

Friday 12, August 2006

Committee Secretary  
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee  
Department of the Senate  
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Canberra ACT 2600



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Submission to the legal and Constitutional References [Senate] Committee: Inquiry into Indigenous Workers Whose Paid Labour Was Controlled by Government [Stolen Wages]

Re: Colin Alwyn Robert Graham. DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear sir/Madam,

My story is as follows, I started school at Churchill in Ipswich. My grandfather Robert "Bob" Anderson and his wife granny Sarah Eileen Anderson, [nee Rook].

Were both under the Act, whilst they were living at both Deebling Creek and Purga Mission.

My mother Gladys Graham, [nee Anderson] Married, my father Leo Hamilton Graham. But their marriage broke up before I started school. And my mother lived with George Carbine. I am the third eldest of five children. Born July, 1947

This is where my story begins. And what I have experienced from 1955.

It was very hard as I started work at 9 years of age. My older siblings, Leonie, nee West, married to Robert West. And Raymond [deceased] Roberta and Elsie. I supported my mother along with my two younger sisters.

And we had a cousin who lived with us, Paul 'Pauly' Anderson, [deceased] who was like an older brother to me. Paul lived with us all through his childhood. Every where we lived Pauly lived with us. When work ran out we were on the move looking for work.

We would travel to and from Ipswich to Gatton, doing seasonal farm work, from sunrise to sunset; it was very hard for all of us, living in farm sheds, cow sheds, and on riverbanks in tents. It was very difficult during the rainy seasons, but we worked in the rain for very little money just to survive.

During my childhood days, we were forever traveling to different work location that we had very limited schooling, for, my brother Raymond, Paul, and my three sisters. Because we were mainly working for farmers picking potatoes, onions, carrots, pumpkins and the rest of other vegetables that had to be picked in that seasons.

Even though we were Queenslanders we were not dependent on any mission or Government assistance we are still Aboriginal people and that meant we were still under the Queensland Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and we still had to abide by their rulings.

The other point, that neither my mother, and stepfather never had their Exemption Certificates, so we could have been picked-up for anything and sent to a mission. Because the local Police Sergeant, was the Government. We moved to Charleville for a couple of years and I was sent to school there in 1954.

But we were still very poor and my mum had to do housework for different people, and went to work for Police Sergeant, at Charleville. We moved to Cunnamulla, and there were other relatives living there, and I went to school there for awhile.

It was the same in every country town out west the Aborigines were situated near a water trough on reserves and or near cattle reserves or we'd live near bore drains. Where the local Council saw fit, and it would sit well on their agenda. But these are the things that went on back then.

And living out west our means of survival, by going out hunting, pigs, goats, kangaroos. Because Aborigines who got their rations from the local police station, if they got there a bit late on a Friday, had had to wait until on a Monday to get their rations. Unlike in the missions, they got their rations from an office on the mission. It was the, Aborigines fringedwellers who suffered the most.

There was a lot of racism in some country towns not all – and segregation. There was not a lot of mixing in with the white people. And some shopkeepers if they refused to serve you because they had the weight of the law and the community to back them up, and blackfellows just couldn't go into any shop or business. There were segregated areas for them in the hospital. Local swimming pool was off limits to me as well because of my skin colour, but the river was always free to all.

And we went back to Charleville to live; we were there for a while and returned to Ipswich, and continued in the farming industry. In 1958 we moved up to the Kingaroy area and we lived in a town called Wondai, where I did a lot of peanut picking, learnt to ringbark, fencing, yard building, post cutting and splitting them. Ear marking sheep, and learned to ride a horse. It was in Wondai that my sister Roberta and I were doing schooling through corresponding.

My youngest sister was born 1961. And we moved back to the Gatton area, doing farm work again. We moved to Mitchell in 1962, at age 17. My first government job on the Shire Council, and only then we started to live a bit better. But it was around the 1960s, there was mixing and mingling coming in about this era. We lived at Mitchell until the end of 1964 and moved back to Ipswich. And I did a lot of odd jobs, around Ipswich.

I went back to Mitchell in 1967, and took up ringbarking. It was hard living, hard work, each morning facing the elements to swing a 3 ½ pound axe 8-hours a day 7- days a week. The wages then was \$10.00 a day.

And I still, supported my mum, and one sister who lived at home with my mum, in Ipswich. And I still believed that I grew up under the Queensland Aboriginal Act and I started work when I was about 8 or 9 years of age on farms and cattle property. I had never held a bankbook, until late 1960s or early 1970s I think?

I still haven't been paid for that work, and neither my brother or Paul. [Not documented]

The Queensland Aboriginal Act was used as a basis for the South African Apartheid which started in 1910 when South Africa became independent from Britain. They sent their experts to Australia, and in particular North Queensland [to study] the Queensland Aboriginal Act and they took it back to South Africa and implemented it. That became the Protection Act in South Africa. But later on, in 1948 when the present African Government came into power, they sent their experts back to Queensland again to see how the Act had been developed, they must have fallen so much in love with it they took it back to South Africa and implemented it in full. That laid the basis for the South African apartheid as it's now known today. This knowledge has been past down from grandfather to uncles and to us children. I guess we had European laws before Africa.

But thinking back over my life, and the hardship we came through, living as fringedwellers, I saw my mother had had to wait at shop counters, taxis, buses, trains, and at hospitals. We were still institutionalized controlled by the Aboriginal Government Affairs. It was my parents and grandparents, who suffered harsh mentality of the white people.

My stepfather died there in Mitchell. But because I do not have documented evidence and cannot meet the Queensland Government guidelines, I still believe that people like my mother, and stepfather, my brother Raymond, Paul and three sisters Leonie, Roberta, and Elsie, are entitled to the same payout and condition of the \$4,000 + \$2000 that was made to certain applicants who meet the Government guidelines. I believe you must make these payments to us As Soon As Possible.

  
Colin Alwyn Robert Graham