

The second problem confronting Safe Schools was the person who became its most public face: Roz Ward. A hard left lesbian activist who came to Australia in 2004, Ward soon became involved with the Victorian Safe Schools program that began under the Brumby Labor government and was continued, and funded, by the succeeding Coalition government headed by Ted Baillieu.

But Ward's activism got the better of her and she soon became known for having advocated Marxist theories of social change and—even worse—for having pitched Safe Schools as part of such social change: toleration means liberation, and liberation means class struggle. No wonder *The Australian* considered this front page news. And no wonder politicians got nervous. Publicly, Roz Ward was at best an irritant for Safe Schools, and at worst, a disaster.

Yet one principal of an independent school told me recently about another side of Ward. While conceding that Ward did, indeed, have a dreadful public profile, the principal described how Ward had visited the school to work with a student, parents and teachers. The principal could not speak highly enough of her work there. Indeed, many principals who have signed up to the program simply see Safe Schools as one resource among many for helping to forge the virtues of tolerance, acceptance and respect in school communities.

Law handles all this evenly—far more so than one would expect, given his recent highly-publicised and offensively lurid social media outbursts. But he might have taken time to consider why the Safe Schools program continues to generate concern in some quarters. 'Safety' has become an important cultural metaphor for our time. It draws strength from our prevailing—and, at times, overwhelming—fear of harm which lurks, we are told repeatedly, everywhere. And so safety has become an end in itself. Questioning is out: we must affirm identity, shun judgement, rebuke intolerance. No wonder the pursuit of 'safety' can sound, at times, more like an ideological campaign.

It's easy to lay all the blame at the feet of those nasty hacks at News Corp, but if there was a 'scandal' about Safe Schools, it was generated, in part, by those who designed, promoted and helped deliver it to students. And if there was a 'Moral Panic 101', it was, in part, caused by parents who got wind of the program and

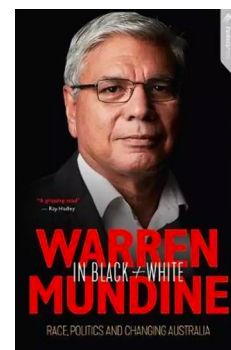
became fearful, whether justifiably or not, that ideas about sex, sexuality and gender were being put into the minds of the very young.

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Warren Mundine in Black and White: Race, Politics and Changing Australia
By Nyunggai Warren Mundine

Pantera Press, 2017,
Hardcover \$45.00, 352
pages
ISBN: 9781921997877



Reviewed by Sara Hudson

At the end of this deeply personal and moving memoir of his life, Warren tells a group of young men in Alice Springs a story about a young Aboriginal boy (p.472). The boy was from a good hardworking family, but during his teenage years he had started to become disillusioned with school, getting into fights and drinking alcohol. As a result, he ended up in court on criminal charges.

Now this boy could have gone the way of many young, troubled men—into a life of petty crime, cycling in out of prison, and feeling angry at the world. However, luckily for the boy, he had the support of his family and community who spoke up for him in court and provided him with the encouragement he needed to turn his life around. Instead of becoming yet another criminal justice statistic, the boy got a job, completed his schooling and eventually became the National President of the Australian Labor Party and the chairperson of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council. This young boy was, of course, Warren.

In many ways, Warren's story exemplifies all that classical liberalism stands for, such as the power of

personal agency, individual responsibility and civil society. How hard work and determination can lead to success and how your life is better when government does not have control over you. Warren's aim in telling the boys in Alice Springs his story was to show that nothing is out reach for them and that through education and hard work they could succeed, '... that failure is not their natural path in life' (pp.472-73).

Warren's story also exemplifies Aboriginal people's experiences moving from the frontier and fringes of society to the city. As Stan Grant writes in the introduction to the book, Warren's story is his story: 'We're blackfellas, me and Warren... Warren's father is my father' (p.xi). Both Stan and Warren were among the first pioneering wave of Aboriginal people to go to university. To this day many people in Australia remain unaware of the level of discrimination, surveillance and control applied to Aboriginal people under the policies of protectionism and assimilation. Until as recently as 1967 Aboriginal people in New South Wales lived under the control of the Aborigines Welfare Board, with strict curfews restricting their movements after dark: 'Aboriginal people in New South Wales were not allowed out after 5pm, and if they were caught, they could be arrested' (p.6).

Warren talks about living with the ever-present fear that welfare people would take him away. According to Warren: 'Poverty wasn't the real harm for Aboriginal people in the century of state and territory protection regimes. The real harm was the suffocating control' (p.75). As a child, Warren learnt to stand back in shops and wait to be asked to come to the counter, to avoid certain places for fear of being arrested, and not to talk to white people he didn't know. As Warren puts it, 'We learnt to know our place' (p.8).

A keen lover of history, Warren's memoir is also a history of the most important Australian political events affecting Indigenous Australians in the 20th and 21st centuries—for example, the Aboriginal Land Rights movement, Mabo, the Apology and the Northern Territory Intervention. In parts of the book Warren appears to stretch the truth about his influence on various political events and policy decisions, but there is no denying the important role he has played in Indigenous affairs and the fact that he is now recognised as an authority on issues affecting Indigenous Australians.

His interest in history has also contributed to his thinking about strategies to improve the socio-economic outcomes of his people.

Since childhood I'd been drawn to the history of peoples around the world who'd rebuilt their societies from positions of existential weakness to positions of strength. I'd observed that the societies that survived and thrived were the ones that adapted, that harnessed their traditions and culture as a force of strength while taking the best that the rest of the world around them had to offer (p.267).

Warren signals out Jews as an example of a group of people who have overcome adversity and successfully combined tradition with modernity. He argues the biggest barrier for Aboriginal people overcoming disadvantage isn't discrimination or historical wrongs but the mindset that 'participating in the modern economy means turning your back on your culture' (p. 272). As Warren points out, every culture has to adapt when it encounters another. Treating Aboriginal people as museum pieces, as if their culture is static and can be frozen in time, has hindered their participation in the modern world:

Colonised peoples, too, can modernise and adapt. Our cultures, too, can embrace the best of both worlds (p.272).

Warren's book is not your usual boring memoir. He manages to generate an element of suspense as he traverses through the tale of his life, with the reader left wondering who the next political identity he will lay bare will be. He describes Kevin Rudd's supplanting of Kim Beazley as Labor leader as the 'murder of a koala' (p.210) and Malcolm Turnbull's ambitions to be prime minister as akin to a fishing for a turtle and not knowing how to eat it once you've caught it:

Becoming prime minister isn't important. What comes next is what's important. It's like spending a day trying to catch a turtle and then, once you've got it, you don't know how to get the shell off. So you just

sit there pleased with yourself for catching it but not able to eat it (p.417).

After reading this book you cannot help admiring Warren and his ability to keep getting up when he has been knocked down. His resistance and sense of humour is a characteristic shared by many Aboriginal people I have met. Unfortunately, many Australians have not had the opportunity or taken the time to really get to know many Aboriginal people. Warren's book therefore serves two purposes. It is not only a story of his life, but also something of a history lesson about the experiences of Aboriginal people in Australia. Readers of this book will definitely be the wiser for it. Hopefully they will also come away with a much deeper appreciation and understanding of what it means to be an Aboriginal person in Australia and the challenges they have had to overcome.

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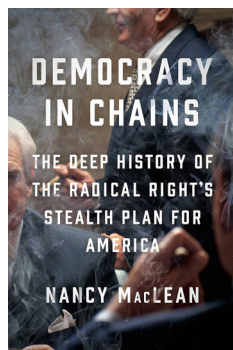
Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America

By Nancy MacLean

Scribe, 2017, 368 pages,

\$35.00

ISBN: (13) 9781925322583



**Reviewed by
Jeremy Shearmur**

Nancy MacLean is a respected historian based at Duke University in North Carolina. Her *Democracy in Chains* has been mostly well-received, especially by those on the political left. (See, for example, Rebecca Onion's uncritical interview in *Slate*¹ and the British columnist George Monbiot's review 'A Despot in Disguise: One Man's Mission to Rip Up Democracy'.²) MacLean tells a

striking story which inter-relates the work of the public choice Nobel Prize-winning economist James Buchanan, the Koch brothers (who are well-known as financial supporters of libertarianism, and more recently for spending a huge amount of money influencing the Republican Party), and the Tea Party. In addition, she tries to link Buchanan with racism and entanglement with unsavoury aspects of Virginian state politics. She also offers some surprising readings of other scholars, including economist and blogger Tyler Cowen.

The book is a strange piece of work. MacLean obtained access to Buchanan's papers, and has also worked in various archives. But she seems to me to misunderstand badly what was going on, and she has come in for significant criticism for misinterpreting some of the material on which she relies. (Three useful studies are Michael Munger, 'On the Origins and Goals of Public Choice: Constitutional Conspiracy?',³ Brian Doherty, 'What Nancy MacLean Gets Wrong About James Buchanan',⁴ and Henry Farrell and Steven Teles, 'Even the Intellectual Left is Drawn to Conspiracy Theories About the Right. Resist Them'.⁵)

It might be worthwhile, first, to say something about the Koch brothers—Charles and David—and their connections with the Tea Party. (Useful background here are Daniel Schulman's *Sons of Wichita* (2014)—to which MacLean refers—and Jane Mayer's overtly hostile *Dark Money* (2016)).

Charles Koch is a brilliant entrepreneur who built up Koch Industries into a hugely successful private company. He has also been a passionate and hardline libertarian, and has put a great deal of money into the support of libertarianism in various forms. This involved a range of activities from the political, through public policy work, to the academic, the latter including the funding of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) at which I worked for about five years. In more recent years, under the prompting of a long-term advisor Richard Fink, and making use of opportunities for political funding opened up by the *Citizens United* Supreme Court case (2010), the Kochs have become involved in the promotion of activism directed at members of Congress, and have funded an organisation which played a significant role in supporting the Tea Party. From this they moved on to the coordination of high-powered donors to, and to becoming important