

Rising Tide of Xenophobia: Australia's Shallow Multiculturalism

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Since the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., racial and violent attacks against the Muslims by the media, the elites and politicians have increased markedly and are becoming part of a daily routine. Under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard, Australia evolved from a "tolerant", forward-looking society into one of the most intolerant and conservative societies in the Western world. Today, Australia's multiculturalism is only useful as political rhetoric and an instrument of marginalisation.

In New South Wales (NSW), the most populated state in Australia, the Planning Minister of NSW, Frank Sartor told the Aboriginal Housing Company's chairman, Mick Mundine, on Koori Radio to "bring his black arse" in to talk about a dispute over the redevelopment of the Aboriginal Block in inner Sydney. Just before that, the opposition leader of NSW, Mr. John Brogden of the Liberal Party had to resign because he called his long-time rival's Malaysian-born wife "a mail-order bride". Like Mr. Sartor, Mr. Brogden is no "ordinary" Australian. He is well-educated and an influential Sydneysider. Mr. Brogden is also a close confidant of Mr. John Howard, the Prime Minister. As opposition leader Mr. Howard did not resign when he attacked Asian Australians and Asian migrants; instead he won government.

Following the Bali bombing, and out of "sadness and sorrow", the Liberal Government of John Howard saw an opportunity to instil fear in the Australian society and further inflame the situation by targeting innocent Muslims as "terrorist suspects". Without any evidence, homes of Muslim students in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth were raided by Australian Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), seizing properties and interrogating terrified Muslim families. Even before the 9/11 attacks and the Bali bombing, Australia has always been a hot bed for racism against non-Anglo-Saxon minorities. The recent attack on Black Africans and Asian Australians by an obscure academic at Macquarie University is just one case in point.

Andrew Fraser, an associate professor in the department of public law at Macquarie University alleged publicly in the Australian media that Africans and Asians are congenitally inferior in terms of their intellectual capacity and naturally prone to violence. Fraser argued it was a mistake to abolish the "White Australia policy" that allowed only whites to migrate to Australia. He said that: "[Blacks] IQ is 70 to 75 so there are differences between the cognitive ability of blacks and whites. Blacks also have significantly more testosterone floating around their system than whites" and therefore they are naturally violent.

The cold-blooded slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children, and the destruction of the Iraqi society by white men like Bush, Blair and Howard is

a fact that contradicts sharply with Fraser's fraudulent theory. "I'm dismayed that a colleague of mine could have views worthy of Joseph Goebbels, [Hitler's propagandist]", said Dr. Alex Miller of the Department of Philosophy at Macquarie University.

Fraser, who migrated to Australia from Canada, argued that Australia should withdraw from the refugee conventions to avoid becoming "a colony of the Third World". He has no scholarship or credentials in the areas of Race Relations or Biochemistry. In his e-mail to Woollahra councillor, David Shoebridge, Fraser wrote that Chinese immigration directly threatened the "social, political and economic interests of ordinary Australians and their children" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 2005). He doesn't tell Mr. Shoebridge how, and provides no evidence or documentation to support his prejudice. Perhaps Asians have an average IQ higher than white Australians? Anti-racism campaigner Mathew Henderson-Hau said Fraser was using his position at Macquarie University to promote "white supremacist" views that are relics of the past.

Fraser, who is employed by a public university, which protected his racist views until they became public, alleged that he has the right to "free speech". Are racist attacks on people of colour "free speech" or abhorrent hate crimes? If a student at Macquarie University - or any other Australian university - calls an academic a racist bigot, the student will be immediately expelled from the university. And there were many cases where students have been expelled from universities in Australia because of their objections to racist academics. It should be borne in mind that without the funds brought into Australia by Asian students, Macquarie University and the like would have to close their doors.

He was an instant celebrity in the small and tightly controlled Australian media. Without notable exception all major media outlets gave Fraser plenty of time to advocate his racist views, but denied his victims any time to challenge those views. In addition, the media have failed to investigate Fraser's ties with the neo-Nazi Patriotic Youth League in Australia, in which he was a member. Fraser said; "most ordinary people would find what I'm saying more or less self-evident". A telephone poll conducted by *A Current Affair* program after the broadcast of Fraser's views showed that 85 per cent of respondents said they support Fraser's racist views. It was the result of the Federal Government's anti-terrorism campaign which specifically targets non-white, non-Christian Australians. It should be borne in mind that the average Australian man and woman are no more racist than other people. However, most Australians are conditioned and manipulated by politicians and the media to disconnect them from political issues. The educated elites prey on the ignorance of the majority of Australian society to incite racism against Australian peoples from non-Anglo-Saxon communities.

After the 7/7 London bombing, Prime Minister John Howard, without hard evidence, deliberately accused all Muslims of terrorism. He said: "They [Muslims] must have known of the attack, it couldn't be possible". Mr. Howard is holding the whole Muslim community responsible for the (yet to be proved) actions of few individuals. "Islam is slandered, not only by extremist groups, but also by moderate parties, intellectuals and journalists", notes Professor Jocelyne Cesari, Principal Research Fellow at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at Harvard University, and coordinator of the European Commission's Network on Comparative Research on Islam and Muslims in Europe (NOCRIME).

No one from the self-appointed 'Muslim leaders' or any other Muslim Australian challenged Mr. Howard deliberate and false accusations. They simply rushed to accept guilt and provide

the Howard Government with ammunition to attack Muslim Australians. In addition, Mr. Howard is asking Muslim Australians to show loyalty and blindly follow the Anglo-Saxon culture, but what will these loyal Muslims get in return for their blind loyalty?

The fact that the only two Australians accused of terrorism are two white Anglo-Saxon Australians, David Hicks in U.S.-run Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and Jack Roche in a prison in Perth, with no connection to the Muslim community in Australia is evidence that Muslim Australians are not in the business of violence. Islam is peaceful religion, and peace is an essential precondition for 'submission' to the 'will of God', and Muslims do not need to be lectured by Mr. Howard, "a man of very dubious moral character".

The new anti-terrorism laws proposed by the Howard Government are specifically crafted to target Muslim Australians. They will turn Australia into a police state and alienate democratic rights. With immense power and indemnity, police will be able to pre-emptively detain people for up to 14 days, without charge. Even the police are acknowledging that 'the laws are discriminatory and they are the implementers of the law'. A court, "on the balance of probabilities" will be able to issue orders such as house arrest, electronic tagging and tracking, and bans on approaching certain areas or people. There was no opposition or dissent to the new laws, Australia is simply turning into an elected dictatorship. "[T]hese provisions have the potential to subvert entirely the conventional protections and established civil rights that our system of justice has put in place over the last 200 years", said Ian Harrison, President of the NSW Bar Association.

The Howard's Government "definition of terrorism is a wide and hard to apply. It is certainly possible that legitimate acts of protest or support for movements in other nations that fight against injustice or oppression will fall into the net. Whether a person is a freedom fighter or terrorist, the Australian law will apply", wrote George William, professor of law at the University of NSW. There is very little protection for fundamental human rights. Recent handling of Mr. Scott Parkin, an American peace activist arrested by ASIO and deported to the U.S. is a case in point. Simeon Beckett, president of Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, said the proposed new laws would "remove fundamental rights of Australians living in a liberal democracy". The draconian laws will not protect Australians from terrorism; instead they will curtail freedom of speech - except by the likes of Andrew Fraser -, freedom of movement - but not of the wealthy whites - and infringe on people's liberty.

Howard's complicity in the U.S. illegal war on Iraq, and in the criminal Occupation of Iraq, made Australia a target for terrorism. This case was rightly argued by the Royal Institute for International Affairs, Chatham House in relation to the London bombing. If Mr. Howard is serious about protecting Australians, he should follow Spain and withdraw Australian troops from Iraq. "The [U.S.] alliance is the last manifestation of the White Australia' mentality", said Mark Latham, former leader of the Australian Labor Party.

Making matters worse, the new anti-terrorism laws enforced a pre-existing fear in the Muslim community. Muslim Australians are terrified. They are made to feel alienated, and (as if they) do not truly belong in Australia. In an article in *The Guardian*, Richard Drayton, an expert on imperial history at Cambridge University, provides some facts about the shooting and killing of the Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes by the London Police. Mr. de Menezes was not a Muslim "terrorist", but we know that he looks like a Muslim and carry the Muslim's "signature on his body". The young Brazilian looked just like an ordinary Muslim, and therefore he was a target. With the new draconian anti-terrorism laws similar executions of innocent people could easily happen in Australia.

Here in Western Australia, the so-called “red neck” state, the new anti-terrorism laws are so draconian that police have the power to enter people’s houses (without the owner’s knowledge), search them and take whatever they deem important. With random baggage and car searches Police have the power to stop, search and question people. Again, Muslim Australians are particularly targeted. A Muslim man risks being arrested by police, fingerprinted, forced to provide DNA sample and charged without the right to a lawyer or legal advice. Without a shred of evidence, Muslim Australians have been convicted, not because they have committed crimes, but simply for the purpose of “racial profiling”. The aim is to deliberately criminalise Muslims, and in the process deny them employment, as many places of employment, such as education require a police clearance. The measures are reminiscent only to Nazi Germany’s racist laws against Jews.

Australian politicians such as Liberal MPs Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Panopoulos are now attacking Islam using Muslim women dress as the pretext to incite Australians to stand up against the Muslim hijab (headscarf) - not the Jewish kippah or the nun’s habits - in schools. The purpose of this old “colonial feminism” is not to defend Muslim women rights, but to promote racism, denying Muslim women education, and their rights to wear whatever suites them. What have these two MPs said about the abuses and torture of Iraqi women by soldiers Occupation and their leaders? Australian schools are for every Australian and families shouldn’t be dictated to by opportunistic politicians.

A study on racist attitudes conducted by the University of New South Wales in 2003 found one in eight Australians interviewed admitted they were prejudiced, particularly towards Muslim Australians. The study, conducted by a team led by geography senior lecturer Dr. Kevin Dunn, also found some Australians were living in denial of such prejudice though 80 per cent of those surveyed recognized racism was a problem. Unfortunately, the problem has been promoted since, and continues to contribute to decrease in the process of integration.

Integration is “only possible if people are allowed to live with the other”, keep their multiple identities, and be accepted as an equal member of the Australian society. Muslim Australians should have the right to live as Muslims, and criticise the Australian government policies. Like any other Australians, Muslim Australians also have the right to question the Howard Government’s war on Iraq - a Muslim nation -, and to condemn Australian Government participation in the war crimes committed against the Iraqi people.

People have the right to integrate into any new society they choose to live in; but they also have the right to stay who they are amongst their own community. A shallow multiculturalism, promoted by politicians and the media, has created ghettoised and marginalised communities “not living together but living next to each other” and against each other.

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