

Protesting Racism

CHARLES PERKINS (1936-2000) WAS THE FIRST ABORIGINAL STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY. In 1965, he led a rights campaign called the Freedom Ride. It was inspired by the African American civil rights movement in the United States. Perkins and a group of white students traveled around Australia in a bus, drawing attention to racism and segregation. They protested outside social clubs, swimming pools, and other places where whites and Aboriginals were kept separate. The Freedom Ride won publicity for the cause of Aboriginal rights and drew attention to racism in Australia. Students from other universities went on to mount similar protests.

150 years of persecution, extermination, indifference, prejudice, discrimination . . . "welfare" policies and sheer neglect have left the original Australians as a depressed racial minority. This . . . situation is ignored by . . . society. The community's conscience **MUST** be awakened by protest action. This has succeeded in the USA—it could do so here.

Sydney University Organising
Committee for Action on Aboriginal
Rights, 1964

◀ A leaflet from the Sydney University Organising Committee for Action on Aboriginal Rights advertises a 1964 meeting to protest the racist policies of the Australian government. Many members of this group went on to take part in the Freedom Ride.

▶ University of Sydney students belonging to a group called Student Action for Aborigines—also known as the Freedom Riders—pose beside the bus that they hired for their February 1965 protest tour of New South Wales.

