

## **CERS Working Paper**

### **The factors that have attributed to the racialization experienced by the Aboriginal people in Australia.**

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Racial discrimination is an issue that has been apparent since the beginning of Australia's history, with tension building between the white settlers and the native Aboriginal people since colonization of the country in the eighteenth century. It is a subject that has entered and affected many areas of both public and private life for Aboriginal Australians for a lengthy period of time and is still very much a current issue, permeating discourse in a variety of arenas. Aboriginal Australians are defined as being descendants of the first indigenous people to inhabit the country and its neighboring islands prior to colonization, and their connection to these original inhabitants as being recognized by others within their communities. The Aboriginal people speak a range of their own languages, which total to more than twenty, and still continue to engage with both cultures and traditions that originate from their ancestors. Through exploring and applying the following contributing factors: Goldberg's notion of the racial state to Australia, governmental and political action towards Aborigines, land issues, Aborigine women's experience of racism and media portrayal of Aborigines and media attitudes towards them, it is clear to see that these areas have attributed to the racialization experienced by the Aboriginal population in Australia, and highlight that racism in Australia is still very much apparent in contemporary life for these peoples.

Goldberg's notion of the racial state is one that can be used to describe the experiences of racialization in Australia. Racial states tend to "define populations into racially identified groups" (Goldberg 2002:110), which is seen in Australia with there being a clear distinction between Aboriginal Australians and their white counterparts. Goldberg proposes that these states often "employ physical force, violence, coercion, manipulation [and] deceit ...ultimately to the ends of racial rule" (Goldberg 2002: 112) and this therefore "sets limits on social possibilities" (Goldberg 2002: 116) for the people that it affects, which is clearly evident in the Australian case, as will be explored in analysis of the government's actions throughout this paper.

Goldberg suggests that one aspect that makes a state 'racial' is "producing and reproducing, constituting and effecting racially shaped spheres and places". (Goldberg 2002: 104) This can be evidenced in the 1910 Northern Territory Aborigines Act, where the government created an area where only Aboriginal Australians were allowed to live, and it was seen by many Aborigines as an attempt by the government to control all aspects of their lives. The rules and regulations that the Aborigines had to adhere to, purely because they were Aboriginal were both overpowering and all encompassing. The Act included guidelines on "where they could live, where their children could live, where they had to work... and who was and who was not an Aboriginal person". (Armitage 1995:18) Armitage argues that this Act made the Aborigines "effectively confined in these settlements because they had no other place to live". (Armitage 1995:18) Therefore, the Act reinforced the idea of a racial state being apparent in Australia, as it created racially shaped spheres and places in the parts of the country where only Aboriginals were told and forced to live, in effect not allowing them, as a people, to move and live freely.

Government policies and action towards Aborigines can be seen as racially motivated, particularly in 1965 with the Assimilation Policy. The aim of the policy was for all Australians, Aboriginal and white, to "live as members of a single Australian community –

enjoying the same rights and privileges” (Markus 2001:19) as White Australians. This policy was meant to “absorb Aboriginal peoples, particularly those of ‘light caste’, into the white population” (Armitage 1995:19) in an attempt to make the country more integrated. It is important to note that during the 1960s and early 1970s, the coverage of Aboriginal Australians in the media was “centered on notions of assimilation”, (Meadows 2001:44) illustrating how this policy generated much discussion. However, in May 1967, after the Referendum called by the Holt Government, the Assimilation Policy was stopped, as Aboriginals were included in the general Australian population, therefore they had more rights than before and were not subject to as much control from the government. The vote was a clear win for Aboriginal people; with over 90 per cent of the voters voting that Aboriginals should be included within the Australian Constitution. Only after this 1967 referendum did the “Australian federal government start to widen its powers in respect to Aboriginal policy”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:40) This was evident throughout the 1970s, where spending on Aboriginal programmes increased from “\$30.9million in 1971/2 to... \$185.8million in 1975/6” (Markus 2001: 21) under the Whitlam government. The 1975 Racial Discrimination Act was seen as a step forward to recognizing that racism was not acceptable in Australia, as this Act made it illegal to “do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin”. (Markus 2001: 22) Even though the Whitlam government appeared to make some progress in respect to Aborigine policies, Markus asserts that there was no “short-term improvement in living conditions, employment, health and education” (Markus 2001: 23) for the Aboriginal people. It could be argued that the government were appearing to make progress in regard to Aboriginal policy in a public sense, but actually implicating changes to the Aborigines’ daily lives was not something that was at the forefront of their political agenda, or something that they were willing to change quickly.

Individual politicians and some of Australia’s Prime Ministers have been seen to ignore Aborigines and their issues, and have seemingly racist policies towards them. John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister from 1996 until 2007 was seen to ignore Aborigines all together. In the first four years of his time in office, Howard only visited one Aboriginal community during this time. He also remained “consistent in his refusal to offer an apology to Aboriginal people on behalf of the Australian government”. (Markus 2001: 106) Howard received much criticism for this and was not surprisingly unpopular amongst Aborigines. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s Inquiry in 1995 about racial violence in Australia, found that Aboriginal people and communities were living in dire conditions, and a contributing factor to this included the failure of relevant government bodies to “acknowledge their responsibilities for providing basic goods and services such as education, health and housing”. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991:5)

Julia Gillard, the first female Prime Minister from 2010 until 2013, was not seen as particularly sympathetic towards Aboriginal Australians. Gillard continued with the controversial Northern Territory National Emergency Response policy that was introduced in 2007 by the Howard government for Aborigines. This policy included restrictions of alcohol and increased police patrolling Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in an attempt to reduce child abuse and sexual assault that had resulted from the consumption of alcohol. In an article published by the *Guardian* newspaper, Pilger (2012) claims that this practice was similar to that of the apartheid that was experienced in South Africa, illustrating the lack of public support for this policy, and the elements of racialization that it entailed. Franklin and Rout (2011) published an article in *The Australian* explaining that the reason Gillard continued with the policy was because she viewed it as protecting women and children in the Northern Territory, but they suggested that this was the only reason which she cited, and alluded to her lack of interest in Aborigine issues.

An individual politician, Pauline Hanson, created her own political party in 1997 called One Nation. One Nation caused a lot of controversy over their Aboriginal policies and attitudes to

non-white Australians. Marian Wilkinson, an Australian journalist, described Hanson's One Nation as "really racist, Nazi Party stuff, anti-Aborigine and anti-Asian". (Markus 2001:164) The party issued a book entitled *The Truth*, about the party and Hanson, with the Aboriginal chapter gaining the most attention. Markus argues that the chapter "sought to delegitimize contemporary Aboriginal demands by denigration of traditional Aboriginal society". (Markus 2001:168) The chapter included stories of baby cannibalism, with mothers eating their newborn's flesh and mixed race children being murdered by putting them on ants' nests. These stories were far from the truth, which is ironic due to the book's title, and were seen as an attempt by One Nation to make Aboriginal people look backwards, savage and dangerous. One of Hanson's policies stated that under a One Nation government, "assistance to Aborigines ... would be slashed...[and] the Anti-Discrimination Board would be closed down". (Markus 2001:171) Hanson "would abolish multiculturalism" (Markus 2001:177) and promote the widespread use of English throughout Australia. Even with these apparent racist and anti-Aborigine policies, Hanson was in denial about her views. She claimed that there were no racists in her party, including herself, and that racism did not exist within Australia. Her policies were also contradictory, as she suggested that Aboriginal people should be treated the same as everyone else in Australian society, but that they "should not have equal access to the Australian legal system". (Markus 2001:194) With the emergence of Hanson and her One Nation in 1997, racial discourse became at the forefront of the Australia media and press, as her policies were so openly racist that they developed a lot of public and media attention.

In more recent years it could be argued that the Prime Ministers of Australia have taken a positive step forward in Aborigine policy and public attitudes towards them. Kevin Rudd, the Prime Minister from December 2007 until June 2010, issued an important apology to the Aboriginal people in 2008 during a speech in Canberra. This was an apology for the Stolen Generations created by the Child Removal Policy, which took place until the late 1960s, where Aboriginal children were taken from their families and made to live with white Australians, in an attempt to breed out the Aboriginal race. He apologized for actions of past governments and parliaments, which was the beginning of the recognition of the harm and hurt that had been inflicted on the Aboriginal people by those in power. The speech looked to the future, with a promise of increasing life expectancy, education and economic success for the Aboriginal people.

The current Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, has also been regarded as having an increasingly positive attitude towards Aborigines. The Sydney Morning Herald reported in January 2014 (Arlington 2014) that he had promised to finalize by September, a draft for amending the constitution to recognize Aboriginal people as the first Australians. However, Abbott said that the changes would not happen quickly, as national debate was needed after a draft of the amendment to make sure that it was a unifying moment in Australia's history. This can be seen as a move in the right direction for the acceptance of Aborigines as the first people in Australia, and perhaps can also be viewed as recognition of the hardship that white Australians and colonials have made them endure. However, there will still continue to be a racial problem with the government until the 'issue' of Aboriginal Australians versus the white Australians is no longer debated. The political discourse about this matter can be seen as promoting more harm than good, and reiterates Goldberg's notion of the racial state through the creation of racially shaped spheres and spaces within the public sector of Australian life.

Land rights, issues and debates have been commonplace between the Aboriginal people and the rest of the Australian population since the English settlers and colonials went to Australia in the eighteenth century. In recent years there has been a resurgence of Aborigine groups and organizations attempting to claim back the land which was taken from them by the settlers and which often has sacred meanings to their culture. Issues over Aborigine land claims are at

the forefront of much media coverage of Aboriginal people, and illustrate how the racialization of these people is still very much present in contemporary society.

Hugh Morgan, a member of the Howard government, tried extremely hard to weaken the Aboriginal Australians' land claims. He sought to undermine the legitimacy of their claims "by attacking the moral basis of their society" (Markus 2001: 60-61) based on his individual interpretation of Christian theology. This can be seen as similar to Hanson's claims that Aboriginal people were barbaric and involved in cannibalism. Morgan argued that the Aborigines claims to land were not "justifiable in Christian teaching", (Markus 2001:61) as he believed that Australian society would not be able to function when a "Christian Aborigine entailed a 'symbolic step back to the world of paganism, superstition, fear and darkness'". (Markus 2001:61) Morgan was convinced that both historians and anthropologists had presented a false and romanticized view of the "culture and history of the Aboriginal people in an attempt to create a feeling of guilt and provide the basis for compensation claims". (Markus 2001:71) This illustrates both Morgan's denial of the Aborigines' land claims and his refusal to accept that they were genuine; his views on this issue are clearly racist, unfounded and discriminatory.

Continuing with Goldberg's notion of the racial state, the state, land commissioners and other jurists had to "decide whether indigenous subjects believe what they say and whether they are likely to act on those beliefs". (Povinelli 2002:254) This can be viewed as another attempt to control all aspects of their lives, including where they were allowed to reside within Australia. Aboriginal people had to prove their beliefs to these jurors and commissioners; they had to present a case, which would allow these authority figures to "calibrate the degree and intensity to which their belief is experienced as a necessary...or merely a potential...source of action". (Povinelli 2002:254) Andrews argues that the denial of access to Aborigines to their own land "deprived them of food and resources, and interfered with the ceremonial religious practices which were part of their culture and identity", (Andrews 1997: 922) highlighting the effect racist attitudes and the British had on the Aboriginal people and their daily existence. She also suggests that "the implementation of the British systems of laws was to render Aboriginal people aliens in their own land". (Andrews 1997: 922)

However, in more recent times, it appears that the Aboriginal people have started to regain rights for the land which was originally theirs, and can be seen as a move in the right direction by the Australian authorities for recognizing the continuing Aboriginal presence in their country. In the 1992 Mabo case, it was decided that the British colonials did not "erase Aborigines' rights relating to land, [and this] raised a wide range of moral, legal, and political questions for all Australians". (Downing and Husband 2003:130) The case recognized that there had been "prior occupation of the continent by indigenous peoples". (Downing and Husband 2003:130) This was a "famous victory" (Downing and Husband 2003:130) for the Aboriginal people, and illustrated that the government could deal "equitably and honestly with them". (Downing and Husband 2003:130) In 2007, joint control of a World Heritage listed rainforest was awarded to the Githabul tribe and the New South Wales state government. Mercer (2007) explains that the agreement between the two bodies occurred after almost a decade of talks and legal argument. This was a big victory for the tribe, and again illustrated how prominent and important the issue of land rights is for the Aborigine people. This land claim was one of Australia's largest, and covered a vast area of both national parks and forests, and even mountain peaks that the Githabul tribe believe to be home to ancestral spirits.

In 2008, the Aboriginal people had another land claim victory, this time in the Northern Territory. They won a case against a Swiss mining company who wanted to mine in their sacred land. The Aborigines argued that there would be danger to the people who lived near the mining site, as the works that were taking place due to the mining could contaminate their main water supply, the river, during the rainy season. In 2013, another incident with mining

occurred. The mining company OM Manganese was found guilty of desecrating an Aboriginal site in the Northern Territory and the BBC News (2013) reported that the company was fined A\$150,000. This was another recognition that specific areas of land are important for the Aboriginal people. However, where there has been some progress in regards to Aboriginal land claims, racism and objection to these claims is still evident in Australia. In 2012, the Aborigine Fingal Head cemetery was vandalized in the east of the country. The BBC (2012) reported that Nazi symbols, including the swastika and the words “KKK” and “white power” were inscribed onto many headstones in the cemetery. This is an illustration that racist attitudes towards the Aborigine people still very much exist in Australia, even where there seems to have been positive steps forward in eradicating this prejudice.

By focusing on Aboriginal women, it is evident that both racial attitudes towards Aborigines and the colonization of these people by the British has had a detrimental effect on how indigenous women are able to live their lives in contemporary Australian society. McGrath and Stevenson (1996) explain that in the twentieth century, any inter-racial relations usually took place between Aboriginal women and white men, with fathers hardly ever recognizing or taking responsibility for these children. In addition, when an Aboriginal woman married a non-Aboriginal man, she could not live on a settlement “or gain any of the benefits provided for Aboriginal people”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:43) This was because in the Northern Territory in 1936, a white man living with an Aboriginal woman was “effectively rendered illegal” (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:48) as it was an offence if they were not married. Further, in an attempt to “breed out colour”, (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:48) white men were told to marry “lighter skinned women”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:48) McGrath and Stevenson argue that Australian legislation at this time was “aimed to curb Aboriginal women’s sexual freedom in order to prevent the breeding of more mixed-race children”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:47) The government therefore focused on half-caste women and girls who were to “serve as the mothers of the next generation of lighter-skinned children until such time as the colour had been entirely ‘bred out’ of the Aboriginal race”. (Kerin 2011: 207) These half-castes, especially the girls, were trained to “fill domestic servant and other menial positions in white society”. (Kerin 2011:207)

The colonization of the Aboriginal people can be seen as having a lasting, and negative impact on the Aborigine women. The managers of the Aboriginal reserves were all male, and they “made Aboriginal women subject to their husband’s authority”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:43) This then led to state employment issues, as employers would avoid paying the women as they were classed as “dependents of the men”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:45) Both the state and churches during this time “viewed the personal autonomy of indigenous women as a major threat to the Christian patriarchal order they intended to impose”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:45) Aboriginal women’s sexuality “was seen as threatening by the first British officials in Australia, and to an extent, this continues to the present day”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:46) The colonials wanted the Aboriginal women to dress in the Western way, and they demanded the covering of breasts, “which interfered with women’s accustomed ease in suckling infants”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:47) Christian ideals were promoted within Aborigine communities, and the government forced the middle class ideal of the “dependent wife onto Aboriginal women, who had previously exercised considerable economic and social autonomy”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:47)

Fredericks (2007) suggests that due to colonization, Aboriginal women have become disempowered, and that they live as colonized people who are increasingly subjected to racism and kept poor by policies that have roots within their history. Women’s health was also much better before colonization. The 1996 National Health and Medical Research Council found that hospital admission rates were “50 per cent higher for Aboriginal women than for other Australians”. (Fredericks 2007: 97) Aboriginal women were more prone to diseases such as asthma and diabetes, and were “twice as likely” (Fredericks 2007: 98) to contract cardiovascular disease. When the Aborigines were colonized, the women were often

“exploited sexually by white men” (Meadows 2001:40) and they were seen as “immoral and highly sexed”. (Meadows 2001:40) Andrews (1997) suggests that the colonization of Aborigines deprived the women of both their status and their role that they had previously experienced within their communities. By imposing an alien and patriarchal legal and value system onto the Aboriginal communities, this ensured that the women would be “relegated to second class status within their communities”. (Andrews 1997: 923)

Further to colonization, the impact of enfranchisement for male Aborigines can be viewed as having a negative effect on their female counterparts, and has been described as “severe”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:44) Aboriginal men were allowed to drink, vote and gained access to public places, like the white Australians. However, it has been suggested that this led to “oppressive circumstances for Aboriginal women, including greater domestic violence”. (McGrath and Stevenson 1996:45) In June 2013, Perth Now News (Sutton 2013) reported that Aboriginal women, especially in the Northern Territory, are eighty times more likely to be hospitalized for assault and injury than white Australian women. Alcohol was a contributing factor of much of the domestic abuse and violence encountered, attributing to between sixty and seventy percent of it. Therefore, McGrath and Stevenson (1996) argue that women have often been skeptical of the advantages that the Aboriginal men received when they were enfranchised, as for them, it included problems such as alcohol and domestic abuse, and male privilege over previously female family concerns.

Elements of institutional racism can be seen in the relationship between the authorities and the Aboriginal women in Australia. The racism, and sometimes violence, experienced by these women from the police can be viewed as a shift from the colonial racism to police and therefore, institutional racism. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1991 found that Aboriginal women and girls had been both sexually threatened and abused by police officers. In Mossman, in Northern Queensland, an Aboriginal woman “alleged that she had been raped by a police officer whilst in custody”. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991: 88) There was also evidence presented to the Inquiry that in New South Wales and Queensland, Aboriginal women and girls “had been abused with sexist and racist language by being referred to as 'black sluts', 'black molls' etc”. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991:89)

Within the Australian Criminal Justice System, McGlade (2006) suggests that Aboriginal women and girls were discriminated against due to both their Aboriginality and their gender. This has been apparent for many years, but was made particularly clear in the 1980 case of Lane, where the Supreme Court in the Northern Territory “accepted the arguments made that the rape of an Aboriginal woman was not as serious or significant a crime as the rape of a white woman”. (McGlade 2006: 6) McGlade continues by arguing that Aboriginal women and girls lack “legal status and they [have] little or no protection under the law”. (McGlade 2006:7) It is evident that Aboriginal women and girls have not, and are still not entitled to, the same protection from the legal system as white women and girls in Australia, and that this “belittles this important human rights principle”. (McGlade 2006:10)

The racialization and sexism experienced by Aboriginal women is still present in contemporary Australian society. Meadows argues that the “invisibility of Indigenous women largely persists”. (Meadows 2001:40) It has been suggested that the violence that Aboriginal women are “subjected [to] has reached epidemic proportions, and...that it constitutes a continuing violation of human rights”. (Andrews 1997: 917)

Andrews concludes that Aboriginal women are at a greater risk of “being victims to homicide, rape and other assaults than non-Aboriginal women” (Andrews 1997: 919) and that Aboriginal Australian women must contend “not only with the legacy of cultural destruction, but with the double bind of racism and sexism as well”. (Andrews 1997: 924) These factors illustrate how racialization permeates all aspects of the Aboriginal women’s public and

private lives, including their sexual autonomy and participation within their own communities.

The fourth and final factor of racialization within Australia to explore is the media, and its effect on representations and portrayals of Aboriginals within the country. The media can be viewed as having an effect on racial attitudes in Australia. The 1991 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission found that the media may “generate a climate which provides legitimacy for racist violence”. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991:117) The Inquiry also found that the Australian media had the potential to provoke violence and was concerned with “discriminatory reporting in relation to crime stories where a person's ethnic and racial origin was only mentioned if the person was Aboriginal”. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991:118) The media has also been said to play a central role in “the construction of social discourse on what and who is seen to be Aboriginal”. (Bullimore 1999: 73) Foster and Stockley (1988) suggest that the print media is the hands of private entrepreneurs and therefore creates a tendency towards monopolization of the media, and what is reported and printed about groups of people. The press therefore reflects some aspects of the “social and political structures of the society in which it is located”. (Foster and Stockley 1988: 157) Downing and Husband argue that the state “can be a critical player in facilitating a minimal media environment for indigenous peoples”. (Downing and Husband 2003:142) Meadows (2001) proposes that the public depend on the media for information about race relations, and that the exclusion of Aboriginal peoples from equal participation in Australian culture is “reflected and perpetrated through mainstream media representation”. (Meadows 2001: 50) He continues by suggesting the media is not only a source of ideas about race, but is a body that can “articulate, work on, transform and elaborate these ideas”. (Meadows 2001: 164)

Bullimore (1999) notes that there are very few Aboriginal voices in the Australian print media, and that it is rare for Aboriginal voices to “stand alone”. (Bullimore 1999: 75) In a similar stance to Foster and Stockley, Bullimore suggests that Aboriginal portrayal in the media is “still determined by the dominant elite's concept of Aboriginality”. (Bullimore 1999: 79) Jakubowicz's exploration of Aboriginal portrayal in the media found that there is an “exclusion of Aboriginal voices” (Jakubowicz 1994: 85) and that “media reports...focus on questions of the Aboriginal spokespeople's ‘authenticity’ and authority to speak”. (Jakubowicz 1994: 88) He concludes that the Aboriginal perspective is “considered ‘too radical’” (Jakubowicz 1994: 165) so often they are not allowed as much coverage. In 1987, Meadows interviewed Aboriginals about their representation in the media and they “described [the] media treatment of Aboriginal issues as bad”. (Meadows 2001: 46) The reasons cited were the following: a “lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues by reporters, the media's need to focus on negative issues, and sensationalism”. (Meadows 2001: 46) It appears that negative Aboriginal depiction is not just present in the print media, but has moved into social media. In 2012, a Facebook page that showed Aborigines in Australia to be drunk and cheating the welfare system appeared on the social networking site. The BBC (2012) reported that the page was removed after public outcry from the Aborigine communities, and there was even an online petition for the removal of the controversial and racist page.

Racial stereotyping of Aboriginal people is seemingly commonplace in both the Australian press and their culture, and is perpetrated through the media's use of these stereotypes. Jakubowicz (1994) outlines themes that emerge in the representations of Aborigines by the white media. These include; an “emphasis on tribalism...[the] threat posed by Aborigines, through crime, violence...Aborigines as failures... [and as] victims of whites”. (Jakubowicz 1994: 39) Meadows reiterates Jakubowicz's point by suggesting that the characterization of Aborigines in the media is “stereotypical, sensational, emotional or exotic”. (Meadows 2001: 50) In recent years, where negative stories about Aborigines may have decreased, racial stereotyping has “increased slightly”. (Meadows 2001: 149) He concludes that “overall the level of overt media racism or discrimination is mild through the perpetuating of stereotypes”.

(Meadows 2001: 149) Downing and Husband argue that Aborigines “suffer from extensive misrepresentation in the majority media”. (Downing and Husband 2003:142)

As has been explored in this paper, racism in Australia is still apparent in contemporary times. Mellor argues that Aboriginal Australians “can never be an Australian in the same sense as a white Australian”. (Mellor 2003: 474) He outlines the macro level racism that is apparent in Australia and divides it into four key categories. These include a “lack of concern about indigenous people...[and] a selective view of history”. (Mellor 2003:481) In an interview with Aboriginal people, one interviewee said, “all we want is to be recognized that we are true Australians”. (Mellor 2003:481) Another key category is the dominating of white culture within Australia, and this has been seen as a form of racism, and it appears that other cultures are not embraced or tolerated as much as the dominant white culture. The final category is the level of “misinformation about indigenous people and how this is perpetrated by the media”. (Mellor 2003:481) Another Aboriginal interviewee claimed that the media and print news “puts Aboriginal people down”. (Mellor 2003:482) Armitage suggests that in the present day, the “Aboriginal Australian remains an outsider in Australian society, irrelevant to the interests and everyday life of most Australians”. (Armitage 1995:40)

To conclude, racism towards the Aboriginal people is a persistent issue in modern Australian society. By exploring the four factors of racialization towards Aborigines through governmental action, or lack of it, land issues, women’s experience and media coverage and portrayal of these people, it is evident that racism permeates both public and private areas of their lives. Due to their Aboriginality, the Aboriginal people have, and are still treated differently, discriminated against and are not considered to be fully Australian, even though they resided in the country long before the whites who colonized it. It must be noted that in more recent years, the racialization experienced is perhaps not as blatant as it was up until the 1960s. However, through the use of the media and racial stereotyping, it has become more of a comical attack and an increasingly accepted form of public racialization. The government too has been seen to make some progress in the recognition of the Aborigines as the first people in Australia, as evidenced in the current land rights debates and Kevin Rudd’s apology in 2008. However, it has taken the government a considerably long period of time to start apologizing and acting to include the Aborigines into the mainstream policies. This view is not held by all in the country, as seen through the examples of Pauline Hanson and Julia Gillard, who were not as accepting as Aborigines. Racialization will always exist within Australia, as the notion that the Aborigines are not the same as white Australians is so deep-rooted into their history that it will be a difficult belief to shake, however hard the government are trying to eradicate the brutal history in which they made the Aboriginal Australians endure.

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