

Phillip Noyce's Rabbit Proof Fence: The Fate of Aboriginal Children in Australia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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During the 20th century in Australia, Indigenous people, also known as Aborigines, were strongly discriminated against by the white society. The tragic history of Aborigines started with the British colonization of Australia in the 19th century. After the enforcement of the Aboriginal Protection Act of 1869, which gave powers to the Board for the Protection of Aborigines, the Australian government started the forced removal of Aboriginal children as part of a program of assimilation which aimed at erasing native traditions, language and culture (*Museum of Australian Democracy*). Through director Phillip Noyce's *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), this essay focuses on these Aboriginal children known as the stolen generation. The film takes place in Western Australia in 1931. The story is about three "half-caste" Aboriginal girls named Molly, age 14, Gracie, age 10, and Daisy, age 8, who are removed from their families by the government, but run away from the settlement where they are thrown in and start walking back to their home of Jigalong located 300 miles away from the settlement. The first part of this essay introduces the background of this forcible removal and describes the social philosophy of eugenics, which is strongly connected to the original idea of the policy. In relation to this issue, special attention will be paid to Auber Octavius Neville, the Chief Protector of Western Australia who played a key role in this infamous program. The second part of this essay tackles some of the significant issues raised in the film, such as the violation of human rights, controlled marriage, as well as sexual and child abuse. In the end, this essay will look at the repercussion of such policies on the lives of Aborigines in present day Australia.

Part 1: Forcible Removal and Eugenics

Before starting the main discussion, the term of “half-caste” should be briefly introduced, because it is often seen as an abhorrent word. Even the *Cambridge Dictionary* defines “half-caste” as an offensive term. It states that “half-caste” is an offensive term for a person whose parents are from different races. There are a couple of reasons to explain why this can be offensive. Firstly, it is possible to say that the term “caste” plays an important role as its etymology comes from the Latin word “casto,” which means “pure” or “unmixed.” It also means lineage, race and breed in Spanish and Portuguese (*Oxford Dictionary*). According to this term, “half-caste” can define a person who does not biologically have pure blood from one origin or has a mixed background. Purity was considered extraordinarily significant in the Christian world of previous centuries. In the Bible, the words “pure” and “purity” are often repeated in relation to ethic, moral, or legal matters. Thus, purity is basically related to guiltless, blameless or innocent behavior (*BibleStudyTools*). In some ways, it might be understood that calling someone a “half-caste” is almost the same as saying that the person is corrupted or not pure, which certainly gives a negative image. However, a number of people today still use the term “half-caste”, because there is a difference in how people understand the word today and in the early 20th century when *Rabbit Proof Fence* takes place.¹ Thus, Heather Rabbatts, a woman born to a Jamaican mother and an English father, and the well-known vice-chair of the Millwall Football Club in South East London, made the following comment about the use of the term “half-caste”: “I have heard it used by white managers, although I do not think they realized that it’s racist. There’s a long way to go before football understands how to talk about race” (Kessel). Rabbatts implies that the term “half-caste” is still used casually by some people who seem unaware that it is a very offensive term, which means that educating

people about race is a pressing necessity, especially in multicultural nations such as England. It is quite important to remember that in the early 20th century in Australia, “half-caste” was used as a word to define the people who, because they are not white, are discriminated against by Western society.

The report named “Bringing Them Home” was made by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 1997. Michael Lavarch, who was the Attorney-General of Australia, greatly contributed to the publication of the report. The report is composed of a number of vital facts and data about Aboriginal children, such as issues relating to the past policies concerning the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities, and their actual testimonies. This report gives a chance to people to reconsider and better understand these people who were systematically discriminated against on account of their mixed ancestry. For example, the report shows the surprising number of Aboriginal children who were removed from their family. According to the report, between one in three and one in ten Aboriginal kids were forcibly removed from their families and communities for about 60 years between 1910 and 1970 (Sonia 4). Although the film “*Rabbit Proof Fence*” (2002) only focuses on the forcible removal that was carried out in Western Australia, other states in Australia also had a same sort of movement. Even though the main idea of the policy of forcible removal was the same, each individual state used different forms and methods in the policy. Especially the officers in New South Wales, in the Northern Territory and in Western Australia, where the film takes a place, had a strong belief in the importance of forcible removal. Therefore they insisted that the light skinned, mixed race children should be taken away from their family at a very young age and be removed to training institution such as Moore River Settlement (Sonia 7). Moreover, understanding the actual object of those policies is essentially important. Even though the methods and

forms of the removal were varied among the states, the main aim of the policy remained almost the same. They aimed at isolating and protecting the Aborigines from further violence at the hand of the white settlers until their inevitable decline was completed, because the indigenous people were simply seen as an inferior and uncivilized race (Sonia 8). As it can be seen in the film, the intensive actions that were carried out under the name of “protection” was controlled by the high profiled politicians such as the Chief Protector, the Director of Native Affairs and Protection Board of the state or territory. Moreover, their power and authority were expanded day by day (Sonia 6).

In this paragraph, the basic hidden thought in the policy and Neville’s belief are going to be analyzed. Neville’s question to the servant in the scene in which he gives a session to the servant who is going to work in a settlement is strongly emphasized in the film. He says: “Should the coloureds be encouraged to go back to the black or should they be advanced to white status and be absorbed in the white population?” The expressions that he uses here, “go back to black” and “advanced to white status,” explains the idea of Neville well, which is based on a principle of eugenics according to which the black race is inferior to the white race and should therefore die out. Neville’s thought is significantly influenced by eugenics, a science advocating the improvement of “inborn qualities of flaws” (Galton 35). Eugenics was originally advanced by Francis Galton, an English explorer and anthropologist in 19th to the 20th century. Galton developed his theory by using a score to rank variety of races and families in order to assess an individual’s intelligence (Corey 5). He concluded that people’s characteristics such as intelligence were passed on through genes (Corey 4). He also formed the original “Eugenics Education Society” in 1907 in order to promote his study. The main purpose of the member of the Eugenics society, especially those

who are high profiled, such as academics and scientists, are to maximize their influence to the government through normal pressure-group activities. Charles Davenport is one of the most significant supporters of this movement. Carey says that “He believed that marriage partners should be chosen in order to increase the possibility of having offspring with positive characteristic” (5) Furthermore, many of them believed that Eugenics is going to save the world (Searle 1). Following this movement, policy makers soon started using those data from the experience and applying the different kinds of policies. In Australia, the Commonwealth Department for the Interior, and a Select Committee Inquiry in New South Wales declared in 1937 that the aim of their future policies would be to ultimately assimilate Aborigines into white Australian society (Sharman 134). These ideas, which gave a great influence on the Neville’s thought, were not only broadly accepted in Australia, but also in many other nations, such as Germany, India, England and the United States of America during the colonization period. For instance, Cecil Jaahn Rhode, who is a politician of South Africa during the Victoria Empire’s period, is also known as a great supporter of eugenics. According to the PBS America, he strongly showed his religious and racial theory to his friends by saying that, “White has clearly come out on the top in the struggle for existence. Within the white race, English speaking men are proved themselves to be the most likely instrument of the vine plant spread justice, liberty and peace. Therefore I should develop the rest of my life to god’s purpose and help him to make the world English” (PBS America).

There is a key scene in the film that illustrates Neville’s racial theory. In that scene, Neville presents three generations of Aborigines and establishes a hierarchy among them. For instance, he defines the offspring of a full-blooded native and a white person as “half-caste”, a category in which the three main characters in the film are

sorted in. Similarly, he defines individuals who are one-quarter native and three-quarters whites as “quadroon” and those who are one-eighth Aboriginal as “octoroons” (Jona7). He uses a picture of three people from three different generations in a family, such as a half-blood grandmother a quadroon daughter and an octoroon grandson to explain how the child’s skin color will look like when a white man marries a colored person. He points out the picture of an octoroon grandson and argues that “in the third generation, no trace of native origin is apparent. The continuing infiltration of white blood finally stamps out the black color. The Aboriginal has simply been bred out.” This ethnocentric idea is also illustrated in the scene in which Neville checks the skin color of the children in front of the church. Molly asks Martha, who is also a “half-caste,” what is going on, and Martha answers that he looks for the fair one who can go and study at Sister Kates’s, which is another Aboriginal settlement, but for smarter children. Needless to say, according to Neville’s belief, “smarter” means “whiter” so that they should have a better education. In other words, Neville believes he can determine their intelligence and superiority, according to the lightness or darkness of their skin complexion. Those extreme thought was pretty common in the early 20th century. The committee report of South Australian Royal Commission on Aborigines in 1913 shows the proposed reforms of the previous policy of protection of Aborigines due to the changing situation. It says that,

it was necessary for the Government to protect the native inhabitants; but, with the gradual disappearance of the full-blood blacks, the mingling of the black and white races; and the great increase in the number of half-castes and quadroons, the problem is now one of assisting and training the native so that he may become useful member of the community, depending not upon charity but upon his own efforts. To achieve this object we believe it is necessary for more direct Government control. (191)

Part 2: Human Rights Violations towards Aborigines

Marriage control was often advocated as an efficient method to whiten the

Aborigines. As Galton, the initiator of Eugenics, puts it: “From the moment that man first began to reflect about his destiny, he must have toyed with the idea of improving the human race by arranging that the ‘best’ types should marry among themselves and produce large families” (Qtd. in Searle 3) In the film, Neville also attests: “As Chief Protector of Aborigines it is my responsibility to accept or reject those marriages”. The marriage control was mostly about making Aboriginal or “half-caste” female to get married with a non-Aboriginal men in order to let the indigenous race die out. Although there have been a large argument about the restriction in marriage and how much effect it actually has, it is clear that they played a significant role for the reduction of Aboriginal population, because an intensive decrease of Aboriginal population can be recognized after the British colonization started. For instance, though there were approximately one million Aborigines in Australia before the colonization, the population had dropped to 458,520 by June 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics). Furthermore, it is possible to say that the marriage control was already planned on the stage of the forcible removal in some states in Australia. For example, Sonia says that “In New South Wales, the majority of children removed were female. In the Northern Territories, permission was required from the Chief Protector to marry, and his control over Aboriginal females was such that they remained under his control until they died unless they married a non-Aboriginal man” (28).

The egocentric idea of whites is often emphasized in *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002). In the scene in which Neville talks about the Moore River settlement, which is an educational institution for Aboriginal children, he says: “Hundreds of half-caste children have been gathered up, and brought here to be given the benefit of everything our culture has to offer. For if we are to fit and train such children for the future, they cannot be left as they are, an in spite of himself the native must be helped” (*Rabbit*

Proof Fence). Neville's speech here is extraordinarily important as he clearly explains his own thought and strategies while showing his egocentric views. Thus, Neville claims that the forcible removal of Aboriginal children is simply for bringing them a better life. Neville also argues that white culture will bring an absolute benefit to them and that therefore forced acculturation is rarely a positive experience, especially for children who are emotionally vulnerable and defenseless. In fact, several victims of this forced removal have testified about their pain caused from the loss of identity experienced at the contact with white culture. This is because these children are raised up without learning much about their homeland, their traditions and cultures, and they have many difficulties to fit into the white society where they were forced to live in, so that they cannot belong within both the white and the Aboriginal society. In this regard, the testimony of Lorraine Mcgeesippel, who was removed from her family in 1943, and lived with a white foster family, is eloquent:

That sense of who am I, why am I darker than my adoptive family, I could not understand. I was obsessed with photographs because I didn't seem to fit into that album. Nothing about me was the same as my cousins, my aunties and uncles. And I felt ashamed because I looked different. When I did find out that I was adopted I kind of guessed when I was nine years of age. And that's when I asked my adoptive mother, hey mum what's a half-caste? Because I was called a half-caste at school at a nice year old. (Stolen Generations Testimonies)

In the film, Neville mentions that the training of domestic servants and farmers was for the children in the institution because these were despised professions that the whites did not like. The film also shows a number of "half-caste" girls who are forced to work in a textile mill as a part of their training. South Australia Royal Commission on Aborigines says that,

The boys might be taught carpentry, blacksmithing, building, plumbing, saddlery, dairying, and general farm work, and the time of girls might be occupied in sewing, dressmaking, household duties and laundry work, with a view to fitting them for outside situations. According to the means which are provided this technical training should be made compulsory on all boys and girls who have left school" (qtd.in Sharman 149).

The majority of children who reached the age of 15 or 16 were usually sent into white farms and households after finishing up those training and often treated in a lousy way by their white masters, like Marvis in the film (Jens 67). It is clear that they are intentionally trained to be an unskilled or semiskilled worker, but not to be an educated and high profiled worker due to the white intention which to keep indigenous under the white race.

In addition to such policies, the settlement itself should be focused on. The poor living standard in the educational institution for Aborigines is emphasized in the film by showing the horrible living conditions. As it can be seen in the film, the food which is served to those children is not high in quality at all. Furthermore, the place where they take a shower, which is surrounded by a thin piece of wood, looks quite filthy. Though it is not really described in the film, as more and more people were taken into the institution, the condition became worse and worse. In the end they had a serious problem of overcrowding and budget deficit. (*Sydney Morning Herald*) Sonia describes this overcrowded condition by stating that, "By the early 1930s, there were seven missions in the Northern Territory caring for about 1,100 Aborigines, with the children housed in dormitories. In Queensland, it is estimated that between 1908 and 1971, over 2,300 Aboriginal children were removed to dormitories on missions and settlements" (27).

The Moore River Native Settlement, where the main characters Molly, Daisy and Gracie are sent to, is an Aboriginal settlement that is located 135 km north of Perth (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2004). Due to those poor living conditions and lacks in basic provisions, the extreme poverty, severe hunger, malnutrition and disease were also recorded. Moreover, there are several testimonies that show evidence how lousy living conditions in the settlement were. Paul Hasluck, who has visited the Moore River

Settlement, describes:

I visited the Moore River Settlement several times. The setting was a poor one with no advantage for anyone except isolation. The facilities were limited and some of them were makeshift. The staffs were inadequate both in numbers and qualification. The inmates disliked the place. It held no promise of a future for any of them and they had little or no satisfaction in the present. It was dump. (65)

The Moore River Native Settlement was divided into two areas, namely the one called “the camp”, where was mainly composed of the families of these children, and another one called “the compound”, where the three main characters are thrown in (The Stolen Generation). The camp side is also briefly described in the film as a place, where the indigenous tracker man Moodoo and the man who seems like the one who is in charge of training the children by whipping stay. Although both of them are indigenous, they work at the Moore River for white settlers. However, it is hard to state that those men truly appreciate to work with white settlers. It is particularly clear, that the daughter of Moodoo, who is responsible for catching the children who run away from the settlement, is taken as a hostage and forced to live in the camp with other “half-caste” children. She is called “the tracker girl” and teased by others. Although the further details of Moodoo’s situation is not precisely described in the film, it can be guessed that he is asked to work as a tracker only for a certain period of time and that his daughter is forced to stay in the settlement as a hostage only while he is working, in case he disobeys the white settlers. The treatment of Aboriginal trackers in 1927, which is written by Reverend Gribble, who is the head of the Forrest River Mission, supports this idea. It says that trackers should be engaged over a term of years and trained for their own particular work and be taught not to shoot but to help in seeing justice done to their own people (qtd. in Sharman 152). According to his statement, it is clear that there was a certain amount of time which trackers need to be trained to officially become a tracker. However it seems that he is technically free to go due to an

expiration of the prohibition period, but not able to do it under the pressure of Neville.

He says to Moodoo:

Mr.Neal tells me that your prohibition period is up, and that you wish to return to the Kimberleys, is that right? Of course, your daughter is here, isn't she? There would be no question of her going. She would have to stay here and continue her training I think for the time being, it would be the best for all concerned if you were to remain here, Moodoo. I'd be prepared to consider your case in a year or so.

As it can obviously be seen in the scene, he is threatened by Neville, who uses his daughter as a hostage. This extensive use of the power can be often seen in the film.

The importance of these permissions from a protector is also strongly highlighted. In the scene in which Neville talks to his secretary, Neville is asked for his permission for several things by Aborigines, as the permission to see their children in the Moore River Native Settlement, for getting married and even for buying a pair of shoes.

Furthermore, in the same scene, a long queue of Aborigines outside the governmental office is also shown. This suggests how much settlers remained power and controlled the life of Aborigines.

The relationship between indigenous people and white settlers must also be analyzed. The film often shows Moodoo and the white tracker Jacky working on a mission together in order to catch the girls. Although they are in charge of the same mission, several differences can be found on their equipment and behaviors. First of all, the means of transportation differ even though they work together. Jacky is provided a car, but Moodoo is not. As shown in the film, Moodoo chases the girls with a horse all the time, even when it rains heavily. In addition to this, their equipment is very different. Jacky is armed with a huge gun, whereas Moodoo is equipped only with a whip. In the Reverend Gribble's suggestion, which was made by Reverend Gribble, head of the Forrest River Mission, it is said that "That trackers be not allowed to carry

firearms, but that the police protect their trackers who, after all, are merely servants of the police” (qtd. in Sharman 152). It is possible to say that it is still extensively important for whites to a precise borderline between whites and indigenous people to clearly show that whites are superior to blacks even though they work on the same task, and it is obvious that those separations can make their work less effective.

There are several scenes that describe the life in Jigalong. In the scene in which the white settler talks to Molly’s mother at the Jigalong depot, there are some items seen on the desk, such as a blanket, food and clothes. Since Molly’s mother receives some of the items and puts a signature on a paper, it is possible to say that they are distributed to Aborigines by Australian government. This also explains why all the Aborigines wear the same sort of clothes which also can show the power of Australian government controlling over Aborigines. Australian government had a decent regulation for those distributed items according to their sex and age. For example, 1937 Ration allowances on Government settlements in New South Wales says that,

for the supply for clothing, the following clothing will be supplied annually to Aborigines throughout the States, in such cases as may be considered necessary, viz.: Men and Youths- one coat, two pairs trousers, two Harvard and two Boys- Two knicker suits, two Harvard, and one flannel shirt. Women and Girls.- One winsey and two print dresses, one winsey and Infant (boys to three and girls to four years).-Two diagonal tweed frocks, five petticoats with bodices, and two Harvard shirts. (qtd in Sharman 176)

Although, the Australian government significantly controlled over the life of Aborigines, it may be argued that the relation between the white settlers at a local station and Aborigines in a camp was not extremely severe even under the occupation. In the scene in which Molly’s mother is told by the white settler at the Jigalong depot that Neville is willing to catch Molly, she makes a joke on Neville “Tell him Mr. Devil, he wanna half caste? He make his own.” That shows how casual relationship they have as she can make a laugh on Neville who is the boss of the white settler. In addition to

this, the three girls talk to the white man who works on a fence in a very friendly way. He answers to their question kindly as well, suggesting that the white settlers in local stations are not the one should be afraid of, at least in Jigalong. They are somehow compelled to live under the control of white settlers in exchange living goods.

The given education in the settlement could be thought of as a violation of human right because the white settlers denied almost all of the native Aborigines cultures, such as a language and beliefs. Especially, as it could be seen in the film, using their native language was strictly prohibited. When Daisy speaks the native language, the white servant comes up to her, and says, “We don’t use the jabber here. You speak in English.” The similar experience was also reported by the Aboriginal women taken from her parents with her sisters. She says: “I can remember we used to just talk lingo. They used to tell us not to talk that language, that it’s devil’s language. And they’d wash our mouth with soap. We sort of had to sit down with Bible language all the time. So it sort of wiped out all our language that we knew” (*Bringing Them Home*).

Due to this, it is possible to say that their native language is regarded as an inferior communication tool and was not respected at all in the settlement. In addition to this, it also can be understood that taking their native language away is one of the most effective ways to control their vulnerable minds, and let them lose their original identity, which was constructed in the indigenous community. The prohibition of their native language was carried out not only in Moore River, but also in many other places, and often caused an identity problem (*The History of the Stolen Generation*). One of the testimonies from the woman who was removed from her family in the 1940s says that:

My mother and brother could speak our language and my father could speak his. I can't speak my language. Aboriginal people weren't allowed to speak their language while white people were around. They had to go out into the bush or talk their lingo on their own. Aboriginal customs like initiation were not allowed. We could not leave Cherbourg to go to Aboriginal traditional festivals. We could have a corroboree if the Protector issued a permit. It was completely up for him. I never had a chance to learn about my traditional and customary way of life when I was on the reserves (The History of the Stolen Generation).

In the scene in which Molly asks Martha where the mothers of those removed babies in the settlement, she says "they got no mother, nobody here got any mother with a sorrowful face. Then Molly says, "I have got a mother." It is clear that although for Molly, Daisy and Gracie, the memories of their mothers are still clear and strong, since they are removed at the age when their identity were almost constructed, it is extensively difficult for those who are removed at their very young age to remember their biological mothers, home, cultures and families. There are several testimonies that say that the removed children were often told by the white settlers that they had been abandoned by their biological families or their mother was already dead (Sonia 26). Therefore, for those who were removed from their family at a very young age, Maltha's argument that "Nobody here got any mother" makes a lot of sense.

Furthermore, a large number of child abuses at these institutions have been reported. Sonia says that, "Bringing Them Home Inquiry reported having been subjected to physical abuse. In a survey conducted by the Western Australia Aboriginal Legal Service that number was much higher, with 62.1 per cent of Aboriginal people forcibly removed as children stating that they had been physically abused" (33) As it can be seen in the film, the violence against children as a form of punishment was carried out on a daily basis. There are a couple of scenes of violent punishments shown in the film. For instance, the Aboriginal girl called Olivia, who was taken away from her family, tries to run away from the settlement to see her boyfriend. She is caught and

thrown in a small shack called the “boob” by the children, she is then whipped, and her hair is shaved off. Such retribution consisting in whipping and shaving the hair of children is exaggerated term of punishment for small girls of about 12 to 15 years old, and enough to be called child abuse. In the settlement, whipping was often given to Aboriginal children to make them scared. In the scene in which Molly reluctantly comes up to Neville when he calls her name, Maltha warns her by telling “Go, get up. Hurry up, they will whip you.” It is clear that even from the small mistake, or a bit of resistance, children could be easily whipped without being given any opportunity to make an excuse. Moreover, there are many testimonies of whipping, too. For example, Ruth Hegarty, an author who was brought up in the Cherbourg Aboriginal Mission till the age of 14 states:

We got whipped from babyhood- there was no age, you just got it. And this is what we got whipped with a cat tail which was used in the prison at the time, and they were using it on us as children. It isn't any different from a prison- it is exactly like it, except that we weren't inmates; we were children, and we'd done nothing wrong, absolutely nothing wrong at all. (Stolen Generations Testimonies)

Furthermore, in the case of Olivia, the action of shaving hair can be a form of mental abuse, and was strongly related to the reason why she left the institution. Before she gets her hair shaven, a white man says to her: “We’ll see if those boys find you so attractive now.” There is no doubt by showing her hair he tries to humiliate her as a woman hence hair is considered as one of the most important parts of body for women to make them attractive. Olivia’s case, escaping from the institution to see her boyfriend knowing the consequences, she needs to take significant risks for it. Therefore, the psychological wound that gives from the shaving her hair much more traumatizing than any physical pain undergone through whipping. In addition to this, based on Christianity, women who have shaved their hair are thought of a symbol of shame as there are many verses in the bible that talk about women who have shave

their hair. For instance, the Common English Bible says: “If a woman doesn’t cover her hair, then she should have her hair cut off. If it is disgraceful for a woman to have short hair or to be shaved, then she should keep her head covered” (1 Corinthians 11:6)

According to the verses, it is clear that a woman who has shaved hair is considered as a disgraceful person. Therefore, the shaving of the hair of the young girl is quite brutal and immoral from a Christian perspective, even in the case of punishment.

In addition to the child abuse, sexual assault was also one of the most vital issues to Aboriginal people. Sonia says that, “Sexual abuse was also disturbingly common. Although not specifically asked about sexual abuse, one in 10 boys and just over one in 10 girls alleged that they were sexually abused whilst in a children’s institution” (33). It is also described in the film in the scene of Mavis who is “half-caste” woman works for white family as a servant. The scene is that Mavis helps Molly, Daisy and Gracie who run away from the Moore River, and lets them sleep in her room. However, her white boss comes into her room when Mavis is out, the three girls hide under a blanket, but he quickly finds them out. Mavis comes back when he left and tells the three girls “Don’t go Molly. Please don’t go. If you go, he will come. He won’t say anything.” Then they decide to stay and sleep over at her place. Although the scene does not clearly show sexual abuse towards Mavis, it has several significant elements that make audience understand that the scene is actually related to sexual abuse. Firstly, in the scene the camera angle strongly emphasizes the moment when he takes his trousers off. Moreover, from Mavis’s words and mien, many can expect what is going to happen if they go. These elements work effectively to suggest sexual towards Aboriginal women without describing it in a direct way, and how usual sexual assault towards Aboriginal women was happening. Mavis expects the sexual abuse if the children leaves and asks them to stay, and send a message that she gets sexually abused

by him on a frequent basis in the daily life without literally saying it. Furthermore without being told anything exactly, Molly could understand what it meant even though she was just a 14-year old girl. According to these materials, it is possible to say that sexual abuse of Aboriginal women was understood as a usual incident that can happen anywhere in Australia in the era. Furthermore, Mavis mentions that she has also been in Moore River, and seen many people who tried to run away. By depicting the life of the specific Aboriginal women who has been in the aboriginal settlement where the three girls run away from, they try to show the difficulty for Aborigines to get a better life even if they could get out of the settlement. To evident this, there are also a number of Aboriginal women who reported a sexual assault by their white foster family (Creative Spirit). Marie Louise Melito Russel who was removed to a Scottish Irish foster family in 1935 states:

I was adopted o a Scottish Irish parentage. They had fostered another girl ten years before me. My parents were really dysfunctional. You couldn't, you couldn't ask for anything. You couldn't talk to them about anything. We were always told that children should be seen and not heard. They did love each other, they desperately loved each other, you could see that, they lived for one another. And but I think my father thought that we were an intrusion. That we were taking too much of my Mum's time, and he paid oy on us for that. He sexually abused us when we were little. He was away during the war, he was in the Navy. So for the time that he was away I had good memories with my mum" (Stolen Generation Testimonies).

As a result of frequent sexual assault, serious sexual diseases spread rapidly among these Aboriginal children, and even today, some of them still suffer from them (The Stolen Generation).

It is also clear that there is a violation of belief can be seen in the film as well. The film strongly emphasizes the religion in both white and Aboriginal. As it could be seen in the film, the removed Aboriginal children were forced to receive a while education with Christianity. For instance, there is a scene in which Aboriginal children

are compelled to stay grace and sing a Christian song before they start eating. The song says:

Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the birds that sing.
Thank you God for everything. Amen,

This song is a thanksgiving song, and it expresses gratitude for the food that they are about to eat, or after a meal on a daily basis (Prayer and Prayers). In addition to this there is also a Christian church in the middle of the institution, which implies that those children were trained to assimilate into the Christian society by being forced to pray god and sing a Christian song on a daily basis.

Part 3: The Shown Contrast between Aborigines and Whites in the Film

The native Aboriginal religion is quite different from any other religion. Some even argue that they do not have an actual religion in their culture. In Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime, Colin Dear writes: “What the Aborigines have an ancestral spirits; spirits which are either human, flora or hybrids of in form; and which do not have personal relationship with the Aborigines, with the exception of “clever men” (2). They do not believe in god but strongly believe in their ancestor’s spirits and nature. For Aborigines, the world is not something that was created by anyone. They consider the world as something that pre-existed, and transformed a pre-existing world of thing and conditions into today’s structures (Dean 2) This belief is also shown in the beginning of the film when Molly’s mother tell the story to Molly in their native language, which says that the eagle in the sky is always watching and protecting them. , Eagle can be understood as a metaphor of their native ancestors here. The eagle also come up on one of the most significant scene in the film when Molly and Daisy get extremely tired from their long walk and fall down on the ground. Then the scene

changes, and shows Molly's mother and grandmother having their mysterious native ritual, and praying for their safety. After that, the scene turns back again to Molly and Gracie being unconscious in a desert. Then the cry of the eagle wakes them up. Molly looks up the sky and stares at the eagle. When she throws a glance at the endless horizon, she finally found her way home. In this scene, the eagle plays a quite important role, because there are some connections can be found between girls and their ancestors as if the eagles answers their prayers and brought them home. This emphasizes the strong relationship between nature and Aborigines as well. In that scene, Molly's mother faces Jacky who comes to their camp to catch the girls. She walks towards him with her wooden spear to chase him away. The unearthly atmosphere that is created by nature is strongly stressed here. The cry of the animals and the darkness of the busy are used as the elements that create an ominous atmosphere.

The title of the film *Rabbit Proof Fence* contains several significant meanings. Especially, the word "fence" which is supposed to keep rabbit away from the land to protect their crops can symbolize the "racial barrier" between humans. Moreover, the role of fence differs according to the scenes. The fence appears just of the beginning of the film. That even seems to divide into the two worlds, such as the civilized and the uncivilized, cultivated and the uncultivated, order and chaos, also good and bad(Study Guide for the Film *Rabbit Proof Fence*). In the scene in which Molly asks white settler how far the rabbit proof fence goes to, he says that, "it goes all the way to the sea down that way right to the top of Australia. The longest fence in the world." In other words, rabbit proof fence, which symbolizes the "radical barrier" between Aborigines and whites, is extremely long and hard to cross. Moreover, some might find this title

sarcastic or ironic, because the fence that is built by whites actually helps the three girls find their way home in the end.

Following this, there are also some differences between the languages used by each character. As clearly shown in the film, all the characters have different accents due to their race and social classes. For instance, it can be said that Neville, the chief protector of Aborigines, speaks English with a very formal British accent. That can give people an impression that he might be from the upper classes in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the English spoken by Aboriginal children is characterized by an Aboriginal accent. Moreover, they make a lot of grammar mistakes when they speak English. As evidence, one of the Aboriginal girls at the settlement says, “caught” instead of “caught.” This might show the lack of the education of Aboriginal children.

Furthermore, the film often makes a contrast and clearly shows the differences between Aborigines and white people by using a variety of effects. For instance, in the very beginning of the film shows the typical Aboriginal life, such as hunting animals and running around with naked feet. Then all the sudden the scene turns to Neville’s office in the city of Perth. The people in the city dress up in a more formal way, and cars run all around the city.

In addition to this, camera works play an important role in the film. Although in most of scenes, an objective camera is used, there are some scenes shot by a subjective camera, especially through the eyes of angle, whenever the girls see the white people, those scenes are more likely described from their subjective part of view. For instance, in the scene in which they see a servant woman at Moore River for the first time, the way she is described may give a sort of the unearthly impression to the audience which is created by an inanimate music and the darkness. Also in the scene in

which Molly sees Olivia crying in the boob, the subjective camera work presents their actual emotions quite well. The subject camera in that scene can give a feeling to audience that they are looking at something that they are not supposed to see through Molly's eyes, and may make them scared. Furthermore, two of the most impressive scenes in the film are also shot by using a subjective camera angle. One is the scene that the three girls are forcibly thrown into the car by Jacky, the other is the scene in which Molly sees Neville for the first time. In the former scene in which their mothers chase the car that the girls are thrown in, and insanelly hit on the window to get them out. By describing the scene through the eyes of girl, this nerve-wracking situation is being shown more effectively, with more intensity. In the latter scene, Neville is captured through Molly's eyes. Specially, when he puts his hands on her shoulder, he is captured from below which somehow gives a scary impression to the audience, because it makes him look a huger man with an eerie atmosphere. Moreover, the music and the sounds of her breath that may give audience a dismal impression are also used in the scene. Those effects greatly work in presenting Molly's feeling when she sees him, such as scariness and eeriness.

Ultimately, although the film *Rabbit Proof Fence* ends with Molly and Daisy's return home, the real story still goes on. The book *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, which was written by Molly's daughter Doris Pilkington Garimara, tells their story after their return to Jigalong. According to the book, Gracie was caught at Wiluna and sent back to Moore River. After she finished school there, she worked as a domestic servant for a while and got married to a white station worker. She had six children, but never returned to Jigalong. Daisy worked as a domestic servant, and got married to a station worker after her return to Jigalong. She had 4 children and lived in Jigalong until she

died. Molly had the most insane life of the three girls. She worked as a domestic servant, married to a white man Toby Kelly, and had two daughters, Doris and Annabelle in Jigalong. Nevertheless, she was caught and sent back to Moore River Settlement again with her two daughters in 1940, but run away from the settlement with Annabelle in January 1941. She followed the same route that she took for the first escape, and arrived in Jigalong safely with her daughter a month later. However, three years later, her daughter Annabelle was taken away again. Molly would never see her again. These stories show the impact the forcible removal had on Aboriginal people, and how little choice they had in their lives. It clearly shows that they were compelled to live a harder life because of the forcible removal. Furthermore, there are several negative consequences brought about by the forcible removal, and these consequences still affect Aboriginal people today. For instance, there are a number of Aborigines who have problems with their social skills. Sonia says that,

Psychological and emotional damage renders many people less able to learn social skills and survival skills. Their ability to operate successfully in the world is impaired causing low educational achievement, unemployment and consequent poverty. There in turn cause their own emotional distress, leading some to perpetrate violence, self-harm, substance abuse or anti-social behaviors. (37) The Sydney Aboriginal Mental Unit also says that Aborigines tend to have an issue with use of alcohol and drug to ease a breakdown in relationship, domestic violence and abuse (37). There is no doubt that the forcible removal of Aboriginals gave a significant negative influence to the indigenous people in the 20th century, and still effecting on their offspring even today. Aborigines in the early 20th century were forced to abandon their native cultures and families and assimilate to the white society. However, many of them felt that they did not belong anywhere since they are neither Aborigines nor whites and as a result, they often got psychological problems.

Notes

1. As one of the major reasons why “half-caste” is still used by many people today, their ignorance and unawareness of a racial problem can be suggested. For instance, in Japan, when people describe a person who has a mixed background, they call them “ha-hu” which comes from the English word “half”. However, it is hardly recognized by people in Japan that “half” actually contains an offensive term. Those kinds of people’s ignorance to a racial problem can be seen not only in Asia but also Western world as well today.

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Summary

20世紀前半オーストラリア、原住民のアボリジニーの人々はイギリスからの白人植民者によって激しく差別され、様々な面で生活の自由を大きく奪われていた。白人植民者は、原住民を野蛮で教養がない劣等種族だとみなし、彼ら自身のためにも完全に絶滅し、オーストラリアという土地を白人文化で洗浄し、文明化するべきだと考えていた。その流れの中で、アボリジニーと白人の混血の子供は真っ先に彼らの作戦の道具として利用されることになった。政府は彼らの多くを無理やり家族のもとから引きはなし、白人の文化、教育を受けさせるための施設を作り、そこに彼らを閉じ込めた。原住民の文化、言葉、血までも奪い、西洋の文化、習慣、宗教、言葉を強要し、完全に彼らを白人化させようとした。施設の中では、性的暴行や児童虐待など様々な方法を介して彼らの人権は侵害された。施設を去ったあとも、彼らの多くは白人の家族に使用人として雇われたり、白人男性との結婚を強要されるなど、苦しい生活を強いられることとなった。彼らの多くは自分たちのアイデンティティを失い、長い間“盗まれた世代”として苦しみ続けることになる。この論文では、フィリップ・ノイス監督の『裸足の1500マイル』という、施設から抜け出し、家族のもとに2400キロの道のりを歩いて帰ろうとした三人のアボリジニーの少女たちの実話をもとにした“盗まれた世代”に焦点を当てた映画を分析しながら、白人植民地者によって侵害されたアボリジニーの人々の人権や、それによって生じた様々な問題を分析する。また、この白人植民者のラディカルな思想の根本を、フランシス・ゴルトンによって展開された概念、“優生学”を分析するとともにより深く探っていく。また映画の中で対照的に描かれている原住民の文化と西洋文化の二つを比べながら、それぞれの違いと特徴を分析する。さらに実際の“盗まれた世代”の人々の証言や、実在した三人の映画の主人公、モリー、デイジー、グレイシーのその後のストーリーにも焦点を当て、この政策を実際、人々はどのように受け取り、今日の社会にどのように影響を与えているのか紐解いていく。