



## Heart of the Protest captures the stories behind the historic Freedom Convoy of Waitangi Weekend 2022 and the Parliament protest that followed.

From Screen to Page! A new book, *Heart of the Protest*, is a powerful behind-the-scenes look at New Zealand's historic Parliament Protest.

Following the success of the documentary *River of Freedom*, a new book of the film, offers a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most significant public uprisings in modern New Zealand history.

Co-authored by the film's director, Gaylene Barnes, and writer, Siân Clement, the much-anticipated *Heart of the Protest*, explores one of the country's most polarising moments.

Delving deeper into the reasons behind the 2022 Parliament protest it features exclusive interviews, fact-checked references, first-hand accounts and personal reflections. This book captures not only what happened—but why it still matters.

This story also hears from the filmmakers—how they came together on Parliament lawn to document and ensure a visual cinematic record was professionally produced. With no major distributor and media silence, the crowd-funded documentary *River of Freedom* became a grassroots hit. Despite screening at only a handful of rural cinemas, audiences travelled from far and wide to see it, and on 21 September 2023 it became the most-watched film in the country.

Barnes and Clement give voice to the diverse cross-section of society who set up camp on Parliament's lawn and were ignored by politicians, maligned by media, and ultimately shut down by force.

“Writing this book was about honouring the courage of everyday people who stood up and said, ‘enough,’” says co-author and film director Gaylene Barnes. “They weren’t just protestors. They were nurses, teachers, builders, plumbers, farmers—mothers, fathers and grandparents wanting to be heard.”

“The book inspects a pivotal chapter in New Zealand's political history from inside and outside Parliament,” says Clement. “It’s not just a retelling of what happened, it’s a reflection on who we are, what we stand for, and what kind of future we want.”





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## Introduction

**I**N 2020, THE NEW

Dedication.....

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Hildegard instantly sprang to mind because of the universal ancient wisdom of the body—the wisdom of nature—in her music. A herbalist, she was an artist, a composer of phenomenal music. To the epitome of spirituality. And I think that was a big thread through protest too. We've lost sight of all of that."

O AGNIS SPIRITUS PARACLETI

O fire of the Spirit and Defender, the life of every life created  
*Holy are you—giving life to every form.*  
*Holy are you—amounting the critically broken.*  
*Holy are you—cleansing the festering wounds.*  
O clearest fountain, in which is seen the mirrored work of God  
gather the estranged and seek again the lost.  
O loving armor, hope that binds the very loath.

On the evening of 28th February, two nights before the end, Gaylene interviews an older lady in the neighbouring tent, she has only just arrived and is settling in. The interview is halted as soon as she starts to tell her story. 'Sorry' she says 'it's just too emotional, to finally talk...' She bursts into tears, and retreats back inside her tent.

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those pods of potatoes tomorrow?" A camper replies, "a milk milk [think you] a milk milk, pomarig [goodnight] pomarig [goodnight] going home home...my inside want to fall out, like I just can't. Nothing left right about going home right now. I probably should, but I just—can't."

It was a few days later that Rachel Mortimer, "I've taught the psychology of what it takes to control a nation. And you look at where it is today, and you think, 'Well, that's not a good idea.' And then you see us start, when you are the first of it happening. There is a real need, and I can't help but think that we're going to be successful when the mandates came in and I really hoped, and I prayed, and I really thought New Zealanders would stand up and not allow segregation because I thought that New Zealand was different."

And then to hear them turn around and allow it to happen. The Wellington protest to me was the light. It gave me the faith that had been missing. I was a little bit of a cynic, but I was not a cynic."

Gaylene waits for the Green Party protesters, Teana Tuoro, to call in as promised. Mervyn came and went and there was no call. She says, "I was disappointed. My ferry ticket had to be cancelled on Thursday, and then on Wednesday [the day after] they turned up. Ambush day."

[illegible]

## 11 Day of Whiro

DAY OF WEEK

Chapter 11

March 2--Ambush at dawn

YESTERDAY WAS THE DAY OF WHIRO, THE NEW  
Matters **Honoka Takirua** on the 3rd of March 2022. And  
as we know and we choose by our cycles to do nothing,  
s, a day of stillness. Whiro is the wildest, angriest ana  
Tumatamanga, the god of war. They chose that day to  
was new moon yesterday. So I sense and believe that this  
sed Operation **Convey Deliberate Action Plan**, designed  
to an end, was announced to the public at 6.09am, an  
adly begun

Police operation underway. Wellington Police are advising the public to avoid the area around Parliament this morning.<sup>100</sup>

The Police wanted to maintain operational secrecy and were only working with a small group of trusted partner agencies.<sup>181</sup> Everyone else, the neighbours and Wellington council received a phone call from the Police Ministry at about 6am. The police justified their unwillingness to share operational details given the sensitivity of the information and the risk would 'leak' to protesters.<sup>182</sup>

However, protesters are aware of a potential ambush. Mandated free health nurse Megan McNamara recalls: 'We'd been told the night before that the police were going to be coming in. So Gary had stood up and warned people. She said "they're going to be using tear gas. They're going to be using pepper spray. Please, if you have children here, you need to be about getting them out; taking them to safety." Even Leighton Baker, who was on the phone the night before with the Human Rights Commission, making a complaint: "This isn't right. We're peaceful protesters standing in front of a government building. We're not doing anything wrong. There's no cause for this kind of violent behaviour against us."

So I went to sleep that night in a tent in the middle of Parliament Square, something happened," McNamara admits. People were agitated

DAY OF WHIRL

'On the 2nd of March, I woke up to the news that if mother and her aunt had been tossed out of a tent, exclaim ex-nolitician from the nearby district of Wairarapa. They

the porch of the Parliamentary library. And that happened in the morning. And what I was really surprised about is all the out about 'the violent protest reaction.' I'm like, well, how you're asleep? I jumped in a car at 6am from Featherston hill.

Lucretia Bird from Hamilton, a volunteer in the Pr tent reflects: "March 2 was the first day I was to open the whole three weeks. We had some of the security team not get the call that the helicopters were in the a

SEE A REF ON THIS SUBJECT

fearful, because we'd seen that the police had no qualms with assaulting, throat punching, strangling, bashing, absolutely violently harming peaceful New Zealanders. We knew what they were capable of. That was truly frightening'.

Around Jam we headed out to security and we could see all these cops arriving at the back of the beehive, McNamara explains. 'Really young police. They looked like they were 18, nervous, really shaky, wide eyed, coming in like it's their first day at work'.

Gaylene Barnes camera and director on River of Creation recalls: Jacqui [Ennis] and I heard on the grapevine there was going to be a large police action that night or the next morning. I decided to stay the night in our crew portacabin and thank goodness Jacqui also decided to stay. By that stage most of the other camera team had left or were sick with the flu, so it was just us. I had heard the helicopters arriving at Sam.

## Democracy Watershed <sup>4</sup>

DEMOCRACY WATERSHED

Chapter 4

**M**ANY BRAIDS OF THE FREEDOM RIVER BLEND INTO one mighty waterfall on the highways. Thousands of diverse voices heading to Wellington, carry a loud, strong message: Freedom! End the mandates!

The convoy heads into a carpark in Palmerston North, and the ferry terminal at Picton; gearing up for a big push into Wellington and Parliament the following morning, 8 February 2022.

**Hundreds arrive in Pictou**

Crowds of people greet the **convoyees** in Pictou, a small township at the top of the South Island - gateway to the North, via the two main ferries across the Cook Strait.

Plot of the South Island convoy, welder Derek Bloomfield recalls about it at exhilarating day: 'The support Pictou showed us was just unbelievable! I absolutely put right around the square, non-stop for ages as we rolled in. It was such an amazing welcome,' agrees Gaylene Bannister, who was in the **convoy** when **Finucane** entered the town. 'Everybody was so excited, it was just fantastic.'