

He hoped to find good, fertile land and become very wealthy. His wife tightened her grip on his arm and stifled tearfully. Carberry patted her hand gently and tried to comfort her, "Captain Stirling made a simple miscalculation, that's all. It couldn't be helped."

A simple miscalculation indeed! What really happened, according to historian Robert Hughes in his book *The Fatal Shore*, was that Captain James Stirling sailing on the *Parmelia*, had been leading a voyage that took over eight months. He was anxious to take possession of a land grant of half a million acres of Nyungar land, which the Colonial Office neither bought nor owned but merely claimed for Britain and the Commonwealth, and a bonus of almost a quarter of a million acres of his own choice on arrival. Once he had settled and established a new colony, he would become its first Lieutenant Governor.

Their sea voyage was almost over. He never anticipated that others might find this location just as appealing as he did, so he was totally unprepared for the sight that greeted him as he approached the mouth of the river. There, anchored in the estuary, was the *Challenger*. The sight of the gunboat under its master, Captain Charles Fremantle, caused him to panic. He was so anxious to make port that he tried to take a short cut and ran his ship, with its cargo and passenger — the first English settlers to this part of the country — off to the rocks. Fortunately, no one was drowned.

Captain Stirling also discovered that his rival, Captain Fremantle, had gone ashore, claimed and took formal possession of not just one hundred thousand acres, but of one million square miles of territorial land, naming it Swan River Colony.

For the European settlers on the beach at what is known today as Cottesloe, the worse was yet to come. The terrain appeared unproductive — thick, tangled creepers grew under foot and when the weather fined up, they were plagued by swarms of mosquitoes and other pests.

## *The Decline of Aboriginal Society*

**A**LL THOSE WHO arrived with Captain Stirling, and others who settled before 1830, had the right to choose an area of land wherever they fancied. The best land was taken up by the more wealthy, influential people who had the responsibility of maintaining their customs. They were advised to "keep up their Englishness" at all costs. This meant having picnics, fox hunts and balls. These activities were welcomed by the new landed gentry, who came from working class backgrounds. They delighted in dressing up for these occasions and being regarded as members of a social group which previously they had only observed and perhaps envied from afar.

The more adventurous settlers discovered that further up and beyond the Swan River colony there was an abundance of fertile land in which they could grow anything.

The Nyungar people, and indeed the entire Aboriginal population, grew to realise what the arrival of the European settlers meant for them: it was the destruction of their traditional society and the dispossession of their lands. Bidjup and Meedo complained to Yellagonga after several attempts at unsuccessful hunting trips.

"We can't go down along our hunting trails," Bidgup told him. "They are blocked by fences."

"And when we climbed over the fence, one of those men pointed one of those things — guns — at us and threatened to shoot us if we went in there again," said an irritated Meedo.

"There are huts and farms all over the place. Soon they will drive us all from our lands."

Yellagonga had no answer or words of encouragement for his cousins. He wasn't certain about anything anymore. Where there was once bush, there were now tents, huts or houses. Soon the white people would take his land from him and there would be no recourse for any injustices committed against his people.

Cut off from their natural food source, the Nyungar people expected these white settlers to share some of their food with them.

"We will take a sheep, they have plenty, they won't miss one," said Bidgup. His young brother Meedo agreed.

"If there isn't going to be any sharing of food, we'll help ourselves."

When the brothers were caught spearing a sheep they were the first of many Nyungar men to be bought in to be sentenced under the English law. They received several years imprisonment and were transported to Rottnest Island Penal Colony. Their people stood on the banks of the muddy river as they sailed away to their prison. Their elderly parents and wives and children wept and wailed, while others watched silently as they were shoved roughly, their legs in irons, into a boat and sailed down the river, out to the open sea. They were never seen again. Hundreds of others followed them, bound in chains, across the waters into the unknown. A few escaped, others served their sentences and were returned to their homelands, while others were dropped off in strange towns along the coast. Some

men remained incarcerated on the island for the rest of their lives.

The white settlers were a protected species; they were safe with their own laws and had police and soldiers to enforce these rules.

One evening, Moody, Yellagonga's uncle, brought back some distressing news from the people at the Lake Monger and the Nyungar people knew their lives were in serious danger. "A big meeting was held there last week and one man was punished for breaking the white men's law and the troopers came down and took several men away."

It became apparent then, that the Aboriginal social structure was not only crumbling, but it was being totally destroyed.

"It seems," added Moody, "that our laws are not being recognised by these strangers." The Nyungar people were hurt and confused when they were punished for carrying out their own traditional laws, handed down to them by the Dreamtime spirit beings.

"Yet when old man Udja complained to the magistrate that a white man stole his wife, Nella, he was given a bag of flour and told to go home," Moody reminded them. "That old man expected the same form of justice under the white man's law. He never got it."

How many more were pacified with gifts of food? The whites had created two sets of laws; this was very confusing for the Nyungar people to understand and accept. There were unending conflicts between the traditional owners and the white invaders, with reports of merciless killings on both sides. The white settlers used muskets, swords and guns against the Nyungar people, who retaliated with spears. Soon, Aboriginal people all over the state learned to acknowledge the white man's brutal strength and their cruel use of superior weapons and were forced to accept the white system of justice and punishment.

The Europeans ventured further inland and like bush-

fires out of control, they could not be stopped. Confrontations between Nyungar and the invaders became more frequent and the practice of "might is right" prevailed throughout the colony. Driven off their traditional lands, the Aboriginal people of all areas (except the Central and Western Desert regions) became a dispossessed and devastated race. The people discovered, too late, that the white invaders were human beings and not spirits.

The colonists took advantage of the Aboriginal cultural beliefs to further their own gains. The Nyungar people who once walked tall and proud, now hung their head in sorrow. They had become dispossessed; these teachers and keepers of the traditional Law were prevented from practising it. They had to fight to find ways to return to their secret and sacred sites to perform their dances and other ceremonies that were crucial to their culture and whole way of life.

Their pain and suffering remained hidden and repressed, silent and deep. They remembered the corroborees and songs that they were forbidden to dance and sing, unless commanded by government officials. No longer would the corroborees be shared and danced by scores of feet, kicking up the dust in the moonlight around the glowing fires. Warriors with painted bodies and plumes of feathers on their ochre-covered heads would become faded images, buried in the past. The important dates on their seasonal calendars would be forgotten.

The British Colony was said to be an excellent settlement for hiring labourers and most colonists preferred Aboriginal workers to others. "Black servants, I find," wrote George Fletcher Moore in his *Diary of Ten Years*, "are very serviceable in this colony; on them we eventually depend for labour, as we can never afford to pay English servants the high wages they expect, besides feeding them so well. The black fellows receive little more than rice — their simple diet."

As a further insult by the white invaders, an act of goodwill in the form of an annual distribution of blankets to the Aboriginal people was established. This generally occurred on Queen Victoria's birthday. The *Illustrated Melbourne Post* of 20 August 1861, page 9, described this event as, "a sorry return for millions of acres of fertile land of which we have deprived them. But they are grateful for small things and the scanty supply of food and raiment doled out to this miserable remnant of a once numerous people, is received by them with the most lively gratitude."

were planning the destinies of children like Molly, Gracie and Daisy.

Official concern shifted from the decreasing numbers of traditional or full-blood Aborigines to the half-castes and part-Aboriginal children who were being born all over the country. The common belief at the time was that part-Aboriginal children were more intelligent than their darker relations and should be isolated and trained to be domestic servants and labourers. Policies were introduced by the government in an effort to improve the welfare and educational needs of these children. Molly, Gracie and Daisy were completely unaware that they were to be included in the schemes designed for children who were fathered by white men. Their mothers were accused of being promiscuous. A few critics were honest, however, when they said many white men satisfied their lustful desires with the native women until they were able to return to white society.

Eventually the Western Australian government decided to establish two institutions for Aboriginal children with white fathers: one at Carralup Settlement near Katanning in the south-west, and the Moore River Native Settlement, north of Perth and 13 kilometres west of Mogumber. Although the births of these children were not registered they were still noted by station owners in their journals so it was easy for the authorities to locate them. Also, movement between stations throughout the Pilbara was not quite as frequent then as it is today because the travel was mostly by foot. This helped the government officials to track down a family group.

Patrol officers travelled far and wide removing part-Aboriginal children from their families and transported them hundreds of kilometres down south. Every mother of a part-Aboriginal child was aware that their offspring could be taken away from them at any time and they were powerless to stop the abductors. That is why many women pre-

ferred to give birth in the bush rather than in a hospital where they believed their babies would be taken from them soon after birth.

The years passed by and the seasons came and went. Except for a couple of years of severe drought when no rain was recorded in the district, nothing extraordinary happened — life and the cycle of nature proceeded. Molly, Gracie and Daisy had outgrown the insults and the teasings. Once the other children accepted their differences, their lives became quite normal. Nevertheless, the trio stood out from the main community at the depot.

No matter where the three girls went, there was always someone watching them very closely and recording their behaviour just as Mrs Chellow from Murra Munda Station did on 9 December 1930 when she wrote to the Commissioner of Native Affairs.

Murra Munda  
9th December 1930

Mr Neville  
Chief Protector of Aborigines,  
PERTH

... There are two half-caste girls at Jigalong — Molly 15 years, Crissy [also called Gracie] 11 years; in my opinion I think you should see about them as they are running wild with the whites.

(Sgd) Mrs Chellow.  
(Department of Native Affairs File No. 175/30)

The girls were very fortunate to be part of a loving, caring family who tried to compensate for all the nasty insults and abuse by spoiling and indulging them at home. Their

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grandfather even went as far as to take them on walkabouts in the bush where he ground black charcoal into fine powder and rubbed it into their bodies, covering them from their faces right down to their toes. This powder, he promised, would solve all their problems. It would darken their light skins and end all the teasings and tauntings, but most importantly, it would protect them and prevent them from being taken away from their families. The trio was joined by ever-increasing numbers of half-caste or part-Aboriginal children in the East Pilbara region. However, the birth rate there was insignificant compared to the rate in the south-west of the state.

In July 1930, the rainy season was exceptionally good. For the Mardu people throughout the Western Desert this was the season for taking long walks in the bush, foraging for bush tucker and feasting on the day's catch. Every Mardu welcomes the glorious warm weather, when the azure skies are even bluer against the grey-green mulga trees and the red dusty earth; grass grows under the small shrubs and between the sandy patches around the rocky ledges and even the spinifex is fresh and green. Alas, like everything that is revived and resurrected by the winter rains their beauty and brilliance is shortlived. They seem to fade and die so quickly.

Molly and Gracie spent a lovely weekend with their families digging for kulgu yams and collecting bunches of yellow flowers from the desert oaks, which they brought home to share with those who stayed behind to take care of the old people and the dogs. They soaked bunches of flowers in a bucket of water to make a sweet, refreshing drink. The other bush foods, such as the girdi girdi, murrandus and bush turkeys, were shared amongst the community. After supper the weary girls curled up in their swags and in no time at all, they were fast asleep.

Early next morning, Molly's step-father Galli rose at dawn and lit the fire. He made a billy of tea and sat under the shade of a large river gum, drinking a mug of warm tea. He glanced over to the sleeping forms of his two wives, and called out, "Come on, get up." The women began to stir. Galli then cut a piece of plug tobacco and crushed it in his hand, mixed the pure white ashes of the leaves of the mulga tree into it then put it into his mouth and began to chew the gulja, spitting the juice occasionally. In the old days, the people would collect and chew the leaves of wild or bush tobacco that grew on the cliffs or on rock ledges.

The Mardus preferred the white man's tobacco, plug tobacco, because it was easily available and also it was stronger and lasted longer. They chewed it and spat out the juice, the same way that other races chewed betel leaves.

Maude was Galli's second wife. She and his other wife both belonged to the same group under the kinship system. Both were Carimaras, the spouse category for Galli. Between them they prepared breakfast for the whole family, which included three big dampers cooked in the hot ashes of the fire and the girdi girdi leftover from the hunting trip in the bush. They all agreed that it had been a successful and enjoyable day.

Molly and Daisy finished their breakfast and decided to take all their dirty clothes and wash them in the soak further down the river. They returned to the camp looking clean and refreshed and joined the rest of the family in the shade for lunch of tinned corned beef, damper and tea. The family had just finished eating when all the camp dogs began barking, making a terrible din.

"Shut up," yelled their owners, throwing stones at them. The dogs whinged and skulked away.

Then all eyes turned to the cause of the commotion. A tall, rugged white man stood on the bank above them. He could easily have been mistaken for a pastoralist or a grazier with his tanned complexion except that he was wearing



khaki clothing. Fear and anxiety swept over them when they realised that the fateful day they had been dreading had come at last. They always knew that it would only be a matter of time before the government would track them down. When Constable Riggs, Protector of Aborigines, finally spoke his voice was full of authority and purpose. They knew without a doubt that he was the one who took their children in broad daylight — not like the evil spirits who came into their camps in the night.

"I've come to take Molly, Gracie and Daisy, the three half-caste girls, with me to go to school at the Moore River Native Settlement," he informed the family.

The old man nodded to show that he understood what Riggs was saying. The rest of the family just hung their heads refusing to face the man who was taking their daughters away from them. Silent tears welled in their eyes and trickled down their cheeks.

"Come on, you girls," he ordered. "Don't worry about taking anything. We'll pick up what you need later."

When the two girls stood up, he noticed that the third girl was missing. "Where's the other one, Daisy?" he asked anxiously.

"She's with her mummy and daddy at Murra Munda Station," the old man informed him.

"She's not at Murra Munda or at Jimbalbar goldfields. I called into those places before I came here," said the Constable. "Hurry up then, I want to get started. We've got a long way to go yet. You girls can ride this horse back to the depot," he said, handing the reins over to Molly. Riggs was annoyed that he had to go miles out of his way to find these girls.

Molly and Gracie sat silently on the horse, tears streaming down their cheeks as Constable Riggs turned the big bay stallion and led the way back to the depot. A high pitched wail broke out. The cries of agonised mothers and the women, and the deep sobs of grandfathers, uncles and

cousins filled the air. Molly and Gracie looked back just once before they disappeared through the river gums. Behind them, those remaining in the camp found strong sharp objects and gashed themselves and inflicted wounds to their heads and bodies as an expression of their sorrow.

The two frightened and miserable girls began to cry, silently at first, then uncontrollably; their grief made worse by the lamentations of their loved ones and the visions of them sitting on the ground in their camp letting their tears mix with the red blood that flowed from the cuts on their heads. This reaction to their children's abduction showed that the family were now in mourning. They were grieving for their abducted children and their relief would come only when the tears ceased to fall, and that will be a long time yet.

At the depot, Molly and Gracie slid down from the horse and followed Constable Riggs to the car.

Mr Hungerford, the Superintendent, stopped them and spoke to Riggs.

"While you are here, there's a native woman with a fractured thigh, in the other natives' camp, the one on the banks of the river. Can you take a look at her, Constable?"

"Yes, I'll examine her," replied the Constable.

"I'll come with you," said Hungerford. "We'll borrow that native boy Tommy's horse and sulky," he added. "I'll fix him up with some rations later as payment."

After Riggs had splinted the woman's leg, he told Hungerford that he would have to take her back with him to the Marble Bar Hospital. "Lift her gently onto the sulky," he asked her two brothers who were standing watch nearby.

As Hungerford seated himself beside Constable Riggs he said, "And by the way, the other woman, Nellie arrived from Watchtower Station while you were collecting Molly and Gracie. You know the one suffering from VD. She needs to go to the hospital too."

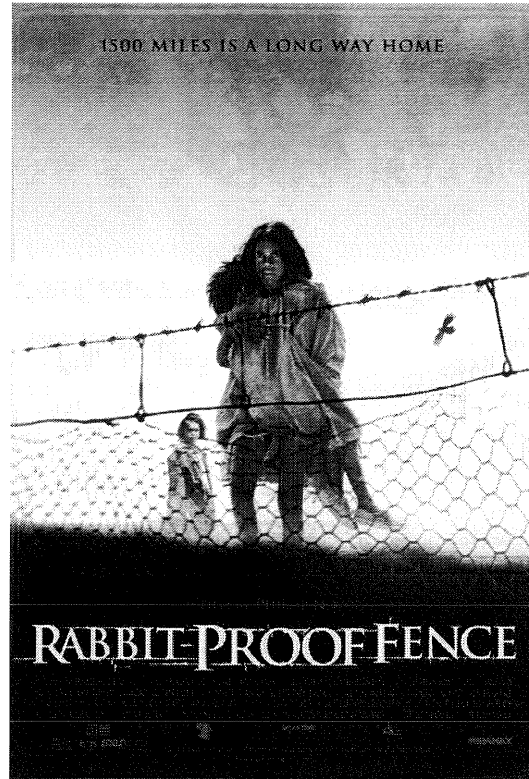
"Alright," Riggs replied. "But I still intend to speak to

end  
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## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ABBREVIATED)

1. RIGHT TO EQUALITY
2. FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION
3. RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, PERSONAL SECURITY
4. FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY
5. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND DEGRADING TREATMENT
6. RIGHT TO RECOGNITION AS A PERSON BEFORE THE LAW
7. RIGHT TO EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW
8. RIGHT TO REMEDY BY COMPETENT TRIBUNAL
9. FREEDOM FROM ARBITRARY ARREST AND EXILE
10. RIGHT TO FAIR PUBLIC HEARING
11. RIGHT TO BE CONSIDERED INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY
12. FREEDOM FROM INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVACY, FAMILY, HOME AND CORRESPONDENCE
13. RIGHT TO FREE MOVEMENT IN AND OUT OF THE COUNTRY
14. RIGHT TO ASYLUM IN OTHER COUNTRIES FROM PERSECUTION
15. RIGHT TO A NATIONALITY AND FREEDOM TO CHANGE NATIONALITY
16. RIGHT TO MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
17. RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY
18. FREEDOM OF BELIEF AND RELIGION
19. FREEDOM OF OPINION AND INFORMATION
20. RIGHT OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION
21. RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT AND FREE ELECTIONS
22. RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY
23. RIGHT TO DESIRABLE WORK AND JOIN TRADE UNIONS
24. RIGHT TO REST AND LEISURE
25. RIGHT TO ADEQUATE LIVING STANDARD
26. RIGHT TO EDUCATION
27. RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY
28. RIGHT TO A SOCIAL ORDER THAT ARTICULATES THIS DOCUMENT
29. COMMUNITY DUTIES ESSENTIAL TO FREE AND FULL DEVELOPMENT
30. FREEDOM FROM STATE OR PERSONAL INTERFERENCE IN THE ABOVE RIGHTS

**EDUCATE**



*Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington

Questions for your consideration—please post to your blog. Each response should be a developed paragraph. Your responses will be graded by an English teacher. Please write accordingly. =)

1. In chapter 3, what injustices do the Aboriginal populations face as the European settlers begin to colonize the western coast of Australia? Using specific references to both the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* text and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, explain how their basic human rights were violated. You should make specific references to the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* text. Please find at least three violations for full credit.
2. How might the "civilizing" of Australia mirror historical events in the United States? (Hint: think about the Native Americans, "Manifest Destiny," the continual drive west of European settlers...)
3. Some might defend the relocating of children of mixed descent, saying that it was for their own betterment. After reading pages 40-45, take a stand. Were the actions of the government morally justified in relocating children of mixed descent? Explain.