

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to Isaac Selby, 1 February 1937, Isaac Selby Papers, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, MS 694, box 226 (published in *Herald* [Melbourne], 22 February 1937, p. 20)

With several other aboriginals I was present at Footscray on Sunday week when you, among others, gave an address at the anniversary of the landing of Batman. Some of us went with misgiving for what is a memorial of the coming of the Whites is a memorial of death to us. That Batman was kind and just to the aborigines is appreciated: that the coming of the whites spelt disaster to our forebears should also be borne in mind. Taking as an illustration, my tribe only. As a lad I can remember 500 men of my tribe, the Moiras, gathered on one occasion. Now my family is the only relic of the tribe. From being a populous people we have now only a remnant of several tribes, all desperately poor and suffering disabilities that are not put on the white race. We attended the meeting as a gesture to the chairman, Mr Claude Smith, a proven friend, but we were regaled with an address on the White Australia policy, no mention of the aborigines occurring.

I am writing to suggest that in future gatherings the notice of the white people be called to the presence of a residue, left after the white man satiated himself in the blood of the aboriginal, and that there should be a call for more than sympathy on their behalf. I know you will recognise the justice of our claim and feel that you will know just how to call attention to the wrong of perpetuating the crime of the days now happily gone, for though we may not suffer by shooting, poisoning or the like, the fact of our being debarred from the full rights of the white race still is censurable.

We were here before the whites and we claim that the coming of the whites should not involve our extermination or complete subjection. We claim that the day of restitution has come and that we should be accorded full equality of opportunity and responsibility with the whites. Those of our race who are as yet uncultured should be uplifted by a planned programme and no policy as the White Australia policy should regard the aboriginal as outside the scope of its benefits.

Thank you for your kindly references.