE OF COLONISATION. MY EXPERIENCES OF COLONIALISM AS A MALAY-TAMIL-SINGAPOREAN NOW LIVING IN AOTEAROA SHOULDN'T BE EQUATED TO THE EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE-SINGAPOREANS IN AOTEAROA JUST BECAUSE HERE, IN 'NEW ZEALAND', WE'RE BOTH "ASIAN".



THIS ARGUMENT MAY SEEM KIND OF PETTY, GIVEN THAT THESE DAYS, SOLIDARITY IS URGENTLY NEEDED. SOME PEOPLE MIGHT FEEL: WHO CARES HOW SOLIDARITY IS FORMED, AS LONG AS IT IS FORMED? WHO CARES WHAT CULTURES AND HISTORIES ARE REDUCED OR SIMPLIFIED, AS LONG AS IT LEADS TO THE SAME GOAL - RIGHT?



I DISAGREE. I THINK THE INABILITY TO RECOGNISE THE DIFFERENCES IN OUR POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES - FOR THE PURPOSES OF A KUMBAYA-CODED, LIBERAL "ASIANS HAVE THE SAME COLONIAL EXPERIENCE" NARRATIVE - IS A DANGEROUS GAME TO KEEP PLAYING.



IF WE ARE IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS LIBERATION IN AOTEAROA, WE MUST BE IN SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS LIBERATION IN ASIA, AND GLOBALLY. FOR ONE, THAT MEANS REFUSING THE KIND OF STORIES THAT ERASE EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALISED INDIGENOUS ASIAN FOLKS.

THAT MEANS RECOGNISING THAT FROM SINGAPURA TO SRI LANKA TO MALAYSIA TO "XINJIANG", PEOPLE "FROM ASIA" DO NOT EXPERIENCE COLONIALISM IN THE SAME WAY. AND THAT AS MUCH AS INDIGENOUS ASIAN PEOPLES HAVE BEEN DISPLACED INTO SETTLER NATIONS LIKE NEW ZEALAND BECAUSE OF COLONISATION OF THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS, OTHERS HAVE ENDED UP HERE BECAUSE THEY HAVE BENEFITED FROM THAT VERY SAME COLONISATION.

CULTURE, SIMILARITIES IN CULTURE AND HISTORY CAN BE A POWERFUL BONDING AND RELATIONAL AGENT - BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE NECESSARY FOR DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITY.

WE MUST LEARN TO BUILD DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITY THROUGH OUR **DIFFERENCES** TOO - DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL, POLITICAL, HISTORICAL LIVED EXPERIENCES. AND, FOR SOME, HONESTLY RECKONING WITH THE WAY THEY HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED NOT ONLY AS SETTLERS IN AOTEAROA, BUT AS SETTLERS IN THEIR ASIAN HOMELANDS, IS ONE WAY TO DO IT.



last time in Hong Kong

it's years and years ago and I'm
too shy to say diu lei ge lo mo de chou hai
to the official office spy
cos Keith Ng from the past reckons
I say it like a Mainlander.
My accent is a war crime,
he should've made me practice more before
I got here. I've been speaking Mandarin
badly this whole time pitching the human rights report
saying dongxi a lot, and it's a bit, kinda, sad?

(yes - both)

but these dongxi do the job.

At office yum cha lunch with
[redacted], [redacted] and [redacted], they
say (kindly) 'when you speak Mandarin you sound
Singaporean' which is - oof! accurate. But a bit sad I mean

why not even Malaysian? Why not Yunnanese? You know why -

a Southern mouth reciting the North from a
government book - and you know why

there are no trolleys here, trolleys are tells
of the outer colonies.

If you woke up and saw a dim sum trolley
you would know who kidnapped you,
that you were prisoner of a time capsule.

Last time [redacted] went undercover, it was a
migrant labour camp deep in the North.

She helped end that system (it was a time
when you could end systems) -

the table's centre moves - when was that?

At this moment right now

the real one not just one in a poem

she's a therapist, and this city I knew is

don't say gone - no - gone
to ground. 'We are all exiles now'
says Keith Ng from the future, an
unpublished draft,
waiting.

What happens when you turn and
leave this world? In Mandarin it means
you're dead. While if you stay but *clock out*
you might be a therapist, or even a
yoga teacher. You might be
an unkept promise, or
just a bit sad,
wheels stirring the air
like you are definitely
going somewhere.

'Last time' in Singlish, no definite
article, is indeterminate and usually
long ago, but specifically not
the real last time
that you met or did this thing now
repeated.

It could mean

when you were small or

before you were born or

before the riots or

before the bright red of the Samsui women's hats imprint upon my mother forever as she peers at Keppel Harbour from the railings of a Rangoon steamer, red squares punched into sky and sea, atop solid blue bodies hauling bricks on the dock

it could mean before she was smuggled in the womb across the border into the Golden Triangle, into the Kokang fiefdom of Olive Yang aka Miss Hairy Legs, the feared opium warlord and infamous midcentury dyke

it could mean before the Revolution it could mean before the Civil War Part Two it could mean before the Great Patriotic War it could mean before the Civil War Part One

it could mean before the Sino-Japanese war it could mean before the Republic it could mean before

the Opium War but

'last time'

does not ever mean

the end.

'Next time' Singaporeans *also like that one* say mah

(can I even pull that off?)

my accent is a hate crime)

'next time' means *one day*, I will meet you there

'next time' as if there will

always be one, even if

there never is

just one

last time

for wandering

with you

or with you

or with you or with

you and you and you or

alone

down to Tsim Sha Tsui

and everywhere being

seen and seeing

rain-ravaged flowers cutting out

of memorials for the dead,

loudspeakers weighing on the living

screaming icons and reminders

of this bright striving of the heart -

the terminal shrouded

in fog, but refracting

an immense basin of light,

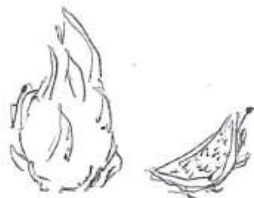
the ghost of what is
to come, moving
through you

years before

the rise and the fall -

the last time depends on the next time

I feel the city beating, I hear it call
my name.



Do you know what's not "complicated"?

Genocide

Do you know what there's not "both sides of"?

Genocide



FREE
PALESTINE

wake up, tangata tiriti

By Etienne Wain

cw: racism, colonisation

wake up, tangata tiriti

you have been asleep too long

you have forgotten the day you made a promise

to all the rangatira

to be a friend, a partner, a whanaunga

words blown away by a musket barrel,

a surveyor's toolkit

and the gavel of a judge

wake up, tangata tiriti

you have been asleep too long

you have forgotten the day you reached the goldfields

looking to replace the price you paid to emmigrate

with minerals from someone else's whenua

someone else who knew the devastation of the white man as did
you

and just because you're not them

doesn't mean you're not complicit too

wake up, tangata tiriti

you have been asleep too long

you have forgotten the day you sent the men and dogs

to the homes and schools of your Pacific siblings

manuhiri just like you

as if you had the standing to evict them from a land

that didn't belong to you

wake up, tangata tiriti

you have been asleep too long

you have forgotten the day you saw the protestors

marching up to your front door

demanding land back, reo strong, tamariki free

I see it in your protestations, saying “everything is fine now”,

“we’re all equal”, “let’s move on”

wake up, tangata tiriti

you have been asleep too long

~~~

haere mai, tangata tiriti

you have journeyed far to be here

know that while your standing here is up to neither me nor you

from one manuhiri to another

let me warmly welcome you

haere mai, tangata tiriti

learn the kawa of this marae

and to your host

be a whanaunga, partner, friend

that we would all of us honour

as we live together

the promise made under

the Waitangi sky

haere mai, tangata tiriti

haere mai

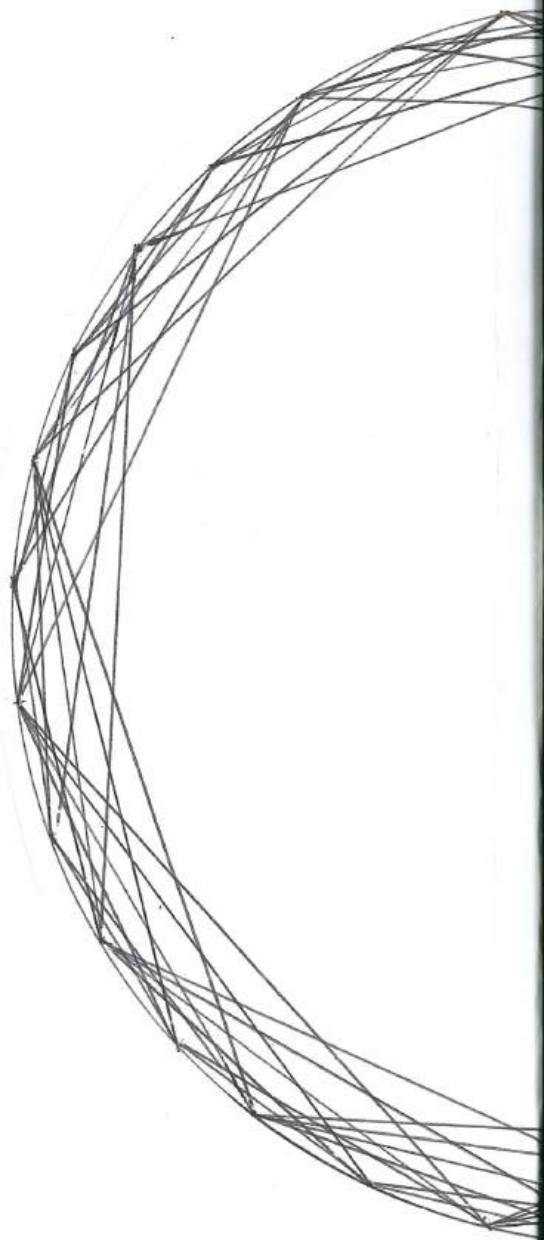
*Etienne Wain (he/any; Hakka Chinese, Malaysian Chinese,  
Pākehā)*

This episode of Mellow Yellow 2024,  
was brought to you by the letters;

'T' for Toitū Te Tiriti,  
'F' for Free Palestine,

and the number 1835 for

He Whakaputanga



Mellow Yellow Antcaro2

2024