

Sharon Davis – Australia Day Speech

I come from both Bardi and Gija peoples in the Kimberley, and my family connections are through the Gregory's (Mungets) in Broome, back through Beagle Bay mission days. My mother, her mother, and all our mothers before her were strong Aboriginal women and although I am now living on Noongar Boodja, I lived on Yawuru-Djugan country for nearly half of my life.

To me, I really think we are mixing up two distinct things... What Australia Day represents and what January 26 represents...

To celebrate Australia Day, for me (on the surface) is to rejoice all it means to live on Country. It means fishing off the rocks on my Country and hearing stories around the campfire. It means shedding a joyous tear seeing newly arrived citizens choosing Australia to be the place they want to spend their lives.

Australia Day is a sausage sanga, a swim at the beach, a halal snack pack, vegan salads, Korean BBQ, Chinese dumplings, a cracking vindaoo, and even a beef gozleme (which, if you don't know is a Turkish pancake thing with beef and cheese. I just had last weekend in Melbourne, and it was amazing). So, on the surface, Australia Day means inclusivity while celebrating what makes us different. Australia Day is all of those things, but for me - it simply cannot take place on January 26, a day so incredibly hurtful to so many, is a day that erases Aboriginal people from our national narrative, perpetuates a divide between First Peoples and all that came after.

In my personal opinion, we have to stop mixing up the wonderful things that make Australia Day, Australia Day with the horrific date on which we hold it.

As my wonderful Lecturer (and now Senator) Pat Dodson once told me, you cannot have Reconciliation without Truth and Justice. So, I figure, regarding Australia Day:

Truth is to acknowledge the history of the 26th of January and the hurt caused by holding celebrations on this date. **Justice** would be to change the date.

Then, and really only then, we can begin to **Reconcile** on a different day where we can all celebrate what it means to be Australian together.

I will continue to draw on my Liyarn and the strength of my old people to keep speaking up in the name of **Truth, Justice and Reconciliation** until a day comes where we can all celebrate together.