

Speech at Anzac Day Reflection
Richardson's Lookout – Marrickville Peace Park
25th April 2024
Melanie Morrison

Thank you everyone for joining us today. Thank you Clr Byrne for your kind words. Thank you Marrickville Peace Group for inviting me to speak here today

I would also like to acknowledge that we are standing on the unceded land of the Gadigal people – always was and always will be. Thanks to Jennifer Newman for her gracious Acknowledgement to Country – beautiful as always.

I think what Antoinette was alluding to is that I'm better known in these circles as Marty Morrison's daughter.

My mother was an active member of the Marrickville Peace Group. She was a teacher who, for many decades, taught migrants and refugees from many war-torn countries. She was a peace activist, a social justice activist, an economic justice activist, an amazing peace-maker, as well as a self-proclaimed compulsive protester. Many people here will know that my mother spent many decades standing on street corners fighting for what she believed in.

I am the director at the Peace Foundation at the University of Sydney, best known for the annual Sydney Peace Prize which shines a light on leaders and movements that work tirelessly for peace and justice. I'm also a new board member of the Addison Road Community Centre in Marrickville which started as a WW1 army barracks and is now a place of sharing, connection and healing. And I'm incredibly fortunate to have inherited my mother's propensity for protest. My children, who are here today, will attest to this.

We are here on Anzac Day to remember the sacrifices of the men and women who fought and died for their country, the impact on their families as well as their communities. Lest we forget that there are no winners in war. Here in Australia we see the disturbing incidence of veteran suicides and the trauma that continues to run through the community.

This country, along with other Western countries, continues to spend billions of dollars fueling the war machine when this money could be better spent on common humanity and the common good.

Let us not forget that there are wars raging across the world right now - from Myanmar to Yemen, from Ukraine to Sudan, in Iraq and Afghanistan and across the Middle East where millions lost their lives because of the ill-conceived 'war on terror' - which has only succeeded in creating more terror and destruction - and the war on Gaza where we are seeing the very worst of humanity in Israel's genocidal assault on Palestinians.

We are all here today because we do not forget the horrors of war.

While these are dark times, we are not without hope. We see the incredible turn out today - thank you for coming. We also see millions of people taking to the streets across the world in an unprecedented show of solidarity to rally for peace and justice in Palestine.

Courageous students across campuses in the US and even now in Australia at my alma mater and workplace, the University of Sydney, are mobilizing in an anti-war movement and calling on their institutions to cut ties with companies and initiatives profiting from war and Israel's brutal occupation of Palestine.

Even here in Marrickville there's a pro-Palestine picket in front of Anthony Albanese office – mostly young people from all walks of life and faiths who aren't afraid to speak truth to power. They are maintaining a 24 hour, 7-days-a-week vigil, simply for the right to speak with their federal government representatives. And right now, our leaders need to listen.

Australia must be a better nation. We must be one that at least tries to break the curse of senseless war.

I will leave you today with one of my mother's favourite quotes which I think is particularly relevant on Anzac Day. It is a quote from the French philosopher and writer Albert Camus: "I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice."

Thank you.