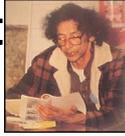


## Kevin Gilbert



### 1933-1993

From: ATSIC News Autumn 1993

**Kevin Gilbert**  
"My art) exhibitions (in the late 60s and early 70s) confirmed my resolve to use my poems, writing and art to open up the question of the continuing denial of and injustice against Aborigines, in an effort to bring the reality of the white Australian inhumanity into the open."  
- Kevin Gilbert, 1990

**MOURNERS PAY TRIBUTE TO AUTHOR, ACTIVIST** From throughout Australia they came to honour him. Family friends and those who respected the author, the playwright, the poet, the artist, the activist, the man.

Kevin Gilbert dead at the age of 60.

More than 300 people gathered at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns outside old Parliament House in Canberra early April for the memorial service of a man who, as one of those present observed, "spoke the truth of his people, lived the anguish of his people".

The location was appropriate because it was there 20 years ago that Kevin Gilbert, as one of the Embassy's organisers, first became prominent as a political activist. Born in the central NSW town of Condobolin in 1933, Kevin Gilbert overcame the death of his parents at an early age, a youth spent in institutions, a limited education and 14 and a half years in prison to devote his life to art and to political activism, the two often coming together.

The memorial service centred around a fire on open ground in the middle of the Tent Embassy. As didgeridoos played in the background, several speakers came forward to the fire

in turn to add their piece to the story of Kevin Gilbert. Some read poetry, some danced, some brought messages from communities across Australia, while others told of the influence Gilbert had on their lives.



And into the flames Kevin Gilbert's family scattered some of his ashes, linking him forever to a site and a cause that he did so much to bring to the attention of Australia.

A statement by his family spoke of Kevin Gilbert's continuous work to teach the meaning of sovereignty and Aboriginal people right to a treaty. This teaching will continue through a memorial trust that is to be established to further the work towards a treaty and recognition of Aboriginal rights. In a mark of respect, the Australian flags outside the old Parliament house - long a symbol of everything Kevin Gilbert fought against - were lowered to half mast to honour his passing.

Beside them, they flew the Aboriginal flag, marking as much Kevin Gilbert's victory in bringing Aboriginal issues to the attention of the wider Australian community, as marking his death.