



Undoing Australia

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The University of Melbourne is training revolutionaries to dismantle the nation

Back in 2017, the University of Sydney launched a campaign to ‘unlearn’ education. In 2022, the University of Melbourne upped the ante by launching a campaign to unlearn the entire nation. In an extraordinary act of institutional suicide, one of Australia’s most prestigious universities has introduced an initiative titled Undoing Australia.

The enterprise is being run by The Australian Centre, a research unit of the university’s faculty of arts which has set out to prove Australia is an ‘unfinished political project’ that is ‘constructed, contested and refused every day’. Key focus areas include policy, law, education, literature and the media – all picked due to their dubious roots in the ‘colonial nation-state’.

At the heart of the Undoing Australia project is a desire to dismantle the Australian nation-state

entirely in order to right past wrongs. The initiative is revolutionary, promoting activism, statue-toppling and the eradication of a positive narrative about Western civilisation from the history books. The political, legal and social framework of our nation must go down in flames before a new, vaguely defined utopia can rise from the ashes to replace it. This message is evident in The Australian Centre's obsession with white supremacy, white privilege and entrenched racism.

One webinar titled 'Whiteness in Education' looks at how 'whiteness' is not innate but learned. According to Associate Professor Jessica Gerrard and Dr Sophie Rudolph, 'the systems of white dominance that operate worldwide are not natural but created and maintained through social and political life'. They advance the argument that education and government are sustaining 'systems of racial domination'. The authors encourage listeners to grapple with the 'politics of education' and reimagine a future 'thoroughly divested from racism'.

Next is a webinar which asks the weighted question 'How do we tell the truth about Australia?' According to Professor Sarah Maddison and Dr Julia Hurst, 'truth-telling' by way of 'truth commissions' will play a pivotal role in responding to a 'culture of active silence on colonialism'. The reference to 'truth-telling' is puzzling to say the least given most of the University of Melbourne's postmodernist intellectuals don't even believe in truth.

This contradiction is openly admitted by the authors who claim that 'truth-telling rarely lives up to its promise' and 'it is not clear that there is a shared understanding of what truth might offer'. On top of this, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory are praised in the webinar for investigating historical and ongoing injustices against indigenous people. All these examples suggest that 'truth-telling' is in fact a priority for Australians and 'colonialism' a hot topic of discussion in the public sphere.

A third webinar titled 'Counter-Monuments: Challenging distorted colonial histories' examines how a culture of silence on colonialism can be combatted by toppling imperial-era statues and building counter-monuments. Indigenous woman Genevieve Grieves and Dr Amy Spiers note that public memorials 'celebrating imperial conquest' are now inciting action against 'racist violence'. They claim white settlers are routinely honoured over indigenous counterparts. Their solution to this inequality is more 'counter-monuments' bringing to light the darker aspects of Australian history.

Last but not least is a webinar titled 'Dismantling Settler Futures' which looks at how the 'colonial future' can be rejected to make way for a new age of indigenous empowerment. Dr Alissa Macoun and Dr Elizabeth Strakosch argue that 'settler colonial technologies' operating through Australian indigenous policy are sustaining the 'settler project'. They decry any non-indigenous claim to 'sovereign legitimacy' as 'violence'. Even 'decolonising agendas' are tainted by 'European understandings of sovereignty'. Given neither author claims indigenous heritage, this naturally raises questions about the legitimacy of their own arguments. For instance, Dr Macoun self-identifies as a 'white woman', a fact which could taint her opinions on indigenous matters according to her own logic.

Perhaps the academics behind the Undoing Australia project are forgetting the benefits of the so-called 'settler project' which include Western intellectual traditions and Judeo-Christian values.



British and European settlers imported democracy, freedom, education, tolerance, welfare and human rights to Australian shores. The campaign to 'refuse settler futures' is a campaign to refuse a socio-political system which has brought freedom and prosperity to billions of people across the globe.

Moreover, Professor Maddison and Dr Hurst's accusation that there is a 'culture of active silence on colonialism' in Australia collapses upon examination. In fact, the opposite is true. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture is one of the three cross-curriculum priorities taught in all Australian schools from kindergarten to year 10. Most Australian universities have entire departments and multiples policies devoted to educating students about indigenous culture. The so-called 'culture of active silence' on indigenous issues is well and truly dead.

Educators involved in the Undoing Australia project who suggest otherwise are weaponising words like 'truth-telling' to impute the guilt of historical figures onto current mainstream Australians. They claim that this nation's institutions are riddled with racism and need to be replaced.

Unfortunately, while there are plenty of criticisms in this webinar series, solutions are few and far between. What is clear is that apologies, reparations and welfare will abound. It will be a world of colonial statue-toppling, indigenous politics, truth commissions and treaty negotiations. The University of Melbourne's plan to 'Undo Australia' is self-destructive, disingenuous and fails to recognise the great achievements of this country. Australia would be better served by its oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher learning if they focused on building up rather than tearing down this nation.

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