

Let Justice roll says Baptist negro leader.

The message from a black Mississippi negro to his brown brothers in Aotearoa is solidarity and independence.

John Perkins should be listened to because his testimony is powerful to indigeneous people everywhere.

Powerful through the action of the Jesus Christ of the Gospels to change bitterness and resentment into practical living with dignity, says John.

John Perkins had every cause for bitterness, growing up in the southern states of America under racial bigotry. He got out, but took within him the seeds of his own destruction, his prejudices. He says when he met Jesus Christ, he learned he could lay down his burdens. Instead of putting all his energies into justifying and maintaining his attitudes, he could turn the energy to positive good. It was soon after he returned to the deep south with his wife Vera Mae and children, to found the Voice of Calvary ministry. This not only brought Jesus Christ into peoples lives but also the gospel understanding of equality, justice and economic independence for all.

That's one of the messages John Perkins brought with him on his recent visit to this country. He's had a lot of experience of setting up co-operatives, where people first realise they need a commitment to each other, and they then work to fulfill it. His work in Mississippi was too successful for some, and he and some other fellow negroes were tortured and beaten by some white lawmen. He was not swayed from his goal, of 'reconciliation', and continued the work.

Whilst in New Zealand, Tu Tangata's editor interviewed John Perkins. Part of the interview was recorded for the Wellington Maori radio station, Te Upoko o te Ika.

John Perkins preaches reconciliation, as he believes the Bible means, "that the purpose and intention of the gospel



is to reconcile people to God and each other in the body of Christ." John found that true for his own life and the success of the ministry among his black people bears this out in their increased motivation and desire to take on life.

He says black people may fear reconciliation because they think it means integration, which for them has meant being submerged in a dominant white culture.

But he says reconciliation comes from equality, from not only being held equal but also knowing it inside in the sight of God. He says minority people all over the world are prone to low self esteem.

That's why he's all in favour of the separate black pre-school, primary and secondary schools that rose naturally out of the American history of segregation. He says from these schools black people were affirmed in their identity, in their roots. By the time they graduated to the dominant white universities and workplaces they were equals, and consequently were successful academically and socially.

Not so he says from the time of integrated schools, where as well as pass rates dropping, the blacks lost economic independence. "Integration cost blacks a lot."

His message to the Maori is that they must find the space to determine their own solutions to their needs, and this will allow Maori leaders to rise up. He's keen that the economic disparity between Pakeha and Maori should be redressed and that government funding be given to start Maori people on the road to economic independence.

"I think its so important that in the end Maori people have to develop an institution that really commands respect because it's getting results. People will say that works. If that doesn't happen you just get racism.

"That should be part of the room in the separate institutions we're asking for, to handle our own problems in our own ways. We have the responsibility for our own people, to create something that works for us, in relation to our own heritage. Some time we got to do it better."