

GENOCIDE

in the
Wildflower State

Information Kit

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A documentary produced by



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SUMMARY

Genocide in the Wildflower State is a 45 minute documentary about a violent, state-run system of eugenics, racial absorption, and social assimilation in the Twentieth Century, in Western Australia.

For more than six decades between 1905 and 1972, thousands of mixed-race Aboriginal children in Western Australia were forcibly removed from their families.

Systematically organised by the State, overwhelmingly supported by West Australian society, generation after generation, for over sixty years — the State worked to destroy Aboriginal families, culture, and language, for the purpose of securing white settler dominance.

In 1997 a National Inquiry called this for what it was — '*Genocide*'.

Survivors of the Stolen Generations give vivid and at times heartbreaking testimony of cruel isolation, abuse and humiliation in the system. Their accounts are supported by evidence from state records, public archives and historical scholarship.

Genocide in the Wildflower State is both truth-telling and a demand for justice. It holds to account successive parliaments in Western Australia that have failed to make redress. It is about helping to heal the trauma in the Survivor community and building understanding in the broader society.

REVIEW by the Hon. Alan Carpenter

Former Journalist and Presenter for 7.30 Report Journalist/ Former Labor Party Member for Willagee in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly (December 1997 - October 2009), and Premier of Western Australia from 2006 to 2008.

Ask yourself one simple question:

Do we as West Australians have the courage to look without pre-judgement at our own State's history and face the reality of what it tells us?

That's the challenge Yokai and award-winning West Australian documentary film maker Frank Rijavec lay before us with their perfectly pitched production, **Genocide in the Wildflower State**.

The documentary clinically lays out the evidence for the assertion in its title and it does so in disturbingly understated style.

It draws upon the widely available official public documents, and on the spoken experience of those who outlived the policy and are among us today. They are the survivors of what we now call the Stolen Generations and, in broad terms, we might think we know their story. After all, it is now 27 years since the Bringing Them Home Report was tabled in the Australian Parliament and its 689 pages told a massive story of dispossession, maltreatment and loss — in the name of 'doing good'.

In Western Australia the true rationale for the policy was more openly stated.

Genocide in the Wildflower State draws directly from a mountain of evidence that a state-wide, full-scale attempt was made to completely rid Western Australia of its mixed-race Indigenous people, to eliminate them through carefully managed and controlled breeding – to 'breed out the colour'. There was nothing hidden or secretive about the agenda being pursued.

It was a policy rooted in the related 19th century theories of social Darwinism and eugenics, the same thinking which found its full horrific expression in the ideology of Nazi Germany.

In Western Australia, it was embraced in the attempt to resolve irredeemably the contest over land that colonial expansion forced, and the question of how to justify the devastating impact on Aboriginal people and their ancient culture.

That the policy ultimately failed was not through lack of sustained effort.

It was State-driven, Church-backed, and popularly embraced, and it was vigorously pursued for nearly a hundred years. From its beginnings in the last half of the 19th century, it remained in place until well into the second half of the 20th century. Its impact was enormous and lives with us today.

Continued ...

REVIEW by the Hon. Alan Carpenter (continued)

This was a brutal, sustained effort to 'breed' Aboriginal people out of existence so that, eventually, no trace of them, not even a memory of them, would survive. The Indigenous people of Western Australia and their culture would be completely wiped from the face of the Earth.

It was not a holocaust as we might conceive of it after the Nazis – although there were plenty of massacres, too - but, by any reckoning, this was a full-scale attempt at genocide.

Genocide in the Wildflower State shows us the evidence lies in the historical records. It's in the official policies and laws enacted by the Parliament of Western Australia; in the speeches and correspondence of members of that Parliament in support of those laws; and in the words and actions of those whose job or zealous mission it was to put those laws into effect.

Most tellingly, the terrible reality of what happened is offered to us in spoken words by those who survived it all and still live to tell their story.

Genocide in the Wildflower State takes just one hour to watch, but it brilliantly and disturbingly reveals a shocking, ghastly truth which, once seen, can help to explain so much of what we see around us today and what remains still to be done.

27 March 2024

INTERVIEWED IN THE DOCUMENTARY — QUOTES

[Standing on steps of Parliament House] “In 1905 the Act was put in place here. This same building where the ‘breed out the colour’ policy was initiated. Let’s not say our children were taken because they were bad parents. ‘Breed out the colour’ policy was the eugenics of this country and initiated by A.O. Neville.”

Jim Morrison - Stolen Generation Descendant

“Mogumber was full, New Norcia was full, Tardun was full, Sister Kate’s was full. They were full of all our kids. And they only could just squeeze us, me and my brothers, into Marribank Mission.”

Marie Pryor - Survivor, Gnowangerup and Marribank Missions

“Mum had our last brother Dean, and when he was born, they took him off her, because we were in the mission. They took him from her. And even though he was in the same mission as Anthony, Timothy and Cynthia, he had no idea that they were his brothers and sister. And neither did they.”

Ezzard Flowers - Survivor, Marribank Mission

“They called them the Protectors at that time, would call us into the room. We used to go to sleep at night they would come and tap you ‘Come along, come along, wake up. Come on, it’s your turn now. Come along. [...] I was taken down the back steps and down into their little quarters, and then he would have a strap out and he used to beat me, and then he used to whip me with the strap and saying I was not a good girl, ‘bad girl!’, and then he would have his way with me. He would sit me on his lap and rock me on his lap, and then penetrate me.”

Valerie Stella Woods - Survivor, Gnowangerup Mission

“But they knew about New Norcia. [it] was the capital of... like a place of sexual abuse, but they kept on sending us there. So, the Native Welfare was in on this, and the government at that time.”

Dallas Phillips - Survivor, New Norcia Mission

Continued ...

INTERVIEWED IN THE DOCUMENTARY — QUOTES (continued)

“My father and mother never got the chance to be parents to me. I’m 66 years of age and the only thing I can do to move forward and spare my children of the torment and the heartache and the trauma that I’ve gone through is always be there for my children.”

Brenda Greenfield - Survivor, Gnowangerup Mission

“When I was taken to the mission, I was eight months old. I was taken away with my Mum, probably because I was being breast-fed. That’s why they took me so young, and my brother and my other two sisters. And we we’re taken to Carrolup Mission. When we arrived at Carrolup Mission, we were put in what they called ‘The Jail’, and it was a red tin shed. Mum told me all about it. And they locked us in The Jail, and it was in December so it was hot. And the elder boys at the mission went and told the supervisor or whatever they called him, ‘if you don’t let Auntie and the kids out, we’re going to break the door down.’”

Dorothy Bagshaw - Survivor, Carrolup Native Settlement

“I went in from two months to nearly ten years of age. And then went home to my mother. Just got packed up one day and driven to this house in Albany. Didn’t even know it was Albany, just got driven. You were never told, and that, where you were going, because you had no rights to know anything. And then just dropped at this door, and that. No authority explained where you were going. No authorities that were with you explained who these people were.”

Glenda Williams - Survivor, Gnowangerup Mission

“We had to readjust into the community. We didn’t act like our people. We didn’t talk like them. We were different so we was more or less like outcasts. Our families could only feel sorry for us for what we went through, but as far as understanding, the only ones that understood what we went through were our brothers and sisters at the mission.”

Timothy Flowers - Survivor, Marribank Mission

“We all went through hell and back, and that’s why a lot of them died through alcohol poisoning, O.D. on drugs, car accident whatever, but you know I never got to see many of them before they passed on.”

Garry Ryder - Survivor, Marribank Mission

Continued ...

INTERVIEWED IN THE DOCUMENTARY — QUOTES (continued)

“I never got my Mum; I never had her in my life. [visibly anguished] Because I was aiming that she would be with me for the rest of her life, you know? But ay, I was able to get over that trauma.”

Gail Yorkshire - Survivor, Gnowangerup Mission

“Fifty-seven percent of Aboriginal people in our state today are connected to the Stolen Generations people. So that’s every second Aboriginal person you walk past in the community, they have that intergenerational trauma that’s impacting their lives.”

Tony Hansen - Survivor, Marribank Mission

“So you know we really need to bring that awareness into the justice system, into the government, you know, the government were the ones that put all these policies down in our past to make our lives like this, to keep us oppressed, and we now need to empower ourselves, our children and grandchildren and we need to start healing them before they have children so that we can break this cycle of intergenerational trauma.”

Lorraine Pryor - Stolen Generation Descendant

“When our kids were taken away the churches kept our kids. There was a lot of money involved. So the churches need to be made accountable too. Not only the government but the policies that allowed the churches to keep our children away from their parents.”

Howard Riley - Survivor, Mogumber Settlement

“The time has come to say fair’s fair. The government just wants us to give up and die to avoid having to pay compensation.”

Sherri Bagshaw - Stolen Generation Descendant, quoting late Auntie Edith De Giambattista, Survivor of Carrolup Native Mission.

“You know it’s a long time now since *Bringing Them Home* national inquiry happened. They found there was genocide against Stolen Generations people, a policy of genocide. Which is about the most serious offence that there could ever be under international human rights law. And there was an absolute clear duty on the state responsible to make reparations for that crime of genocide.”

Hannah McGlade - Survivor, Sister Kate’s Home

QUOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES

The blacks will have to go white. ... It is exemplified in the quarter castes, and by the gradual absorption of the native Australian black race, by white. I have noticed no throw-backs in such cases hitherto.

A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, The Daily News, p.2, 8 June 1933.

Destiny of the Race:

This Conference believes that the destiny of the native of Aboriginal origin, but not the full-blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end.

Key resolution adopted unanimously by the national conference of State and Commonwealth Aboriginal authorities, Canberra 1937. Proposed by A.O Neville.

When I went up to Carnarvon in 1949 I read a police manual which told police officers what to do. In a section under natives it said that if a police officer finds light caste children in a native camp they are to pick them up and send them to the nearest mission or, failing that, down to Sister Kate's in Perth. They just picked them up and took them away. It was all done at the request of Neville to the Police Department.

Frank Ellis Gare, Commissioner of Native Welfare, 1962 to 1972.

When we tried to tell someone about the abuse, we were told, There's some things God does not want you to talk about. How dare you.

Former inmate, New Norcia Mission

Assimilation fell within the modern definition of genocide, and in particular the attempt to "solve the Aboriginal problem" by the taking away of children and merging them into white society, fits within that definition.

Hal Wootton, Commissioner, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1987-91.

Continued ...

QUOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES (continued)

The goal Neville envisaged was one where — "part Aborigines" (the "half-caste") would be absorbed by the white community and the "full blooded Aborigines" would "die out as quickly as possible". ... The policy and practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities was an attempt to "breed out" the Aboriginal race. It amounted to genocide.

Tony Buti, Aboriginal Legal Service WA, Submission to National Inquiry 1996, currently WA Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

I am come to this Royal Commission to ask that steps be taken to breed out the half-caste, not in a moment but in a few generations, and not by force but by science we can, as I urge to be done, slowly absorb the half-caste into our own white ranks. We will do all in our power to prevent the mating of a half- caste with half-caste, and especially with black. ... We will on the other hand do all in our power to displace the black strain by an infiltration of white blood.

Dr. Cecil Bryan to Moseley Royal Commission 1934.

Are we going to have a population of one million blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?

A.O Neville, appealing to his fellow Protectors and Commissioners, Canberra, 1937

We must have charge of the children at the age of six years; it is useless to wait until they are twelve or thirteen years of age. In Western Australia we have power under the Act to take any child from its mother at any stage of its life, no matter whether the mother be legally married or not.

A.O. Neville, Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia, 1937

It is my wish that every care be taken in the admittance of children in order to ensure that they are fair enough to be regarded as white when the period of education and training has been completed.

Letter from Acting Commissioner Native Affairs to office of Sister Kate's 'quadroon' home, 29 October 1947, Native Welfare file.

Continued ...

QUOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES (continued)

Dealing with half-castes—and this clause has chief reference to these people—Dr. Bryan has spoken strongly against the mating of half-castes with half-castes, on the ground that it will perpetuate the black and coloured elements. And still, without advocating the marriage of whites and half-castes, he does support the mating of a half-caste with a coloured person higher in the white scale. To further this scheme, he says, we should do all in our power to prevent a half-caste marrying another half-caste, and to encourage him or her to look higher. This, of course, can only be done by throwing these people together and hoping for the best, and this is just what in other words I have been advocating when suggesting the Community Settlements where these coloured people, or half-castes as I have called them (without reference to the degree of colour in them), will live their lives together under proper supervision. If this scheme of breeding out the colour is really effective, and if these people assist in the policy by choosing the appropriate partners, well and good. If, on the other hand, a half-caste chooses to marry a half-caste, then I would not be a party to interfering with such choice, hoping always that, as the coloured race multiplied, effective administration might be the means of raising them in habits if not in colour.

H.D. Moseley, Report of the Royal Commissioner, Perth 1935

Children placed with Sister Kate are never released to their parents. This would be a direct contradiction of the principle of their segregation from native persons, as they are placed with Sister Kate for this very reason.

Letter from Commissioner of Native Affairs to a government official station in NorthWest, 21 July 1944, Native Welfare file

Western Australia has gone further in the development of such a long range policy than has any other State, by accepting the view that ultimately the natives must be absorbed into the white population of Australia.

A. O. Neville, Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia, 1937

I was in complete accord with the mission policy of retaining the native boys and girls until sixteen years of age, and then placing them with Christian families located some distance away from the districts of their parents, in order to minimise the degree of contact and influence which is undoubtedly detrimental to the future of the child in most cases.

Letter Acting Commissioner Native Affairs to Superintendent, Roelands Mission, 27 July 1948, Native Welfare file

Continued ...

QUOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES (continued)

The influence of the adult full blood parents ... although often arising from the love of their parents for the child is completely undesirable from our standards and can only delay the process of the child to such an extent and that becomes retrogression.

Director of Moola Bulla Native Settlement, Annual Report, 1950

I know that the long-distance view is to breed these people right out, but so long as the half-castes can mate with the full blacks, the process is being reversed [...] The girls, constituting the greatest problem of the lot [...]

I would not be above taking them away from their mothers at the earliest possible stage. [...] we owe it to the future generations of white people that something should be done to stop this ever-increasing menace.

Garnet Barrington Wood MLC, in WA parliament, 1936.

The danger today lies in the native camps in the South-West where the half-castes go back and live with the full-blooded natives [...]

The colour must not be allowed to drift back to the black.

We should be prepared to spend considerable sums of money in taking away the female children [...] If they do go out to service, and then get into trouble, that trouble will be associated with white people which, in itself, will assist to breed out the colour.

Leslie Craig MLC MLC, in WA parliament, 1936.

When the present does not recognise the wrongs of the past, the future takes its revenge.

For that reason, we must never, never turn away from the opportunity of confronting history together — the opportunity to right a historical wrong.

Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, at relaunch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, October 2009.



Media Release

8 April 2024

Genocide in the Wildflower State

New Documentary Tells the Story of Genocide in Western Australia.

“Are we going to have a population of one million blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?”

WA Commissioner for Native Affairs, A.O. Neville, Canberra, 1937.

Thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their families and communities under a government program that attempted to eliminate the so-called ‘half-caste problem’ in twentieth century Western Australia.

Fearing that a growing mixed-race population posed a threat to white Australian society and influenced by the racial eugenics ideas of the time, the state government passed laws in 1905 that enabled the systematic removal of mixed-race children from their families, and the strict control of Aboriginal marriages and reproductive freedom, in an effort to ‘breed out the colour’ over several generations.

The over-arching policy of forced social assimilation, which persisted into the 1960s, sought to smash the connections between mixed-race children and their Aboriginal families, culture, language and land.

The social devastation and intergenerational trauma caused by these policies, to this day, are compellingly recounted by Stolen Generation Survivors in a new 58-minute documentary — “Genocide in the Wildflower State”.

Stolen Generations Survivors demand a response to the crucial question: why is it that almost three decades since a national inquiry found this to be genocidal (Bringing Them Home report), and sixteen years since Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologised to them, WA has failed to commit

to redress and compensation, when all other states (bar Queensland) have done so?

Believing much can be done to heal the ongoing wounds of this catastrophe, Stolen Generations Survivors appeal to WA parliamentarians to:

'Work with us to put the trouble at the heart of this state to rest'.

Produced by Yokai Healing Our Spirit, the peak body representing the Stolen Generations in WA, written and directed by Frank Rijavec (Exile and the Kingdom, A Million Acres A Year), co-written and researched by author and academic Steve Mickler (Andrew Bolt, The Far Right and the First Nations) and powerfully narrated by Kelton Pell (The Heights, Mystery Road: Origin), "Genocide in the Wildflower State" will shock and disturb many, and enlighten all who view it.

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8 April 2024

Genocide in the Wildflower State **New Documentary Tells the Story of Genocide in Western Australia**

Documentary 58 min 2024 (M)

“My father and my mother never got the chance to be parents to me. I’m 66 years of age now and the only thing I can do to moving forward and to spare my children of the torment and the heartache and the trauma that I’ve gone through is always be there for my children.”

Brenda Greenfield, Survivor, Gnowangerup Mission.

In springtime diverse and beautiful wildflowers bloom along roadsides leading to the many Native Missions and State institutions in Western Australia that once served effectively as concentration camps for Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their parents.

These were places used for systematic programs of ‘biological absorption’ for ‘breeding out the colour’ of our mixed-race people, and for forced social assimilation into settler society.

At the root of these practices and policies were theories of eugenics, enacted in Western Australia well before Nazi Germany. They aimed to achieve a ‘White Australia’.

“The blacks will have to go white. It is exemplified in the quarter castes, and by the gradual absorption of the native Australian black race, by white. I have noticed no throw-backs in such cases hitherto.

A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, 1933.

Legally empowered by special acts of Parliament, the WA Government removed thousands of our children from their families and incarcerated them in institutions like Moore River Native Settlement and Carrolup, and in dozens of participating church missions throughout the state.

A national inquiry into what occurred in these missions and institutions deemed it to be genocidal (Bringing Them Home Report 1997). WA was the first state to apologise for this terrible injustice, and in 2008 Prime Minister Rudd formally apologised to our people on behalf of the nation. However, while other states have established practical redress schemes, Western Australia has not compensated survivors.

“They’re waiting for us to die. They’re waiting for us to die! Without even consideration of the trauma and harm that’s impacted upon us.”

Jim Morrison, Stolen Generation Descendant

Many Aboriginal infants died in these institutions and missions, and children suffered sexual and psychological abuse. Supported by archival images and historical records, Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants give testimony to the untold grief and intergenerational trauma caused by this vast racial system.

“Genocide in the Wildflower State” offers a deeply moving and disturbing exposé of the often denied and dismissed reality of racist state thinking, and the resulting misery families experience today. It gives voice to Survivors’ proposals on what must be done to redress the wrongs.

Production Information

Produced by YOKAI Healing Our spirit (West Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation) and Bringing Them Home WA Inc., written and directed by Frank Rijavec (*Exile and the Kingdom*), co-written and researched by Steve Mickler (*Andrew Bolt, The Far Right and the First Nations*), and narrated by Kelton Pell (*The Heights, Mystery Road: Origin*).