

Attempted aboriginal genocide in rabbit proof fence

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



Attempted Aboriginal Genocide in Rabbit Proof Fence The exploitation and colonizing of the Australian Aborigines by the British settlers in the early 20th century is evident through Rabbit-Proof Fence by Doris Pilkington. Historical background information has provided a deeper understanding into the "stolen generations"; hence, we further understand the struggles Daisy, Molly, Gracie and their families had to go through. The kidnapping of these children to brainwash them of their language, tradition, values and way of life was designed to abolish the Aboriginal culture. The mother's reaction to this in the film speaks volumes for itself as Daisy, Gracie and Molly are being taken away by the white settlers. In addition, a realization of the presence of racism in so much of human interaction adds to the appreciation of the book. These abductions were motivated by racism and a need to eradicate the aboriginal culture. Captain James Cook had landed in Botany Bay (which is a short distance from where Sydney is today) and named this territory New South Wales and claimed it being Britain's. In 1788, a fleet of eleven ships carrying approximately 750 convicts from England, along with guards and crew "were on a mission to colonize the land and a strange group of settlers" (Benson). These convicts were of the lower class in England but upon arrival in Australia, they depicted these strange looking humans as a lower class than them. This initiated immediate conflict between the indigenous groups and the white settlers. They saw their skin color as a superior type than the aborigines, and straight away with the weapons they had such as guns and machetes, they envisioned themselves colonizing this land and building their own race and culture within it while ridding of the aboriginal culture first. This was the first introduction of the racial ideology

implemented by the British colonists in Western Australia. Those who were victims of abductions by white settlers always posed the question, " Why us? Why forcefully remove us from our families"? (Korff) The rationale behind removing the aborigine children was so that the white people stole their culture and they did not want it to transpire in the future. The policy of " assimilation for Australia's aboriginal children and children of mixed descent was expressly seen to involve the destruction and elimination of the cultural heritage, languages, traditions, and family history of aboriginal people. In attempting to stamp out all traces of the aboriginal culture, the Australian government was committing genocide" (Benson). Such traditions, values, languages and heritage could only live on to future generations if they were passed on to their children. Hence in breaking the circle of life, the white settlers hoped to end Aboriginal culture within a short time. We further can see the similarity and understand why it was so important to Mr. Neville and his henchmen to kidnap Gracie, Molly and Daisy and seclude them from society, instead, keeping them in captivity. Such acts and the treatment of these children would hinder them for the rest of their lives. It is not fair to such a unique culture that the next generation coming through are being brainwashed in an attempt to westernize the aborigines. Sonia Benson goes on to argue that " the aboriginal people were indeed dying out under the harsh conditions they were forced to endure. " We see through the three girls' eyes what they had to deal with, such as sharing a mattress with three kids and showering outside in the paddock. We come to a realization that this was only a snippet of what the other thousands of kids went through during this period of abduction and attempted cultural erasure. The stolen

generations is a term that is used to define aboriginal people (mainly children) who were “forcefully taken away (stolen) from their families between the 1890s and the 1970s, and in many cases never to see their families again. Because the period covers many decades, we speak of ‘generations’ (plural) rather than ‘generation’” (Korff). We understand from this that such abductions happened over a few decades and that Gracie, Molly, Daisy and the other children held at the River Moore Settlement were not the only ones who were stolen from their families. In attempting to abolish the aboriginal culture the white settlers were making sure “girls would grow up and marry nice white boys. We would have nicer fairer children who, if they were girls, would marry white boys again and eventually the color would die out” according to an aboriginal woman named Barbara Cummings who was quoted in Korff’s article. Gracie, Molly and Daisy were the target of this particular action in which the settlers wanted to rid society of their color. The preferred targets were mainly children of mixed descent (half-caste children). These children could be more easily assimilated into white society as with the three girls and as well as this, the stolen children were raised on missions by foster parents or on settlements such as the River Moore Settlement which cut them off from their Aboriginality mentions Korff. He goes on to mention that some children never learned anything traditional and received little or no education at all. Instead the girls were trained to be domestic servants and the boys to be stockmen. This brings in the racial ideology implemented by the white settlers. Because of this, many captives tried to run away with little success but the three girls managed to get away due to the harsh conditions they were living in and the way they

were treated. Professor Anna Haebich takes it a step further saying, "Australia adopted a new policy of assimilation based on Indigenous citizenship and equality across the board and in return, Aboriginal people were required to abandon their cultures and way of life" (1039). The white settlers had moved onto adults now and wanted to rid the older generation before they were able to re-produce more aboriginal children. By looking at the additional information Professor Haebich brings to the table, the white settlers slowly moved up the age ladder getting rid of a cultural history that stood as a representation and symbol for Australia. Additional information have given us clearer understanding as to why, who, when, and how the aboriginal children were stolen from their families. Many people can argue that perhaps the case was that the settlers thought these children were going to be neglected, live in bad conditions or be abused by their parents, but it is evident that such children were stolen to become not just accustomed to the western culture and brainwashed of theirs, but some to act as slaves for their white masters. It is not fair to wipe out a culture of unique tradition, values, morals and language let alone steal young children who have yet to live a life with those who have conceived them, just because you want the land all to yourself with only your kind of people -- white people -- living on it. It is unreasonable, unjust and inequitable to perform such acts. Can you imagine yourself being the mothers of Gracie, Molly and Daisy as the white settlers came and literally stole them without hesitation of one's love for a young child? Yes, two girls made it back to their family, but for those out there who didn't make it back or cannot remember who their parents were because they were so young when abducted, their family

members suffered. This suffering ranged from " social and personal problems including mental illness, violence, alcoholism and welfare dependence" (Korff). Many of those who survived the assimilation had a tendency to hold something of themselves back from everyone but a selected few. " Having been brought up in an institution, many aborigines never had a family in the traditional sense mentioned in Korff's article. All cultures are unique in their own ways, and we cannot just attempt to wipe out one because of the greed for land, power and glory. It is simply pathetic and such colonizers should be significantly ashamed of themselves -- such as Mr. Neville -- because of what they did to a culture which is special in a unique sense in this world. Work Cited: Benson, Sonia. " Hard to Say Sorry: Indigenous Australia's Reconciliation Movement." *History Behind the Headlines: The Origins of Conflicts Worldwide*. Ed. Sonia G. Benson, Nancy Matuszak, and Meghan Appel O'Meara. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 2002. 24-36. *Gale World History In Context*. Web. 6 Dec. 2012. Haebich, Anna. " Forgetting Indigenous Histories: Cases From The History Of Australia's Stolen Generations. " *Journal Of Social History* 44. 4 (2011): 1033-1046. *Historical Abstracts with Full Text*. Web. 7 Dec. 2012. Korff, Jens. " A Guide to Australia's Stolen Generations." *Creativespirits. info*. N. p., 12 Jan. 2000. Web. 06 Dec. 2012. . " Stolen Generations (Australia)." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Ed. William A. Darity, Jr. 2nd ed. Vol. 8. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 158-159. *Gale World History In Context*. Web. 7 Dec. 2012.