



Press Kit

EARLY WORKS

PEACE PILGRIMS

Conscience versus law

Producers Philippa Campey, Samantha Dinning: FILM CAMP, Writer Director John Hughes
Developed and Produced with the assistance of Film Victoria

Sunday August 8, 'Compass' 8.00 p.m. ABC Plus

Sunday August 15, 'Compass' 6.30 p.m. ABC TV

Sunday August 22, 'Compass' 11.00 a.m. ABC TV

An aerial photograph of the Pine Gap military facility in Australia, showing several large white satellite dishes and various buildings in a desert landscape.

Christian peace activists penetrate the militarized 'Joint Facility' Pine Gap just outside Alice Springs, to protest and lament victims of American drone strikes. They face 7 years in jail.

In September 2016 five 'Peace Pilgrims' trekked overnight through the central Australian bush into the secretive military facility Pine Gap, 18 kms east of Alice Springs. Their plan of action, according to the police record of interview, was to "pray for a miracle". They were spotted by surveillance CCTV around 3.30 a.m. as they approached the 'prohibited area' and were arrested about an hour before sunrise. When the sun came up on September 29, 2016 Margaret Pestorius, Jim Dowling, Jim's son Franz, Timothy Webb and Andy Paine were to be charged under the Defence (Special Undertakings) Act. A law originally designed to protect 1950s British nuclear tests on Montebello Island, Emu Fields and Maralinga.

The day before the Pilgrims' 2016 trespass, a drone strike at Shadal Bazar in Iraq targeting the home of a man entertaining guests on his return from pilgrimage to Mecca, killed 19 civilians. This was a year to the day after another US drone strike destroyed a *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders) trauma hospital in Kunduz, northern Afghanistan, killing 42.

It wasn't the first time that Christian activists had breached the boundaries of the Defence 'joint facility' Pine Gap. Jim, and his wife Anne were involved in a 1987 protest at the base, and again in 2005 as part of the group 'Christians Against All Terrorism'.

Margaret's aim in protesting at the base was to "stop (people) pretending it didn't exist." When it came time to defend their actions in court before Federal Court Judge John Reeves - himself once a member of anti-base group 'Concerned Citizens of Alice Springs' - the accused argued that they had to act urgently to prevent war crimes conducted by those in charge of the base.

They said extrajudicial killings mounted by drone strikes - resulting in the deaths and injuries to civilians in countries with which neither the United States nor Australia was at war - were targeted through the functions of the base. But the Court directed these arguments irrelevant.



Catholic Workers

PEACE PILGRIMS approaches its story with a 'human interest' focus on Jim Dowling and his son Franz, and on Margaret Pestorius. The Pilgrims are a diverse group. They share a remarkable modesty and a devout focus. They are self-deprecating and funny, talented, committed and brave. Each of them drawing on their faith and commitment to peace and to 'living simply so others might live'.

Jim and Franz, along with their New Zealand 'Pine Gap 5' colleague Timothy Webb and Brisbane friend Andy Paine, are associated with Brisbane's Dorothy Day 'house of hospitality', named after a co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. It was established by Franz and his sister Rebecca. Franz continues to manage the house and works with a 'Food not Bombs' program offering healthy meals for free to anyone who chooses at the 'people's park' laneway in Brisbane's West End.





Jim Dowling moved into a newly established Catholic Workers house in Brisbane's West End in 1982, later, with his wife Anne and seven children they hosted others on rural land at Dayboro.

These days they live north of Brisbane at Peter Maurin Farm, named in honor of the other co-founder of the Catholic Workers. Jim and Anne's home is a model of low energy living, and a welcoming refuge for troubled individuals down on their luck.



Margaret, a social worker and professional musician carried her viola so that she and Franz (who carried his guitar) could perform a lament for those who died in Iraq, in Syria and Yemen as a result of the base's work.

Margaret - whose preparations for the trek into the 'prohibited territory' included a personal trainer - believes strongly in the transformative power of lament; and for her, gathering with friends on prohibited ground is liturgy and witness.



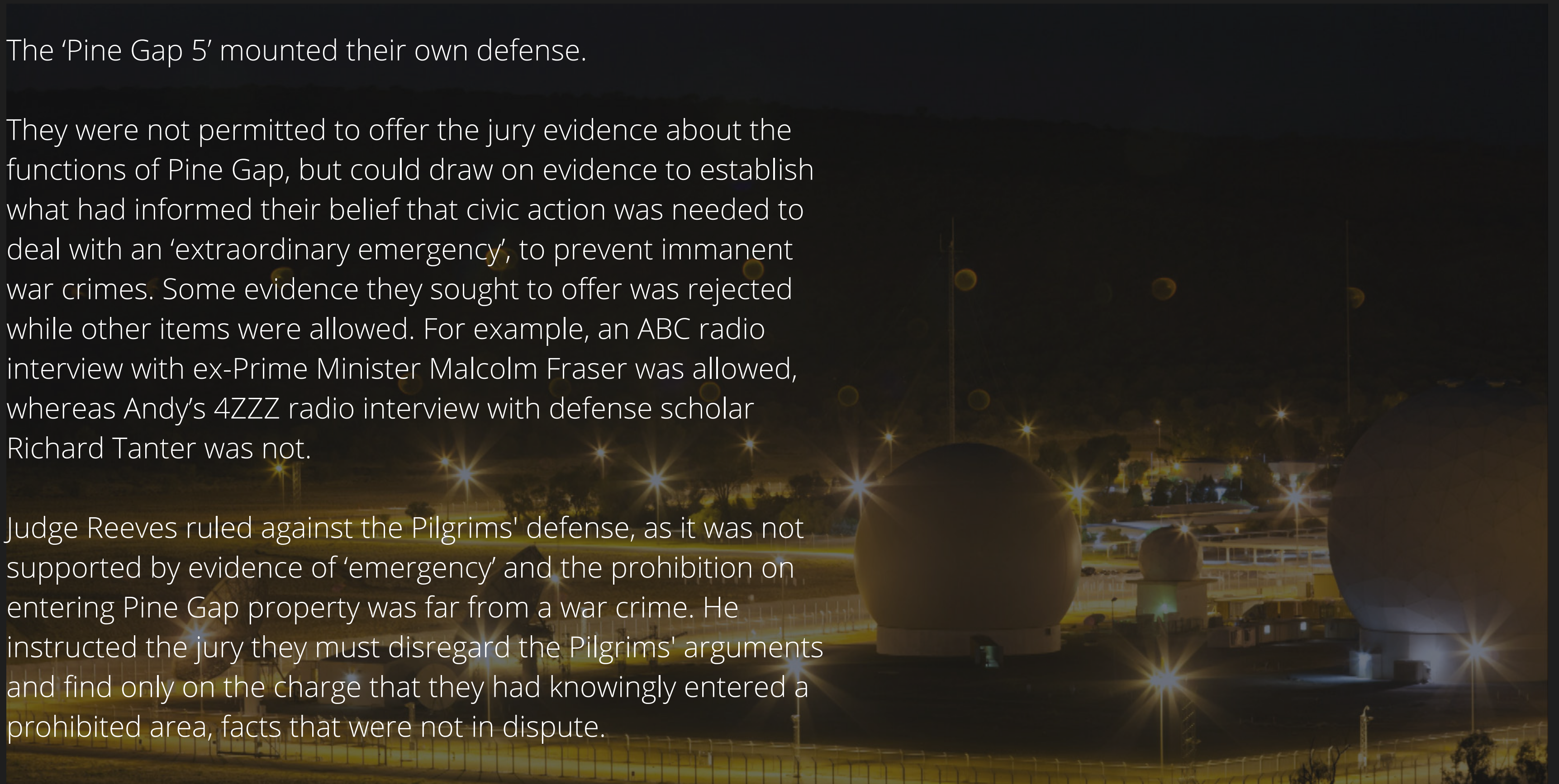
PEACE PILGRIMS is informed by Kieran Finnane's book *Peace Crimes* (QUP 2020)

In PEACE PILGRIMS we meet Kieran Finnane, the Alice Springs journalist whose initial impetus to tell the Pilgrims' story was inspired by the work of young photographer Kristian Laemmle-Ruff. Kristian's art is also driven by an ethical imperative; his photographic practice in tune with the contemporary 'counter-surveillance' art movement. Kristian describes for the film his capturing of dawn images of Pine Gap that have now become iconic, following their publication in exhibitions, books and scholarly articles.

The 'Pine Gap 5' mounted their own defense.

They were not permitted to offer the jury evidence about the functions of Pine Gap, but could draw on evidence to establish what had informed their belief that civic action was needed to deal with an 'extraordinary emergency', to prevent immanent war crimes. Some evidence they sought to offer was rejected while other items were allowed. For example, an ABC radio interview with ex-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was allowed, whereas Andy's 4ZZZ radio interview with defense scholar Richard Tanter was not.

Judge Reeves ruled against the Pilgrims' defense, as it was not supported by evidence of 'emergency' and the prohibition on entering Pine Gap property was far from a war crime. He instructed the jury they must disregard the Pilgrims' arguments and find only on the charge that they had knowingly entered a prohibited area, facts that were not in dispute.



Jim Dowling and Franz had sought permission to enter the base; from traditional owner Peter 'Coco' Wallace, a widely acknowledged Eastern Arrernte custodian of the land on which Pine Gap was built. Franz: "We did ask permission, we asked permission from the people who really matter."

'Coco', with Felicity Hayes, another Eastern Arrernte traditional landowner of this country, tells us "Nobody explained this to the elders. Still no explanation, we got nothing. We didn't know about this."

In his advice to the jury, Judge Reeves remarked, "You will probably be left with no doubt about the sincerity of the beliefs held by the accused and the strength with which they hold them. Nevertheless, those beliefs [...] do not override their obligations as citizens."

The jury took little time in finding the Peace Pilgrims guilty, and while the Crown prosecution demanded they serve time in jail, when Justice Reeves instead imposed fines, the Brisbane court house erupted in cheers from the Pilgrims supporters.



"Jesus called us", says Jim
"Blessed are the Peacemakers"

Key Creatives

Writer, Director, Producer: John Hughes

John Hughes' creative practice traverses film, television, gallery installation and video art. Recent credits as producer and director of broadcast documentaries include *Love & Fury* (ABC, 2013, 2014), *Indonesia Calling* (ABC, 90 minutes, 2009), *The Archive Project* (ABC, 2006 98 minutes). Among industry and critical awards he is the recipient of the Stanley Hawes Award (2006), Joan Long Award, achievement in film history (2006), Australian Writer's Guild Best Broadcast Documentary (2010), NSW Premier's History Prize (audio-visual) 2007, Critics Circle Best Feature Documentary (2006). Hughes produced and directed several series of TV 'micro-docs' with Betty Churcher (*Take 5* and *Hidden Treasures* 2000-2008) and films for SBS and ABC TV (*The Art of War*; 2005; *An Unstoppable Force* 2008). Hughes was Commissioning Editor, Documentary with SBS Independent (1998-2001). He was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2017. *The Films of John Hughes: a history of independent screen production in Australia* (Cumming, 2014) is published by ATOM. Website: www.earlyworks.com.au

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Producer: Philippa Campey

Philippa Campey is the founder of Melbourne-based production company Film Camp. Over the past 16 years Film Camp has produced many critically acclaimed and commercially successful feature documentaries including *Palazzo di Cozzo!* (Madeleine Martiniello, 2021), *Brazen Hussies* (Catherine Dwyer, 2020), *The Leunig Fragments* (Kasimir Burgess, 2019), *No Time For Quiet* (Samantha Dinning, Hylton Shaw, 2019), *Murundak: Songs of Freedom* (Natasha Gadd, Rhys Graham, 2011) and *Bastardy* (Amiel Courtin-Wilson, 2009).

Her debut feature drama *Galore* premiered at Berlinale 2014, *The Face of Ukraine: Casting Oksana Baiul*, (Kitty Green, 2015) won the Short Film Jury Prize at Sundance 2015 and her debut short *Clara* won the Jury Special Mention in Cannes 2005. Other films have won awards at the AACTA, FCCA, AFI Fest, FIFO and Seminci Valladolid, and have screened at over 100 festivals in the world including Venice, Berlinale, Telluride, True/False, BFI London and Sheffield Doc/Fest.

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Editor Uri Mizrahi

Uri Mizrahi is one of Melbourne's most highly regarded editors, whose work over thirty years includes drama for cinema and television as well as documentaries. His work has garnered him numerous nominations and awards including the Best Editing AFI Award for *Rainbow Bird & Monster Man* (2002) and the AFI Award for Best Visual Design with John Hughes for *After Mabo* (1998). Uri's recent work includes the telemovies, *Sisters of War* (2010) & *Parer's War* (2014) and the documentaries, *Puttuparri & The Rainmakers* (2015), *On Richard's Side* (2016), *My Mother's Lost Children* (2017), *Guilty* (2017) & *The Coming Back Out Ball* (2018)

Links

Richard Tanter et. al. Nautilus Institute, *Pine Gap Project*
<<https://nautilus.org/briefing-books/australian-defence-facilities/pine-gap/the-pine-gap-project/>>

Phillip Adams, ABC Radio National
<<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/pine-gap-peace-crimes/12674824>>

Peter Cronau, *The Base*: Background Briefing, ABC RN
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/the-base-pine-gaps-role-in-us-warfighting/9115558>

Margaret Pestorius et.al. Wage Peace < www.wagepeaceau.org>

Full Credits

Writer Director

John Hughes

Editor & Sound Design

Uri Mizrahi

Producers

Philippa Campey, John Hughes

Based on *Peace Crimes*
Kieran Finnane (UQP 2020)

Camera & Sound

Samantha Dinning
Shane Mulcahy
John Hughes
Fiona Walsh
Randall Wood

Sound Mix

Andrew McGrath, Soundwaves

Picture Colourist

Edel Rafferty, The Post Lounge

Archive

ABC Archives (Lisa Chadlow & Clare Cremin)
Jane Jeffes & Peter Beeh, David Bradbury
Siobhan Dee (National Film & Sound Archive)
Sarah Hope & Andrew Best (Salt Story Studio)
ViaSat 2 courtesy of Viasat Inc.
'Buffalo' Maralinga 1956 Courtesy National Archives of
Australia (NAA: C571, 1337816)
Home on the Range, Gil Scrine (1981) Courtesy Gil Scrine
Inside Pine Gap, Robert Plasto (1987)
Courtesy Tyge Landa Plasto
Pine Gap 4 (2009) Courtesy Jane Jeffes
Prayer intentions for June 2017
Courtesy Vatican News

'Drone Lament: Demons of Hell'
Written by Franz Dowling
Performed by the Peace Pilgrims

Legals

Shaun Miller Lawyers

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the custodians of the land in which we live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

With thanks to

Ben Abbott, Brett Aplin, David Bradbury, Alicia Brown (Film Victoria) Peter Butt, Peri Coleman, Samantha Dinning, Jessica Douglas-Henry (ABC Compass)
Anne Dowling, Eleni Dowling, Franz Dowling, Jim Dowling
Dan Edwards, Kieran Finnane, Alexander Gionfriddo
Helen Grace, Tyge Landa Plasto, Stephen Griffin (Film Victoria) Felicity Hayes, Peter Hayes, Amanda Kerley, Kristian Laemmle-Ruff, Harriet McKern, David McKnight, Rod Moss, Molly O'Connor, Andy Paine, Claire Perry, Margaret Pestorius, Carole Sklan, Madge Szoeki, Richard Tanter, Steve Thomas, Peter 'Coco' Wallace
Fiona Walsh, Jaralji Films & Suzanne Bryce
(Audiovisual recording Alice Springs)
Sue Wareham, Rachel Wilson,
Andrew Wiseman (Film Victoria),
Tom Zubrycki

Produced by

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