

2012

Bob Randall... Short Bio



Bob Randall was born around 1927 in the Central Desert region of the Northern Territory (NT), Australia. He is a “Tjilpi” (special Uncle) of the Yankunytjatjara Nation and is one of the listed traditional keepers of the great monolith, Uluru. At about age 7, young Bob was taken away from his mother and family under government policy which forcibly removed all half-caste (half-Aboriginal) children from their families and placed them in institutions. He was one of thousands of Aboriginal children who came to be known as the “Stolen Generation.” Like so many, he never saw his mother again.

He was sent to a receiving home for indigenous children in Alice Springs, NT, and later taken to Croker Island Reservation in Arnhem Land where he, like the other children, was given a new identity and birth date. No records were kept of the Aboriginal nation, family name, or identity of the Aboriginal children who were stolen. Young Bob was kept, by force, in government institutions until he was twenty when he, with new wife and baby, was banished for questioning white authorities. He moved to Darwin and later to Adelaide, South Australia, working, studying, and looking for his family and country of belonging. After many years of heart-wrenching searches, he found his roots and returned to his mother’s country, his Ngura, where he lives today at Mutitjulu Community, beside Uluru.

Throughout his life, Mr Randall has worked as a teacher and leader for Aboriginal land rights, human rights, education, community development and cultural awareness. He established Croker Island Night, and several organizations in Darwin including the RRT Pony Club, Boxing Club, Folk Club, the Aboriginal Development Foundation, worked as a Counselor at Koomilda College, and led a Country Music Band that serviced regional Aboriginal communities. Later, Mr Randall helped establish the Adelaide Community College for Aboriginal people, served as the Director of the Australian Northern Territory Legal Aid Service, performed on stage in “Child of the Night” and “Dream of Reconciliation” and established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centers at Australian National University, University of Canberra, and University of Wollongong.

In the early 1970s, Mr Randall earned widespread recognition for his song, “My Brown Skin Baby, They Take Him Away,” which focused national and international attention on the issues of the Stolen Generation. This led to the filming of a documentary by the same name that won the Bronze Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. His lifelong efforts to establish Aboriginal culture and equal rights were recognized in 1999 when he was named Indigenous Person of the Year. In 2004, Mr. Randall was inducted into the NT Indigenous Music Hall of

Fame, recognizing the historical significance of his classic story songs, "My Brown Skin Baby, They Take Him Away," and "Red Sun, Black Moon."

Mr. Randall has authored four books, including his autobiography, *Songman, Tracker Tjugingji, Stories From Country, and Nyuntu Ninti*. In 2006, he commissioned, co-produced, and narrated the award-winning documentary, "*Kanyini*." "*Kanyini*" was voted "best documentary" at the London Australian Film Festival 2007, winner of the "Inside Film Independent Spirit Award", and winner of the Discovery Channel Best Documentary Award in 2006. In 2009, his personal story was published in the anthology, "*Stories of Belonging, Finding Where Your True Self Lives*."

Mr. Randall, affectionately known as "Uncle Bob Randall," continues to write and teach throughout the world presenting Aboriginal cultural perspectives on living based on the Kanyini principles of his Anangu people: caring for the environment and each other with unconditional love and responsibility. ***'He is a living bridge between cultures and between world nations, creating lines of understanding so that indigenous and non-indigenous people can live and learn together, healing the past through shared experience in the present'***.

Uncle Bob's continued dedication calls indigenous people to reclaim their identities and re-gain lives of purpose, so that the relevance of ancient wisdom in modern context is understood. With two-way learning and working together we can preserve the indigenous cultural knowledge that will allow us to restore environmental sustainability and once again live in the natural order of interconnectedness and harmony with all things.

