Walls of Silence - Stories of Cabramatta Street Youth

Justice Kirby Collection

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Read the poems. Look at the photographs. Consider the stories. These are images of Australian life; not of life in some far away, alien, impoverished land. They portray young Australians whose parents have come from different cultures and who must cross the bridge into full membership of our society but with their own hopes and dreams intact.

The official image of Australia is of a tolerant multicultural society which has absorbed huge numbers of migrants with success. In all truth, Australia has done better than most countries. But this exhibition makes us confront the dark side. Racial stereotyping. Location stereotyping. Drug dependence. Inter-generational and inter-community tensions. Nostalgic longing for unknown homelands where things were surely healthier, more natural, less dangerous.

These are our fellow citizens who are talking to us, in words and images. We must respond to their messages not out of for fear of the danger of failing to do so. But out of our moral sense, for they are part of our family.

This exhibition is itself a contribution to reaching out and responding. The contributors have reached out. We should respond. If we do, not only will Australia be a better place. Not only will our society be strengthened. We too will have a better understanding and will see our country and our world through new eyes.

We can leap the wall of silence and reach out with friendship and love. It is never too late.