

## **JULIE, THE LATEST ONE ON THE WILLIAMS' SAGA**

Jack Williams, the year the Prime Minister publicly apologised the Aborigines for the pain, contempt and extermination inflicted on them by the harsh policies carried out in the past, was only fifteen years old, yet for as long as he could remember, he had suspected the word as it had been used by the colonisers to refer to the first inhabitants, whom they did not consider humans. He had the blood in his veins of those that had died in their thousands from smallpox, measles, influenza and chickenpox with the arrival of the foreigners, of those whose land had been expropriated and who had been confined to the semi-deserts of the interior, of those whose children had been taken from them for generations and never seen again, of those who had been severely punished for using their language. The country came to a standstill. Millions of people listened attentively to the speech with joy, but also with tears flowing uncontrollably down their cheeks.

Joshua Williams, the son of an Aboriginal woman and a coloniser, was fair-skinned. He lived in the village of his mother's tribe. A day, in mid-morning, when the adults were working in the fields, government representatives came and, after threatening the elders, took away all the mixed-race babies. The mothers were accused of neglecting their children's needs. The pastors baptised them and gave them new names. Then, they were placed in orphanages where they were eventually taught to read and write in the official language, the girls were prepared to work as domestic servants and the boys learned to work as farmers.

I never saw my mother's face again. I don't speak her language... The police, pastors or anyone in good social standing was able to enter any house, say they were not taking care of the children and take them away – Joshua used to tell his grandchildren.

Joshua's grandson Thomas objected to the slaughter of camels by army snipers. Their numbers were to be considerably reduced because they were a serious threat to water supplies and crops. The government never explained why such a rampant invasion had occurred. The colonisers had brought in huge numbers of these ruminants from India to transport goods in the absence of railways. Later, they released them in the hinterland. For years, the Aborigines tamed and sold them but, as they did not have natural predators, the camels bred and expanded very fast. Thomas rode his horse for miles and miles scaring

off the herds, until a bullet went through one of his legs. A Williams inaugurated the presence of the saga in the media.

Joshua's great-granddaughter Charlotte and her fellow activists ran several awareness campaigns to try to stop the waves of tourists that annually climbed the monolith in a famous World Heritage-listed national park in the middle of the desert. This monolith was a small hill, considered a sacred mountain by the natives and a symbol of the whole nation. In the surroundings, and even on the summit, were mountains of rubbish, including the faecal remains of those who slept in vans or camped unchecked on nearby roads and in the park itself. This huge amount of waste had an impact on the eco-system, polluting the water, spoiling the animal's food supply and degrading the beauty of the landscape. They stood in front of the official tourism offices, in front of the operators, they even travelled to those foreign countries that sent a great number of tourists, started several hunger strikes, explained the people in the squares and at community meetings why they were opposed to mass tourism. Charlotte and two of her colleagues took the strike to such an extreme that it took them some months to recover.

Terrible fires were spreading across parts of the country. The flames had also reached the village where Lucas, another of Joshua's great grandchildren, lived. He saw an old man wandering near his property, looking totally disoriented. Lucas didn't think twice, he went out onto the road, completely surrounded by flames, and pulled him into his ranch. He had just got up, after rescuing the old man he ran to search for his pick-up, but the garden, the driveway, the road... all was in fire. He couldn't get out of that mousetrap. The fire was entering his property, so he carried the old man in his arms, put him into the pottery kiln and then he himself went into it with a fire extinguisher, a bucket of water and a fireproof blanket. They stayed there for an hour, the time it took for the fire to destroy his property. At this moment, the head of the regional government was announcing at a press conference that there was nothing left in our protagonist's village, the properties were practically all destroyed and some 900 people were homeless. Following the announcement, a distraught fire fighter said that the fire services were not equipped with the necessary means, that they had done everything possible and that two colleagues had died in the labours of extinction. Meteorologists on the news said that the cooler temperatures were to last only for two or three days at the most and that then the high temperatures would return, temperatures that would break new records, and could even reach a hundred and ten degrees Farenheit. The next day, Lucas was interviewed by a

major TV channel and the news spread all around the country, and once again a Williams was a kind of national hero. During his emotional speech, the following headline flashed across the screen: "Around 200 fires are burning across the country, nine people have died and more than 1,100 properties have been destroyed".

Years went by and again the forest fires appeared voraciously on an island close to the south coast. This island was a reserve for seals, penguins, koalas and several types of birds. The situation was dramatic. A great part of the koalas had been burnt to death. Two teenagers converted their newly acquired electric car into an ambulance. They loaded several animals into the vehicle and took them to a clinic where their wounds were healed and were kept safe. They made several trips and saved more than forty animals. The most tender image was that of a mother with its child on the co-driver's seat. This photo and the one of the two youngsters with their "ambulance" went viral on social networks all around the world. The Williams were again the pride of the whole country. In this case, it was Jack and Neil.

- It's a pity that some of the koalas we saved died on the first day due to severe burns –Neil told the cameras.

Neil's elder sister Julie won the election thanks to the massive vote of the indigenous population and the young people who were very concerned about the planet's health. The serious forest fires around the nation were caused by the difference in temperatures between the opposite areas bathed by the ocean waters. In its positive phase there were colder than usual temperatures, heavy rains and floods on the eastern coast and warmer than usual temperatures and droughts on the western coast. In its negative phase, it was the other way round. Experts pointed out that this phenomenon was due to the considerable increase in carbon dioxide levels. For the activists, the intense and continuous burning of coal was the main culprit.

Like other heads of government from different countries, Julie attended all the climate summits convened by the UN. Little by little progress was being made: producers, consumers and leaders were becoming aware that things had to change. The population was exerting pressure with continuous demonstrations in the streets, on social networks and the media. She was re-elected as the nation's prime minister. In his last year of her second term, she climbed the sacred monolith and from the top she could contemplate

how the forests and natural flora were regenerating and the fauna was in perfect communion with the farms of the farmers and ranchers. Before this sight, there came to her mind the great catastrophes suffered, the struggle of millions of people worldwide, the huge amount of lives, not only human, sacrificed.. She was now at ease with herself. A tear slowly fell down her cheek. After all, she was a Williams.

**"Stories without Mufflers" (2006 - )**

Jesús Claver Giménez