Short Chronology of Charles Perkins and the Freedom Rides

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| Date |  |
| 1936 | Charles Perkins born in Alice Springs. One of 10 children. He is a ‘half caste’ as is his father, his mother is a full blood. Raised on a mission on the outskirts of Alice Springs.This is 3 years before the outbreak of WW2. King Edward is on the British throne (subsequently abdicates to marry the infamous Mrs Simpson).Australia maintains a White Australia Policy. Aboriginals could not vote. No Aboriginal person had ever graduated from University.Movies that outline the times – A Town Like Alice & The King’s Speech |
| 1946 | Perkins, aged 10, removed from the Mission to Adelaide where he attends a Protestant run boarding school. |
| 1952 | Leaves the boarding school at age 16 and is trained as a fitter and turner. He also develops an interest and expertise in soccer. |
| 1957 | Everton Football Club scout persuades him to move to England to attempt a professional football career. |
| 1958 | Returns to Adelaide to play soccer professionally |
| 1961 | Moves to Sydney to enrol in Sydney University to study Arts, continues as a professional soccer player.In the USA the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) take a bus from Washington DC to New Orleans to protest the failures to enforce Federal Laws declaring segregation unlawful. The protestors are dubbed the “Freedom Riders”This bus is fire bombed and the Freedom Riders are beaten by an angry mob in Alabama in May 1961 |
| 1964 | May. Sydney University students protest outside the US Consulate including erecting fiery crosses, wearing white sheets reminiscent of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK). The protest is focussed against attempts by some Southern US Senators to block the US Civil Rights Bill introduced by JFK and subsequently championed by LBJ.Over 50 arrests are made. |
| 1964 | July. Galvanised by the media coverage the US Consulate protest had attracted and coupled with the realization that segregation in Australia is just as rampant(but perhaps hidden from the general community) students form a group named Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA). Charles Perkins, aged 28, is elected its first President. |
| 1965 | February. An Australian version of the Freedom Riders bus set out from Sydney with its initial aim to gather evidence of segregation in Australia.Bus rolls into Walgett where the protestors commence a demonstration outside the Walgett RSL Club about discriminatory practices in the town. The protestors are ejected from the town and an unknown person attempts to run the bus off the road.In Moree the protestors “invade” the local swimming pool area which segregates between whites and blacks.These and other actions garnered a swathe of media attention and the protestors return to Sydney. |
| 1965 | Perkins becomes one of the first Aboriginals to graduate with a University Degree |
| 1967 | Referendum to allow Aboriginals to vote |
| 1969 | Perkins moves to Canberra to work in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs |
| 1984 | Perkins becomes Secretary of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs |
| 2000 | Perkins dies. |
| 2011 | Federally funded discussion committees are formed to explore the recognition of Aboriginals in the Constitution. |