

The Great Silent Apartheid

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With the backdrop of the Springbok tour of 1971, this paper promotes the contention that cultural genocide as the progeny of colonialism is so insidious that, as a wily beast, it has turned on the 'dispossessors' – who are now themselves being dispossessed through what is in reality a 'Silent Apartheid'. The 'Silent Apartheid' is a knowledge or intellectual segregation that targets one of the last bastions of colonial endeavour, the 'colonisation of the mind'. The silence of this apartheid is aided by its invisibility. In it, there are no segregated buses, schools, diners or washrooms on which to target rage, but rather an ever consuming intangible ignorance which is harder to recognise. The phenomenon simply put is that non-Indigenous Australians, as a result of their world-standard education, know very little about Indigenous Australia and so cut themselves off from the cultural and spiritual heritage of the land that they now reside upon. This is not a thinly disguised attempt to harness political support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues but rather it is about non-Indigenous rights that are being furtively misappropriated. The silent apartheid gains sustenance from the relegation of Indigenous knowledge, culture and tradition to the fringe of the curriculum in most streams of the educational supply chain. It is as a concept further nourished by seeing culture and tradition merely as a training outcome (or, worse, a 'tree hugging' or 'feel-good activity') rather than a competency. Cultural competency, like all Indigenous education, should 'stretch the mind and stir the spirit'. It can be quantified as a competency and immersed industrially as a requirement and an ongoing KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for systems, schools and teachers. Worst of all, the 'silent apartheid' effectively dispossesses non-Indigenous people of a 'truth' which negates their ability to make informed personal, political and professional decisions.