
Ryan, E, 2010, *“We are refugees in our own Country”*: Alyawarr Walk-off versus the Northern Territory Intervention, BSc Hons Class 1 Thesis, University of Wollongong.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how spaces for Indigenous empowerment and social change are created, maintained and sustained, within the political context of resistance to the Federal Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), otherwise known as the “the Intervention”. This thesis explores the multiple journeys of different political identities involved in the creation and maintenance of the Alyawarr Walk-off Camp, as one example of resistance to the Intervention. The Alyawarr people of Central Australia have walked off their prescribed town under the Intervention, to set up a protest camp where they are able to live freely on their land. Activists and unions from around Australia have been active in supporting the Alyawarr people’s cause. Drawing on a range of qualitative methods, the multiple modes, understandings, practices and emotions of resistance that took place during the building of the first permanent structure at the Walk-off Camp are investigated. The research demonstrates that, at the Walk-off Camp, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working towards reconciliation on their own terms. Through working with activist communities, this thesis challenges the spatial imaginaries embedded in Australian Government policy which have served to maintain and perpetuate the frontier metaphor of the Indigenous ‘Other’. The research also offers valuable insights into the reasons why resistance processes emerge where they do, and analyses the role of the activist-researcher in developing sustainable resistance practice.