

**RACISM AND AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE:
A HISTORICAL PARADIGM GONE ASTRAY⁽¹⁾**

Gaynor Macdonald

Aboriginal people die in police custody at a rate more than 40 times the rate of non-Aboriginal people (Biles et al 1989a: 21). In prison they have been dying at a rate 13 times greater than that for non-Aborigines (Biles et al 1989b: 3). Aboriginal deaths account for 32 percent of deaths in custody although they represent only 1.2 of the Australian adult population. In 1987, after years of Aboriginal agitation, the Australian Government set up a Royal Commission to investigate the causes of these deaths. The Commission will hand down its final report at the end of 1990.

The deaths in custody issue is not an isolated problem, as members of the Royal Commission acknowledged early in their work. It has served to highlight once again the appalling numbers of Aboriginal people who have died and still are dying in Australia. The well-known statistics are those of the "Third World". Infant mortality is fourteen times higher, general death rates four times higher, and their life expectancy is up to 22 years less than for other Australians (Australian Institute of Health 1988). They die primarily from what have been termed "lifestyle diseases". One of the alarming findings of the Commission has been the recent apparent increase in the number of deaths which could be termed "suicide", in and out of custody.

Aboriginal lifestyles all over Australia today are the outcome of their dispossession and control by Europeans. As so few of them die from "old age", a majority die prematurely as a result of their interaction with European-Australian society: from both harsh or inappropriate actions, to the lack of any action — the neglect and uncaring responses

of those who have assumed power over them. After years of research and policy making on what has often been referred to as "The Aboriginal Problem", the question still remains: how are we to understand why these conditions still exist in Australia today?

There have been many models which have purported to account for the inequalities between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal Australians. Obviously, if the models used to interpret particular modes of articulation are deficient, it is inevitable that programmes and policies which aim to improve conditions will not only be unsuccessful, they may further distort the situations they were designed to ameliorate.

I wish to focus on a currently popular "explanation" which one encounters in various contexts, and which is cited in several papers of the Royal Commission and other literature on the deaths in custody issue: that the problems confronting Aboriginal people in Australia today can be explained by Australian "racism". I argue that this very plausible, even attractively simple explanation, distorts the situation confronting Australians today.

"Racism": the foundation issue?

In his very powerful book discussing Aboriginal deaths in custody, Duncan (1989) repeatedly argues that the "foundation issue" is that of "racism". Commissioner Wootten (1989:87) has also stated in a Royal Commission report:

Asking an Aboriginal what he or she regards as the important factors underlying deaths in custody often elicits as a first reply 'Racism'. An increasing number of Aboriginals are seeing racism as a key concept in understanding and explaining their relations with the rest of the community.

Even if Aboriginal people do perceive, as Wootten maintains, racism as of "pervasive importance", I will argue that racism is inadequate as an explanatory model. One would have to ask why a large percentage of Australians of non-Anglo or Celtic origin were not over-represented in

custody or dying of preventable diseases if "racism" was the only issue. There is insufficient space here to do justice to the substantial theoretical and Australian-oriented literature on racism: let me state that I believe racism itself is a symptom not a cause. And as such, it is a very convenient one.

'Racist' may seem a harsh label for Australians as a whole: Duncan's tone suggests he thinks so, and Wootten maintains that it is "an uncomfortable subject which tends not to be talked about very openly and the existence of which is often vigorously denied by those who are its most obvious practitioners" (1989:87). But it is really a relatively unthreatening label to explain differential treatment, whether to criticise or condone it. Although stemming from nineteenth century evolutionism when the biological theory of racial difference was used to retrospectively legitimate the colonisation of Australia, in popular contemporary usage "racism" has come to refer much more generally to people's likes and dislikes about other groupings of people. If their dislikes can be associated with differences in ethnicity, appearance or language, they are referred to as "racist" attitudes.

This implies that "racism" in Australia refers to an ideational rather than biological framework. If one person accuses another of being racist, they are likely to be referring simply to the fact that the person accused has faulty, outmoded or distorted perceptions, the "wrong ideas" about Aborigines, ideas that lead to discriminatory attitudes and practices — hence, directly or indirectly, to bad living conditions and the high Aboriginal death rate. The most frequently given "remedy" is education: people need to be better informed, especially about the suffering of Aborigines in the nineteenth century, and about "Aboriginal culture", and then, the theory goes, attitudes will change.

Often this view implicitly suggests that part of the "problem" lies in the fact that Aborigines engage in behaviour and actions not deemed socially acceptable by the culturally-dominant grouping in Australia (Anglo-Australians). Thus, much "racism" will disappear once Aboriginal people are better educated, have jobs, and learn to conform more appropriately to the conventions of middle-class white Australia:

they will no longer be the "blot on the Australian landscape".

Racism and social structures:

There are two stereotypical responses an Australian might make if accused of being racist towards Aborigines. These will be familiar to most Australians. The first is the assertion that, "Of course, I'm not racist, some of my best friends are Aboriginal". The second is to acknowledge, "Too bloody right, I'm racist. Should have wiped 'em all out in the first place". Ironically, the second response looks more honestly at the sources of racism: not in people's emotional or social repertoire but in the clash of peoples competing for the same resource base. Most references to racism as a causal factor ignore the prior issue of the way in which Aboriginal peoples have been structured into inequality in Australian society as colonised peoples.

In other words, what passes for "racist" attitudes towards Aborigines in fact describes a state of differential treatment and the method of its reproduction. The resultant attitudes cannot therefore be used to explain the differential treatment. When racism is presented misleadingly as an "explanatory" model, it obviates the need to explain any underlying reasons. What the model can effectively conceal are the historical, political and economic constraints which influence practices of inclusion and exclusion, and thus the ways in which people are incorporated and are able to participate in various levels of a society's life.

To analyse this argument it is necessary to take a brief look at the history of Aboriginal-European interaction. Since I have been most interested in the colonisation experiences of the Wiradjuri Aboriginal people of central New South Wales, I am familiar with the history of an Aboriginal society with one of the longer histories, from an Australian point of view, of colonising influences (from 1815) and a varied one in terms of the ways in which Europeans inserted themselves and developed relations (both positive and negative) with different groups and individuals in Wiradjuri country. Wiradjuri people's perceptions of themselves as invaded peoples who lost control of their

own lands has never been absent. Despite popular claims that this consciousness has only developed recently as a result of the land rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, there are historical records demonstrating the continuity of these demands (cf. Goodall 1983; Read 1988).

Wiradjuri people first encountered their European invaders between 1815 and 1830. Some had already died from introduced diseases, such as smallpox, before they set eyes on them or knew the source of the illness. As many as 80 percent were to die in the next fifty years — most from disease, starvation, massacres, poisonings and despair (Macdonald 1986, Ch. 2). They died in undeclared wars, in government-organised extermination programmes, and in local confrontations with “settlers”. They fought their armed invaders with amazing endurance in many battle fronts (Coe 1986, Gammage 1983, Read 1988). From the time these battles ended until the mid-1960s, Wiradjuri people lived in conditions which Commissioner Wooten (1989:5) has recently described “as falling squarely within the modern definition of genocide”, mostly on government-managed stations. None of this history, and its variations around the same theme elsewhere in Australia, was acknowledged until very recently. Wiradjuri, like other Aboriginal people, had no voice until a Constitutional amendment in 1967 allowed them to be counted as Australian citizens for the first time.

There are two sets of experiences which are the legacy of colonisation in Australia for Aborigines: the first is the indifference on the part of Europeans which allowed for the perpetration of a violence which seems hard to comprehend at times. The following is one Aboriginal person’s experience:

They buried our children with their heads above the ground, then from their horses had a contest to see who could hit the children’s head off the furtherest. They tied the men to trees and then raped their women in front of them, then stuffed things like spears up their vaginas until they died. Then they untied the men and cut off their testicles, letting

them run around screaming till they died (from *The Secret Country*, documentary film by John Pilger, Ronin Films).

Aborigines were not treated like animals in the nineteenth century: animals were more valuable. A person received fourteen years in prison for killing a sheep, and five shillings for a dingo or Aboriginal scalp. This is the history white Australia has tried to forget: what journalist/film maker John Pilger has called "The Secret Country".

The second factor is total dispossession and the loss of resources which would have enabled them to maintain some independence. Instead, contained on small reserves, they led lives completely controlled by the state whose expressed desire was to destroy their culture and social organisation. This included the forced removal of thousands of children from their families, and their institutionalisation in order to train them for servitude (as domestic or farm labour), away from the cultural influences of their own people.

Biles (1988:6), in his report to the Royal Commission giving draft guidelines for the prevention of Aboriginal deaths in custody, recommended the following:

No person in custody... must be allowed to believe that his or her world is at an end as a result of inactivity, boredom, frustration, shame, guilt or lack of communication. Every reasonable effort must be made to prevent the onset of depression which is a common reaction to incarceration.

In agreeing with this statement, I would want to point out, however, that for many Aboriginal people this is not just the experience of police cells or imprisonment. Incarceration is a way in which many Aboriginal people have experienced their participation in Australian society. One could argue for a long and continuing history of Aboriginal deaths "in custody" if this includes their colonial custody in one form or another since the British arrived in Australia. This also includes a long history of attempts to obliterate them, physically through massacres and poisoning programmes, as a visible presence through their confinement

on reserves out of sight, in people's minds through writing them out of Australian history books.

Stanner characterized the European attitude to Aborigines as a "history of indifference", starting from the first years of the invasion, which included turning a blind eye to any treatment of Aboriginal people, however inhuman, racist, unchristian, or undemocratic. Reynolds has more recently described the denial of Aboriginal rights and their subsequent treatment as giving rise to a "whispering in the heart", an unease — expressed, one could argue, in "racist" attitudes. These writers argue for an understanding of the ways in which these early events have influenced relationships ever since. It is still possible to hear Australians make comments such as: "Well, they had no "Aboriginal problem" in the old days, we should just shoot 'em too".

It is also pertinent to note that the perpetrators of injustices and ill-treatment included those officials most responsible for Aboriginal welfare. Nineteenth century "wars of extermination" and "dispersals" were legitimate government procedures, using the military, native police and regular police forces at different times in different areas (see, for instance, Coe 1986; Rosser 1985). "Settlers" were also allowed to take the law into their own hands in the outback. Such attitudes prevail. In reporting on one of the deaths in custody which occurred in 1982, Wootten (1989:6) commented:

It is a matter of concern that professional [medical] people should have allowed themselves to become so calloused to the inadequacies of the system that they continued to participate in it without strident protest and pressure for reform.

Duncan's (1989:12) interpretation of the West Australian Government's initial refusal to cooperate with the Royal Commission was that "the whole system of indifference and sloppy inquiries" in relation to Aboriginal deaths in custody would be revealed. He maintained that this would indicate that "the public servants who let the black person die were only taking their cue from the top". Responsibility for the

cruelties which stem from both direct mistreatment and neglect lies with Australian society as a whole, including its leadership.

Some deaths move people, others don't. Australians have shown they cared about unnecessary deaths brought about elsewhere by war, famine or political suppression. But the Aboriginal situation is much more complex. However, I do not agree with Duncan (1989:14) that Australians react only to economic pressures and entrenched political lobby groups: there is a relatively high level of public concern and action in Australia over many social issues. The reason the Aboriginal-based Committee to Defend Black Rights, which did the hard lobbying to get the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody established, had to fight for so long was not just to overcome political apathy but reluctance, even aversion, to anything Aboriginal.

Duncan's thesis, in common with many concerned people in Australia today, focuses on the problems caused for Aboriginal people by their "rejection" from mainstream Australian society and their subsequent "identity" problems (see, for instance, Duncan 1989:15). The emphasis is on the extent to which Aboriginal peoples have or have not been willingly and successfully incorporated into mainstream Australian society. However, it was because Aborigines resisted being taken over by the invaders that they were killed in large numbers — not because they failed the tests of incorporation, not because the British didn't like them, nor because they were supposed to be technologically backward. They were killed because they were in the way. They refused to become conventional participants (as menial labourers) in British society unless coerced by force or starvation, and, as a consequence, refused to legitimate by their acquiescence the morality and legitimacy of the new regime.

This is not "racism". This is colonisation. Would it have made any difference if Aborigines had been white? If they had built cities? These have not stopped colonisation in other parts of the world. The "problem" surely was that Aboriginal people did, and still do, vigorously attempt to prevent the colonisation of not only their lands but also their culture — including their ways of thinking and their social

practices. The history of Aboriginal-European interaction is the history of repeatedly failed attempts on the part of Europeans to force Aborigines to relinquish their rights and preferred ways of being in order to support the emerging capitalist society. These attempts have included government-sanctioned programmes of extermination, incarceration on small reserves, cultural genocide, resettlement — and excessive imprisonment.

Duncan (1989:16) declares that “it is surely not beyond the wit of any rich and modern society to solve a problem which affects less than 1.5 per cent of the population”. But he fails to recognise that Aboriginal deaths are an issue which affects and implicates the entire population. All Australians are caught up in the institutions of thought and practice, and the history of their development, which perpetrate and legitimate these happenings, whether they migrated to Australia last century or last year. In working out what it means to be a moral community, all Australians have to take responsibility for the continuation of practices and attitudes shaped in the past.

I believe that what is called racism today needs to be understood as the outworking of attitudes towards Aborigines which have been so structured into Australian society that each generation has reproduced the inequalities and prejudices, whether or not people have been aware of the history which gave rise to them. In fact, the complete absence of any accessible history of colonisation until the 1980s ensured that there was no critical apparatus available even for those Australians who might have listened.

What this means is that each generation has also been content to reproduce colonial relations, despite Australian support for decolonisation in other parts of the world and its active involvement in denouncing apartheid in South Africa. In Australia the colonial relationship is premised on the assumption that European cultural and political domination are inevitable, and that European moral codes and modes of living are superior. Australians have been taught that their country was “peacefully settled”, not colonised. Finding out that it was violently settled has made little difference except to the availability of welfare

allocations — what Beckett (1987) aptly writes about as Australia's "welfare colonialism".

Re-examining Australian society:

Muirhead (Interim Report, cited in Duncan 1989:14) referred to the Commission as an opportunity to "examine a little of our national character and the behaviour of people in authority". However important this might be it needs to be done within a much broader context: not just people in authority, and not just characters and behaviours. It also needs to be an opportunity for Australia to examine the structuring principles, ideological and institutional, which continue to promote this indifference to Aboriginal rights as well as Aboriginal deaths. And this means any Aboriginal death, not just those in custody. The reasons so many Aborigines die in custody are the same as the reasons why they have high rates of infant mortality, low life expectancy, and numerous health problems, including diabetes, failure of the circulatory system, leprosy and trachoma. These are the same reasons they are not well represented in educational institutions, particularly at upper secondary and tertiary levels, have high unemployment rates — and high imprisonment rates.

There would seem to be two ways to prevent Aboriginal deaths in custody, or any other premature and preventable Aboriginal death. Both involve changing the present structure of inequalities. One is to convince Aborigines that their interests are better served by becoming a more compliant part of the bottom rung of Australian society (they have not been offered anything else, as von Sturmer (1984) illustrated is still the case). By denying their distinctiveness as Aborigines, they will be treated as any other minority group in Australia — not always very pleasant, and often "racist" but, one might hope, not singled out for the excesses now current. This cannot happen, of course, unless the notion of Aboriginality, of land rights, of cultural distinctiveness, of separate rights is abandoned: in other words, if Aboriginal peoples are prepared to acquiesce in the genocide of their historical and cultural distinctiveness. This is evidently the view and hope held by many, if

not most, Australians. They may not hold to it very explicitly but it is implied in any programme that seeks to "solve" the relationship crisis ("The Aboriginal Problem") by "better" incorporation of Aborigines — which usually seems to imply the spending of more money by government rather than a commitment to personal involvement.

A second way is to acknowledge the prior rights of Aborigines which were illegally extinguished through British colonisation and give what should have been given in the first place. Colonisation is a fact. There is no way to turn the clock back as it were. But it is a continuing fact, and it is this that is rarely acknowledged. The rights of Aborigines continue to be denied or further extinguished.

In the late 1960s, for instance, police set fire to an Aboriginal township in North Queensland because the people would not move out and make way for a mining company. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the New South Wales Government gave land to Aboriginal individuals and communities for residential and farming use. Most of that, too, was taken back again and, in 1983, the Government legislated to retrospectively legalise their illegal repossession. Early in 1990 in New South Wales, Aboriginal people blocked attempts by the State Government to rescind the 1983 Land Rights legislation, after previous Government attempts to render it ineffectual were also stopped. This battle is still waging. Even small Aboriginal gains are not secure.

Aboriginal people are inevitably going to find themselves in conflict with Australian values, with Australian law, and thus in custody more often, and in poor living conditions generally, because Aboriginal social practices are frequently "anti-social" as far as the mainstream dominant Anglo-Australian culture is concerned. Many Aboriginal cultural practices clash with European standards of behaviour, and thus inevitably with the law. Not only do Aboriginal people not have the right in most cases to live out their own cultural values, but they have been subjected to up to two centuries of the suppression of any attempt to assert them.

If the British had left Aboriginal people with a reasonable portion of

their own lands in the first place (see Reynolds 1987), and the right to continue linguistic and cultural practices, perhaps many of these issues would not arise now. Some accommodation may have been possible. At least there would be a clear boundary expected between Aboriginal space — and Aboriginal social expectations — and European-Australian space. And Aborigines could expect Europeans to behave as appropriate to Aboriginal customs and laws whilst in Aboriginal space. This implies that Europeans would have to learn about and respect these customs — as they would have to moving into any other “foreign” country (von Sturmer 1982). Different cultural norms and expectations prevail in Aboriginal communities today: people are constituted in relationship differently. If an outsider ignores this they can soon run into trouble. The people who don't, of course, are the government officials who have to be accommodated because they represent the “welfare”, the powerful, and source of resources. Their power over access to resources, upon which they have made Aboriginal people dependant, gives them the assumed right to ignore Aboriginal conventions.

Many will feel Australia has come too far in its history of ignoring Aboriginal rights to believe it should now do something about them. But if it is not going to, how is it going to live with the legacy of not doing so? Is “the Aboriginal problem” so much a part of the way in which Australian is constituted that Australians are happy for it to continue — with all the moral contradictions not only for its internal but also its international relations which that implies? And with the continuation of the “racism”, the ideas behind which legitimate the (welfare) colonialism?

The British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries legitimised their takeover of all Aboriginal lands by reference to both the inadequacy of Aboriginal technology and their biological inferiority. Now it is bureaucratic inadequacies and a supposed “inability” to conform to Anglo-Australian definitions of acceptable behaviour. The New South Wales government wishes to take over control of Aboriginal land councils on the grounds that Aboriginal people do not run them

according to bureaucratic convention.

"Racism" can be understood as the predictable ideas, approaches and programmes that people develop in their intolerance of other people's difference. In particular this will be the case when the power or prestige of one group is symbolically or actually challenged by another group defined by the first as "lesser" in some way. Continued difference challenges the alleged legitimacy of that power or superiority and it needs to be condemned, despised, degraded. Racism, whether based on biological or any other theory of superiority/inferiority, is a useful tool to legitimate inequality and contain difference.

And this is what makes the issue of Aboriginal deaths so complex. The "little of our national character" which Muirhead thought would be revealed by the commission's inquiries is, in fact, the revealing of structural inequalities continually reproduced politically, economically and ideationally. Racism becomes a way of excluding those who threaten political or cultural dominance. Unless Australians come to terms with this, they will not change the relations which exist between Aborigines and other Australians. Changing "ideas" people have about each other is not enough if the structuring principles of inequality which give rise to those ideas do not also change.

Aborigines have constantly pointed out hypocrisy of Australia's criticism of South African apartheid. In the case of Aborigines it is not a question of the injustice of unequal separateness under the law, but of an enforced equality which extinguishes their independent rights. As Aristotle noted many years ago, it is as unjust to treat the unequal equally as it is to treat the equal unequally.

In the past, most Australians have assumed the superiority of European culture and the inevitability of colonisation. Colonisation is still seen in Australia as just a form of social change, not good or bad but just inevitable, even necessary and normal. Looking at the brutality of the European treatment of Aborigines, and arguing that these stem from "racism" does not address the structural contradictions which exist in a colonial situation. In fact, all it does is continue to legitimate the colonisation, by adding a statement like, "we were not very nice

and we have to start being nice (including "non-racist") now". It suggests that what Australia needs to do, of course, is improve the living conditions and opportunities for incorporation of Aboriginal people — which is the same as saying how can Aborigines be better (as in more humanely) colonised.

When colonisation as treated is a non-problematic, the consequence must be recognised as an ignoring of the inequalities it creates, and condoning not only the subsequent treatment of people rendered powerless but also the negative stereotypes and attitudes of the dominant society which arise as a part of this structuring process. It is inevitable that "racist" attitudes will prevail because they help to camouflage the contradictions. The myth of the inevitability of colonisation is very strong: there is a great deal at stake.

Colonisation led to the structuring of Aboriginal people into Australian society as dispossessed, dislocated, disenfranchised people. This is not just history, a backdrop to understanding the present, it is part of the way in which the present is constituted. The fact that this process has not been so intense in some parts of Australia does not change this structuring principle, it merely creates various expressions of it. Racism is one of its products and, as a legitimising force, it is unlikely to disappear without the disappearance of those structures which give rise to it. To address problems of racism without addressing issues of colonisation, and thus the distribution of power and resources, is to distort what is happening in Australia today. This avoids rather than confronts the hard decisions needed to encourage cooperative and constructive dialogue. Australians who fear the consequences of increased Aboriginal rights may indeed discover that the greatest gains often come from being prepared to lose.

Notes

- (1) The reflections in this paper stem from several years work and friendships with Wiradjuri Aboriginal people of central New South Wales, Australia, many of whom have been directly affected by deaths in custody, and are currently involved in the work of the Royal Commission. I am indebted to Dr. John Maher for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

References

- Beckett, Jeremy R. 1987. *Torres Strait Islanders: Custom and Colonialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biles, David. 1988. *Draft Guidelines for the Prevention of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. Research Paper No.2. Parkes, ACT: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Biles, David, David MacDonald and Jillian Fleming. 1989a. *Australian Deaths in Police Custody 1980-1988: An Analysis of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Deaths*. Research Paper No. 10. Parkes, ACT: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Biles, David, David MacDonald and Jillian Fleming. 1989b. *Australian Deaths in Prisons 1980-1988: An Analysis of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Deaths*. Research Paper No.11. Parkes, ACT: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Coe, Mary. 1986. *Windradyne: A Wiradjuri Warrior*. Sydney: Blackbooks.
- Duncan, Graham. 1989. *Dying Inside*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Gammage, Bill. 1983. The Wiradjuri war 1838-40. *The Push from the Bush: A Bulletin of Social History* 16 : 3-17.
- Goodall, Heather. 1983. *A History of Aboriginal Communities in New South Wales, 1909-1939*. Unpubl. PhD Thesis. Sydney: University of Sydney.
- Macdonald, Gaynor. 1986. *The Koori Way: the dynamics of cultural distinctiveness in settled Australia*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Sydney: University of Sydney.
- Macdonald, Gaynor. 1988. Self-determination or control: Aborigines and land rights legislation in New South Wales. In Jeremy Beckett (ed). *Aborigines and the State in Australia*. Social Analysis Special Series 24 : 34-49.
- Read, Peter. 1988. *A Hundred Years War: The Wiradjuri People and the State*. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Reynolds, Henry, 1987. *Law of the Land*. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.
- Rosser, Bill. 1985. *Dreamtime Nightmares*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

- von Sturmer, John R. 1982. "Aborigines in the uranium industry: towards self-management in the Alligator rivers region?" in R.M. Berndt (ed). *Aboriginal Sites, Rights and Resource Development*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.
- von Sturmer, John R. 1984. "Separate societies: the different domains." in Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. *Aborigines and Uranium: The Social Impact of Uranium Mining on the Aborigines of the Northern Territory*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Wootten, J.H. 1989. *Report of the Inquiry into the Death of Malcolm Charles Smith*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

人種偏見とオーストラリア先住民： 史的パラダイムの混迷

〈要 約〉

ゲイノア・マクドナルド

オーストラリア先住民のきわめて貧困な生活状況、および彼らに対する、国中に蔓延する否定的態度は、長らく政治や学問の関心の的であった。特に現在は、警察や刑務所の中で死亡する先住民達の数が多いことに関心が高まっている。

この論文は、オーストラリアにおける先住民と非先住民との関係の否定的側面を理解する上で、従って、先住民の直面する多くの社会的状況を理解する上で、“人種偏見”が鍵になっているとする、根強い現代の理論に挑戦するものである。人種偏見にまつわる思想や、態度、慣習などは、ヨーロッパによる植民地化の過程において、オーストラリア社会に組み込まれていった社会的、政治的、経済的不平等から切り離して理解することはできないのだということを論証する。

もし人種偏見が、史的観点にたつて、ある特殊な構造原理の再生産の結果としてでなく、ただ観念論的な枠組みの中で理解されるならば、この概念を用いて説明することで、オーストラリア社会の根底にある緊張や矛盾の理解を歪めてしまうことになろう。