

“LAW AND GENDER: BEYOND PATRIARCHY”
SYMPOSIUM – KEYNOTE SPEECH
SISTAHS IN ARMS? MANA WĀHINE
AND FEMINISM

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Tēnā koutou katoa, tēnei te mihi mahana, te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, wāhine mā. Ko Khylee Quince tōku ingoa, he uri o Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou me Ngāti Kahungunu hoki. Ko au te Tumuaiki o Te Kura Ture ki te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau. Ka nui te hari ki te kite i a koutou, nō reira, kei te mihi, kei te mihi, kei te mihi.

I INTRODUCTION

Mōrena koutou. My name is Khylee Quince and I am the Dean of AUT Law School. On behalf of the Law School and AUT more broadly, I welcome you all to this Symposium on “Law and Gender: Beyond Patriarchy”, hosted by AUT and the New Zealand Women’s Law Journal.

I’m going to give an overview of a wāhine Māori’s perspective and reaction to the theme of today’s Symposium, being Beyond the Patriarchy. I’ve called my kōrero “Sistahs in Arms?” and you will note that I have deliberately used the use of slang, which is generally a spelling and a term used by women of colour. And that’s deliberate, because the reason for the question mark is of course, the broad question for Māori women and one that I hear many friends, colleagues and relations react to or talk about if they do talk about feminism at all, is: is feminism relevant to us at all? In other words, are we sistahs in arms? Do we have anything in common or do we have more in common than not? That’s really my moot question.

I’m going to give an overview of what is Māori women’s feminism. And I have a couple of things to say about this. It’s really sort of a grand overview

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of what was the position of wāhine Māori in te ao Māori, particularly in pre-colonial or pre-contact Māori society, how this changed, and where does that leave us in 2022. This is a really short kōrero and I'm going to leave you with a couple of questions. We have facilitators from amongst our taura Māori to assist you to discuss really those big questions: what is the relevance of feminism for wāhine Māori? What can non-Māori feminist allies do to assist Māori women in obtaining their objectives? Those objectives may be different to the one that is sort of the premise of "beyond patriarchy". One of my big questions is he aha tēnei mea, the patriarchy? What is this thing, the patriarchy? There was no such thing in te ao Māori, there certainly is in the lives of contemporary Māori women. What can we do as a post-colonial or decolonisation strategy to reify or lift or raise the position of wāhine Māori; to improve their lives and to be Treaty compliant; to assist in addressing the breaches of equity and discrimination which are breaches of Article 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi; and what can we do to then use that as a platform to assist in goals of mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga, self-determination of wāhine Māori as guaranteed by Article 2 of Te Tiriti. That might sound a lot grander than what I'm going to say, but really those are my questions. What is the relevance of feminism in te ao Māori? Does feminism resonate within te ao Māori? He aha tēnei mea? What is this thing the patriarchy? I'll answer those questions by setting up a really short overview of what are notions of gender, what was the relevance of gender, including the roles and responsibilities of wāhine Māori, in te ao Māori.

II THE RELEVANCE OF GENDER IN TE AO MĀORI

One of the core things, when I say that there was no patriarchy in te ao Māori, is that te ao Māori was not a patrilineal society traditionally, neither was it matrilineal. It was ambilineal or ambilateral. Meaning it was non-gender specific. Gender was not and never has been the core determinant of status or power within te ao Māori. Mana is. In te reo Pākehā, or in non-Māori terminology, you might say that rather than gender, class—if you were to nut it down to a broadly analogous term—was much more important in terms of mana, status and authority. Briefly, the story arc of colonisation and the introduction of Pākehā and tauwi into Aotearoa has meant that the balance of roles and responsibilities and the place of women vis-à-vis the place of men was destroyed upon colonisation and had unique effects upon Māori women.

When I say unique effects what I mean by that is that colonisation had very, very different consequences for wāhine Māori compared with tāne Māori. One of the story arcs that we will see is that Māori men internalised much of the patriarchy of the incoming European colonisers. And why wouldn't they? Obviously, they had a lot to gain, particularly if you were a man without a lot of status or non-chiefly status. This democratisation of te ao Māori had enormous effects upon the stratification of Māori society into quite new social orderings in which gender did become the more significant determinant of status and power. Women of mana were diminished, and men without mana were raised into much more significant roles of power and responsibility. I've used that phrasing “the balance destroyed.” That's in reference to Professor Ani Mikaere, one of the foremost, probably the foremost Māori feminist legal scholar, of Te Wānanga o Raukawa. That's the title of her Master's thesis from the 1990s, *The Balance Destroyed*, in reference to the balance between women and men in te ao Māori.

This is a particularly pertinent kaupapa or topic to be thinking about given the revival of what was Wai 2864, now renumbered Wai 2700—the Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry with the Waitangi Tribunal. For those of you who aren't aware, in the Waitangi Tribunal you have inquiries or claims that are specific to a particular iwi or hapū, and sometimes even smaller than that, individuals or families. Kaupapa inquiries are those that are of national significance, so they tend to be the broader topics or issues. And the Mana Wāhine claim is one of those. It was a claim that was initially filed in 1993 by 16 very prominent wāhine Māori, including Dame Mira Szaszy, whose beautiful āhua you can see on the photo in the slide. Dame Mira Szaszy, Dame Areta Koopu, Dame Whina Cooper, Dame Georgina Kirby, Dame Aroha Reriti-Crofts, Ripeka Evans, Donna Awatere Huata, and a number of other wāhine. You'll see a lot of dames there – not sure what the collective noun for a group of dames is!

In 1993 the timing of the first filing of the Mana Wāhine claim was around the removal of Dame Mira from the Fisheries Commission shortlist. In the 1990s, when I was at law school, there was a particular time of raru or conflict in the Treaty Settlement era, with a huge fight over fisheries that went all the way to the Privy Council. Part of one of the settlements involved the establishment of the Fisheries Commission, and the choice of Commissioners by the government was particularly controversial. Dame Mira Szaszy was on

the shortlist for one of these Commission roles, and her name was removed. There were no women on that initial Fisheries Commission, and the elevation of a number of male tribal leaders, many of whom received knighthoods as a result: Sir Bob Mahuta, nō Tainui, Sir Tipene O'Regan, nō Ngāi Tahu. Part of the claim was that it was part of a colonial trope—this narrative that Māori men were the tribal leaders, *they* were the people of chiefly status, *they* were the heads of industry, *they* were the people who could lead the development of contemporary Māori. These women filed a claim in opposition to that. The claim fell over in the 1990s and was refiled in 2019, so it's currently on track. In 2021 the Tūāpapa hearings began—a Tūāpapa hearing is the foundation of the claim, so setting out what the claim is about—that occurred in Kerikeri in February of last year, thankfully before lockdown. It became a much more generic claim about the discrimination faced by Māori women more broadly, post-colonisation and post Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Not just about that Fisheries Commission kaupapa, but a much broader claim. That claim is based upon this breach of the inherent mana and iho, the connecting thread of wāhine Māori, and it aims to examine the systemic discrimination, inequities and deprivation suffered by wāhine Māori in the post-colonial context, and the effect that it has had upon the positioning of contemporary wāhine Māori, not just contemporary but generations of Māori women—the negation of our mana motuhake and rangatiratanga, so leadership, self-determination, as well as status for all women. Obviously because it's a claim in the Waitangi Tribunal, the opposition if you like is the Crown, and it's about the breaches of the Treaty and how the Crown has facilitated this discrimination, and the consequential inequities and deprivation suffered by women in ways that are Treaty non-compliant. So that's the mana wāhine claim. The hearings are scheduled, Covid dependent, to continue by the end of 2022. Once that Tūāpapa evidence has been given, then there is the need to hear material and evidence about the consequences of the breach, and the end is consideration of remedies, what can we do about it, and that's something that we might want to discuss at the end of my kōrero.

If the first part of my thesis is that the position of wāhine Māori in te ao Māori was significant and equal, different but equal, to that of tāne Māori, there is plenty of evidence that tells us that this was the case. If we start right back with wāhine Māori in creation stories, and the starting point of a duotheistic, a two god creation story, with the primordial parents of tāngata

Māori, and of te ao mārama, the world of light and living in which we live, being Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the Sky Father and Earth Mother. The importance of the balance between male and female tracing right back from human whakapapa to that relationship. The first human being created by one of their children, the atua Tāne Mahuta, was a female, Hineahuone. The first piece of evidence about that normative ideal of gender balance is evident in the Māori cosmogeny and creation stories.

Within te ao Māori there are threads of normativity and notions of gender, and I’m assuming at some part of today there will also be discussion about notions of duality of gender and perhaps multiplicity of genders and sexuality. At a very basic level, this idea of te ira wāhine (the female gender) and te ira tāne (the male gender) with differing roles and responsibilities, but equally respected and contributing to the collective whole and wellbeing of whānau, hapū and iwi Māori. That was the position in pre-colonial Māori society. Now as I’ve said already, within that society, mana was a much more significant determinant of a person’s status than gender. Everybody is born with mana. Some people are born, in terms of inherited mana, with more than others. That’s that notion of, in a crude sense, class status. Are you born with chiefly status, are you born to a significant family? The notion within te ira wāhine, of women as powerful sexual beings, with inherent tapu. Tapu is that dedication of separate important status, again deriving from our whakapapa to the atua or gods. The core identity of women, not only in te ao Māori but in the female gender worldwide and across cultures, is this concept of ngā whare tangata: the houses of humanity. All human beings come from a whare tangata, come from a woman. The role and status of women as mothers, as nurturers, as carers, and of kuia or older menopausal women as repositories of knowledge. And again, there is a lot of evidence of this, in our language, in our reo, the gender-neutral pronoun terms, ia for example, gender neutral names, but also of course the place of women within pakiwaitara, purakau, tribal stories, the naming of places and important events, the naming of hapū and iwi after important and chiefly notable women.

The balance within tikanga was evident in the speaking roles ascribed to women. You’re probably well aware, particularly from the annual raruraru or conflict on the Waitangi treaty grounds, of the divvying up of roles on the marae between men and women. Many would say that part of that is post-colonial practice, of women not speaking on the marae, but even in the

most conservative of iwi, women play a role in terms of kaikaranga, men as kaikōrero—formal speakers, speech markers—and then women again. There's this constant to and fro, so that often the last word is given to a woman, a kaiwaiata. Once a male, usually, has given a formal speech, it is the role of women to stand up and support, or not, what that person has said. Their choice of waiata, their choice of song, and the *way* in which they sing it, matters. Quite often in hui you will hear women very vociferously sing a song that gives the impression or sends the message that they either agree with what that man has said, or they do not. Sometimes they will sing a nonsense song which clearly gives the message that that man is not speaking for us. I've seen that many times in my own tribal setting.

III THE IMPACT OF COLONISATION ON WĀHINE MĀORI

This all changed upon colonisation, but within pre-contact te ao Māori, the legal status of wāhine Māori was very clear. There was equal citizenship to the extent that a person's mana allowed for it. There were, for want of a better equivalent term, slave people with little to no mana and little to no property, legal status, rights within the community, but the qualifying mea or thing was not their gender, but their mana. Generally speaking, women had the right to equal citizenship and legal personality, they could hold positions of political and tribal power and influence, they could contract, own land, gift or bequeath property, they had sexual and bodily autonomy, they could have multiple partners. There was not necessarily any idea that you would stay with one partner for life. You could marry for love, you could marry for alliance, and as is often the case in communities or societies based upon stratification by class, you could have a tomo or taumau, an arranged marriage by alliance for political purposes. Equally parties could separate. Upon marriage women maintained their family or whānau tribal names, their own identity and separate property. That is because the most significant aspect of te ao Māori is whakapapa. If you do not whakapapa or have a genealogical link to a place or a piece of property, then you had no rights to it. Marrying someone does not merge your property portfolios or your access to particular rights and responsibilities. The primacy of whakapapa as a means of determining legal entitlement was maintained upon marriage or coupling in traditional te ao Māori. This is really important in terms of protecting the rights and status of wāhine Māori, because the whānau remained your primary source of support. There was no severing of ties upon

marriage. This is really significant for those of you who are family lawyers or particularly engaged in, whether you are talking about family violence, intimate partner violence, or relationship property. That’s really important to remember, that the whānau as a form of support and protection was always there within te ao Māori. In my view at least, and in the view of other Māori female researchers such as Kuni Jenkins, Stephanie Milroy, Leonie Pihama, the division of social ordering into the public and private spheres, and this notion of the primacy of the marital relationship over other family relationships, have been significant in the breakdown of the protective factors within traditional Māori communities. In their view, and I agree with them, the diminishment of the family and the primacy of the marital relationship has meant that it is easier for people to perpetrate intimate partner violence. It is easier for all kinds of horrors to go on and deprivation and discrimination to go on behind closed doors when your whānau no longer has automatic right of access to your marital home. Ani Mikaere, in her Master’s thesis I’ve mentioned already, she provides numerous pieces of evidence of marriages where a woman moves away from her family community, her home community for the purposes of marriage, she maintains the link to her home community and she sends words to them when things go wrong, and the husband’s community is aware that this can happen. She gives numerous instances, pieces of evidence where a married woman would send word back to her community that she has been insulted or that she has been physically harmed by someone in her husband’s community or her husband himself. Her own community has the right of utu to come and generally seek muru, compensation, recompense for the harm done, because diminishment of her mana is diminishment of their mana, because of collective responsibility and identity. There was no severing of those ties upon marriage, and the maintenance of those ties was a form of protection for women and children. That is no longer the case.

Colonisation destroyed much of that balance, in making gender a primary determinant of status. In terms of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, there were at least 13 female signatories to the Treaty but of course, we don’t know of the 500 plus signatories, because many Māori names are non-gender specific. Some of those signatories may be women that are unidentified. We also know of many wāhine rangatira who turned up to sign on behalf of their hapū who were turned away. Matua Moana Jackson gives a story of one of his female tupuna who was in that position, who was denied the right to sign and who then had her people

walk away. They are not signatories for that very reason, because her mana was not recognised because of her gender. We know of course that in terms of Pākehā law from the UK that the Married Women's Property Act in 1877 was the piece of legislation that gave legal status and personality to women. So, we have that early one or two generations of colonial contact where Māori women were assumed not to have legal personality. They couldn't contract, they couldn't sign the Treaty, they couldn't own property. I've mentioned that distinction between the public and private spheres and the effects that that had, the destruction of the protective capacity of the whānau. We saw the retelling of Māori cosmogony, the retelling of those stories. Possibly a controversial take and particularly within my whānau, which is wholly colonised within the Mihinare, the Māori Anglican church, in the belief and the idea of the Io, the primary monotheistic whakapapa of God. We move away from the dualistic cosmogony of Ranginui and Papatūānuku and you start to see materials referring to Io, which coincidentally sounds a lot like the Christian God, although as I say people within my whānau and others are adamant that the history of Io predates colonial times. That's another matter of controversy within Māoridom.

The new moral order of the colonial invasion also brings with it different sexuality and behaviours and mores about what is appropriate feminine behaviour. I'll mention very briefly the effect that that has had on the representational intersectionality of contemporary Māori women. Judgement about sexuality. Judgement about not being married that is represented in our laws of welfare. Media representation of women, Māori women in particular. Judgement of their choice of partner. In criminal law the law of omissions, of failure to protect children, in my view is in some way related to this imposition of this new moral order about appropriate female sexuality and behaviour.

Ani Mikaere, she's the godmother, the godfather in this area, in her constant refrain about law as colonisation's enforcer. That the law was used to enforce this new moral and legal order, and of course there is an unending number of pieces of legislation and policy that enforces this new order. Starting with the Native Land Act, its long title, its very purpose is the destruction of collectivism, and along the way the position of Māori women, wāhine Māori as landholders, as leaders of iwi hapū and whānau. The Land Act is really one of the first, probably foremost, means of the destruction of Māori women's place in our local tribal economies. Then we had the ten owner rules in the early

days of the new land tenure system, which meant that only ten owners could be named upon the title deed. The reason for that is just because the piece of paper, the deed, could only fit ten names on it, and so those names became male names. Initially it was intended that those men were kaitiaki or trustees of the wider group but they very quickly under the legal order became absolute landholders, landholders not trustees for the greater good. We quickly see the economic destruction of the role of Māori women within Māori communities.

In education, the Native Schooling Act 1867 set up a racialised and gendered education system for wāhine Māori that persisted for 100 years. I say it's racialised and gendered because the primary purpose was to set up an education system for Māori children, but within that system there were gendered pathways, so that Māori boys became fathers and farm labourers and Māori women were set up to be housewives, domestic servants, and in later decades possibly nurses or teachers. In that pathway, you see a very big internal distinction between Māori men and women and their ability particularly to access tertiary education. My tupuna Tā Apirana Ngata was the first Māori lawyer, or the first Māori to gain an LLB, and that was in the 1890s. The first Māori female lawyer was Georgina te Heuheu, who became a National Party MP, and she wasn't admitted to the bar until the 1970s, almost 100 years later. That's the gap, that internal gap, that intersectional gap between wāhine Māori and tāne Māori. There are just numerous, hundreds of pieces of legislation in which you see the differentiation on the basis of gender or race or both. Customary marriage was curtailed. I've mentioned the concept of ambilineal or ambilateral identification and succession in Māori land law. Traditionally you could succeed and identify with either of your female or male or matrilineal or patrilineal whakapapa lines, but not both. Bilineal succession under the native land tenure system meant that you had very quickly thousands of owners, as people inherited rights to land that they had no domicile connection to. Again, destruction of the internal protective factors of our own land tenure system, which was that you only inherited land and use rights to resources around whenua in places where you were living. If your father was from the Hawkes Bay and you never lived in the Hawkes Bay, you did not get rights to that land. After colonisation, the series of Native Land Acts allowed for this succession to land interest that people had no domicile connection to, in terms of their contribution to those communities. That's had again a devastating impact on the Māori economy and the usefulness of Māori land, the ability

then to mortgage and develop land, because blocks have tens of thousands of owners.

The Adoption Act, and family law, and other pieces of law in terms of things like the Administration Act. Who inherits when someone dies, who is your next of kin when you need organ donation, or you have a dispute over a tūpāpaku? Billy T James and of course the case of James Takamore of Tuhoē that went to the Supreme Court, in a dispute between his Pākehā wife and birth whānau. Again that's essentially a dispute about which is the primary relationship in a person's life – is it the marriage partnership, or is it the broader whānau?

Here we see what I call the tactics of divide and rule. We see Māori women and Māori men pitted against one another, and when we come to the contemporary position of Māori women, we see lateral violence. Men taking out their frustration and the discrimination against them, the inequities that they face, on the women in their lives, extremely dangerously. I've mentioned this briefly, and again somewhat controversially perhaps, this concept of tāne Māori as collaborators in the colonial project. In the 1990s, when that Mana Wāhine claim was tabled, there was a North American legal academic at the University of Waikato called Nan Seuffert. I think Nan might be at the University of Wollongong in Australia now. She wrote a few interesting pieces at the time about this idea of the alliance of men across race, this idea of men bonding across the patriarchy in that fisheries settlement kaupapa, that Māori men were willing to diminish the status and potential leadership of wāhine Māori in order to advance themselves. That was quite controversial at the time, and I don't think it is coincidental that we had not only a non-Māori woman making those claims safely, but also not only a Pākehā woman, but he wāhine tauīwi, a foreign woman, because she could.

So, this internalisation of Christian morality and gender hierarchies that I've flagged already, women as supporters of men, men who are the heads of nuclear families, again this internalisation of these very Victorian Pākehā social organisation demographics. The democratising of the position of men as landholders, voters, persons with social, cultural, economic, and political power. One example is the case of Meri Mangakāhia, another woman from the North, from Te Rarawa. She's significant in the women's suffrage movement, but remember at the time in the 1890s there was a separate Māori Parliament or Te Kotahitanga, and Meri Mangakāhia's husband was, at the time, elected the

premier of Te Kotahitanga, Hamiora Mangakāhia. Meri represented the Māori women’s suffrage movement in asking them, the Māori Parliament, made up only of men, Māori men, to support the suffrage rights and advancement of wāhine Māori. And they closed ranks upon her. Māori women were not granted the right to the franchise within Te Kotahitanga until 1897, which of course was four years after the general suffrage right granted to women in the New Zealand Parliament. That gives you some idea of the difference and the internal discrimination faced by Māori women.

Another example is Cathy Dewes of Te Arawa, elected to the Te Arawa Māori Trust Board, again in the 1990s. Te Arawa have quite a specific tikanga or kawa around protocols around the place and position of women, probably I would say the strictest of any tribal grouping or area within New Zealand. Cathy was elected and within their protocol, and of course I may get some flak for this, but women are generally seen and not heard in their political tribal spheres. When Cathy walked into the room for the first Trust Board meeting, the men either turned their backs on her or got up and left. So, this has contemporary consequences for wāhine Māori, this internalisation of patriarchal views.

Just to finish, the contemporary position of wāhine Māori, and this is obviously the intersectional point. If we think about the core of intersectionality being that all of us all human beings have multiple points or multiple identities and some of those identifies have agendas or cultures that conflict with other aspects of our identity. The core point for women of colour is that our race or cultural ethnicity is read or responded to, so our gender is read and responded to in particular ways because of that cultural or ethnic identity. In other words, we are characterised or responded to, presented in the media and in other public forums, in different ways because we are Māori. Not just because we are women, but because we are Māori. In ways that are different to the representation of other women, non-Māori women, but also in ways that are different to Māori men. Most people I think are familiar with the classification of statistical information about health, well-being, education, justice indicators, in the aggregated or disaggregated data by gender and ethnicity. Often the hierarchy will be, in terms of wellbeing or education status etc, that Pākehā men will be best off then possibly Pākehā women, Māori men, but always Māori and Pasifika women at the bottom. That is the effect of intersectionality. In my field, in terms of criminal justice, the

most overincarcerated demographic in Aotearoa, by proportionate numbers, is wāhine Māori, and that is growing exponentially.

IV MANA WĀHINE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

So, Māori feminism then, mana wāhine, is underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the promises of tino rangatiratanga under Article 2, and equal citizenship in Article 3. It's about the promotion of mana, the power, authority and influence of women, and the recognition of tikanga and kaupapa Māori, in our laws, our legal processes and institutional structures. The recognition of different familial structures and obligations, our roles and responsibilities in relation to whenua, territory and resources, but also political decision making and power. Mana wāhine is about the denunciation and rejection of violence and colonial gender hierarchies and the deconstruction of that public private divide that I flagged very quickly. Deconstruction of the notion of individualism and the idea of individual rights holders. We've seen this for example in the very recent Pou Matakana judicial review claim by John Tamihere and the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies around the Māori data request in respect of the vaccine rollout. That is a pitch for collectivism over individual data. It's about the centring of gender and race in our discourse, not one over the other.

To use Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework, intersectionality has reference to three different aspects of our race and gender identities as women of colour. It's about the structural – so what is the narrative that has set us up in terms of that contemporary position, in terms of our health, our wellbeing, our life expectancy, our education, our access to housing etc. That's our structural position. The political position is about the inconsistency and the competition between those competing agendas of our race and gender. That comes to the fore of course in Professor Crenshaw's work in terms of intimate partner violence. We know that Māori men and men of colour are particularly poorly treated, if we think about the Black Lives Matter movement, by the police and justice agencies. But we also know that women of colour are the victims of their private violence. The dilemma for those women of colour is: do I prioritise my race over my gender? Do I prioritise my own and the safety of my children against the safety of my man by handing him over to the authorities where he may be harmed, or killed, or at least one of the many thousands of men of colour incarcerated? That is political intersectionality. Then there's the representational aspect of the way in which wāhine Māori are presented in the

media compared with Māori men or compared with Pākehā women or other demographics. I’ve just got a couple of examples of two Māori women, Nicola Daly Paki, mother of Moko Rangitoheriheri, killed by caregivers, and Macsyna King, whose partner Chris Kahui was acquitted of the murder of their babies. Neither of these women, these Māori mothers, neither of them were suspected of harming their children. Yet they were the ones vilified in the media, for their choices of partner, for their choice of activity in terms of sexuality and behaviour, for going out, in the case of Nicola Paki, leaving their children with caregivers so she could seek medical help and treatment for one of her other tamariki. That is a form of representational intersectionality. The New Zealand Herald at the time had a headline that referred to Macsyna King as “the worst mother in New Zealand.” Neither of these mothers had harmed, or were even suspected of harming, their children.

V CONCLUSION

I want to finish with a story, the story of Meri Ngaroto, another wahine Rangatira, a chiefly woman from Te Aupōuri, one of the five tribes of Muriwhenua in the Far Far North, who lived in the early 19th century. Now Meri Ngaroto, her father was a significant chief, and they were at their marae in Ōhaki near Ninety Mile Beach when they heard that a group of visitors were coming who were unwelcome. There was talk about slaughtering them or offering her up to marry the visitors. Two different forms of traditional dispute resolution strategies in te ao Māori, you either marry the people that you have conflict with, or you just wipe them out. A decision was made to wipe them out. Meri Ngaroto pled with her father and the other chiefs of her hapū for the lives of these manuhiri who were going to be slaughtered. She did so in a metaphorical way, which was also a very Māori way of doing such a thing. In doing so, this is one of these most famous and in my view overused whakatauāki, misunderstood quotations of famous Māori speeches if you like. She made the plea in this way:

Hutia te rito o te harakeke
Kei hea to komako e ko?
Ki mai ki ahau
He aha te mea nui o te a o?
Maku e ki atu

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata
If you pluck out the centre shoot of the flax
Where will the bellbird sing?
If you ask me
What is the most important thing in the world?
I will reply
It is people, it is people, it is people

Her metaphor was one about the health and ecosystem of the flax bush as a metaphor for a healthy functioning Māori whānau, hapū or iwi unit. The rito is the centre shoot that she refers to and it is where the bellbird, the komako sits and sings and is part of a healthy functioning ecosystem. She says if you take the child out of that flax bush where the child is the centre and the parents and grandparents are the shoots that wrap around and provide nurturing support, love, awahi and tautoko to that child, the whole ecosystem falls apart. What she is saying is that if you kill these people then you will kill not only the living people amongst them, but also their ability to procreate, and the people that they are connected to will be affected. So, when she says the most important thing is people, it's not people in the Western sense of individual human beings. She means the most important thing is *whakapapa*. It is our connection to one another, our connection to whenua, our connection to place, people and the broader universe. It's not about human beings at all, it's about connectivity. That's what she meant in that whakatauaiki. In relation to the place of wāhine, wāhine are part of a functioning ecosystem within that flax bush, along with men, along with grandparents, along with the wider community. That's what mana wāhine means.

Kua mutu tāku kōrero i tēnei wā, kia ora koutou mō tō koutou whakarongo mai, thank you very much for listening, and I've left a couple of questions for discussion for you. The first is, is mana wāhine compatible with feminism, and do the schools of thought have common goals or objectives? What is the relationship? Are we sistahs in arms? The second is the question of allyship. What can a good ally do? How can Pākehā and tauwiwi, non-Māori feminists, assist and contribute to the goals of wāhine Māori? What is your role as a non-Māori person? That's a very common question that's asked and it's a very good one. And my final question for you is this, is that Matua

Moana Jackson, one of the best Māori feminists I know, he tane Māori, has described colonisation as the process of replacing one house with another. The colonisers came, and they established a house. Every society’s house has a similar foundation as being a place to live, as providing sustenance, as being built upon particular values, but each house is organised according to the cultural beliefs, history, environment and resources of that society. It is also adorned with its art, traditions, etiquette, and music. My final question is the decolonisation one: how can we reconstruct the whare Māori, the Māori house in Jackson’s metaphor, and why should we? Where does our impetus or desire to do so come from? And of course, the big question is what would that involve for wāhine Māori, and with what potential impact? What are the resources that we need to tell the truth of our past? What are the resources that we need to rebuild the capacity of whānau, hapū and iwi Māori so that we can properly access the promise of Te Tiriti o Waitangi? Of equality and equity in Article 3, being a platform for tino rangatiratanga, mana Motuhake in Article 2? I’ve spoken for far longer than I’ve intended to e wāhine mā, I hope that wasn’t too basic an introduction or reader to Māori feminism and the story arc or narrative of the role or place of wāhine Māori within te ao Māori and contemporary Aotearoa. But again, I thank you very much for listening and coming today.

Kia pai tō rā koutou, have a great day today, once again enjoy the Symposium, I hope to catch you all in person sometime soon. Kia ora rā koutou. Ka kite.