

Don't tell me to 'get over' a colonialism that is still being implemented today

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Broadcaster Kyle Sandilands says 'get over it, it's 200 years ago', but it's everything that has happened since that is the real problem



Never mind Captain Cook – who wasn't even mentioned in the document in question – was not the first white person to come to Australia. Photograph: Royal Society/PR

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The recent shenanigans around the use of “invasion” instead of “settlement” was annoying on so many levels. Not least of which was the stark reminder of how many Australians just require an inciting “green light” from media to let loose a tirade of hatred and ignorance aimed at Indigenous people.

It can happen at the drop of a hat, over the most insignificant of events.

Even a years' old document stating things that have been around for decades can set it off. Never mind that it is not an enforceable document demanding students think and talk in a certain way. Never mind Captain Cook – who wasn't even mentioned in the document in question – was not the first white person to come to Australia. Never mind that the Australian national ethos can proudly embrace historical criminals who opposed government in the form of bushrangers, but feels threatened by the acknowledgement of Aboriginal resistance fighters.

Never mind that the edicts from England which spoke of peaceful negotiations, purchasing land and forming treaties were completely ignored in favour of the myth of Terra Nullius, or that the infamous posters pictorially claiming that both white people and Indigenous people alike would be hanged for killing each other was completely ignored (the only white people to be hanged for killing Aboriginal people was after the Myall Creek Massacre, the only massacre that has entered mainstream Australian consciousness, not because of the horrific nature of the massacre itself, but because of the fact that white people were punished for it).

Never mind any of that because, as amateur historian [Kyle Sandilands said, “get over it, it's 200 years ago.”](#)

This is a common catch-cry of white Australia, one that flies in the face of our other famous war slogan “Lest We Forget”.

It is a catch-cry so filled with racist crap that we rarely stop to unpack it, but it has always made me curious about just what people like Sandilands think so many Indigenous people are angry about.

Do they think that all of this is about our refusal to “get over” the fact that Captain Cook landed here over 200 years ago, rather than everything that has happened since?

Pemulwuy was killed over 200 years ago, but today his head still sits, unnamed, on a shelf in England somewhere.

The Myall Creek massacre, which I mentioned earlier, was in 1838, 178 years ago.

Jandamarra was killed 119 years ago today, but most people living in Australia still don't even now his name.

The last formally recognised massacres of Aboriginal people, the Conistan massacres, was 88 years ago. There were plenty of massacres in between too. Australia has such a poor record of acknowledging these that you probably don't know where the closest massacre site is to where you sit while reading this, but it is a relatively safe bet that it isn't that too far away.

Aboriginal people were only given the right to vote in the 1960s. Five decades ago.

Lang Hancock called for the sterilisation of “half castes” in 1984, 32 years ago.

John Pat was killed by police in 1983, 33 years ago.

Mulrunji Doomadgee was killed by a police officer in 2004, 12 years ago.

Ms Dhu died in police custody last year.

These stories are not isolated, and there is no reason to suspect we will not hear more similar stories in the future.

Remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia are facing forced dispossession of their land right now. Aboriginal children are locked up or removed from their families every single day, as they have been for generations. This week, white Australian media absolutely lost its shit at the mere mention of the word “invasion”.

These are just snapshots, there are infinitely more stories like these.

Every time these stories occur though, we can still be confident that Indigenous voices will not be invited onto most shows to discuss these issues rationally. Not only will Indigenous voices be largely omitted, but the most racist commentators available will be invited to talk on many shows instead.

We can still be confident that politicians making racist comments will garner public support. That the most disgusting and malicious radio media commentators will be given airtime. That

police officers who kill Aboriginal people will not be held to account. That governments who fail to meet their own Closing the Gap targets due to their preference of implementing racist, paternalistic and punitive policies will not be held to account. That gross breaches of human rights will be ignored and swept under the rug.

We can be confident that every victory ever won by Indigenous people in terms of getting our rights is constantly under threat of being taken away. As Kevin Perkins once said, “We pray eternally that the white authority structure will not turn on us and impede what little progress we have made”.

“We live off the crumbs that fall off the white Australian tables and are told to be grateful.”

“We ask for land rights with tongue in cheek knowing full well that the land belonged to us in the first instance”

All of these comments are as true today as they have ever been.

So tell me, do you really think that we are upset over what happened “200 years ago”, or what started 200 years ago?

You can not “get over” a colonial past that is still being implemented today.

You cannot come to terms with a national history that the nation refuses to acknowledge ever happened.

We cannot “reconcile” what happened yesterday when we are too busy bracing ourselves for what will inevitably come tomorrow.