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Toa and the Wero: The Gang and Community Contract
Ko Tū a Waho, ko Rongo a Roto.
Tū Outside, Rongo Inside.

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Abstract
This article is about the gang–community contract in Aotearoa New Zealand, and asks whether the patch can be used for good. To date, little academic attention has been given to the role that predominantly Māori patched street gangs occupy in their communities or the role that re-Indigenisation plays in the trajectory of community-based work by such groups. Using the wero (challenge) as a metaphor for the gang–community contract, a study of gang membership is applied to assess notions of toa (warrior) and the warrior culture, while asking whether such contemporary expressions and embodiment of toa can be used in the form of gang membership for the betterment of the broader society; essentially using the patch for good. Through the application of two Māori concepts—toa and wero—as metaphor, this article will explore the relationship between contemporary expressions of the toa and the challenges they face in the current climate of socioeconomic inequality and COVID-19. Lastly, this article provides a case study of the Black Power Movement Whakatāne chapter to identify processes of re-Indigenisation and the role the patch plays in restoring the mana of marginalised communities.

Key Words: gang–community contract; re-Indigenisation; toa; wero; Black Power Movement Whakatāne

Introduction

Toa (warriors), along with farmers, hunters and carvers, are a small but important group who have played a constant role in the history of the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand in a myriad of forms. What role do toa play now and what may be their potential into the future? Furthermore, do we even have a clear picture of what constitutes the contemporary expressions of toa? Historically, there is a sense of shared characteristics, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when we consider those who fought in the Land Wars or overseas in the Pioneer battalion of the First World War or the 28th Battalion in the Second World War. Such examples dominate the narrative. But have concepts and understandings shifted? Modern expressions of toa can be seen in the New Zealand Defence forces or within the New Zealand Police. Further to these contemporary expressions, there is also a clear idea of the tama toa (male warrior) within the patched street gang culture. Drawing on Gilbert (2013, p. ix), gangs are defined as "a structured group (five or more people) that maintains an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers and formal rules that supersede the rules of the state". If we want to understand what has happened to toa as Māori journeyed into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we need to understand the narrative around toa and how ideas and language can shape aspects of our society. While there is a plethora of work that extolls the virtues of the warrior, and the history and mythology around warriors and warfare from a dominant Eurocentric perspective (see Walker, 2012), this article seeks to look at a particular aspect of

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history in Aotearoa New Zealand, concentrating on patched street gang membership and the process of re-Indigenisation. This contribution places the voices of community leaders within a gang space at the centre of the narrative at a time when most discussions on gangs are driven by politicians concerned with vote chasing and penal populism (Brown, 2021; NZ National Party, 2021; Pratt, 2008; Pratt & Clark, 2005; Small, 2021) and the mainstream media opinionestas.

Gang membership is arguably a contemporary expression of toa but is it appropriate to classify gangs in the context of Māori tikanga (custom, protocol) and linked to a continuation of tradition? It is argued here that through a process of re-Indigenisation, some chapters within the context of patched gangs have used toa to reclaim a place in their communities. Indeed, such moves are the only clear path for some people in Aotearoa New Zealand who have become marginalised and criminalised through neoliberal policies that have increased socioeconomic inequality (McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Workman & McIntosh, 2013). To this end, by using tikanga, some chapters have answered a call to defend their communities, who see increasing consequences of state-driven policies of structural violence (Cavadino & Dignan, 2006) and settler policies that exclude them from mainstream society (Pratt, 2006).

The first section of this article assesses patched gangs in the contemporary environment with an emphasis on toa in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how toa fit within the language and issues that arise from a narrative of masculinity. This section further explores the social contract between patched gangs and the societies they come from, arguing that the nuances of such arrangements are vital for gang acceptance and relevance. The second section of this article will define toa before exploring ideas of liminality and the social contract between the warrior and their community. Next, the wero (challenge) will be used as a metaphor to discuss the concept of the gang–community contract and the shifting in the presence of Tū (the primary atua/god associated with war) to Rongo (the primary atua/god associated with peace). From this contract we can explore some examples of the use of the patch for good and then examine a case study of the practice of re-Indigenisation through restoration.

At a Bridget Williams Books event held in April 2021 celebrating *Imagining Decolonisation* (Elkington et al., 2020), Moana Jackson, one of the contributors, discussed decolonisation as a process of restoration. In the case study presented in this article, Black Power Movement Whakatāne encapsulate the main concepts of restoration but have done so through re-Indigenisation. For Black Power Movement Whakatāne, the wero centres their process of re-Indigenisation which began thirty years ago. In so doing, they place themselves at the centre of the journey that removes colonisation as the defining baseline context. Re-Indigenisation also recognises existing values located in te ao Māori (the Māori world) that further remove the centrality of colonisation and the ongoing trauma of this process. Through re-Indigenisation, restoration of mana (authority, spiritual power) can be achieved while providing alternative methods to truly aspire to decolonisation beyond the Eurocentric language and context that plagues such initiatives under the current political system. This discussion of re-Indigenisation has utility in the ideas and concepts of toa using the patch for the good of the community, and as such, this article highlights community-centric agendas, dynamics and issues.

Approach

Exploring gang communities can be a difficult environment to navigate given their marginalisation and treatment at the hands of the state. Discourse analysis was the major theoretical approach to researching this article. I utilised existing literature while conducting a media scan to identify relevant examples that have been covered by various news agencies. There is, however, a small corpus of material that has proven useful in understanding the nexus between patched street gangs and the community (Desmond, 2009; Gilbert, 2013; Newbold & Dennehy, 2001; Taonui & Newbold, 2011). I entered into a partnership with Black Power Movement Whakatāne and was subsequently granted access that allowed for participant

observation and casual interviews with those open to discussing the history and motivations around using the patch for good. Drawing on the work of Riki Mihaere, I refer to these individuals as kaikōrero (speaker, narrator) (Mihaere, 2015). One kaikōrero (Genesis 'TK' White) was open to disclose information about the chapter's journey to date. The move to engage in participant observation was motivated by the lack of information outside media commentary or academic research. In developing a partnership with Black Power Movement Whakatāne, the voice of the community can be presented here, separated from the often-hostile narrative that is generated by the media, law enforcement and politicians. It was important to hear from members about what was happening to them and challenge what was being said about them.

Gangs and toa

Māori dominate some of the largest patched street gangs in Aotearoa New Zealand and they attract many young Māori (Belich, 2001; Taonui & Newbold, 2011). Kinship links, poverty, unemployment and dysfunction arising from urbanisation and cultural disintegration affecting traditional Māori social and family organisation contribute to gang membership (McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Shilliam, 2012; Workman & McIntosh, 2013). Other factors such as colonisation, marginalisation and assimilation are also seen as drivers of Māori gang membership (Anderson et al., 2014; Shilliam, 2012; Taonui & Newbold, 2011). There has been some discussion and critique around the tribal aspect of Māori society, toa and endemic warfare in early Aotearoa New Zealand, and some gang conflicts involve inter-iwi/hapū (tribe/subtribe) dynamics (Taonui & Newbold, 2011). While gang-on-gang violence rarely has a direct impact on non-gang members, there are always risks to public safety if conflict gets out of hand (Biddle, 2019). Sometimes such threats take hold of society's imagination beyond realistic eventualities in the form of moral panic. The potential for gang-on-gang conflict is the realisation of the violence underpinning gang survival and their paramilitary nature, characterised by tenets of hyper-masculinity and brotherhood (Bradley, 2021; Lauchs et al., 2015; Payne & Quinn, 1991; Veno, 2012). For gang members, violence is a currency. However, such hyper-masculinity possibly has negative implications when we consider the government-stated rates of domestic violence seen among communities with high gang membership (Cabinet Social Policy Committee, 2014). Such perceptions will be discussed below but suffice to say that politicians and mainstream media drive to perpetuate the nexus between gangs and domestic violence despite some chapters working to use the patch and concepts of toa and wero to tackle such issues.

Gang membership offers a contemporary means to express warrior ideals. Ideas of gang membership and toa are arguably problematic because of issues around criminality and domestic violence. The government claims that "almost half of the serious offences by ethnic gangs of New Zealand which originate from outlaw motorcycle gang members are family violence related" Cabinet Social Policy Committee, 2014, p. 3).[1] Aspects of gang culture are based on the ideals of hyper-masculinity, are paramilitary in nature and underscored by the potential for violence (Bradley, 2017). "Wives, girlfriends and female associates of gang members are at significantly higher risk of family and sexual violence, including multiple assaults with potentially severe consequences" (Cabinet Social Policy Committee, 2014, p. 3). While it is easy for government to target gang members as easily identifiable folk devils over issues of family violence as a moral outrage, there needs to be a clear understanding that such behaviour in Aotearoa New Zealand is not limited to gang members and their families; family violence is a systemic issue of patriarchy that is well-established in all sections of society.

Gang violence is seen by some as the internalised anger derived from oppressive socioeconomic, political and cultural forces of colonisation, and violence against women and children occurs because anger often seeks the easiest target (Belich, 2001; Taonui & Newbold, 2011). The irony is that violence used to

[1] The author questions the term ethnic gangs and prefers to use patched street gangs.

defend against an external threat, such as other gangs, is sometimes focused internally. It seems that the ideals of toa and the concepts of martial response to external threats have shifted on their axes. Among Māori gang membership, such martial behaviour is an ever-present aspect of toa. Taonui and Newbold (2011) question the reasons of detribalisation and endemic warfare, and exaggerated warrior culture arguments for the rise of gang membership among Māori, and find such approaches limited. Perhaps the traditions of defending the community or the role of the gang become blurred and a distorted feature of toa under the intergenerational strains of colonisation? One kaikōrero believed that such issues of violence arise through intergenerational trauma with relationships being formed by parties who are both damaged (anonymous, personal communication, 26–27 February 2021). While in no way excusing family violence, such insights help to understand the harm of family violence and why it may be happening. And it is such understandings that are used by some chapters to turn things around for whānau (families). There is, however, an issue with gangs, violence and the risk to the communities they live within that can be seen in the context of social and community strain. Such tensions, while arguably the result of marginalisation and social upheaval since the arrival of non-Māori, can provide a place for the rise of anti-social groups sitting on the fringes of mainstream societies, or who have in some cases evolved to control sections of it. Such a position, however, also offers opportunities to challenge patriarchal systems and focus on whānau well-being. Before we move on to discussing the relationship between patched street gangs and their community, it is prudent to explore and define toa and its context within gang membership.

Defining toa

Before exploring gangs as contemporary warriors, it is prudent to define toa. Angela Ballara (2003) identifies toa as fighting men or war leaders. Eddie Durie (1994, p. 32) classifies toa as warrior but extends the meaning to "individuals renowned for feats of bravery, strength or skill" who could also be called on to represent the hapū in "arranged combat to settle disputes" seen within the context of patched street gangs. While contemporary expressions of the warrior are found in the New Zealand Defence Force and the New Zealand Police, these two institutions hold a legal mandate to use lethal and violent force within that nation's constitutional framework and are arguably socially accepted. Gangs present an unofficial shadow group and are present and persistent in the social make-up in some communities of Aotearoa New Zealand. All groups fit within a narrative that is wrapped up in the language of the warrior male ethos and hyper-masculinity dominates these definitions. While the definitions above focus on the martial aspects of the toa, conflict has both offensive actions and defensive meanings, and this will always be an element that creates a duality in the role of the toa where Tū, the god of war, and Rongo, the god of cultivation and peace, share a place within the Māori world view. Through a duality that recognises the need both to defend and nurture and to attack, tensions arise for communities who may rely on gangs in one sense yet acknowledge state power in another. From this position we can gain a sense of a gang–community contract. Within this context, the role of the toa is to move between Tū or conflict and Rongo or peace. And it is in the functioning of the wero that we can observe this duality encapsulated in the whakataukī (Māori proverb) *Ko Tū a waho, ko Rongo a roto*: *Tū outside, Rongo inside.* Before we explore the wero in the context of the gang–community contract, we need to articulate this relationship in more detail.

The gang community/contract

Jarrod Gilbert, drawing on Jankowski, discusses the concept of the gang–community balance. This balance emerges when communities accept (willingly or grudgingly) that gangs are a permanent fixture in their midst (Gilbert, 2013, p. 292). Gilbert provided a classification of the gang–community relationship: 1) associates—support within the community/takes part in gang-organised event; 2) incidental associates—no deliberate contact (share neighbourhood); and 3) the wider public or work associations (Gilbert, 2013,

pp. 292–3). Communities with a strong gang presence share with gang members many social and economic experiences and, therefore, similar values, troubles and outlooks, but there is a need to maintain more than a gang–community balance to ensure gangs do not live up to the hype that surrounds them (Gilbert, 2013).

Taking this idea further and conceptualising a gang–community contract changes the narrow optic of just a balance between gangs and their communities. Making such a distinction between balance and contract comes from conversations with current and ex-patched members who strongly believe that they are part of their host community and navigate this space through an understanding of their place within that community. Balance suggests a binary of polemic position that does not fully recognise the fluidity that exists in communities with a high gang presence. In such communities the gang–community nexus exists and, when placed within the context of the wero, the concepts of the warrior/community contract as discussed above also exists. Whether this contract is verbal or implied, it allows for a deeper understanding of the gang–community dynamic. But given the spectre of violence, can gang membership be a positive force in our society? For some families, gangs represent a community-based function (sense of belonging/brotherhood, reintegration support for ex-prisoners, post-addiction supports) and there is a need to recognise the significant social function they provide (Gilbert, 2013). In some communities, gangs fill a power vacuum where law enforcement cannot. Unofficial or non-state groups filling such a vacuum are not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand and are particularly noticeable where there is significant social, political and economic unrest. Previous Police Association president Greg O'Connor believed that the decline in active policing of gangs has allowed such groups to increase their numbers (see Daly, 2016). With increased numbers come power and the ability to control sections of the community. However, for some chapters, with this power come responsibilities and obligation to the community. In using the wero as a metaphor, we can explore the gang–community contract in detail.

The wero

The pōwhiri is an important ceremony when welcoming manuhiri (guests) onto the marae (meeting house). The wero is a challenge that takes place within the pōwhiri. Such a challenge recognises the potential for conflict in the meeting of two groups; however, the wero, while loaded with tensions between groups, rarely comes to blows in contemporary times. It is in the context of the wero that we see the symbolic connection between toa and their communities. In looking at the wero as a metaphor for the contract between the toa and their community, this ritual can be broken down into two aspects. The first is the role toa have within their society and the second is how they react to elements from outside. For gangs, such roles fit within ideas of territoriality, in-group/out-group relationships and the role that violence may play as required. The definitions of toa point to those with martial skill and as the representatives of their hapū in matters of dispute and, by extension, defence. The second aspect of the toa is seen in the performance of the wero, an important process in determining visitor intent and then welcoming others onto the marae. In the wero, the features of defence and protection become clear and symbolic action is attached to the space (marae) and community (whānau, hapū or iwi). Such ideals can be seen for gang members along territorial lines and based on the people who make up the inhabitants of that territory.

Pre-and post-Treaty warfare and conflict was directed by tikanga and Ballara (2003, p. 13) states that such activities were "culturally determined responses to offences against the rules of Māori society". We can safely acknowledge these activities in the symbolic actions of the wero. Today, the performance of the wero is still set in the context of defence (Mead, 2003). In looking at toa and their role in the pōwhiri, there is a sense of the warrior as a liminal being. Liminality is a state of betwixt and between (Turner, 1969), neither here nor there, and as the toa moves out to protect their people and determine the intentions of the manuhiri, they move away from the host group to challenge. Such a state allows us to understand the time and space in which Tū and Rongo move within the pōwhiri, a transition accommodated by the toa. In the

behaviour of the toa, we see a liminal process whereby the toa meets the guests in a sacred middle ground. The space in time (also liminal) is like the holding of the breath as intent is determined. The toa is situated (however briefly) in this space, a link between their hapū and a definite other. This action is the moment of liminality, the void between conflict and peace and the toa controls such a space.

Ko Tū a waho, ko Rongo a roto places Tū outside and Rongo inside and presents this binary relationship of conflict and peace. Tū represents the debate that takes place on the marae, while Rongo represents the peaceful setting inside the wharenui (Mulholland & Bargh, 2015). Once the wero is completed, conflict or debate is ended and so the toa re-joins the tangata whenua in the peaceful setting of the marae, joined by the manuhiri. The wero also recognises the spiritual shift from Tū to Rongo and the toa are central to this transition that has spiritual and physical meaning. The principles of tapu (restricted) and noa (clean) are important elements to the pōwhiri ceremony where a state of tapu changes to one of balance and noa (Mead, 2003).

Furthermore, expanding on the idea of liminality and the concepts of the sacred space, the toa plays a role that links two different communities on the physical plane but also moves, through ritual, between the tapu to a place of balance (in both time and space). They are essentially neither here nor there, and given the spiritual dimension to the role played by the ancestors in the meeting of different kin groups, the toa also possibly plays a role where they provide the links between the living members of the hapū and the ancestors through the wero. Furthermore, the toa controls the space through protocols where one group moves through and joins the other. The toa is the central element to the meeting of tangata whenua and manuhiri, a role that is rich in symbolism and, from a modern viewpoint, a link to the past. The ceremonies are a process in recognition of the sacred act of war and peace, a symbolic social contract between the toa and their community. And it is concept of the toa as a liminal entity that operates in such a liminal space that can be applied to contemporary warriors and their place within, or on the margins of, their host communities. Patched members fit into this idea of liminality, toa and community, examples of which we will return to.

The toa and wero are important links to the past and underpin the toa–community contract which recognises both a continued need for defence and the aim to achieve peace and harmony with the wider world. Thus, from a Māori world view, the toa and wero are symbols of the binary nature of conflict and peace, or of Tū and Rongo. Gang warfare of varying degrees of intensity are a natural aspect of gang life. Such conflicts place patched street gangs into a martial position within their communities. This position is seen as activities of a contemporary warrior group in an abstract sense but incorporating elements as the actions of Tū. If seen through the social contract between the toa, in the form of the patched street gang and the broader community, then elements of the hyper-masculinity of toa may manifest themselves in the actions of gang members and inter-gang warfare. Such potential for violence needs to be tempered with the ideals of Rongo and the balance seen in the symbolic act of the wero. The wero is an important part of the pōwhiri and the actions are symbolic with clear parameters around the ideals of defence and protection, although sometimes extended beyond the local boundaries. Gangs provide an alternative example of the warrior and offer an oblique example of the community contract and symbolic expressions of the wero. To this end, part of the gang–community contract has encouraged some chapters to use the patch for good. Indeed, such a move to provide positive supports for communities by gangs is something that law enforcement and politicians could utilise if they are serious about supporting marginalised and criminalised communities. We will now examine some examples of how the patch has been used for good in the community.

Patch for good?

The government of Aotearoa New Zealand claims that gang members and their families rate highly in domestic violence figures (Cabinet Social Policy Committee, 2014), but domestic violence is a deeper and more widespread issue in this country. Such hyper-masculine environments can draw criticism in their perpetuation of male dominance and negative attitudes towards women, but the expression of toa and the representations of Tū and Rongo provide a valuable set of useful and positive motifs in contemporary society. The adoption and use of tikanga Māori provides responses to effectively support the reduction of domestic violence and the negative consequences of hyper-masculinity. The balance of this article will discuss patched street gangs and the idea that they encapsulate the warrior ethos while exploring the notion of the nexus between toa and society, and the contract between the two. What follows are some examples.

Tribal Huk, a single chapter patched street gang in a Waikato town, used force and violence in an attempt to remove methamphetamine dealers from Ngāruawāhia (Brown, 2017; Peters 2017). Speaking on Tribal Huk's stance on methamphetamine, a local businessman (Don) said he backed its leader Jamie Pink's ruthless tactics, claiming the gang chief "did for his community what local police 'ignored'" (cited in Peters, 2017). Don went on to state: "We got to the stage where it wasn't even worth going to the police. They just ignored the problem. Jamie didn't ignore it and he fixed it," Don said. "Nobody else was doing it and the police have got an invidious job, they have got to follow the rules... It's worked" (cited in Peters, 2017). The actions of Pink and his gang, while vigilante in nature and possibly raising the threat of criminal tensions in the area, served their local community in a way that, while unconventional, had some support from the district. Tribal Huk are also responsible for a community programme that provides school lunches for hundreds of school children using farms they own to fund the initiative. Tribal Huk are an example of the gang–community contract between toa and the community that is twofold in its activities of tackling drugs and hunger.

Another example of a gang–community contract is the joint initiative between the Notorious chapter of the Mongrel Mob and the Salvation Army through the Hauora Programme. This programme deals with the impact of methamphetamine abuse on gang members and their families. The Hauora Programme was driven by the leadership within the Notorious chapter, but the comments made by patched member Roy Dunn highlight some of the issues faced by gangs trying to make changes for the good of the community:

> It has taken 14 years to get to the point where we are finally getting help to battle addiction. In those years, many people in society did not take us seriously. They viewed us with suspicion and mistrust. I can see why. I think it's fair to say we continue to be viewed as the baddest of the bad. (Roy Dunn, quoted in The Salvation Army, 2013)

There is an understanding within gangs of society's perceptions of gangs and the suspicion when they turn to more community-focused issues such as methamphetamine addiction. Moves by senior gang members can also attract suspicion from other gang members (The Salvation Army, 2013). However, the cohesion of the gang has its benefits. Lynette Hutson from the Salvation Army's addiction services said, rather than an individualised treatment, this was done in a group: "It drew on the strength of the group to be part of the support for recovery" (quoted in Brown, 2017). There were also wider positive implications for non-gang whānau members (Brown, 2017). The group cohesion, arguably formed from inter-gang warfare, has been applied to provide positive peer pressure by a gang that in the past prided itself on being anti-social to an extreme (Isaac, 2007).

These examples show an awareness of how gang membership can be an influencing motivator in certain sections of the community, be they tackling issues of child hunger or the selling of, and damage

caused by, methamphetamine. There will be suspicion of gang involvement in social issues, but some fundamental attitudes around community responsibility show an evolution of awareness that has been around for some time. The Black Power, for example, had early leaders, such as Rei Harris and Denis O'Reilly, who had a pro-social agenda to respond positively to personal hardships (Gilbert, 2013). Denis O'Reilly continues this pro-social agenda from the base of the Black Power whānau. The subcultural and secretive or closed nature of gangs can place them outside of their community; however, there are increasing touch points where gang membership and the broader community meet. We will now look in more detail at the Black Power and a chapter of the Movement in Whakatāne.

Black Power Movement, Bay of Plenty, Whakatāne: Toa and the future narrative[2]

In the cases above, there has been a move by some patched street gangs to provide community-based support that goes beyond the patched members of their chapters. In so doing, the challenge is placed at the feet of the public, police, politicians and media to decide how sincere the motives of these groups are. In this, patched street gangs are up against a persistent attitude from some sectors who fail to accept that patched members can be anything but negative factors in the social fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand. While groups such as the Mongrel Mob Kingdom have gone to some lengths to counter negative publicity, some chapters go about their business with little regard for what others outside their communities think—it is just not useful to engage in public dialogue. Black Power Movement Whakatāne have evolved over the past 30 years and have slowly begun to engage in open discussions about their moves to improve the well-being of their members and their families through a process based on tikanga Māori in a way that focuses on re-Indigenisation (*Te Karere,* 2016).

Thirty years into a 100-year plan and Black Power Movement Whakatāne are optimistic that through their own actions, they can continue to lead lives that place whānau at the centre of their culture and keep their people off drugs and away from crime, while doing so in a way where they can enjoy tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (self-determination) (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). In looking to one's self, such self-determination comes through "setting free of power and authority absolute" so that one can determine one's own future and destiny (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). As stated by one of the members, "Only we can keep our people safe"—echoing the values of a toa seeking to defend the well-being of his community (anonymous, personal communication, 17 November 2020). In looking to create a new hikoi (journey) based on a solid kaupapa and the understanding of te ao Māori, a tikanga Māori approach was applied to set a platform from which to carve a new path. In 1992 and through the mahi (work) of Paora White and 'Bongee'[3] in the search for a better future, Black Power Movement Whakatāne was established and a process of re-Indigenisation began. These initial moves were based on the learning of te reo and traditional martial arts in mau rākau and the skills of the wero. It was recognised that in building the platform for long-term and meaningful change, an intergenerational approach was vital to the success of the vision. TK recognises such intent, stating: "I watched my father stay committed to his vision of seeing a solid grounding of te ao Māori woven into the ethos of Black Power Movement Whakatāne" (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). This broader history will be recorded elsewhere, but suffice to say, the events over a weekend on the 26–28 February 2021 represent the accumulation of two generations of mahi coalescing into the first Black Power Movement Whakatāne wānanga that involved

[2] From here, this Black Power chapter will be referred to as Black Power Movement Whakatāne. It is important to state that the views expressed by members of this chapter do not necessarily reflect those views of the wider Black Power iwi. Information for this section was gained through participant observation and informal interviews with certain patched members. The main kaikōrero is Genesis 'TK' White, but some remain anonymous to preserve their privacy, while others are identified through pseudonyms.

[3] Bongee passed away in May 2022.

wāhine and tamariki as the central focus for the gathering. It was self-funded through koha and was set down as an alcohol-free weekend.

One small but important act at the end of the wānanga was opening the social media platform, normally used by patched members, to wāhine. In a hyper-masculine world of patched street gangs, this seemingly small step is a great leap in addressing generations of attitudes arguably steeped in patriarchy and misogyny. Black Power in general have had a history of challenging patriarchal stereotypes (Desmond, 2009; Gilbert, 2013), but in the 1990s, Black Power Movement Whakatāne saw a strong sense to change further. Indeed, there was much kōrero at the February wānanga around the important role that wāhine play in tikanga Māori, particularly in the formal performance of the welcoming or karanga during the pōwhiri. Further to this sentiment, one long-term patched member spoke of the frustration of driving long distances to attend Black Power hui to be separated from his partner once they arrived, with the men sitting at one set of tables and the women at another (Bongee, personal communication, 26 February 2021).

Other members remember the days before the shift started by Paora and Tui White and there was a strong sense in acknowledging the past, as a means to both appreciate the need for change and recognise how to achieve this (anonymous, personal communication, 26–27 February 2021). What is clear from the conversations that were had about the need to change was the importance of strong leadership, and in this recognition lies a pathway to succeeding with certain members modelling the right behaviour. But it was observed and understood that such a journey would be hard. This was articulated by TK when talking about the leadership and trials shown by his father: "I watched him cry, I watched him crumble to his knees, I watched him battle with himself, I watched him change the tide, I watched him show us a new way." And in so doing, TK watched as his father built a "platform for free thinkers, brothers and sisters who could think for themselves" with a clear language of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). There was a strong blend of old and new working on the kaupapa set down 30 years ago. The new leadership sees their role within the hapū as serving the members and their families (servant leadership) and one characteristic TK recognises is courage. He acknowledges a courage to "stay humble in times when its most difficult to do so…to keep on keeping on when all is against you (life in general) and there is no one with you…to lay your life on the line and stand for what you believe in" (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). During participant observations, formal and informal leadership were observed being used with the chapter hierarchy to create a positive environment with clear expectations on behaviour. The longer-serving members act as mentors offering their support and mana. In this, they bring years of experience and knowledge.

When considering strong leadership, recent events allow us to look at how individuals who carry authority can shape positive outcome for their communities. Whakatāne has a history of conflict between Black Power and the Mongrel Mob. One flash point that has gained media attention is tangi (funerals). While there was a time when funerals were seen as off limits, there had been an escalation leading up to the COVID-19 outbreak (Gilbertson, 2020; Ensor & Harris, 2020; Malone, 2017; *Stuff*, 14 January 2017). Tension rises when one group enters or moves through the territory of another in large numbers. This was seen in Whakatāne in 2017 with footage of shots being fired went viral over the internet as well as footage of the Mongrel Mob procession being taunted by unidentified local Black Power members (*Stuff*, 13 August 2017).

In looking for meaningful actions where the patch has been used for good, Whakatāne offers examples within the context of tangi. When Aotearoa New Zealand came out of COVID-19 Alert Level 4 in 2020, two tangi were held in the Whakatāne region with no incident or expected tensions. Twice, the passage of large numbers of members through the recognised territories of another were negotiated by senior leaders, one being the rangatira of Black Power Movement Whakatāne, with little involvement of New Zealand Police or the media. When asked about the second occasion, both leaders stated independent

of each other that they have an obligation to their communities to keep them safe as they feel that there is no one else who can. Indeed, providing an insight into where he sees the future, TK stated: "…instead of fighting the Mob, we will be fighting for the freedom and future of our children". And drawing on the vision and path set down by his father and the responsibilities to the community, TK added: "Some may not see it now, but my father sure did, and I see it too that the frontline warriors we need to be training and developing are academics, politicians, lawyers and teachers" (TK, personal communication, 29 April 2021). In talking to each other, these two community leaders demonstrated a guardianship role in averting tense situations that have erupted into armed conflict in the past. In this, these two leaders have role modelled positive behaviours that challenge decades of inter-group conflict and antagonism. But this last quote also provides insight into where the focus of Black Power Movement Whakatāne sits and how they see this responsibility to whānau and the future generations as an expectation for those who chose to wear that patch.

Conclusion

The examples shown above point to a move by some gang members to act as an agent of good in their communities, but they recognise that they have a long way to go to overcome perceptions of criminality and violence—an image most gang members are aware of.

Through the context of toa, this article has considered the wero as a metaphor to highlight the social contract between contemporary warrior societies and their communities. Within such contemporary warrior societies—the gangs—the ideas of defence and challenge were established while acknowledging their liminal status; a position also found during the wero as the toa move out to meet the manuhiri. There needs to be a more considered assessment of the ideals of toa and how they are used today as well as further questions around the role toa play in two areas: the role of tikanga Māori as a positive framework for such a contract between the toa and society, and the attitudes of males to domestic violence. However, can these groups and the roles they play be used as a force for good in their communities? This subject requires further research.

While this article focuses on two particular aspects of the toa narrative, there is so much more that can be looked at beyond the martial-dominated narratives that exist today. Gang members have shown a willingness to refocus their energies to community-centric strategies, and while public support has been slow and considered, these moves should be encouraged and channelled positively, particularly when vigilante-type behaviours have the potential to escalate and threaten the gang–community contract. This article is a brief exploration of toa and the wero but calls for a much broader study for understanding contemporary toa today and how such ideals, linked to the well-being of the community, can potentially act as an agent of positive change.

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