

Another World is Possible - Race Relations in New Zealand

By Daisy Cadigan, aged 17, Wellington

'Another world is possible'. My first glance at the phrase brought up many issues in New Zealand and in the world I believe can be changed. However, an issue affecting New Zealand I feel particularly strongly about is our race relations - given the title of "the best in the world". Maybe they are - they look good if you *compare* to places like America, and Australia. And New Zealand looking good in comparison is often used as excuse to ignore the race related issues in our country's past, and present. New Zealanders utter disinterest, and ignorance of our history is something that holds us back from honestly obtaining the title, with an increasing number of people believing in order for equality to be obtained, we must abolish any Maori privileges. There are calls to stop Maori scholarships, iwi settlements, which is all a consequence of ignorance of New Zealand 19th and 20th century history. If New Zealanders knew about how atrocities 100 years ago affected us today, the settlements would not be questioned. With better knowledge and understanding of our past, New Zealanders will be connected, unlike a 'kiwi not iwi' sense, but as Maori, and Pakeha.

My first issue with New Zealand race relations is how we compare ourselves to other countries, managing to convince "racism isn't an issue here." Even through the extreme racism post colonisation, the facade of "best race relations in the world" was used through clenched teeth. David Ausubel, author of 'The Fern and the Tiki', visited New Zealand for over a year, studying New Zealand relations in 1960. In the public eye, he recalled friendliness about Maori, and pride of the fantastic race relations. However, behind closed doors, it was "Those bloody Maoris are disgusting, the way they laze around all day on the family benefit-". When criticizing the race relations, all he got was "Like you can come here from America and try to tell *us* about how we manage our affairs! What about Little Rock?!" The most recent news in race relations now is 'The Pakeha Party' who received over 60,000 likes on facebook for their policy against 'reverse racism' (an ideal that racists believe in, but more on that later). The state of race relations today can be summed up simply with this comment from John Banks "We continue to pay young Polynesian, young Maori men in South Auckland, the dole to sit in front of TV, smoke marijuana, watch pornography and plan more drug offending, [and] more burglaries..." This view of Maori today is strikingly common with the view of Maori 50 years ago, when Ausebel's book was published. The same comments of Maori being lazy, and using government handouts was common. Similar comments to the disgraceful 'food in schools' cartoons only this year were made 50 years ago. 50 years, and the state of our race relations has not changed. I see comments similar to John Banks's on social media often - as people are not afraid to express this kind of viewpoint online. The lack of media coverage on John Bank's outrageous comments, right after the election is further proof that New Zealand is not an egalitarian society - if a politician in parliament can get away with making blatant racist remarks and only have a 10 second cover on 3 news, then obviously this kind of view isn't an 'out of the norm' thing. But enough narrative on our race relations - why are they like this, and what's caused the ignorance behind them?

A lot of our racism issues today are based behind ignorance of New Zealand history. This lack of knowledge and interest is a really big issue - as it is a cause of racism, and also prevents us from being able to solve the socio-economic gap that divides us as a society today. For example; I know more about American racism in the 60's than I do about my own country, up until about a week ago, when I was inspired to do this essay. Most New

Zealander's know more, and are more interested in the African American civil rights movement - the segregation was brutal, and the perspective and psychology of it all is really interesting. However, most brush off New Zealand history as 'boring'. This is because the segregation that occurred in our own country is so rarely talked about and discussed, that no one is even aware it happened! Ausebel describes seeing signs outside cafes of 'we don't serve Maoris here' and segregated cinemas with one side Maori, one side Pakeha. He mentioned in a town (not named) that 6 out of 8 barbers refused to cut Maori hair, and that Maori were only allowed to swim in the local pool on a Friday because it was cleaned every Saturday. I for one, was shocked, and so were those around me when I proclaimed this news to anyone who would listen. The ignorance and disinterest of our past is in my belief, the creator of the Pakeha Party and it's supporters. The Pakeha Party policy, is essentially 'equality' in the literal sense. No iwi compensation, no Maori scholarships, no Waitangi Tribunal, no Maori seats in Parliament. Essentially 'become one' as a nation. Those who agree with this belief are simply uninformed of how our history has affected Maori, and why they need this 'special privilege'. Pakeha Party genuinely believe they are victims of reverse racism, and can't for the life of them understand why we can't achieve equality by having 'Pakeha guaranteed seats' 'Pakeha schools'. They are unaware of the affect land confiscations had on Maori, the total being over 63 million hectares. This forced Maori into poverty, loosing their ancestral connection to the land, and their economic base. Poverty, which majority of us know is a generational cycle that is incredibly hard to break, without some help. (Government compensation through the Waitangi Tribunal). The Tribunal was set up to compensate iwi who were affected from a breach of the Treaty of Waitangi by the New Zealand government. Maori are significantly higher in our poverty statistics than Pakeha - this is direct proof that this generational poverty still affects us. In fact, our economic disparity in terms of race has the OECD concerned. What I have mentioned is incredibly basic - but if everyone had this knowledge then there would be no question of whether Maori are deserving of this compensation. This is where our education comes in.

I am a 17 year old student, and my school is 20 minutes away from the National Library; yet my knowledge of New Zealand history is incredibly limited. And prior to taking NCEA level one history, all I knew, like those around me, was the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty was introduced to the curriculum in 2007, and since then, it's been nothing but. Now don't get me wrong - the Treaty of Waitangi is really important, and absolutely should be mandatory in our education, however it was taught terribly, and turned a lot of students off New Zealand history. I know no students who recall any knowledge of their education on the Treaty, despite their boredom and hatred of the topic. The especially interesting parts of the causes and consequences weren't looked at. The significance of the Treaty into our country today wasn't even touched on, and I think this is because my primary school teachers didn't know what they were talking about, like a lot of New Zealanders on the Treaty. Every year was the Treaty - nothing about land confiscations, or the many wars that followed it. I recently went on a school trip to the Waikato to view war sites from the Waikato Invasion, and was shocked to discover the memorials put in place by the government haven't been updated to be more respectful. One memorial for the Pakeha that died was a beautiful marble statue, 10 feet high. The memorial next to it was for Maori, which was a huge mound of earth - a mass grave for the 50 men that died. Even in 2002, Helen Clark erected a memorial as an apology to the Chinese Community for the poll tax and general racism they faced - this memorial is unnoticeable and walked on daily, as it's flat on the ground. I think how the New Zealand government chooses to remember our history is disgraceful - millions of dollars will be put into the National War Memorial off Taranaki Street, with most likely, little reference to any wars that took place in New Zealand. When our own government puts no effort towards

remembering our past - how can we move on as a society? Once students reach high school, there is no requirement to teach New Zealand history in the NCEA subject. Peter Sharples, former leader of the Maori Party, believes this means that students leave school 'ill-equipped to understand and participate in some of the key issues of their time that affect them most directly'. Like me, he believes if everyone had a knowledge about why the Treaty settlements are necessary, there would be a lot more support for it. I personally know that when some of my peers learnt that our level three course would be a New Zealand history focused curriculum, they dropped it. Without knowledge of the effects of colonisation - how can we be educated, and knowing of solutions to solve these negative effects? How can we be united as a nation and rid ourselves of our inbred racial discrimination without understanding the history of these stereotypes?

New Zealand history, and our race relations are two things that correlate closely, and are not often talked about. Often the response when racism in this country is brought into discussion is 'at least we're not as bad as America - they still have segregated balls!'. Comments like these sweep any race issues under the rug, just like they have for the past 100 years. In terms of the Maori stereotype Pakeha have created, it has not changed throughout history - but seeing as it's ignored, no one knows about it. A nation ignorant of how history has affected and shaped our world and our perceptions today, is a nation that cannot grow together. It's a country that is afraid of difference. If we don't acknowledge our history through memorial and education, then the growing economic disparity, and the poverty trends that are so strong today will continue to grow. Another world is possible, a world where the races are equal. Because equality isn't always about state of law - it's about state of mind.