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Australia's nasty Utopia

By John Pilger

The author's new film, Utopia, to be released this month, visits the brutal past and little-better present of Australia's original inhabitants and their treatment at the hands of the continent's latecomers.

The corridors of the Australian parliament are so white you squint. The sound is hushed; the smell is floor polish. The wooden floors shine so virtuously they reflect the cartoon portraits of prime ministers and rows of Aboriginal paintings, suspended on white walls, their blood and tears invisible.

The parliament stands in Barton, a suburb of Canberra named after the first prime minister of Australia, Edmund Barton, who drew up the White Australia Policy in 1901. "The doctrine of the

equality of man," said Barton, "was never intended to apply" to those not British and white-skinned.

Barton's concern was the Chinese, known as the Yellow Peril; he made no mention of the oldest, most enduring human presence on earth: the first Australians. They did not exist. Their sophisticated care of a harsh land was of no interest. Their epic resistance did not happen. Of those who fought the British invaders of Australia, the Sydney Monitor, reported in 1838: "It was resolved to exterminate the whole race of blacks in that quarter." Today, the survivors are a shaming national secret.

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The town of Wilcannia, in New South Wales, is twice distinguished. It is a winner of a national Tidy Town award and its indigenous people have one of the lowest recorded life expectancies. They are usually dead by the age of 35. The Cuban government runs a literacy programme for them, as they do among the poorest of Africa. According to the Credit Suisse Global Wealth report, Australia is the richest place on earth.

Politicians in Canberra are among the wealthiest citizens. Their self-endowment is legendary. Last year, the then minister for indigenous affairs, Jenny Macklin, refurbished her office at a cost to the taxpayer of \$331,144.

Macklin recently claimed that, in government, she had made a "huge difference". This is true. During her tenure, the number of Aboriginal people living in slums increased by almost a third, and more than half the money spent on indigenous housing was pocketed by white contractors and a bureaucracy for which she was largely responsible. A typical, dilapidated house in an outback indigenous community must accommodate as many as 25 people. Families, the elderly and the disabled wait years for sanitation that works.

In 2009, Professor James Anaya, the respected UN Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people, described as racist a "state of emergency" that stripped indigenous communities of their tenuous rights and services on the pretext that pedophile gangs were present in "unthinkable" numbers - a claim dismissed as false by police and the Australian Crime Commission.

The then opposition spokesman on indigenous affairs, Tony Abbott, told Anaya to "get a life" and not "just listen to the old victim brigade". Abbott is now the prime minister of Australia.

I drove into the red heart of central Australia and asked Dr Janelle Trees about the "old victim brigade". A GP whose indigenous patients live within a few miles of \$1,000-a-night resorts serving Uluru (Ayers Rock), she said, "There is asbestos in Aboriginal homes, and when somebody gets a fibre of asbestos in their lungs and develops mesothelioma, [the government] doesn't care. When the kids have chronic infections and end up adding to these incredible statistics of indigenous people dying of renal disease, and vulnerable to world record rates of rheumatic heart disease, nothing is done.

"I ask myself: why not? Malnutrition is common. I wanted to give a patient an anti-inflammatory for an infection that would have been preventable if living conditions were better, but I couldn't treat her because she didn't have enough food to eat and couldn't ingest the tablets. I feel sometimes as if I'm dealing with similar conditions as the English working class at the beginning of the industrial revolution."

In Canberra, in ministerial offices displaying yet more first-nation art, I was told repeatedly how "proud" politicians were of what "we have done for indigenous Australians". When I asked Warren Snowdon - the minister for indigenous health in the Labor government recently replaced by Abbott's conservative coalition - why after almost a quarter of a century representing the poorest, sickest Australians, he had not come up with a solution, he said, "What a stupid question. What a puerile question."

At the end of Anzac Parade in Canberra rises the Australian National War Memorial, which historian Henry Reynolds calls "the sacred center of white nationalism". I was refused permission to film in this great public place. I had made the mistake of expressing an interest in the frontier wars in which black Australians fought the British invasion without guns but with ingenuity and courage - the epitome of the "Anzac tradition".

Yet, in a country littered with cenotaphs not one officially commemorates those who fell resisting "one of the greatest appropriations of land in world history", wrote Reynolds in his landmark book *Forgotten War*. More first Australians were killed than Native Americans on the American frontier and Maoris in New Zealand. The state of Queensland was a slaughterhouse. An entire people became prisoners of war in their own country, with settlers calling for their extinction. The cattle industry prospered using indigenous men virtually as slave labor. The mining industry today makes profits of a billion dollars a week on indigenous land.

Suppressing these truths, while venerating Australia's servile role in the colonial wars of Britain and the US, has almost cult status in Canberra today. Reynolds and the few who question it have been smeared with abuse. Australia's unique first people are its

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Intermenschen. As you enter the National War Memorial, indigenous faces are depicted as stone gargoyles alongside kangaroos, reptiles, birds and other "native wildlife".

When I began filming this secret Australia 30 years ago, a global campaign was under way to end apartheid in South Africa. Having reported from South Africa, I was struck by the similarity of white supremacy and the compliance and defensiveness of liberals. Yet no international opprobrium, no boycotts, disturbed the surface of "lucky" Australia.

Watch security guards expel Aboriginal people from shopping malls in Alice Springs; drive the short distance from the suburban barbies of Cromwell Terrace to Whitegate camp, where the tin shacks have no reliable power and water. This is apartheid, or what Reynolds calls, "the whispering in our hearts".

John Pilger's film, [Utopia](#), about Australia, is released in UK cinemas on 15 November and will be broadcast on ITV in December. It is released in Australia in January.

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Steve Rhodes · Beijing, China

Much of what is written here is true . The hidden history of dispo: But also much of their current plight is self inflicted . When housin alcohol . Children are neglected by parents sleeping off the previ It is an intractable problem , with blame enough to go around all :

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Julian Coker · Top Commenter · Perth, Western Australia

This weekend Aussies of all colors and creeds will crack a tinnie, h pool, beach, watch or play sport. A wonderful, democratic counti the top 1th.

For most Aussies, the name Jon Pilger will probably be less well kr who realise he is an embittered exPat will wonder why he likes to birth, from England. They will also wonder WHY he donates none issue that he feels so strongly about.

In the meantime Godzone (God's Own Country) will continue to p: Aboriginies, and vote for a party who's leader has spent 2weeks doing voluntary work in remote communities.

Keep producing irrelevant drivel, Jon, that only your fellow trave

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Pysword Rizvi · Immigration Racial Commission and Aliya. at C

There are thinkers that have suggested that these indigenous ra and the present human race being off the Sixth Race. It might se blaming the White Race as criminals of the New World hardly doe

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WTF?

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brenrod · Top Commenter (signed in using yahoo)

i think you are an imposter troll

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I salute Mr. John Pilger for his courage and honorable human dec does not exist.

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dxcjt (signed in using yahoo)

how did asia get a *white trojan* smack dab in its midst ?

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Steve Laudig · ★ Top Commenter · Changsha

Humans, the holocaust species, if not other humans then other s

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