

Rabbit Proof Fence Essay

Introduction

In the 'Rabbit Proof Fence', Phillip Noyce, the writer, takes into account the conflicting opinions over the 'stolen generation policy'. This was an Australian policy which involved taking half-caste aboriginals away from their families and homes, to be brought up in a white society. The policy was in operation between the 1930s and the 1960s. One of the main justifications for the policy, was to educate the half-caste children so that they could fit into society. One of the main arguments against the policy was that it encouraged a sense of superiority by the whites and a sense of inferiority by the aborigines.

Justifications For the Policy

The Europeans, who invented and put the policy into practice, had many reasons for doing so. They thought that they were doing a good thing. Some of the reasons for this are outlined below.

The first reason is so the half-caste aboriginals could have an education. Their education taught them western life skills, this was so they could fit in more easily with modern society. This process was also known as civilizing them. They also learnt very basic reading and writing. Some children got sent away for a proper education. Whether they got to go or not depended on how pale their skin was.

The Europeans thought that if they took the half-caste aboriginals into society and trained them as explained above, they stood more chance of being able to gain new and wonderful opportunities such as employment.

By using the policy, the Europeans were trying to create a single race (race homogeneity). They were doing this to try and eliminate any racial

tension that there was around. The Europeans just assumed the full-blooded aboriginals would die out naturally like they had in Tasmania a few years ago.

The Europeans thought that the half-caste children would have a better health if they were brought up in a European lifestyle, using their diet, doctors etc.

Other Information

Before going on to outline some of the arguments against the policy, I would like to clarify one or two points of information which might be of interest.

The half-caste people were half aboriginal and half European. These were the people which the policy affected the most.

At the time, Australia had another policy called the white-Australia policy. This stated that any person who was not of a European race was not allowed to live in Australia. This policy was in action until the 1960s.

Aboriginals were not treated as citizens of Australia. Although they abided by the countries rules, they were not allowed to take an active part in society by doing things like voting in elections.

Arguments Against the Policy

I am now going to state some of the arguments against the 'stolen generation policy'.

Taking children away from their parents is a very immoral thing to do. It harms the emotional health of both the parents and the children.

Instead of easing racial tension the 'stolen generation' policy created more racial tension than there was before. This was because people were angry, strongly resented each other, and in some cases the policy.

When the Europeans thought that the aboriginals would just die out on their own, they were wrong. There are still Australian aboriginals around today.

The policy encouraged a sense of superiority by the whites and a sense of inferiority by the aborigines.

One of the justifications for the policy was to give the half-caste children an education, but the standard of education that was given to the half-caste children was much poorer than the one given to European children. This was followed by a much poorer lifestyle. Many half-caste children ended up doing housework and heavy farm labour in exchange for meals and accommodation.

The Europeans thought that if they gave their diet to the aboriginals their health would improve. This was a bad idea because the aboriginal diet was actually better for them than the western one because it contained a lot less sugar, salt and fat. Also the aboriginals were not used to western food and so their stomachs were not used to it.

My Opinion

I think that the 'stolen generation' policy was a bad idea. I think this because hundreds of children who were taken away never knew their mother or cannot remember who she was. Some of them didn't even know that they were half aboriginal until later life.

After staying in a settlement for half-caste children and learning basic life skills, they would go into a hard labour job where they lived with a

family. Some of the families made them work extremely hard for little reward, and some half-castes were even victims of rape and torture because they couldn't escape.

This is why I consider the 'stolen generation' policy a massive mistake in European and Australian history, even though they thought they were doing the right thing at the time.