

Interview with Bowie Hickey:

“There’s 67 percent poor people—we need our own government”

Our reporters
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Among those present when a coronial inquest into the death of 17-year-old youth TJ Hickey concluded on July 16 was Bowie Hickey, 51, TJ’s second cousin, and “aunt” in traditional Aboriginal custom. The Aboriginal boy’s death in February ignited a violent confrontation between police and Aborigines in the Sydney suburb of Redfern.

Bowie has lived in Redfern for 35 years. She spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site*, describing how TJ had moved in with her only a week before he died. After living with his mother in the “Block”, the predominantly Aboriginal part of Redfern, TJ told Bowie that he needed to escape the constant police harassment there. The youth was so intimidated that he was scared to even step out of his house.

“Everything TJ loved was at my house. His X-Box, his videos,” Bowie explained. “When you’re an Aborigine in Australia, you’ve got to have all indoor things, because if you’re seen walking around on your own they’d just chase you. I’ve watched it for 35 years.”

Bowie described how TJ had been attempting to improve his life. “He had a little girlfriend. He was turning into a little man. The first thing he asked me when he moved in was ‘Aunt, let me do a course and get me a house’.” She explained how she had helped TJ arrange an appointment with juvenile justice to resolve his outstanding warrant. “He asked me straight out, ‘I want to get a house, how do I do it?’ That’s why I set up that meeting with juvenile justice that morning for him. And he had a meeting with them on the Monday ... but he wasn’t here on Monday.”

She described the last time she saw TJ, on the morning of his death. “He walked out the front, put his

little glasses down, his eyeglasses, and he had one cigarette in his ear. And he pulled the cigarette out and he gave it to me, and he put his little hat on. He pushed his little bike down the stairs and he just gave me the nicest smile. He didn’t say anything else to me, he just rode away.”

Bowie condemned the arrest of TJ’s 14-year-old girlfriend, April Ceissman, on the day of his fatal crash. “Little April, I feel so sorry for this little girl. She found someone she loved. They played their little games, they watched their videos. And that night when TJ died, of course she was upset, because she lost her father when she was very young. He was a heroin addict. Her mum’s also a heroin addict. So this little girl found something that she loved. That night she got a bit drunk or whatever and they locked her up for six hours. I only live two minutes down the road, why didn’t they bring her home to me? She needed someone to cuddle and comfort her, not to be thrown in a cold cell for six hours.”

Like every other member or supporter of the Hickey family who spoke with the WSWS, Bowie expressed no confidence in the coronial inquest. “The inquest was a kangaroo court. Kangaroo court—that means there’s no justice. TJ was chased to his death. I don’t know when justice is going to happen. I don’t know Mr. Justice, I really don’t know him. This is a cover-up by the police. I don’t know the system, but I know that TJ was murdered and I know there’s a big cover-up in the justice system, as usual.”

Bowie criticised the media, and explained that she no longer talks with journalists, because of their biased coverage. “If Murdoch and Packer tell a bit of truth instead of worrying about the dollar sign, maybe we’ll

get a bit of justice. The media sort of made a circus out of it.

“There’s 67 percent of us that really needs our own justice system because we can’t compete with the 33 percent rich people’s government. Because you can buy and sell your way out of these things. In our kind of living, you’ve got a job just to pay for a feed.

“There’s 67 percent poor people see. That’s black, white and brindle. Howard caters for the 33 percent rich. Even us, sitting here like this, to him we’re just stupid people, with no brains. But as soon as he wants someone to iron his shirt he’ll get one of the little people to do his dirty laundry. We don’t need that, we need our own government.

“We need a street where we can walk along where we won’t be picked at, where we won’t be chased. We want to be able to drive a car without someone saying, ‘where’d you get that from, nigger?’. We want to be able to own our house and walk in the front yard without getting paranoid because we’re black, thinking that we shouldn’t be there. We’re as normal as everyone else. With me, I’m not racist and I don’t know how anyone could be racist to anyone, you know.

“The government sickens me. Everyone should be equal. Everyone should be equal, that’s my point of view for everyone. We should be able to walk around and hold our heads up high, live where we want to live. But in Australia we can’t do that. Doesn’t matter who we are, we can live as human beings. Because living like this, black and white and Chinese, doesn’t matter what we are, if you look at the full picture we are people. We are one you know. So let’s act like one person instead of Greeks and Chinese or blacks and whites. I’m sick of that, it gets to me.”



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