

Shirking Responsibility and Accountability: Racial Capitalism, Biculturalism and the Ethics of the Crusaders Super Rugby Franchise's Rebranding

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Abstract

This article examines the Crusaders Super Rugby franchise's partial rebranding after the 15 March 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks as a case study in how sport reproduces settler/invasor colonialism, racial capitalism and white possessive power in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the attacks prompted public scrutiny of the franchise's name, medieval crusading symbolism and pre-match performance culture, New Zealand Rugby and the Crusaders retained the "Crusaders" name and substituted the horseman logo with koru-inspired branding. Drawing on Aileen Moreton-Robinson's theorisation of the white possessive, the Doctrine of Discovery, critiques of bicultural containment, and Māori constitutional values, the article analyses media discourse, stakeholder consultation and branding decisions to show how symbolic reform can protect institutional authority while appearing responsive to racial harm. I argue that the rebrand commodified a history of Christian conquest and settler nostalgia for commercial profit, while marginalising Muslim and Māori concerns and avoiding deeper accountability for Islamophobia, white supremacy and colonial violence. The deployment of Māori design elements functioned as a settler move to innocence: bicultural aesthetics were used to soften critique, provide cultural legitimacy and redirect attention away from the franchise's refusal to relinquish the name. Consultation processes similarly operated as performative inclusion, privileging majority sentiment, fan loyalty and brand equity over the experiences of communities most directly affected. By situating the controversy within longer histories of Indigenous dispossession, terra nullius logics in Te Waipounamu, racialised capitalism and the containment of mana motuhake, the article demonstrates that the issue was never simply one of branding or

public sensitivity. Genuine transformation requires more than a redesigned logo. It requires decolonial accountability, Muslim–Māori solidarity, mana whenua narrative authority, and sporting governance grounded in tikanga, manaakitanga, pono, tika and mana motuhake.

Keywords: settler colonialism; racial capitalism; biculturalism; mana motuhake; Islamophobia; professional sport.

Introduction

On 15 March 2019, an Australian white supremacist attacked Friday prayers at Christchurch's Al Noor and Linwood mosques, killing 51 worshippers and injuring many more (BBC News, 2019). The livestreamed atrocity shattered Aotearoa New Zealand's self-image as a benign, multicultural society and thrust both its Muslim population and the nation's fragile commitments to racial justice into global view. In the immediate aftermath, then Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern moved swiftly, banning most semi-automatic firearms, launching a national buy-back scheme and co-founding the Christchurch Call to eliminate extremist content from digital platforms (Ardern, 2019; Crothers & O'Brien, 2020). Yet, although these measures addressed the visible catalysts of terror, they did little to unsettle the deeper structures of white supremacy, colonial dispossession and capitalist profit that undergird such violence. As sites of national identity and racial/commercial capital, sporting institutions are pivotal arenas in which these structures reproduce themselves. As these debates unfolded, attention quickly turned to the Crusaders Super Rugby franchise facing widespread scrutiny over its name and imagery; calls for a rebrand emerged as part of the wider reckoning with racism and Islamophobia.

The Crusaders franchise's partial rebrand in response to the attacks became a high-profile example of how these institutions negotiate public outrage, cultural symbolism, and commercial imperatives within a settler/invasor colonial and racial capitalist context. In this article, I show that the partial rebrand not only preserved symbols of religious and community sanctioned violence, thereby undermining any genuine solidarity with Muslim communities, but also transformed what should have been meaningful stakeholder consultations into little more than performative inclusion, privileging majority and commercial interests over those most affected. In repackaging Māori design elements as commodified 'bicultural' branding, the rebrand masked the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples even as it appeared to celebrate Māori culture. At the same time, by framing the controversy in terms of market disruption and brand equity rather than structural justice and historical accountability, New Zealand Rugby (NZR) and the Crusaders Super Rugby franchise effectively redirected attention away from colonial power dynamics and toward the financial implications of change.

Positionality

Since I am a critical Kaupapa Māori activist scholar and advocate for anti-racism, decolonisation, and anti-oppression, I acknowledge the ongoing injustices faced by marginalised communities in New Zealand, especially Māori and Muslim communities. Our experiences show that systemic and institutional discrimination persists and requires urgent change. I support the silenced and marginalised. Their resilience emphasises the need to dismantle privilege and root inequality. This work requires action, not just words. We must amplify marginalised voices, centre their experiences in policy and decision-making, and create empathy- and respect-filled spaces. Racial discrimination, white supremacy, and white possession must be addressed through reflection, bias confrontation, and tangible change at all levels (Simon, 2024c).

We must challenge the status quo and work toward justice and equity individually and collectively. This includes amplifying marginalised voices, prioritising their experiences in policymaking and institutions, and advocating for equity and inclusion. I understand the importance of genuine dialogue across diverse communities. Create spaces based on empathy and mutual respect to bridge divides and foster belonging that honours each person's unique insights and lived experiences. My position is that fighting racism requires critical reflection, education, and transformative change. Unlearning internalised biases, resisting normative power structures, and achieving tangible praxis at every level of society are needed.

My goal is to build an Aotearoa New Zealand where dignity, tauritenga, and the right to thrive are granted to all as a matter of equity, not inclusion. To this end, the article addresses these research questions: How does the Crusaders' name and on-field behaviour offend Muslim and Māori communities? How does racialised capitalism fuel this controversy? How does partial branding hinder deconstruction and decolonisation? How was biculturalism used to silence Muslims? How did Muslim colonial ambivalence and white adjacency affect the outcome?

Background

The Treaties of Waitangi,¹ the 'official' history of settler/invader-Māori relations, are instrumental in legitimising and sustaining state sovereignty in public discourse (see

¹ Traditionally The Treaty of Waitangi and Te Tiriti o Waitangi have been seen as translations of each other despite the textual mistranslations. In the modern view of Te Tiriti this has shifted. They do not speak to each other, and the legal version is the one in Te Reo. The use of the plural "Treaties of Waitangi" here I have argued should be adopted to address these issues. To further the my assertions, a quote by Ani Mikaere is key. She comments, "One of the greatest misconceptions currently plaguing Treaty jurisprudence [and its general interpretation in society] is the conviction that Te Tiriti and the Treaty bear some kind of relationship to one another; the common description of them as English and Māori texts of the one document illustrating the ultimate absurdity of pursuing such a view to its logical conclusion. This position is typically characterized by an irrational expectation that the two documents are capable of being 'read together' which, in turn, has led to reliance on the statutory device of the Treaty 'principles' as a means of resolving the 'tensions' between them. This misguided attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable has not only resulted in a mire of muddled thinking, it has also enabled the perpetration of a dangerous 'truth,' whereby Te Tiriti has been subordinated to the Treaty and one of our most significant historical documents, *He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni*, the 1835 Declaration of Independence, has

Simon, 2024c). The Waitangi Tribunal (2014) decision in the *Te Paparahi o Te Raki* report confirms that signatories to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* did not cede *mana motuhake* (Indigenous sovereignty) to the Crown (also see *Te Kawariki & Network Waitangi Inc.*, 2012; Simon, 2016, 2024c). This changed Aotearoa New Zealand's white patriarchal state sovereignty paradigm. The Tribunal's ruling challenges the pre-2014 belief that Māori had only rights-based self-determination, limited by the government's assumed sovereignty (Maaka and Fleras 2005).

Simon (2016, 2024c) extends the Tribunal's decision in relation to non-signatory hapū and iwi, if signatory peoples cannot be considered to have ceded *mana Motuhake*, it also applies to non-signatory hapū. Research challenges the ideology of the white possessive state (Simon 2016, 2022b, 2024c, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, n.d.). The article emphasises the disregarded content of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* and the sources, processes, and histories of authoritative interpretation within Māori communities. Despite being separate treaties, *contra proferentem* makes *Te Tiriti* the legally binding version (Simon 2016; see also Hayward 2018; Mikaere 2011; Blincoe, 2016; Simon, 2016, 2024c).

Aotearoa New Zealand's settler/invasor colonialism and racial hierarchy have fostered far-right violence. Although *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* supposedly guarantees Māori self-determination, Crown policies have often ignored hapū and iwi voices, promoting settler dominance through land confiscation, legislative marginalisation, and assimilationist education (New Zealand Parliament, 2014; also see Walker, 2004). Late-20th-century bicultural initiatives sought to correct these injustices, but the 'white possessive' logic continued to favour white norms in governance, law, and resource allocation (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Simon, 2024c).

Scholars have shown that white privilege normalises settler/invasor interests over minority communities. Rahman (2021), Mayeda (2020), Lee and Cain (2019), and Wilson (2019) define 'white privilege' as a structural mechanism that subtly promotes white settler/invasor goals, perpetuating social, cultural, and economic inequality. In public discourse, immigrant crime is sensationalised and nativist anxieties are amplified, fuelling exclusionary attitudes that can lead to violence (Wilson, 2019).

The Christchurch terror attacks shattered New Zealand's self-perception as immune to mass violence (Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020). The attacker's livestreaming of a white nationalist manifesto exposed online extremism's toxic echo chambers and used the far-right Great Replacement Theory to justify targeting Muslim worshippers (Wilson, 2019). The Arms Amendment Act and ban on most semi-automatic firearms showed political resolve (Ardern, 2019; Battersby, et al., 2020; Bensman Monin, 2020), but civil society and affected communities made deeper structural critiques. Although necessary, critics argue that these symbolic reforms did not eliminate racialised

been marginalised." Additionally, when society enacts terms such as "the Treaty" as a singular, it perpetuates the colonial narrative that the English treaty is the legal version. Refer to Mikaere 2011, 83–84; Simon 2022, 2023b; See Simon 2022a; 2024c.

surveillance, under-resourced community policing, or marginalisation of Muslim and Māori voices in policymaking (Battersby, 2020; Chew & Tandoc, 2020, Ibrahim, 2020).

Aotearoa New Zealand led online extremist content prevention by co-sponsoring the Christchurch Call (Crothers & O'Brien, 2020; Hoverd et al., 2020; Pandey, 2020). The Royal Commission of Inquiry (2020) found intelligence gaps in monitoring white supremacist networks and over-policing communities of colour domestically. The offender's life sentence, the first without parole in modern Aotearoa New Zealand, acknowledged the crime's targeting, but survivors' testimonies showed that legal remedies alone cannot heal hate-fueled violence's intergenerational trauma. The complex interaction of historical dispossession, contemporary policy responses, and ongoing critiques sets the stage for examining how cultural institutions like NZR and the Crusaders franchise navigate, reproduce, or challenge the Christchurch atrocity's structures.

Ultimately, however, NZR opted for a partial rebrand, replacing the horseman with stylised 'knights' but retaining the Crusaders name. This half-measure drew widespread condemnation as inadequate, failing to confront the historic and cultural violence embedded in the brand (Hattan 2019; Husband 2019; RNZ 2019; Taonui 2019). The episode underscores the tensions between symbolic inclusivity and the more arduous task of dismantling systemic racial injustice.

The Crusades, the Doctrine of Discovery and Aotearoa New Zealand

European expansionism in Aotearoa New Zealand relied on mediaeval Crusader theology and law, later formalised as the Doctrine of Discovery. Since the 5th century, papal edicts promoted a 'civilising mission' that legitimised Christian rule over non-Christian nations. The Crusades (1096–1271) crystallised this ideology: Pope Innocent IV (1240) claimed natural law and gospel promotion authorised the Church to rule non-Christians (Miller, 2019). Papal bulls like *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) and *Inter Caetera* (1493) codified the idea that first discovery by a Christian power granted sovereign rights and allowed Indigenous peoples to be conquered, enslaved, and dispossessed (Miller et al., 2010). These instruments financed papal-authorized Portuguese and Spanish expansion along the African coast and in the Americas. British colonial law adopted the logic of 'first discovery' and *terra nullius* ('empty land'). Most infamously, *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) established the Doctrine of Discovery in US law and influenced British colonial governance, particularly in the *Wi Parata* case. (Simon 2016; Mutu 2018; Miller et al. 2012; Williams, 2013).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, these doctrines asserted that Māori land was 'unoccupied' unless it aligned with European cultivation and authority. *Te Wai Pounamu* became *terra nullius* after *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (1840). On *Te Ika a Māui* (North Island), non-signing hapū and iwi faced paternalism, undermining *tino rangatiratanga* and *mana motuhake*

(Simon 2016; Charters 2019). These shaky, illegal, and unfounded claims were rooted in racism, possession, and biopower and deeply ingrained in the Doctrine of Discovery's British colonial culture (Miller et al., 2012; Simon 2016) Māori were initially treated as sovereign and asked to sign a treaty. However, when they refused, the Crown claimed paternalistic rights over them, treating them as children. (Simon, 2016, 2024c, 2025, 2026a, 2026b).

The Crusades–Discovery Doctrine nexus entrenched white and Christian supremacy in law and governance (see National Geographic, 2023) and justified dispossession and marginalisation. Scholars and activists worldwide urge the UN, national governments, and religious institutions to rescind the Doctrine of Discovery, incorporate colonial histories into education, and work with Indigenous nations to restore sovereignty and correct ongoing injustices. Only by working together can the colonial privilege of 'first discovery' be dismantled for true justice and equity (Assembly of First Nations 2018; Human Rights Watch Canada 2023; National Geographic 2023).

The White Possessive Doctrine and Mana Motuhake

Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (2015) white possessive concept illuminates settler/invader colonial power in Aotearoa New Zealand. White possessives normalise settler/invader interests and hide racial hierarchy under bicultural inclusion. This doctrine entrenches racialisation in law and governance by establishing whiteness as a structural force and an individual worldview, shaping national identity, subjectivity, representation, decision-making, and knowledge production (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). White possessive government and judiciary uphold state authority over Indigenous territories under patriarchal white sovereignty. Denial of mana motuhake, the spiritual power and sovereignty of Māori, makes Indigenous sovereignty contingent on colonial recognition. The white possessive reinforces Māori land occupation and marginalisation in legal and epistemic frameworks (Simon 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, n.d.). Mason Durie (2005) links these processes to colonial legal foundations of 1854. The English Acts in Aotearoa New Zealand were intended to incorporate British law, but they actually undermined Māori tikanga and Indigenous legal traditions. The colonial state dehumanised Māori communities through land confiscations and 'extermination' campaigns, reinforcing white ownership and control narratives (Simon 2016, 2024c). Although Māori and Pākehā attempted to establish a bicultural polity in the mid-20th century, the white possessive eroded mana motuhake. Treaty-based arguments that were meant to empower Māori often became 'zombie concepts', perpetuating the power status quo (Simon 2022, 2024c). Using Indigenous language of rights undermines Māori moral authority and legitimises the state, promoting a narrow 'Treaty-truth' that excludes non-signatory hapū and iwi from self-determination and mana motuhake recognition (Moreton-Robinson 2011; Simon 2016, 2022, 2024c, 2026a, 2026b).

The term 'settler/invader' complicates colonial complicity. Based on international scholarship, this designation distinguishes between settlers whose identities and

subjectivities are deeply entwined in dispossession – the settler/invasor and those whose arrival is more like colonial labour migration. Both groups profited from Indigenous marginalisation, but they are not equally accountable – the arrivant (see Simon, 2023b). The related concept of ‘settler moves to innocence’ describes how settlers use token consultations or selective cultural recognition to absolve themselves of responsibility while dominating national narratives and futures (see Simon, 2023b; Tuck & Yang 2012).

Today, campaigns against Indigenous self-determination and recognition, such as Hobson’s Pledge, the Treaty Principles Bill, publisher colonial revisionism, and anti-co-governance tours, are framed as democratic but reinforce power structures (Simon 2020, 2023b, 2024c). In response, Indigenous and migrant communities are creating ‘arrivant relationalities’—new political and cultural alliances based on marginalisation and decolonisation. The mutual recognition, accountability, and collective reclamation of sovereignty offered by such alliances is transformative (see Simon, 2023b).

Biculturalism

In recent decades, Aotearoa New Zealand has recognised Māori and non-Māori as equal partners, sharing kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of resources and contributing to the nation’s identity and culture (Grant 2016; Johnson 2008; Sibley & Liu 2007).

Biculturalism, a conscious public discourse, is a policy framework that creates a ‘imagined community’ of nationhood (Anderson, 1983) and portrays a ‘postcolonial nation’. Symbolic partnership in biculturalism should be scrutinised to address colonial inequalities that have marginalised Māori (Kake 2016; Poata-Smith 2002, 2013; Walker 2004). Although Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) is considered biculturalism’s foundation, settler beliefs rendered the Treaties unenforceable for most of the 20th century.

The 1960s–1980s civil rights movement and 1990s neoliberal reforms changed this. Canada and Australia pursued sovereignty politics, while New Zealand adopted biculturalism (Armitage, 1995; Grant 2016). Despite the Treaty requiring Māori-led governance, government institutions were primarily national and lacked Māori-specific customisation (Grant, 2016). Grant (2016) states that Māori only gained formal partnership roles with government departments through litigation, such as the Māori Council cases (p. 43).

Biculturalism has often promoted inclusion rhetorically while hiding the negative effects of neoliberal policies, despite legal gains. Critics like LeFevre (2015), Maletino (2014), O’Sullivan (2007), Simon (2022, 2024c, 2025) and Turruhn (2019) demonstrate that biculturalism is rooted in a neoliberal paradigm that limits Māori self-determination. Maletino (2014) claims that individual responsibility and cultural nationalism hide class and racial inequality, while O’Sullivan (2007) claims that state policy hinders tino rangatiratanga. Simon (2016, 2020b, 2022, 2024c, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, n.d.) calls facile Treaty rhetoric ‘we are all a treaty people’ a ‘zombie concept’ that perpetuates a static narrative that obscures evolving political and ethical demands.

Terruhn (2019) maps a spectrum of bicultural approaches from 'soft' cultural recognition to 'strong' sovereignty and finds that the white possessive state in Aotearoa New Zealand favours minimal inclusion focused on reconciliation, economic development, and symbolic recognition over power-sharing. The fourth Labour government's neoliberal reforms abandoned the welfare state for privatisation, globalisation, and free markets (Bargh 2007; MacDonald & Muldoon 2007; Mitchell 2017; L. Smith 2020; Terruhn 2019). Although Māori leaders initially supported autonomy through by-Māori-for-Māori services, the economic restructuring disproportionately hurt Māori and Pasifika communities. In 1988-1992, Māori unemployment nearly doubled (from 13.5% to 27.3%), while overall unemployment increased more modestly (from 5.7% to 10.8% (Poata-Smith 2013, OECD n.d., cited by Terruhn 2019). Rural Māori communities still face significant socioeconomic disadvantage, with unemployment peaking at 95% (Rewi & Hastie 2021, Terruhn 2019).

As Treaty settlements – consisting predominantly of financial compensation aimed at strengthening iwi economies – became the primary mechanism for redress (Bargh 2012; Terruhn 2019), scholars like Mutu (2018) and Simon (2016, 2020b, 2022, 2024c, 2026b) critique the power dynamics and sufficiency of these processes. A concurrent rise in settler/invasor animosity and backlash to Māori progression and the cultural resurgence in Aotearoa New Zealand society underscores the settler/invasor's refusal to acknowledge enduring poverty, racism and marginalisation (Barber 2008; Meihana 2015, 2017; Simon 2020; L. Smith 2020; Terruhn 2019).

Ultimately, the settler colonial dimension of biculturalism transcends economic and class analysis. Terruhn (2019) argues that the Treaty has been instrumentalised to re-legitimise settler sovereignty by promoting a myth of co-founding origins. While reconciliation efforts such as Waitangi Tribunal redress, te reo Māori revitalisation and inequality initiatives have delivered some improvements, they have yet to restore the sovereignty Māori never ceded by signing (or not signing) Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This paper questions bicultural containment, arguing that Aotearoa's biculturalism has become a state strategy for managing Indigenous resistance through symbolic inclusion and controlled recognition. Since the 1980s, biculturalism has been a government response to Māori political activism, promising 'partnership' but mainly resulting in regulated recognition. (see Simon, 2022, 2024c, 2025, 2026b). It is now a tool of the white possessive state rather than a framework for power-sharing or constitutional transformation. Co-governance models and partnership language reinterpret Māori values like whakapapa, mana, and kaitiakitanga, making them more tangible and non-threatening to the settler legal system (Simon, 2026b). To maintain territorial authority while appearing conciliatory, Māori authority is integrated into the national project rather than being a distinct political order.

Veracini's Commentary on *On Settling*, Relationality and the Collective Future

Veracini (2014) discusses Goodin's *On Settling* (2013) framework. I have adapted this to Aotearoa New Zealand (Simon, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024a, 2024b, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, n.d.) to show how the final 'settling on' phase, meant to signal a mature, shared understanding, remains territorially loaded in settler colonial context. Although metaphorical, 'settlement' connotes the occupation, erasure, and patriarchal white salvation that justified Māori land dispossession (Veracini 2010). Settling on requires constitutional commitments on a project or a set of shared values to move society forward, not shallow metaphors.

Jones' (2014) Māori Constitutional Values—whanaungatanga (relationality), mana (authority), utu (reciprocity), manaakitanga (care), tapu (sacredness), and noa (freedom)—provide an ethical and political framework for post-settler transformation and solidarity. These principles require the deconstruction of colonial governance structures, not just their inclusion of Māori (see Simon, 2024c).

Pasifika scholarship emphasises 'wayfinding' and 'meaning-making' as Indigenous practices that cross borders and encourage community collaboration (Simon, 2023b). Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, categorised as 'arrivants' with complex identities, can use these concepts to avoid complicity in Māori dispossession through ethical guesthood (Simpson 2014; Simon 2023b). Muslim solidarity with Māori requires challenging anti-Indigenous assumptions and resisting 'white adjacency', which replaces colonial safety with accountability (Beliso-De Jesús et al., 2025). Intercommunal alliances based on tikanga, led by hapū and iwi, can transform partnerships beyond mere gestures. They reject tokenistic biculturalism and embrace a values-based approach that dismantles settler colonial dominance, affirming mana motuhake and co-creating a decolonial Aotearoa New Zealand based on mutual respect, accountability, and Indigenous sovereignty (Simon 2023b, 2024c).

These solidarities must avoid the settler colonial logic of multiculturalism, which reduces cultural difference to aesthetic celebration while maintaining white sovereignty. Subsuming Muslim-Māori relations under state-sponsored diversity and inclusion risks exploiting Indigenous values for national image or civic integration. Relationships should be based on shared understanding and acknowledge the intersecting experiences of Māori and Muslim communities, including surveillance, exclusion, and racialisation. Muslim communities must resist Islamophobia and securitisation in ways that support Indigenous resurgence, similar to Māori assertions of sovereignty.

Jones' (2014) Māori constitutional values are crucial for rethinking Aotearoa New Zealand's Constitution (Simon 2022, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2026a, 2026b, n.d.). However, these values model intercommunal justice and relationality as well as governance. They invite Muslims in Aotearoa New Zealand to co-create a future based on taurite (balance), mana (dignity and authority), tika (correctness) and pono (truthfulness). This future cannot be imagined through liberal inclusion or settler multiculturalism. Māori and Muslim communities must engage in sustained wānanga and talanoa to discuss their histories, epistemologies, and aspirations. The goal is to

unite through difference, not to dissolve it. A decolonial Aotearoa New Zealand centers Indigenous authority and allows ethical, accountable guesthood from those who resist settler/invaser colonial and white supremacist violence in their own lives.

Applying Arrivant Theory to the Muslim Community

Many scholars dispute the “settler” identity in Canadian literature. They argue that calling migrant, diasporic, and racialised minorities ‘settlers’ reinforces power binaries, lacks historical specificity, conflates migration with colonialism, and ignores the complexities of involuntary migration. Scholars have categorised migrant communities as settler-colonials and explored ways to contextualise the term within their theoretical and political frameworks (Trask 2009; Haig-Brown 2009; Thobani 2007; Lawrence & Dua 2005; Phung 2011; Saranillio 2013). The uncritical use of “settler” terminology to Black diasporas and Asian racialised migrants who were forcibly integrated into colonial and racial-capitalist frameworks raises concerns in Indigenous, settler-colonial, and Canadian/American studies. ‘Asian settler ally’, ‘Asian settler colonialism’, ‘Creole Indigeneity’, ‘non-preferred’ or ‘undesired immigrants’, ‘minor settler/co-coloniser’, ‘refugee settler’, or ‘coloniser’ are used to distinguish newcomers’ intentionality and culpability. However, this distinction ignores how their forced resettlement and migration are linked to Indigenous dispossession in capitalist societies, making it problematic. Byrd (2011) and Day (2016) use ‘arrivant colonialism’ and ‘alien’. Simon (2023b) calls this ‘arrivant theory’. Analysing recent research on Tāngata Moana is crucial for understanding modern applications of the Tāngata Tiriti concept (Simon, 2023b).

Pasifika communities contribute to this discussion beyond their shared Māori ancestry. Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa face marginalisation, surveillance, racialisation, and structural exclusion under a settler/invaser colonial state, similar to Muslim and other racialised migrant communities. Their experiences of displacement, labour migration, and belonging negotiation offer valuable insights into how arriving communities may manage Te Tiriti o Waitangi duties (see Simon, 2023b; Simon, et al., 2026). Focusing on Pasifika offers a culturally relevant example of Māori whakapapa ties and a framework for understanding how other migrant communities, like Muslims, can interact with Māori-led frameworks of relationality, responsibility, and decolonisation.

Aotearoa New Zealand has historically called the Pacific diaspora ‘Pasifika’ (Enari & Haua, 2021). While Māori and Pasifika share a common ancestry, settler/invaser colonialism is a deliberate political separation mechanism in relation to Te Tiriti (Enari & Haua, 2021). Their ancestral ties create ambiguous vulnerability and distance (Fa’avae et al., 2019). Trans-Indigeneity promotes Indigenous-to-Indigenous exchange and collaboration across boundaries and intellectual domains, aligning with global Indigenous Studies (Carlson, 2015, Allen, 2012).

Sāmoan scholar Melani Anae (2010) emphasises the importance of resources for Pacific researchers to foster relationships with non-Pacific and Māori communities. In her

analysis of Kaupapa Māori and *vā* connections, Sua'ali'i-Sauni (2017) highlights the importance of negotiating and navigating Māori and Moana meaning-making, suggesting that Māori and Pasifika researchers share many similarities. According to Enari and Haua (2021, p. 70), scholars should study the shared origins of Māori and Pasifika, emphasising that migrations began with *va'a/waka* launches into the moana, not passports and planes. They also advocate for communities to continue the dialogue and create labels and terms for themselves. According to Fa'avae et al. (2019), the term 'Tāngata Tiriti' refers to all settlers, including Pasifika and non-Māori individuals, highlighting the responsibilities towards Māori in settler colonialism.

This future benefits *tauwi* and *mana whenua*. The goal of Asian and 'Tāngata Moana' communities to become Tāngata Tiriti can be reframed as 'be(com)ing Hoa Haere', demonstrating solidarity with the pursuit of *mana motuhake* recognition (Simon, 2023b; Tuck & Yang 2012, Macoun 2016). Pasifika and Asian diaspora arrivants, considered 'non-preferred or undesired' immigrants, are not directly linked to 19/20th-century colonialism's genocide in New Zealand. However, we must promote relationality and decolonise to reduce complicity in the settler/invasion colonial project (Simon, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023b, 2024c; Jones 2018). The application of Tāngata Tiriti to arrivant communities requires reevaluation, as its initial framework focuses on settler guilt and complicity.

Re-evaluating Tāngata Tiriti involves rethinking ethnic relations as a decolonisation project based on respect and reciprocity, rather than focusing on remorse and complicity. The structural positions of various communities—arrivant, settler/invasion, or *mana whenua*—must be identified for genuine, relational engagement with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, not for moral labelling. Naming these positions clarifies their *mana motuhake* and mutual duties. Instead, a practical initiative based on normative respect and reciprocity is needed to decolonise ethnic relations (Justice 2018; Simon 2023b).

The foundational constitutional values of Aotearoa New Zealand, rooted in Te Ao Māori, are broadly applicable to other Tāngata Moana cultures. Centring *whakawhanaungatanga* (relationality) allows these values to challenge the white possessive and reconceptualise the South Pacific beyond its colonial legacy as 'Little Britain'. Identifying arrivant communities and settler/invasion groups is essential for establishing new avenues for knowledge production and overcoming colonial frameworks. In honouring *mana* and *tino rangatiratanga*, a Māori-led framework for our collective future underpinned by *tikanga* processes of *tika*, *pono* and *aroha* offers an ethical foundation for belonging, justice and balance for both *tauwi* and *mana whenua* (Justice 2018; Simon 2023b).

Simon's (2023b) adaptation of arrivant theory from Canada to these communities is instructive and relevant, but the current terminology is 'tauwi of colour'. Rata & Al-Asaad (2019) popularised the term, which has been used by scholars such as Fu (2025), Lotoa (2023), Yeung (2022), Rata et al. (2021), Abbott (2022), Tecun, et al. (2022), Palomino-Schalscha (2023), Afaso & Tuiburelevu (2021), and Rankine (2022). Arrivant

theory deepens understanding of 'tauiwi of colour'. Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand are also arrivant and 'tauiwi of colour' (Rata & Al-Asaad 2019, Fu 2025). Even though they are marginalised by race and religion, they settle into a colonised space and negotiate what it means to be ethical guests in a state based on settler sovereignty and invasion. Muslim communities must critically examine their positionality due to the conflict between guesthood and subsumption into settler colonialism. Supporting mana motuhake and Māori resurgence requires solidarity to dismantle colonial structures, rather than perpetuating them (Simon 2023b). Muslim arrivants can help create a decolonial future that honours their diasporic histories and mana whenua's tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake.

Media Framing

Symbolism and Historical Sensitivities

A prevalent motif in news articles is the historical sensitivity linked to the nomenclature and symbolic significance of the Crusaders. With its roots in the Crusades, an escapade of religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians during the Middle Ages, the name has intricate historical implications (see Simon, et al., in press). Some critics contended that retaining the name and associated imagery may be interpreted as insensitive in the aftermath of the heinous Christchurch attacks, which resulted in the loss of 50 lives. The discourse surrounding a potential name change reflected more extensive dialogues concerning cultural sensitivity, historical legacies and the changing connotations of symbols in modern society (see Star News 2019; Robertson 2019; McMorran 2019; RNZ 2019; Kulasingham 2019).

Poll Results and Public Opinion

The influence of public opinion on the discourse about a possible name change was substantial. A survey conducted by 1 NEWS/Colmar Brunton (2019) found that an estimated 76 per cent of New Zealanders were opposed to the name change of the Crusaders. This highlights the profound sense of loyalty that both supporters and community members feel towards the team's identity. Notwithstanding the apprehensions expressed by certain individuals regarding the name's historical ramifications, the outcomes of the survey suggest that the prevailing consensus favoured preserving the status quo (see Stuff 2019; Taonui 2019; NewzTalk ZB 2019; Waatea News 2019).

Community Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

The news articles emphasised the importance of stakeholder engagement and community consultation in the decision-making process for the Crusaders' name change. Both NZR and the Crusaders franchise conducted comprehensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the Muslim community, supporters and members of society at large. Adopting this inclusive approach signalled

a dedication to incorporating a wide range of viewpoints and guaranteeing that every voice was acknowledged during the discussions. However, in navigating this complex issue, determining the appropriate level of community input and the weight assigned to various perspectives remained a challenge (Goff 2019; The Guardian 2019; Al Jazeera 2019). While some Muslim community members did offer feedback, some media outlets reported that the consultation process was not comprehensive or representative of the broader community and that consultations with the Muslim community were lacking. Despite initial intentions, the Crusaders' chief executive officer ultimately excluded the Muslim community from the consultation, stating that the tragedy was still too fresh and that the team did not want the name change to be decided by this group (Waatea News 2019; see also Stuff 2019; Al Jazeera 2019).

Difficulties in Branding and Rebranding

The prospect of rebranding presented the Crusaders and NZR with significant obstacles. Sports marketing professionals in the media advised against any rebranding initiatives, especially when they involve sports teams, due to their intrinsic complexity and the potential opposition they may face from ardent supporters of the team's identity (Cully, 2019). In addition to altering logos and names, rebranding necessitates thoughtful deliberation regarding the personality, values and associations of the brand. The decision-making process is further complicated by sponsorship agreements and fan loyalty, which is problematic and contribute to logistical and financial ramifications of rebranding the team (see Federick & Patil, 2010).

Regional and Cultural Perspectives

The debate around the Crusaders name also reflected cultural and regional divergences of opinion. While some contended that the name should be retained due to its significance as an emblem of regional identity and pride, others called for a more nuanced approach that would take into account the historical backdrop and possible repercussions on marginalised communities. The poll results underscored the diversity of viewpoints present in Aotearoa New Zealand society and the necessity of nuanced dialogue and engagement among various communities.

The continuous discourse about a possible name change involved a multitude of intricate motifs and viewpoints. The complexity of identity, symbolism and cultural representation at play in modern sports discourse was highlighted by several factors, including community consultation, historical sensitivities, public opinion and branding challenges. For the Crusaders franchise and NZR to arrive at a decision that would accurately represent the aspirations and values of all parties concerned, thoughtful deliberation and a meticulous examination of diverse perspectives were necessary (1 News 2019; RNZ 2019; Robertson 2019; The Spinoff 2019; NZ Herald 2019b).

In news articles, the possible name change was predominantly presented as a branding, symbolic and public opinion issue. However, this perspective concealed more profound structural concerns. The media rhetoric simplified the issue to identity management

and consumer loyalty by highlighting community consultation, regional pride and the financial and logistical constraints of rebranding. As a result, it neglected to address the racial capitalism that underlies both the sports sector and the commodification of colonial symbols like “crusading knights” for profit. The discourse was thus framed as a matter of safeguarding a prestigious brand rather than an opportunity to examine the racial and historical tragedy that imbues the name Crusaders with significance.

Furthermore, this framing treated exclusion as a branding concern, emphasising the perception of inclusion among the Muslim community and other stakeholders, rather than confronting the underlying processes of systemic racism, colonial legacy and the enduring nature of white possessiveness and supremacy in national identity. Consultation mechanisms were portrayed as inclusive even though they functioned within limited confines that reinforced colonial interests.

The media failed to incorporate the Doctrine of Discovery and Māori viewpoints, both of which are crucial for comprehending the colonial underpinnings of Aotearoa New Zealand society and its sporting institutions. This includes the association of the term ‘Crusaders’ not only with medieval Christian–Muslim conflicts but also with persistent settler/invaser colonial ideologies in Aotearoa New Zealand. The exclusion of Māori critiques of bicultural containment and *mana motuhake* from the discussion therefore perpetuated the settler/invaser colonial state’s and the Crusaders franchise inclination towards symbolic reform rather than structural and constitutional transformation (see Simon 2022, 2024b, 2026a).

Discussion

Settler/invaser colonialism shapes New Zealand’s institutions, culture, and politics. In particular, the Doctrine of Discovery and the white possessive (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) legitimise colonial conquest and Indigenous dispossession. These frameworks are active systems that maintain white supremacy through law, governance, and culture. Racism is systemic, woven into the state and society. White possession and supremacy, affecting Māori and Muslim communities globally, lead to marginalisation in various ways (Beliso-De Jesús, et al., 2024). Muslim communities in colonised spaces face ethical guesthood responsibilities, including upholding *mana motuhake* and supporting Māori resurgence (Simon, 2023).

After the Christchurch terror attacks, the Crusaders rugby team’s partial rebranding illustrates racial capitalism under settler/invaser colonialism. Biculturalism softens criticism by honouring Māori culture and language while acknowledging sovereignty and authority. Withholding resources is a ‘settler move to innocence’, according to Tuck and Yang (2012).

Despite appearing progressive, such acts legitimise settler/invaser dominance and Indigenous land occupation. Using a *koru*-inspired motif instead of the Crusaders’ sword-wielding knight does not decolonise the brand, but rather re-inscribes white patriarchal sovereignty, possession, and supremacy beneath cultural partnership.

Biculturalism allows settler institutions to maintain power while appearing to 'share', to include without relinquishing land, law, and political authority. This rebranding shows how settler nostalgia and symbolic inclusion dominate. Despite its links to violent Christian military campaigns and the takeover of colonialism the team's name remains, showing how whiteness defends cultural, economic, and racialised capital and dominance.

The Crusaders used public consultation to include, but keeping the name shows how a "compromise" upholds racialised power structures. The new logo reframes Crusader violence critique through a settler/invasor-Māori lens, averting Muslim concerns about glorification. The rebrand emphasises bicultural symbolism and silences those directly targeted, rather than addressing Islamophobia, white supremacy, or interfaith and colonial harm. Thus, it reinforces white settler/invasor dominance by masking exclusion as cultural respect. Keeping the 'Crusaders' name while rebranding shows how colonial violence is commodified for profit. The logo rebrand turns white Christian conquest into profitable jerseys, caps, and memorabilia (Simon 2022; Tuck and Yang 2012). Sanitising the symbol for mass consumption removes it from its violent roots, even as Muslim and Indigenous communities suffer the emotional, social and cultural costs.

The franchise prioritised economic value over accountability, protecting decades of brand equity, licensing agreements, and legacy sponsorships despite Muslim and Indigenous stakeholders' harm and offence. Racial capitalism exploits cultural assets rooted in colonial dispossession while excluding dispossessed communities from decision-making and reparative justice. Ethical concerns are ignored to preserve settler/invasor nostalgia and consumer loyalty and profits. Resistance to abandoning the Crusaders name shows how whiteness holds onto selective historical memory and economic capital. Appeals to heritage and tradition hinder change, revealing that symbolic inclusion, like public consultations and Māori imagery, primarily conceals settler/invasor dominance. Whiteness controls land, narratives, and market value while feigning bicultural partnership.

The Crusaders rebranding followed NZR and its commercial partners' guidelines. Māori participation was crucial in this process. Māori designers and advisors were asked to prioritise brand equity over altering settler/invasor paradigms in a pre-established decision-making framework. Māori involvement gave the new logo cultural legitimacy, but Pākehā institutional authority made the final decisions on retaining the Crusaders name, engaging Muslim communities, and structuring the rebranding process. The mechanism of bicultural containment maintains authority while incorporating Māori cultural labour and aesthetics.

The new logo, inspired by the koru, features a stylised Māori eque-shaped spiral instead of the sword-wielding knight. One critic compared the loops to phallic imagery (Palmer 2019). This redesign places critique within a Pākehā-Māori bicultural narrative, ignoring Muslim communities' concerns about the Crusades' glorification. By emphasising bicultural symbolism, the franchise minimises Islamophobia and erases

place-based recognition. The 'we are all New Zealand' storyline celebrates a shared identity while negating Māori mana motuhake. Tokenistic inclusion ignores that the team lives, works, and plays on violently dispossessed whenua. It violently discards the histories it claims to honour. British declaration of terra nullius on Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) exacerbated this for the Crusades. Despite colonial amnesia, their home city's legacy of colonial dispossession and the Crusades lives on.

'Tuia 250's focus on New Zealand's "dual heritage" (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019) erases tauwi (settlers) of colour from the national narrative, echoing Rata and Al-Asaad's (2019) critique of national heritage projects. The Tuia 250 responses refute the national settler colonial narrative, highlighting whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to building relationships with indigenous people of colour. Similar to the Crusaders, the rebrand marginalises Muslim tauwi of colour while promoting settler/invasor nostalgia and racial capitalism-based commercial interests. A logo tweak cannot achieve whakawhanaungatanga, which requires honest naming of colonial harms, meaningful dialogue with all affected communities, and narrative control.

Māori and Muslim populations in Aotearoa New Zealand face unique and interrelated marginalisation due to settler/invasor colonialism. Māori face long-term effects of colonisation, including land dispossession, Crown paternalism, and policies that undermine mana motuhake and favour white patriarchal sovereignty. Islamophobia, racial profiling, and global securitisation after 9/11 have solidified Muslim communities' status as racialised 'others' in the national consciousness. These intersecting dynamics were illuminated by the Christchurch terror attacks, revealing deep racial and religious divisions in a nation that has promoted tolerance and multicultural peace.

The attacks emphasised the need for relational solidarity against white supremacy and colonial violence, rather than viewing Māori and Muslim marginalisation as separate issues. Aroha (love and compassion), tika (justice), and pono (truthfulness) must underpin this solidarity. Māori process values foster genuine relationships across differences when used in intercommunal contexts. The goal of kōtahitanga (unity) is to build resilience against racism and exclusion, rather than erasing differences between Indigenous and migrant communities. Concrete manifestations of this solidarity may take several forms. Collaborative campaigning against racism, whiteness and state violence can enhance the prominence of both Māori and Muslim perspectives in public and policy discussions. Collaborative platforms in the media, education or political arenas can guarantee that these voices are acknowledged not in solitude but in unity. Establishing wānanga and talanoa environments would facilitate intercommunal education, cultural interchange and political planning, ensuring that relationality is concrete rather than theoretical. Such programmes must fundamentally be anchored in *rangatahi* leadership, acknowledging that younger individuals bear the wounds of racism while possessing the potential to envision alternative futures.

Similarly, Muslim communities must combat what Hage (1998) calls 'aspirational whiteness' or Beliso-De Jesús et al. (2025) call 'white adjacency'. Embracing settler

privilege, such as ignoring Māori dispossession or aligning with majority interests, undermines genuine solidarity. Muslim communities must actively support Māori struggles and reject official inclusion discourses that undermine Indigenous sovereignty to reject white adjacency.

Crusader rebranding goes beyond symbols and branding to include community responses to institutional injustice and racism. Māori and Muslim communities can create a common future based on equality, mana motuhake, and ethical guesthood by establishing solidarities that challenge settler colonial nostalgia, and oppose the commodification of culture and history. The Crusaders' partial rebranding shows how sports can promote settler/invasor colonialism and racial capitalism. It sanitised violence for profit and avoided structural justice. NZR and the franchise perpetuated settler/invasor nostalgia by retaining the "Crusaders" name and reshaping imagery within a Pākehā–Māori bicultural frame, ignoring the critiques and experiences of Muslims and other tauwi of colour, and reinforcing white supremacy (Simon 2022; Tuck and Yang 2012). Indigenous representations, such as token consultations, koru-inspired logos, and appeals to shared heritage, conceal ongoing dispossession and neglect the need for power-sharing, reparative justice, and rejection of colonial frameworks like the Doctrine of Discovery and the Crusades, which is a shared history of oppression for both groups. Ethical sports governance in Aotearoa should be based on Māori constitutional values (whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, mana, tapu, and noa) and supported by Muslim–Māori solidarity based on mutual accountability and decolonial praxis. It is necessary to rename and reimagine brands in consultation with Māori and other marginalised communities, and to give narrative control to mana whenua and tauwi of colour. Only by centring mana motuhake and dismantling settler/invasor logics through reparations, educational reforms, and legislative action can cultural institutions like NZR represent justice in their public image. A transformative approach can help sport and society move beyond symbolic inclusion to a decolonial Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Te Reo Māori Glossary

Aroha – Love, compassion, empathy, and concern for others; a guiding ethic in relationships and collective life.

Hapū – Sub-tribe or extended kinship group, a political and social unit within iwi.

Hoa haere – Companion, ally, or ethical guest; used here to describe tauwiwi of colour or arrivant communities engaging in just and accountable relations with tangata whenua.

Iwi – Tribe or confederation of hapū, often associated with a shared territorial region and descent from a common ancestor.

Kaitiakitanga – Guardianship, stewardship, or care for people, lands, and resources, grounded in whakapapa responsibilities.

Kōtahitanga – Unity, solidarity, and collective action; often invoked in movements for Māori sovereignty and justice.

Mana – Authority, power, prestige, and spiritual force, derived from whakapapa, relationships, and collective recognition.

Mana motuhake – Indigenous sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination; the right of Māori to exercise authority independent of the Crown.

Manaakitanga – Hospitality, care, generosity, and respect; obligations of kindness and responsibility towards others.

Māramatanga – Shared understanding, enlightenment, and insight; a principle in Māori constitutional thought.

Moana – Ocean, sea; also used to signify Pacific identities, communities, and relationships.

Noa – The ordinary, unrestricted, and free from tapu; balance and normalcy in social and spiritual life.

Pono – Truthfulness, honesty, and integrity; an ethical principle underpinning relationships and justice.

Rangatahi – Young people, youth; often seen as carriers of future potential and responsibility.

Tangata Tiriti – People of the Treaty; a designation for non-Māori whose presence in Aotearoa is justified through Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Tangata whenua – People of the land, Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa with ancestral ties to place and authority over it.

Tapu – Sacred, restricted, set apart; a spiritual state requiring respect and appropriate behaviour.

Tauīwi – Non-Māori, foreigners, or people of later arrival; in contemporary usage, often denotes Pākehā and migrant communities.

Taurite – Balance, equity, fairness, and parity in relationships.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Māori-language Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between the Crown and many hapū; distinct in meaning and intent from the English-language Treaty of Waitangi.

Tika – Justice, correctness, and doing what is right; a central principle of tikanga.

Tikanga – Māori law, customs, and correct ways of doing things; protocols grounded in whakapapa and mātauranga Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga – Absolute chieftainship, self-determination, and authority guaranteed to Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Wānanga – Forum for deep discussion, learning, knowledge creation, and intergenerational exchange.

Whakapapa – Genealogy, ancestral lineage, and relational framework connecting people, land, and the cosmos.

Whakarongo – To listen, heed, and pay attention; also the title of Ngōi Pēwhairangi's waiata emphasising collective responsibility.

Whanaungatanga – Relationality, kinship, and the responsibilities of maintaining strong, reciprocal relationships.