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*Freedom Rider  
Australia's Racism  
by Margaret Kimberley*

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*"Come to Cronulla this weekend to take revenge. This Sunday every Aussie in the Shire get down to North Cronulla to support the Leb and wog bashing day &" – Australian [talk radio](#).*

The loss of the American colonies created many problems for the British Empire. One of the most serious was the loss of a very large prison system. From the moment they arrived in the North American mainland and the Caribbean, the British used their colonies as a means of disposing of their most problematic citizens, the very poor, and providing the new American gentry with free labor under the system of indentured servitude. The colony of Georgia was founded for the express purpose of serving as a penal colony. Of course, enslaved Africans eventually formed the bulk of America's pool of free labor, but the British had to start somewhere.

The victorious colonies presented the mother country with a challenge. What is a newly inconvenienced empire to do? Should it change its ways? Should it stop shipping petty criminals off to far away places from which they would never return? The answer was a firm and resounding "no way."

In the eyes of Britain, the solution was a simple one. Find a new place to dump the least fortunate. Just go to the other side of the world. Australia replaced America as Britain's first choice for sending the lower classes out of sight and out of mind.

Like America, Australia had a large native population. Europeans in both countries ignored that fact and claimed these lands as their own. Just as in America, a variety of means were used to segregate or kill off the Aboriginal population so that restless Europeans might have a place to call home.

## The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Australia's Racism

After establishing themselves among the black, brown and yellow peoples of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, white Australians proceeded to consider themselves good British colonials. Although they established their country as a prison and then killed off the native inhabitants, they managed to secure for themselves a reputation for being laid back and good-natured. What was less than good-natured was an official policy that restricted immigration by non-whites that was not rescinded until 1973.

This history lesson is needed in order to understand the rioting that occurred recently in Sydney, Australia. A rumor that Arabs had punched a white lifeguard in the nose sent the laid back white Aussies into a frenzy. Encouraged by hate speech on radio stations and text messaging from white supremacists, they set aside a day to act upon their outrage. A mob of 5,000 Aussie red necks went on a rampage at a beach near Sydney. They set upon anyone Middle Eastern looking and assaulted even white police officers who stood in the way of their good time.

It is interesting to note the lack of anger and indignation as America's press witnessed Australia's red necks acting like animals because of a fistfight. There was none of the condemnation that is always directed at people of color who act out. Right wing pundits reserved criticism only for Lebanese and other Middle Eastern immigrants who defended themselves against the white rioters.

Australia's nearest neighbors are New Guinea and Indonesia. White Australians really are down under, white people living in a sea of very dark people. It is little wonder that immigration by non-whites was restricted or that they recently rejected republic status in favor of remaining in the British Empire.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard placed his country among the "coalition of the willing," the nations who aided and abetted the United States in its occupation of Iraq. Bush and Howard are good buddies, and Howard has learned from Bush how to take advantage of fear itself. It takes one to know one.

In 2001 a group of Afghan immigrants sailed to Australia in hopes of securing asylum. Howard and other politicians were desperate to stop them from landing and desperate to make political hay as well. Howard claimed that refugees were throwing their children overboard in order to facilitate gaining refugee status in Australia.

The story was untrue. Howard and the other government officials who repeated the claim knew they were stating falsehoods. The revelation of government lies didn't hurt Howard at all. He and his party won reelection.

Howard loves the American way so much that he has taken to mimicking its right wing fanatics. Like Bill O'Reilly, the Prime Minister believes that Christmas is getting short shrift and has called for public displays of nativity scenes. Howard even presumed to speak for Jews and Muslims. "They respect the fact that it's a Christian day. You don't win tolerant brownie points by pretending to be something you're not." Australia's non-Christians are either with him, or they are against him.

Australia may be far away physically, but it seems to have too much in common with the United States. Both countries affirm that their forebears had a right to kill and destroy. Both countries have political leaders who accentuate the worst aspect of their nations' histories. The people produced by those histories are never as good as they claim to be.

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