Race and Racism in Australia: White Settler Colonisers That "Have Come to Stay," Multicultural Immigrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: A Three-Part Essay.

Nick Hutchinson
Sydney, New South Wales

Abstract

A number of geographical concepts are examined under the rubric of race and racism in Australia. The first section looks at postcolonial perspectives on race and racism and the interconnection between whiteness and European colonisation. The second section, that relies largely on the work of Australian university geographers, is premised on the belief that racism manifests itself differently over space, and that race as a social construction is constructed differently in different places. The third section examines changing attitudes to race and racism in a particular place: the Block in Darlington/Redfern, a place that has experienced polarisation, vilification, gentrification and renewal. This three-part essay argues that there are numerous opportunities to engage students with race, racism, racialisation and anti-racism ideas in the geography classroom.

Keywords: interconnection, space, scale, change, place, race, racism, racialisation, anti-racism ideas, racist tropes, ideologies of racism, pedagogical problems, power, normative geographies, gentrification, neoliberal capitalism.

Geography, as an intellectual field, and as an academy and a tertiary workplace, is underpinned by a variety of practices that privilege an ideology of Eurocentric-white superiority (Peake & Kobayashi, 2002 p. 51; Esson & Last, 2020, p. 671). The privileged status of white Anglo identity has been identified in both British secondary schools and Australian primary schools (Winter, 2022, p. 314; Walton et al., 2016, p. 135) At the other extreme, everyday racist incidents in Australia, encountered in shops, restaurants, at sporting events, or in the form of disrespectful treatment on the basis of ethnic identity, or name-calling, affected almost a quarter of all Australians (Dunn et al., 2009, p. 2). The pocket-sized Aboriginal settlement bounded by the streets of Eveleigh, Louis, Caroline and Vine in the inner Sydney suburb of Redfern/Darlinghurst, known as the Block, that has morphed into the Pemulwuy Project, personifies struggles over neoliberal capitalism, race and racism in an urban Sydney setting.

Racism and racialisation in Australian secondary schools is rife. An extensive Deakin University survey of secondary school students across four states found that 70% of school students witnessed or experienced some form of racism (Casinader & Walsh, 2015, p. 53).

> Racism is real because it is experienced, frequently through thousands of microaggressions reserved only for individuals of certain groups. It can also be observed through the way institutions (including schools) operate—that is the way they look and present themselves to the world (Morgan and Lambert, 2023, p. 4).

Racialised school students come to be understood, to see themselves and be seen and treated by others, as a distinct racial category (Watego et al., 2021, p. 4). Consequently, they describe a diminished sense of belonging, and this can have a negative impact on educational engagement and achievement (Casinader and Walsh, 2015, p. 53).

How to approach race and racialisation? Two thoughts to begin with: anarchist/geographer Kropotkin's (1996, first published in 1885) hope that geography's inevitable involvement with race and ethnicity would result in classroom practices that teach children "to respect the 'lower races'" (pp. 142–143). Secondly, a number of geographers, (Harvey, 2001, cited in Castree, 2006, p. 266; Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.1; Smith, 2008, p. ix) paraphrase Karl Marx's 1845 dictum: "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" (Pollard, 2022). Indeed, Dunn et al., 2014 found that "teachers are more open to diversity and more positive about anti-racism than the general population" (p. 25) and this may be the result of

a predisposition of those who wish to become teachers, or, it may be the result of adherence to policies and professional development.

The approach adopted in this paper is to structure a geography of racism around key geographical concepts. Because a geography of racism inevitably draws from the wider field of the social sciences, this becomes important when its "key concepts (e.g., space, place and scale) are seen as crucial to sociologists, cultural theorists, political scientists and historians" (Morgan & Lambert, 2023, p. 168). Furthermore, "they are central to geographical thinking . . . They give the subject coherence, linking the different topics studied in school geography" (Maude, 2024, p. 31). The concepts used here are interconnection, space, scale, and change.

The first section, "Race and interconnections," references Audrey Kobayashi, Catherine Nash and Jane Jacobs' writing to examine postcolonial perspectives on race and racism, where the construction of whiteness and the phenomena of European colonialism are fundamentally interconnected and continuities still persist in the colonial present. Here, the triumvirate of white settler colonisers that "have come to stay," Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, and multicultural Australians combine in multifaceted awkwardness. Each group, and individuals within each collection of people, has their own interpretations on the discourses of colonialism and postcolonialism, whether they be segregation vs. assimilation or racial equality vs. the right to rule.

The second section, "Space, scale and race," is premised on the belief that racism manifests itself differently over space, and that race as a social construction is constructed differently in different places. Using the work of various university geographers, notably Kevin Dunn and Jim Forrest, on the spatial variation of racism, two ideas old and new forms of racism, are examined. Scale and race reflect on the various university surveys and public opinion polls to work through a conventional conception of scale to examine racism and anti-racism at the local, city, state, macro regional and Australian scales.

The third section, "Race and change: the Block," uses the work of Wendy Shaw, Kay Anderson and others to look at change and the polarisation of Australians, in a particular place: the Block in Darlington/Redfern.

Geographers' Concerns

Geographers have been concerned about racism for a long time. Under the Jim Crow laws, the virtual apartheid system which operated primarily, but not exclusively in southern and border US states, between 1877 and the mid-1960s, geographer Clyde Woods reported about the common perception that all people of African ancestry

> shared a similar set of debasements: criminality, lack of industrial efficiency, exceptionally strong reproductive powers, the lack of science and art, polygamy, heathen religions, unusual sexual proclivities, neglect of the young, and ignorance (2017, p. 97).

Australian geographer, Faye Gale, was more sanguine but equally plainspoken when she observed,

> the settlers were uncompromising in their desire for land and maintained their unfaltering belief in the superiority of Western culture and its right to usurp, convert or destroy all lesser cultures, Today's growing situation of racial conflict is the inevitable heritage of this historic position (1987, p. 138).

Professor Divya P. Tolia-Kelly wrote a journal article titled, "A Day in the Life of a Geographer: 'lone', black, female", (lone here is used to signify that all too often the teacher feels alone and isolated, unsafe and uncomfortable). The piece drew upon anecdotes. In one such story, a black academic was teaching about the myth of race and the discrediting of racial science.

> In response, the students dismissed her argument. Their responses included "it's proven scientifically, race does exist. It is biological. Look at our skins". Also, to prove their point, students started "Googling" for evidence whilst in the lecture theatre. "Look here's the evidence!" said a throng, whilst looking at a sports piece arguing for recognition of biological differences between white and black runners (2017, p. 325).

Part 1: Race and Interconnections

Kobayashi (2013, p. 57) approaches the concept "race" as a way of life, and articulates the following interconnection: it is described as "a fundamental product of Western cultures, deeply embedded in the European colonial past, lived out in the present as a taken-for-granted reality." The scare quotes around the word race are used to signal irony or a controversial use of the term and the possibly/probably hurtful ways that the term may impact on others. Jackson and Jacobs (1996, p. 2) relate the following:

> A lecturer in the history of Australian colonialism decided to present material on

the construction of Aboriginality. As the course had a large Aboriginal enrolment, the teacher was careful to make clear that he was not presenting his own views in many of the sources quoted but colonial discourses about Aboriginality. That is, he threw out a safety-net of quotation marks to signify that at least some of the words that came out of his mouth in the classroom were not his words or even an approximation of "truth". In doing this, the lecturer used his pedagogical authority to de-authorise—to render "untruthful"—colonial discourse. Despite these efforts, some of the Aboriginal students staged a walkout. This was not a misrecognition of the use of quotation marks but a response to their inadequacy for transporting racist discourses from their place in history as colonial "truths" to their present place as postcolonial "fallacies." There is, then, no predictable relationship between the political intentions of those who employ the interpretive strategies of social constructionism and their effects.

Kobayashi acknowledges that explanations concerning race were an integral part of modern geographers' earliest scholarly efforts and the continuities are very much alive in contemporary Australia.

There are a number of interconnections that can be identified, notably:

- between an Enlightenment belief in "the irreconcilability of premodern ways of life with western models of progress" (Anderson, 2000a, p. 6), that justified "a range of practices from mass murder, genocide, dispossession, and displacement, to more benign gestures of protection, assimilation, and institutionalization in the segregated spaces of missions and reserves" (p. 6);
- between the European metropolis, London, and the postcolonial periphery, Australia, "and the complex interactions between power, difference, and resistance wrapped up in such encounters" (Cullen et al., 2013, p. 515; Jacobs, 1996, p. 4), where the European authorities have the power to make decisions and make sure that laws are obeyed and where the efflorescence of geography was intimately connected with the growth of the British Empire (Jazeel, 2013, p. 180, Livingstone, 1992, p. 219);
- where ". . . the emergence in the nineteenth century of geography as an academic discipline and geographical education in schools were closely tied to the exercise of imperial and colonial power" (Blunt, 2005, p. 177) and its attendant racism;

- whereby Australian colonialism is seen as a British phenomenon that can be explored in relation the colonisation of Canada, New Zealand and the Cape Colony and colonial claims for self-government, and the assumption of governance over Indigenous peoples (Carey & McLisky, 2009, p. xvii; Haebich 2015/2016, p. 24), or more precisely "in cavalier defiance and denial of more than a hundred Aboriginal language groups" (Anderson, 2000a, p. 6), resulting in a British civilising mission complemented by a fierce militant invader;
- between the notion of a "white man's country" and multicultural Australia, where

    nineteenth-century imperialisms and the great modern migrations that saw some 50 million Chinese, the same number of Europeans and about 30 million Indians migrate to new homes around the world. A large proportion of these voyagers went to South Africa, the Americas and Australasia, to lands taken by force from their Indigenous inhabitants, who were systematically displaced or destroyed (Lake and Reynolds, 2008, p. 6);

- coloured by Western scientific efforts to classify and categorise the link between evolutionary thinking and the newly devised sciences of phrenology and craniology that linked head size and shape to levels of intelligence. Deeply pernicious and often sexualised notions of "native savagery" were constructed through scientific as well as cultural representations of the bodies of colonised people, as their bodies were depicted in texts and images as well as put on display for Europeans (Nash, 2004, p. 110);
- between settler colonists and Indigenous people in the late nineteenth century, whereby Indigenous Australians were

    represented as not just different, but "subhuman" relics from an evolutionary past, and their families as primitive sites and the parents incapable of raising their children as civilised subjects, hence the necessity to rescue them from these perceived sites of risk and danger (Haebich. 2015/2016, p. 23) and to "take the children away."

Interconnections can also be seen in terms of intersectionality where different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. To the extent that,

    Imperial geographers "discovered", mapped, differentiated, named and claimed spaces and "races" on the basis of essentialised political notions by colonial

thought. In so doing, they contributed to geographical knowledge characterised by whiteness, patriarchy, Eurocentrism, heterosexuality and classism (McKittrick 2006, p.xiv).

"The result was a racialized landscape that reflected the dominant values of the time and conditioned the values of the future" (Kobayashi, 2013, p. 60).

While racism, undoubtedly, has an extended history dating back to classical antiquity, it was during the European Enlightenment that the most virulent forms of thinking about race came to the fore (Rouch, 2021, p. 13). The initiators of racism were European intellectuals, such as Immanuel Kant who "is often depicted as the foremost intellect of the Enlightenment, but he was also among the first to obtain a formal appointment in geography, at the University of Königsberg, where he taught about the relationship between race and climate" (Kobayashi, 2014, p. 1103). Harvey maintained that the Enlightenment Project was based on the "extraordinary efforts on the part of Enlightenment thinkers" (1989, p. 12). These scholars included ". . . clergymen, physicians, professors and philosophers. In the nineteenth century, science was pressed into the service of racism to prove the inferiority of blacks, all coloured people outside Europe and Jews in Europe" (Sharp, 2009, p. 36). The scholars, geographers included, developed rational modes of thought in contrast to the irrationalities of myth, religion and superstition that resulted in "a fundamental geographical comparison between the institutions of civilized Europe and those living in a state of Nature" (Livingstone & Withers, 1999, p. 14).

It was when geographical thought made the seismic shift from natural theology to evolutionary biology (Peet, 1998, p. 12) that modern geography began in earnest. Ellen Churchill Semple imported German geographer, Friedrich Ratzel's ideas into the United States under the aegis of "science" to teach about "environmental determinism." Not only were the natural and human worlds fused together but more importantly "this synthesis could be employed in the service of power, specifically to legitimate as natural the expansion of Europe into a world of dominance" (Peet, 1998, p. 14). Griffith Taylor, Australia's first Chair of Geography at the University of Sydney, was convinced by environmental determinism to the extent that he was called "Australia's tormented prophet of environmental control" (Powell, 1978, p. 123).

There are persistent reverberations of these ideas among geographers, the political classes and other protagonists.

British geographer and conservative politician, Halford Mackinder, was another environmental determinist as was US President, Theodore Roosevelt:

> The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages. . . . American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Māori,—in each case the victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundations for the future greatness of a mighty people (Roosevelt, 1769–1776, quoted in Schwarz, 2020).

Contemporary US geographer Tamar Rothenberg observed that

> Imperialism would never have worked without racism. Whether crudely exploitative, gently paternalistic or just plain nasty, racism provided the base logic for whites controlling the brown and black people of the world. In a rather simplistic equation, imperialism was racism plus capitalism (Rothenberg, 1994, p. 167).

The accumulation of such attitudes and values still echoes through Australian space and place. In 2023, Professor Marcia Langton, a Yiman elder, an anthropologist and geographer, was addressing a community information session in Western Australia as an advocate for the Yes case in the Voice to Parliament campaign.

Journalist, Annabel Crabb (2023) reported that, in response to an audience question, Langton replied:

> What are they [the No campaign] talking about? See, "Aborigines are bludgers, Aborigines steal everything, Aborigines aren't entitled to the compensation that everybody else gets because they're lying." Do you see my point? Every time the No case raises one of their arguments, if you start pulling it apart you get down to base racism—I'm sorry to say it but that's where it lands—or just sheer stupidity.

Much of the Australian press, and several politicians, condemned Langton for expressing these forthright views. Crabb continued in her article:

> Let's be honest. Racism has been slopping around this referendum like a foul, rising tide. You don't believe me? Have a little trawl through social media, or comments under Voice-related stories on the more loosely-moderated news websites.

She then asked

What are the racist tropes that power this filth?

> That Aboriginal people don't deserve nice clothes. That they are drunks. That they make up or capitalise on stories of disadvantage. That Aboriginality is a magic ticket to grifting. That Aboriginal people want more government money, or to charge white people to go to the beach, or to make you feel bad about enjoying yourself on Australia Day. What is the common factor in all of this? It's the ingrained view that Aboriginal people are the "other", full of threat or hostility. And when that's your point of view—if that's genuinely where you stand—then perhaps you get to a point where you can talk yourself into the idea that being called a racist is more hurtful or damaging or outrageous than being subjected to actual racism.

Crabb then concluded with the thought that, "The attacks on Marcia Langton are not part of a theoretical debate. We know that racism exists. We know what it does to people."

And,

> Of course, there are arguments against the Voice that are not racist in the least. Australians are historically chary of shoving new stuff in the constitution. The most potent argument the No campaign has—that enshrining a Voice in the constitution before parliament has decided on the design creates uncertainty—has nothing at all to do with race.

> But to deny that racist arguments are out there and are being oxygenated by those who should know better is naive on the very kindest interpretation, and grade-A gaslighting at worst (Crabb, 2023).

Nonetheless, there is always hope in contemporary Australia. In May 1988, Kumantje Nelson Tjakamarra stood on his 200 square metre granite mosaic in the forecourt of the new Parliament House. *The mosaic, named* Tjuurkurpa, was designed by the Walpiri artist but was crafted from thousands of pieces of granite by other Australians identified as Franco Colussi, William McIntosh and Aldo Rossi. The artwork can be seen as a metaphor for a meeting place "marked by alienation of the traditional owners and an uneasy belonging by the new settlers" (Brennan, 1994, p. 1).

Wiradjuri author Anita Heiss's poem (1998), "We Have Survived", captures another essential reality about Australia's racist geography:

> You may have tried to
> Eliminate us
> assimilate us
> reconcile us

> But you only managed to alienate us.
> And as Indigenous peoples united
> You will never totally
> eradicate us

> For our spirit has survived
> And we will remain, now and forever.

(Heiss, A. (1998). Token Koori, p 13, cited in Moses, 2010, p. 16).

Part 2: Space, Scale and Race

Geography matters. Academic geographers have amassed a convincing case that racism is "everywhere different" (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, p. 168). UK geographers, Jackson and Penrose, stated that "place contextualises the construction of 'race', generating geographically specific ideologies of racism" (1993, p. 203). Race is seen as a social and cultural construct. Such an anti-essentialist approach to race means that race is "much harder, if not impossible, to map and count" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 177).

The brilliance behind the body of work that Dunn, and other university geographers have presented is that the results can be clearly mapped and counted. In the surveys, the binary distinction between old and new forms of racisms (Jayasuriya, 2002) is emphasised. Their work also admits a more contemporary view of space, or socially produced space (Cresswell, 2004, p. 10), where space is thought of "as a much more complex, fluid, contingent, hybrid, contested, changeable thing" (Kobayashi, 2004, p. 88). Rather than assume that space is a stage on which events unfold, "humans have a dialectical relationship to space in that they change and are changed by it" (p. 88), thus becoming a meeting point for strung out webs of social relations (Morgan & Lambert, 2023, p. 64).

Racism in space, then, depends on descriptions such as "race," ethnicity, nationality and religion. It is related to phenomena such as Islamophobia, antisemitism and xenophobia. (Ben et al., 2024, p. 230). Racism "has taken particular forms in societies such as Australia, Canada, Israel, the United States and New Zealand, where massive immigration and the multicultural basis of recent immigration policy has resulted in ever more ethnically diverse populations" (Dunn et al., 2004, p.410). Racist attitudes are also associated with spaces that are pockets of national ethnocentrism, "Australianness" or centres of Anglo (or Anglo-Celtic) culture (Forrest & Dunn 2007, p. 701), that have been called centres of "Whiteness."

This appellation does not relate to skin colour but rather to "mono-cultural Anglo-inspired cultural orientation" (Hage, 2023, p. 629). Such white Australians are referred to by cultural anthropologist Hage as the spatial managers (p. 75) of society. These spatial managers are self-authorised to determine who belongs, who should come and who is allowed to voice opinions about the national space (Dunn, Forrest, & Burnley, 2002, p. 4). "The spatially managed are those who have opinions expressed about them, where they should be put, what they're doing, where they should be sent back to, etc." (p. 4).

The university generated survey questions, generated by the University of New South Wales Racism Project, are carefully constructed and could be used in the geography classroom to clarify attitudes and values or to construct student field surveys (a useful student-friendly source document of the survey questions can be found at Dunn & Geeraert, 2003, p. 2). They encompass a variety of attitudes to cultural diversity and racism. "Some of these are derived from existing survey instruments (Eurobarometer 1997; University of Michigan 2001); and some new question formats were developed to operationalise aspects of the 'new' racisms" (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, p. 170).

Old and new forms of racism

Further student engagement with the questions and the data provides opportunities for extended discussions of old and new forms of racism. "Old racism" based on the then-fashionable science related very strongly to a eugenic movement that believed in the genetic superiority of Nordic, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon people, with Blackfellas in Australia followed by Indigenous Tasmanians at the bottom of the pile (Anderson & Perrin, 2007, p. 19). The old racism is exemplified in the quotations above from Kropotkin, Woods and Gale and the attitudes expressed by the undergraduate students in Tolia-Kelly's account. Usefully, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) provides a reference for Year 10 science teachers that states,

> While notions of racial superiority have deep roots in many human societies, the technological and economic dominance of European nations in the 19th century and the establishment of colonial empires made such ideas particularly popular in Western societies of the time (ACARA, n.d.).

Morgan and Lambert explain, "biologically, race is fake: "racial differences" are literally phenotypic—that is, no more than skin deep and having zero explanatory power when it comes to academic intellectual, musical or sporting performance" (2023, p. 4).

The "new" racism is described as a process of racialisation that may be deconstructed into three main though somewhat interrelated aspects:

- the construction of out-groups containing Australians that appear to have dishonoured particular values, often identified as Asian-Australians, Muslims (Atie & Dunn, 2012) or "Third World-looking people" (Hage, 2023, p. 20). Included in this category are Indigenous Australians where core stereotypes persist in the surveys regarding "supposed welfare dependency, drunkenness and failure to 'assimilate'" (Dunn et al., 2004, p. 411);

- secondly, there are considerations of what counts as an Australian as seen in terms of cultural diversity and nationhood (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, p. 170). This type of argument often starts with *I am not racist but . . .* and is based on intolerance of cultural difference and ambivalence towards multiculturalism, an argument that revolves around so-called *ethnics*. Thus, "Whiteness" and "race" are rendered invisible (Geeraert, 2003, p. 180). White people view themselves as racially or culturally neutral rather than recognising their privileged position (Valentine, 2001, p. 210). Again, racism is seen as an aberration associated with a relatively small minority (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 393–397), and new racism is typified by denial politics (Dunn & Nelson 2011, p. 589);

- thirdly, there is symbolic racism, a fusion of old and new racisms, accommodating racial prejudice and a type of conservative politics that surfaced under Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. Symbolic racism "identifies the assumed extent of individual prejudice against other cultures or racial groups, across Australian society generally, or specifically at the individual level" (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, p. 170). Symbolic racism also involves the use of emotional, often visceral, responses and beliefs that are apparently well accepted by "real Australians" or "an ordinary Australian" to justifying an advantaged position (Fraser & Islam, 2000, p. 133).

Racial prejudice exists, and whether it is seen as a form of old or new racism it has devastating social impacts.

> Racism refers to prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their race. It is something that creates disadvantages for some, and confers privilege on to others. When you understand things this way, you recognise that racism isn't just about

intentions; it is ultimately about impact (Soutphommasane, 2017, para.11).

Scale and race

Work on racism and anti-racism studies started through analysis of three separate public opinion polls in the 1990s (Dunn & McDonald, 2001), to morph into the University of New South Wales and Macquarie University Racism Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) and follow up studies such as the Western Sydney University Challenging Racism Project (Western Sydney University, 2024). In addition, there are some local council studies of race and racism cited, as are other studies using focus groups.

The local

The results of these surveys and observations allow teachers and students to work through geographies of scale starting with two localities, one in South Australia and one in New South Wales (Nelson and Dunn, 2017). From these examples, we learn that celebratory anti-racist measures, like "multicultural weeks, lovely assemblies and sharing food" (p. 17) have limited success because they tend to stereotype and commodify otherness (p. 16) whereas specific local initiatives such as an after-school basketball program, that was designed to ease the tensions between newly-arrived African migrants and local South Australian Aboriginal young people, was more effective (pp. 22–23).

There are also two examples of local council studies in Melbourne both with significant Indigenous, multicultural and multifaith populations (City of Darebin, 2012; Peucker, et al., 2022). The Darebin study involved phone surveys, an online survey and a number of focus group meetings to find that schools were mentioned by focus group participants as a major setting for racism, as well as public facilities, including public transport, notably buses, streets and parks, sporting venues, and local shops (City of Darebin, 2012, p. 219) and that visible difference (skin colour, headwear for Muslim women or Sikh men) appeared as a trigger in race-based incidents (p. 220).

The Whittlesea anti-racism community project uses similar methodologies to obtain data. These include an online anti-racism yarn with people from the local Aboriginal community. As far as school settings are concerned.

> In the Muslim women's group, for example, two participants spoke about racist, Islamophobic slurs directed at Muslim students during inter-school sport classes, such as "you towel heads", or students being called "terrorists." A

participant of African background in the focus group for new and recently arrived women recalled a racist incident at school involving her son: he was called a "monkey" by other students and told "to go back to your country" (Peucker et al., 2022, p. 22).

The city

From the University of New South Wales and Macquarie University Racism Survey we learn that Sydney exhibits "unsettled multicultualisms" (Forrest & Dunn, 2007, p. 700) where ideas about nationhood, including Anglo-Celtic cultural dominance, intolerance of diversity, antagonism towards some cultural groups, and general fear of strangers have been exacerbated by substantial immigration numbers over the past forty to fifty years.

Data taken from the Challenging Racism Project survey of Melbourne, undertaken in 2006, showed that attitudes towards Asian Australians were more liberal than among Australians generally but the opposite was found in relation to Middle Eastern and Muslim groups where negative attitudes were important exhibiting both "old" and "new" racist positions (Forrest, Elias, & Paradies, 2016, p. 58).

The state

Using three separate public opinion polls from 1994 to 1996, the New South Wales study was very much concerned with the rise of the One Nation Party, finding that there were substantive strands of racism throughout the country where, in New South Wales, over half the respondents declared that Indigenous Australians were treated over generously. In addition, well over 60 per cent of respondents "felt that migrants should learn to live and behave like the 'majority of Australians' do" (Dunn & McDonald, 2001, p. 34).

Eastern Australia

The 2001 University of New South Wales/ Macquarie University Racism Project telephone survey taken over Eastern Australia, i.e., the states of New South Wales and Queensland, found that the rates of racism experienced by Indigenous Australians were generally more than double that for non-Indigenous people (Dunn, 2004 p. 4). Spatially, the most tolerant places in Queensland were found to be in the regional cities of Mackay Townsville and Cairns (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, 173). By way of contrast, the least tolerant part of New South Wales was the Lower Murrumbidgee statistical division where views were dominated by the "old" racisms (p. 178).

Australia

"Professor Kevin Dunn, from Western Sydney University, led a survey of just over 6,000 respondents, in 2015–2016, to assess key factors in evaluating racism in Australia; including in views on, multiculturalism, ethnic cultural relations, immigrants and refugees" (Rouch, 2021, p. 16). In terms of multiculturalism, some 80 per cent of Australians saw cultural diversity as a positive factor in Australian society but nearly half of the respondents 'believed that people from racial, ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups should behave more like "Mainstream Australians'' (Blair et al., 2017, p.6).

Earlier data from the Western Sydney University Challenging Racism Project indicated that Indigenous Australians recognised Anglo-Australian privilege. Overall, Indigenous respondents have revealed positive dispositions towards cultural diversity (Dunn et al., 2010, p. 27) but they strongly recognised racism in Australian society. In many other respects, Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents, tended to demonstrate similar views (p. 27). There also appeared to be significant anti-Muslim sentiments among Indigenous respondents (p. 25). The researchers would have expected the extent of anti-Islamic sentiment amongst the Indigenous respondents to be lower considering the extensive links between Indigenous Australians and Makassar traders in the 18th century or "Afghan cameleers" in the 19th century. It was explained that "the social, cultural and community contexts of Muslim life simply do not exist for the majority" (p. 26) of Indigenous Australians, with a great number following Christianity or acknowledging "no religion" in the census.

A stand-alone 2014 study which was published as *Witnessing anti-white racism, white victimhood and reverse racism* (Nelson et al., 2018) attested to the complexity of anti-white racism. From an online survey relating to direct, or incidents of racism that the participant had observed indirectly, just over 10 per cent of the participants self-identified as "white" using various appellations such as "white," "Aussie," "England," and "Captain Cook" (p. 14). They were identified as largely white, Christian, Anglo, and Australian born (p. 15). Most of the participants had a rather superficial view of racism as opposed to the racialised experience of minorities, understandings built over long periods of time with "systematic and institutionalised experiences of discrimination" (p. 15).

Finally, a number of academics from geography, sociology, anthropology, health studies and other fields involving racism and anti-racism, conducted a stocktake review of quantitative racism data collected nationally up to July 2022. Their paper reported on 32 survey-based research studies and six ongoing organisational reporting initiatives (Ben et al., 2024) regarding quantitative studies of racism in Australia. They define racism "as a historical and ongoing system of oppression, which creates hierarchies between social groups based on perceived differences relating to ethnic origin and cultural background" (p. 230). They observe, as has been mentioned before, "many Australians tend to deny, dismiss or minimise racism, avoid discussing the ongoing significance of 'race', conflate mentions of 'race' with perpetrating racism, or redefine it as 'not racism'" (p.230)

These academics observe that the Challenging Racism Project, that has been so useful in compiling spatially-based data, is now dated (p. 238). More importantly, the geographers' research found that racist and non-racist attitudes were "everywhere different" (p. 238) and, "local anti-racism [projects] will be more likely to be regionally sensitive, effective and gain buy-in if the programs respond to the local manifestations of racism, as revealed through data" (p. 238). The Challenging Racism Project was lauded because it "measured both old and new forms of racism, including denial and anti-diversity attitudes" (p. 239).

Part 3: Race and Change: From the Block to the Pemulwuy Project

> Pemulwuy was a courageous Bidjigal man who led a guerrilla war against the British settlement from 1788 to 1802. He has been immortalised in the naming of this inner-city precinct (Moore, 2023).

The Pemulwuy Project, officially opened in August 2023 (Turnbull, 2023), incorporates sixty-two homes, affordable housing units for Aboriginal people on the tiny site of the Block in Darlington, more commonly referred to as Redfern (refer to Figures 1 and 2) The Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC), that built the project, believes that the number sixty-two is significant because it symbolises the number of Gadigal families that occupied this piece of land, adjacent to Blackwattle Swamp, when Berewalgal (Karskens, 2010, p. 4) arrived between 1789 and 1790. It also represents some 400 people that are regarded as a critical mass that will ensure the success of the Pemulwuy Project (Dabscheck, 2006).

These two events, in 1790 and 2023, bookend the various stages of settlement on the Block and the evolution of race relations between Aboriginal people and Berewalgal. Although most of the sixty-two Gadigal families succumbed to smallpox

Figure 1: *The Pemulwuy Project's sixty-two housing units, comprising thirty-six two-storey townhouses and twenty-six units within the apartment building, are designed to provide affordable housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.*

(the AHC among others state that the smallpox was introduced by Europeans) (Karskens, 2010, p. 594), the few survivors were forced to move into surrounding areas (Thalia, 2018, p. 47). Rather tragically, the Berewalgal were not going away, instead of leaving "they not only destroyed and ate everything in their host country, but were starting to rob other people's country" (Karskens, 2010, p. 368). From a "white" point of view, a newcomer arriving in Sydney in 1842, who stopped to examine the "natives" seated on a grassy area opposite the Quay, was heard to remark that, "there could be little or nothing human in the creatures before me" (p. 533).

From the mid to late 1800s, tidy streets of Victorian terrace houses dominated the suburbs of Darlington/Redfern. By way of contrast, as early as 1837 a British Parliamentary Select Committee reported that genocide was occurring in the Antipodes (Australian Government, NSW Department of Education, 2000a). The 1901 Australian Constitution denied Aboriginal people citizenship nor were they included in the census numbers. (Australian Government, NSW Department of Education, 2000b). This was the apogee of thinking about beliefs in "white supremacy," where social Darwinism argued "not only for white ethnic superiority, but also for justification of segregationist policies and denying social support for non-white ethnic people" (Rouch, 2021, p. 14).

By the turn of the century, the tides of industrialisation, overcrowding and lack of infrastructure led to so-called "slum" conditions over much of inner Sydney and to associated accusations of crime and immorality. There was a rat-borne outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900 in inner Sydney, with smaller outbreaks in the decades leading up to the early 1920s (Shaw, 2001, p. 71). The term "slum" was commonly associated with dirt and disease. Transformation took place during the 1920s. These poorer parts of inner Sydney, with small rented terraced houses became industrial worker suburbs (p. 71) with the poorer wooden housing stock destroyed to make way for factories, warehouses and breweries (p. 72). Nevertheless, "Darlington retained much of its predominantly brick housing stock until the 1960s" (p. 72).

During the 1920s, the Aboriginal population is estimated to be at its lowest ebb, at 60,000–70,000. The majority of non-Indigenous Australians had no contact with Aboriginal people due to segregation and social conventions (Australian Government, NSW Department of Education, 2000b).

In the post-war years, there was a chronic shortage of accommodation and a relocation of people and jobs to the suburbs away from the inner Sydney suburbs. For post World War II migrants from all over Europe, "the impoverished inner-city became home" (Shaw, 2001, p. 72) as it did to many Aboriginal migrants from northern and western NSW (Kohen, 2000, p. 86).

> Inner Sydney suburbs within easy reach of Central Railway station became a magnet to Aborigines of diverse communal and country origins who sought cheap housing, access to public transport, and unskilled employment in the Eveleigh Railway Yards and other industrial outlets (Anderson, 1993, p. 6).

Urban life was not easy for these newcomers.

Figure 2: *The townhouses on Eveleigh Street are a mixture of three- and four-bedroom units with modern kitchens, air conditioning and separate laundries. They also contain large balconies and terraces.*

Chain migration created considerable overcrowding in the run-down inner-city housing that provided the only genuine rental option available to Aboriginal people. Racist letting practices by landlords and agents precluded those who identified and/or were identified as Indigenous from obtaining tenancies in better dwellings (Morgan, 2008, p 76).

The practice of squatting in vacant premises was a popular mode of existence for many inner-Sydney Aborigines during the 1950s and 1960s. This precarious lifestyle brought them into frequent contact not only with land-interested groups, but also with law enforcement agencies including police and the courts (Anderson, 2000b, p. 15).
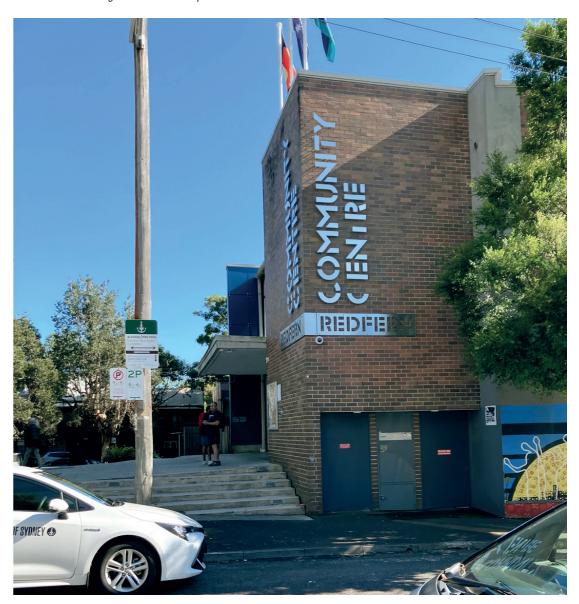
By 1970, much of this landscape was regarded as economically and socially depressed with Redfern in particular regarded by Sydney residents and many of the inhabitants of the Block as a "slum" (Anderson, 1993 p. 6). As Morgan (2012) more forcefully puts it,

> During the post-war decades Redfern-Waterloo developed a reputation as a rough area. Media reports of public

drunkenness, violence and prostitution provoked considerable moral alarm and contributed to the public perception of Aboriginal residents as "fringe-dwellers" corrupted by modern society (p. 209).

Then came gentrification. The Block was a place that offered up "the last vestiges of gentrification investment potential" (Shaw, 2000, p. 296) in inner Sydney. Gentrification implies a sophisticated urban lifestyle replete with art galleries, cafes, parks and specialty retail establishments. This process served to bifurcate the community in and around the Block. Aboriginal people are divided in their views about the efficacy of the Pemulwuy Project and some/many non-Aboriginal people welcome gentrification to the extent that, "if the area rids itself of this troubled Aboriginal presence, gentrification will proceed unencumbered" (Shaw, 2001, p. ii). Although gentrification had begun in the 1960s and 1970s, this process was apparently impeded in Darlington/Redfern and Chippendale by a significant Aboriginal presence in the Block. By the late 1990s, gentrification in the form of apartment building was advancing rapidly. The completed Pemulwuy Project can be regarded as an integral part of the overall gentrification project. The Block no longer stands out as an

Figure 3: *Part of the Pemulwuy Project, the Redfern Community Centre is a centre for Aboriginal social and cultural activities, surrounded by a landscaped park with an amphitheatre and a children's playground. It was formerly a printing factory, next to a disused timber yard and corner shop dating back to 1881. The opening of the Centre in 2004 occurred during a transformative period on the Block.*

island of resistance in the face of neoliberal forces that are changing the inner-city skyline.

The struggles over the destiny of the Block over the last fifty years serves to demonstrate that when different cultural values clash the "normative geographies are defined by those with the [most] power" (Cresswell, 1996, p. 80) and a racist chasm was excavated between black and white residents. As Anderson (1993, p. 13) observed, "Paul Gilroy, perhaps more effectively than other social scientists, has argued that 'race', in addition to being a construct of (White) imagining and exclusion, is an idiom of (Black) resistance."

"By March 1973 the South Sydney Residents' Protection Movement had formed to fight, in its words, the 'festering sore' of 'vermin' at Louis Street' (Anderson, 2000b, p. 17). However, Black

resistance was very much evident when The Block was formally established in 1974. Plans were approved by the Federal Government to redevelop the area around Eveleigh Street, Redfern for private housing. Indigenous leaders and a group of local priests petitioned the government which then purchased an area that became known as The Block and placed it under the control of the newly-created Aboriginal Housing Company (Morgan, 2012, p. 210).

This development was accompanied by a powerful political and cultural revival and a new wave of black intelligentsia centred on the Block (Shaw, 2013, p. 260). By 1970, the Aboriginal population of Redfern had grown to over 35 000 (Lattimore, 2018, Thalia, 2018, p. 47) and a number of Aboriginal-owned services were formed, including the Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Medical

Figure 4: *Eveleigh Street before demolition. The last tenant departed the Block in 2004. By 2019, the entire site had been cleared.*

Service and the Aboriginal Children's Services (New South Wales Parliament, 2004, p. 35). Additionally, black power had arrived to the extent that the "celebratory mythology of settlement has been convincingly challenged by Indigenous counter-narratives of invasion, dispossession, and genocide" (Morgan, 2012, p. 208). Moreover, as Anderson, (1993, p. 3) observed, "It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that the district displays the collective injuries wrought on Aboriginal Australia by European policies of dispossession over the last two hundred years."

Underpinning these collective injuries were numerous racist currents critical of everyday life on the Block and the future of the Pemulwuy Project. White residents wanted to present the Block as a "failed human experiment" in Aboriginal self-determination, a view repeated in media and local discourses over decades (Shaw, 2013, p. 268). Nothing epitomised these discourses more than the run-down nature of the terraced housing on the Block (refer to Figure 4).

Newspapers frequently reported about "fearscapes" awash with racial violence and references were made to the appearance of a "human zoo" (Anderson, 2000b, p. 19). The 1991, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1991) (HREOC) *National Inquiry into Racist Violence* found that sensationalist reporting, particularly in headlines, was a major negative influence on the image other Australians have of

Aboriginal people (Hulsker, 2002, p. 80). Media reporting about Aboriginal people had apparently shifted between 1960 and 1990 from stereotypical portrayals of Aboriginal people as "victims" to those associated with people as "criminals" (p. 80). What is also clear is that, as apparent crime levels rose, this ignited zero-tolerance and violent culturally insensitive, over-policing (Morgan, 2012, p. 210, Thalia, 2018 p. 48).
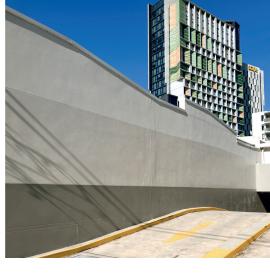
In February 1990 at approximately 4 a.m., the police, led by 70 officers from the Tactical Response Group, raided eight houses on the Block. "The police carried firearms and batons and wore riot gear (shields, helmets and vests). During the raid iron bars and sledge hammers were used to gain entry into houses" (HREOC, 1991, appendix).

Another violent episode occurred in February, 2005. This incident developed after the "death of Aboriginal teenager TJ Hickey, that the local community believed had resulted from a police chase" (Morgan, 2012, p. 210). As Tony Birch (2004, p 20) observed, "The media reacted with a typically orchestrated frenzy, momentarily transferring the chaos of Baghdad to the 'war zone' of Redfern." Birch was extremely disturbed by the incident.

> We should not be surprised then that this anger was directed at the police. Nor should it surprise anyone that those who confronted the police appear to have

Figures 5 and 6: *The Col James student accommodation precinct has been dedicated to the architect who worked tirelessly on the Pemulwuy Project.*

come well prepared. Although most likely unaware of it, those who would later write in the letters pages of the daily press "we do not condone acts of violence in Redfern" were in fact condoning an endemic system of violence perpetrated against Indigenous people that inevitably produces a violent response when no other defence is available (2004, pp. 19–20).

Precinct 1 of the Pemulwuy Project was completed in December 2020 with sixty-two affordable homes available for rent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families (Turnbull, 2020). By July 2023, the AHC celebrated its 50th birthday and marked the official completion of the Pemulwuy Project, which included student accommodation in Precinct 3, (refer to figures 5 and 6) with subsidised rental accommodation for 110 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Elsewhere on the site are retail and commercial spaces, a gymnasium, an art and culture centre and a childcare centre. Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore remarked at the opening ceremony, "The community have told us that they want the area to celebrate its Aboriginal culture and history" (Moore, 2023).

Normative geographies

The normative geographies of the Block have been defined by who has the most power to determine what is appropriate in this place. The AHC had been considering The Block's redevelopment since the mid-1980s. Its local critics objected because the purchase of homes was no longer an option for the residents. Some argued that the student accommodation building was too tall, at some twenty-four storeys high.

Governments of various stripes also exhibited power over this place. In 2005, the AHC believed that the New South Wales Cabinet did not trust Aboriginal people to manage their own housing (Rice, 2005). The project was referred to as *terra nullius* Mark II, "In this version, we do not take the land—we just find other ways of making it impossible for Aboriginal people to determine their futures" (Rice, 2005).

On the other hand, the 2004 New South Wales Legislative Council inquiry into issues relating to Redfern/Waterloo, that sought to examine proposals for the redevelopment of the Block, recommended that the New South Wales government make a substantial funding contribution that would enable the completion of the Pemulwuy Project with further contributions of funding or in-kind assistance to come from the Federal Government and the City of Sydney Council (New South Wales Parliament, 2004, p. 65).

The police are another group that exercises its power over place. There is some evidence that the police are more amenable to the aspirations of the AHC. The AHC drew up its latest plans in consultation with Sydney City Council, the metropolitan development authority and the police.

The police service has been involved with Aboriginal young men in the *Clean Slate Without Prejudice Program*, run by the Redfern local area police commander and staff at the Elouera Tony Mundine Gym, which combines boxing classes, with "a good breakfast" and participation in a numeracy and literacy and Aboriginal language program (McNab, 2015). The journalist, Heather McNab, even claims that the program is credited

Figures 7 and 8: *Tony Mundine's old gymnasium survived the bulldozers in 2011 but was finally demolished in 2019. The new gymnasium in Precinct 1, the Elouera Tony Mundine Gym, designed by Col James, is a Redfern showpiece.*

with reducing crime statistics by up to 80 per cent in the suburb.

Nevertheless, the remorseless tide of gentrification has changed the tenor of the area. Lower crime levels have also played a part. ABC journalists argue that "in recent years robbery and stealing offences in the area have been cut by up to 70 per cent" (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 3). However, some print journalists maintained the rage in their racist diatribes. Gargett (2005, p. 2) explained that "Redfern is a symbol of indigeneity and crime" and cites Priest's article in *The Australian*, where the journalist seeks to empower the local police because "the problems of drugs, alcohol, domestic violence, sexual assault and chronic medical problems continue to rise among Redfern's urban Aboriginal population and there is little hope they can be contained." (Priest, 2004, p. 3). On the other hand, another ABC journalist said that "the drugs moved elsewhere years ago. The last terraces were demolished in October, but it's taken time to shed a hard-won reputation" (Harvey, 2012). The AHC would concur. "Concerned Elders, residents and ex residents of the Block want the Housing Company and the police to show no tolerance for hard drug dealers living and operating in the Block" (New South Wales Parliament, 2004, p. 58).

Finally, "Will 'cultural ideals' be compromised to ensure economic viability?" (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 1). The more normal financial opportunities were not available for the AHC. The AHC has had to rely of private financiers because no banks would provide a loan for the project. On the other hand, some locals on the Block were wary of a sell-out to private capital, in effect mismanaging the project and forfeiting the land to developers (Trenoweth, 2014). The prospect of a $70 million complex of townhouses and apartments for students and Aboriginal people was too daunting for some.

The late Ms. Joyce Ingram, an Aboriginal Elder, the last resident to leave the old houses on the Block, and who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Aboriginal Affairs, gave her evidence to the New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, on 19 May, 2004:

> To my way of talking, the birds are whistling and the dogs are barking that they want to get rid of the Aborigines— the indigenous Aborigines—of the Block so they can put high-rise housing or whatever—apartments—for $300 and $500 a week, and they want us to get off. They don't want us here. Gradually I really think myself that they want to push the Aborigines back out of Sydney, as Dad and Dave did with his sheep and cattle (New South Wales Parliament, 2004, p. 44).

Silences around race and coloniality

There are some excellent Australian anti-racism teaching resources. *Racism No Way*, the website managed by the New South Wales Department of Education on behalf of all Australian schools, "aims to assist teachers to deliver anti-racism education within the school environment" (Australian Government, New South Wales Department of Education, 2000c), with resources that have been developed "to support the delivery of anti-racism and anti-prejudice education in the classroom and to assist students to engage positively with other peoples and cultures and to better understand Australia's cultural diversity" (Australian Government, New South Wales Department of Education, 2000d). Within the site is a link to curriculum support for the geography learning area (Australian Government, New South Wales Department of Education (2000e).

The 2017 SBS documentary, *Is Australia Racist*, (SBS staff, 2017), which used hidden cameras to capture the experience of racism through the

eyes of those suffering it, was supported by the Western Sydney University Challenging Racism Project (Western Sydney University, 2004–2024).

The innovative app, *Everyday Racism* developed by Western Sydney University in collaboration with the University of Melbourne and Deakin University, challenges players to experience a week in the life of a person from a minority group. "Through the app, participants receive a mixture of SMS and Facebook messages, tweets as well as audio and video recordings and are prompted to choose an action. This is followed by messages that challenge their assumptions and highlight the importance of speaking up against racism" (Western Sydney University, 2004–2024).

Geography teachers and teacher educators could do so much more. Unquestionably, "there are silences around race and coloniality that geographical education has reproduced" (Puttick, 2023, p. 855) but it is through geography, "perhaps more than most subjects, we 'get' how general principles (such as racialisation) are contextualised by local, contextual particularities" (Morgan & Lambert, 2023, p. 178). Likewise, it is difficult not to agree with two European teachers: "Geography teachers are the ideal leaders to challenge the reality of racism within traditional geography. The classroom is where ideas and norms can be productively challenged and disrupted" (Sinclair & de Fonesca, 2022, p. 58). There have to be many opportunities to engage students with race, racism, racialisation and anti-racism ideas in the geography classroom.

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