

SUZANNE: Hi, I'm Suzanne Ingram and it is my pleasure to bring you this RAWA anthology podcast series for International Women's Day 2018, a week long series of short interviews with some pretty special Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and a pretty special ally. The theme for International Women's Day 2018 is #Pressforprogress.

KYRA: I'm Malera Bandjалан and Mitakoodi woman and I am that before I am my sexual preference and I'll always be that.

SUZANNE: I'm speaking with Kyra Kum Sing, Curator at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, the organisation was established in Chippendale Sydney in 1987. I'm speaking with Kyra about Boomalli's annual Mardi Gras celebration exhibition, this year it's called Luscious All Sorts - Love Won.

KYRA: We do a Mardi Gras exhibition every year and this year is Luscious All Sorts - Love Won. It's around the marriage equality stuff and I had our own little interpretation of it around how equality is great for marriage equality for same sex and people however, with Aboriginal people we've still got a long way to go in order to be equal in this country. So yeah, it was about getting everyone to have their little interpretation about the show and exhibition through their art

For me, I've always been about maintaining who I am and especially my traditional connections to my homelands on both my mother and my father's side. Matrilineal - we follow women's lore much more than what on my father's side is more patriarchal which is men but there is room for both and that's why there's women's business and men's business but I think that when you come from a long line of strong women you definitely gotta carry on that and bring it to the next generations so they understand who we are as Aboriginal, well, me as a Malera Bundjalung woman and also Mitakoodi. We've got our roles in where we come from, so.

SUZANNE: Can you tell me where that is? I don't know where that is - I know where Bundjalung is.

KYRA: So Malera is sorta in between Casino and, you say Tenterfield but it's more Tabulam than Tenterfield so it's along the Rocky River there, and that's my mother's country. And then my father's is Mitakoodi, so it's along like Cloncurry and it goes all the way up to Burketown, so Queensland and New South Wales. So Mum's rainforest and Dad's desert, so, much different to each other, the landscapes, but yeah.

SUZANNE: And you're also an artist, and you've curated this show. I'm interested, you chose to go home to do a lot of your art study didn't you went to home country. Can you tell me did it make a difference?

KYRA: I think it was very important. Like Sydney, I see Sydney, I've grown up around Sydney and I've always been traveling around the world and also around Australia as a kid but I think when you have that connection to your

own homelands and understand who you are and exactly what that means it gives you this special power within to keep going and understand why it's so important to have a home and it's a part of our identity. A lot of people don't have their identity they have to sort of make a identity up where I've always had that so it's never gonna change sort of thing, and I guess I got stronger with it.

SUZANNE: How did it affect your art and how you were developing as an artist?

KYRA: Well it was quite funny cos I actually did a media journalism degree, so it was a complete shift but I think they're all about telling a story and I think when I come into this space, it was a different side because I've always been around politics, especially, around the administration side of things and publications and all that and then I've gone into an art space which is completely different where you tell your stories through different artforms and, I'm still learning, there's a long way to go but with every show that I do I get a bit better at it, at ways I'm happy to learn and I guess that's the beauty of it too.

SUZANNE: I wanted to ask you again coming back to that theme #PressforProgress and I wanted to actually ask around what the aim is and the theme is for this show -

KYRA: Press for progress... when you think about things, we live in a society where it's quite male dominant and there still needs to be a lot of progress in order for like equal pay and all that sort of stuff but as an Aboriginal woman we're still a little bit less - can seem - in this space by even equal to what non-Aboriginal women are so I guess it's about making sure that we as strong Aboriginal women especially lesbian for myself continue to keep working hard to try and make sure that we push through what we need, but in saying that, I'm Malera Bundjalung and Mitakoodi woman and I am that before I am my sexual preference and I'll always be that.

SUZANNE: It brings me to another question, do you mind? Because part of what and I've seen this over decades, of course, discrimination from our own mob, you know, gay and lesbian issues, do you have any kind of thoughts around that

KYRA: I think that we all are able to have our own yeses and no's about things, disagree and agreeance, I don't think that, I don't really care about those people and, it doesn't offend me like it would offend other people but that's because I was brought up better than that, I just feel sorry for them people because they live in really close doors and they don't actually open their eyes up to see that there's a lot more difference out there and that if they wanna be like that well that's their choice but at the end of the day it's not gonna stop me from who I am.

SUZANNE: I think that's a really really important point is not stopping you being who you are

KYRA: Well I always say that to all those younger ones out there if they're struggling with that sort of stuff, keep your head up and keep going cos you know what? We do make Australia rich in culture. And I guess there's a big change and I hope that our young ones pull their head up and keep going and maintain who they are as Aboriginal peoples. I think as you grow older you understand that if you are in the situation where you'd want to choose to marry someone it's at least a choice and that you that can have that. But yeah, I still don't particularly want to get married but if I chose to get married I've got at least that right to now. But, yeah, I'd probably have to say pre-nup now.

SUZANNE: If you would like to know more about Boomalli's Luscious All Sorts exhibition for the 2018 Gay and Lesbian mardi gras, you can visit their website at www.boomalli.com.au

This podcast was made possible by the Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation at the University of NSW and brought to you by RAWA, Redfern Aboriginal Women's Alliance. Sound engineer is Asher Milgate and it was produced by Melissa Bernstein and myself, Suzanne Ingram. Executive producer Evelyne de Leeuw.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal nations upon whose lands we live, laugh, love and work.