

Introduction

Look at this First *Before Diving into the Book*

Welcome to my book. Thank you for opening it. Please don't be put off by its size. This book really isn't as scary as it looks. The core of this book is fairly short and simple. The gist of it is contained in just the first chapter or two. After that, the rest is simply padding.

If you are reading these words you will be probably be asking yourself two things:—what is this book about; and, is this book for you? Well, there is a short answer to the second question. It is yes. Yes this book is for you. This is not a flippant comment. I am being perfectly serious. To a certain extent this book is for everyone, everywhere. There is, of course, a core audience. This is white New Zealanders, known locally as Pākehā. However, the main issues raised in this book concern, or should concern, every citizen of the world.

As for what this book is about, this too has a simple answer. It is about the attitude of Pākehā towards the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Māori.

How on earth can such a topic be relevant to everybody? New Zealand is a tiny country miles from anywhere. It is of little significance in the global scheme of things. What on earth can its domestic race relations have to do with the rest of the world?

The answer is actually quite straightforward. The issues raised in this book concern the attitudes of a settler people towards an indigenous people. Although the precise details of these issues are specific to the particular peoples involved, many of the issues themselves are universal. They are common to any country that has indigenous peoples. New Zealanders might be surprised to learn that this covers almost all the countries of the world, apart from the majority in Europe. As for Europe itself, these countries are precisely the ones that created the issues between settler and indigenous peoples in many countries of the world via colonisation. These concerns should be given more prominence in Europe, because Europe today has been built on the colonisation movement.

Finally, all countries, including any non-European ones without indigenous peoples—if such countries actually exist—are part of the modern global economy. Much of the wealth of this economy has been, and is still being, created by attitudes towards indigenous peoples that are similar to the microcosm of Pākehā attitudes towards Māori.

At this point my core audience of Pākehā is likely to be put off, or begin to feel uncomfortable. Oh, no, they go. We can see what's coming. Here is another book about that (expletive) Treaty of Waitangi. Here is another book about the bad and wicked Pākehā doing bad and wicked things to Māori. What a load of rubbish. We bend over backwards to help Māori. We go out of our way to be nice to them. We're fed up of hearing about this...

OK, OK. Please bear with me. And please don't put this book down now. Let me address your concerns. First, this is most definitely *not* a book about the Treaty of Waitangi. It is not in the title, and compared with other books on Māori/Pākehā issues, I hardly mention the Treaty at all.

Second, I haven't actually said anything about 'bad and wicked'. Alright, I admit that 'bad and wicked' does eventually appear in this book, if that's the term one wishes to use for it. But this is jumping the gun. This is doing what I fervently hope no-one will do, and why I have asked that you read the beginning of this introduction before diving into the book. This is not to say that I want to hide these things from you, so they can be revealed later in some sly and underhand way. No, the reason is simply that now is not the right time.

This book is not like most other books on this topic, nor indeed like most other non-fiction books. It is not a book written by a know-it-all author who can't wait to tell you 'the truth'. I would be mortified if this is how my book came across. Instead this book is a journey. It is a journey of me, the author, struggling to make sense of this 'bad and wicked' label that has been attached to Pākehā—and indeed the entire white population of the world. It is a journey of me—simple plain me with no formal instruction whatsoever in this

issues of this book—opening my heart, mind and conscience to what is being said. For I too am Pākehā. I too am white. I too have no desire to be labelled ‘bad and wicked’.

So let me begin this introduction again for my key readers—Pākehā.

I grew up in New Zealand. Like many Pākehā, I have grown up with a strong sense of justice based on equal opportunities, equal rights for all, and the fundamental principle that a person is not to be judged on the colour of their skin. In 2004, something happened in New Zealand that struck a chord with this. It was a speech by one Don Brash—the then leader of the main political party in opposition to the government. No New Zealander will need reminding of this speech. On the face of it, though, it wasn’t a significant speech. It wasn’t a speech to the nation in a time of crisis. Nor was it a speech to the great and good of New Zealand. It was simply a speech given to a small club in a small town one Tuesday in late January. As for its contents, it basically said that every New Zealander—Māori, Pākehā or anybody else—must be treated equally. In other words, it appealed to the strong sense of justice shared by myself and many other Pākehā. It made a lot of sense.

It all sounds obvious. Yet it divided the country like never before. For New Zealand gives special grants to Māori. It gives special treatment to Māori, special institutions. And it is handing over large sums of money and land to Māori in compensation for ‘bad and wicked’ events from the dim and distant past of New Zealand’s colonial history. The logical conclusion of treating every New Zealander equally is that all this had to stop. New Zealand must stop giving privileges to Māori. This, anyway, is what Don Brash said.

Māori came out in force when they heard this. They were extremely angry. Many even called Brash a racist—with the implication that anyone who agreed with him was also a racist.

I just didn’t get it. I wasn’t completely ignorant about the past. I knew something of the ‘bad and wicked’ deeds of New Zealand’s early history. But how could it be that believing in equality today, regardless of skin colour, was racist? Did this make me a racist? Surely such a belief was, in fact, the very opposite of being a racist?

Don Brash had called to my mind, and indeed the nations’ mind, a very disconcerting dilemma. If you treat Māori the same as everybody else, you are called a racist. On the other hand, if you treat Māori differently... well, that is the very definition of racism.

This book is about my personal journey towards reconciling these two opposing views. It is about stating the Pākehā case and slowly coming to the realisation that it is built on the assumptions of a particular world-view—a world-view that is distinctly different from that of the Māori. More generally, it is about coming to the realisation that the Pākehā case is shared by white people everywhere, and is based on a particular way of thinking developed in Europe over the centuries. And it is about realising that this view is distinctly different from the world-views of indigenous peoples everywhere. For, as far as a white person is concerned, the core values of any indigenous people are more or less the same as the core values of Māori.

In many ways my journey is an unusual one. For I am a Pākehā who has lived overseas for many years. In particular, I have lived in the United Kingdom since 1989. Nevertheless, I have kept in close contact with New Zealand. I have lost count of the number of trips I have made back ‘home’ since I left. This state of affairs has had both helped and hindered my journey. On the negative side, living overseas means I have become out of touch with daily life in New Zealand. I constantly have to catch up with what’s going on. On the positive side, though, this has made me more acutely aware of the conflict and subsequent changes New Zealand has undergone recently. It has also enabled me to stand back from day-to-day wrangling and concentrate on the bigger picture. In other words, to use a popular metaphor, I have been able to see the forest instead of being stuck in amongst the trees.

The main thing to note about this book, though, is that it is a personal journey. In other words, I get personal in this book. I do not stand outside lecturing from on high. I place myself in the situation, and ask what it means for me. What are the implications of a Brash attitude (pun intended) for me and the people I know in New Zealand? What does it mean for the people I love? One of the people I love is my adopted sister, to whom this book is dedicated. She is Māori. This personal journey, then, is very personal indeed. It goes right to the core of my family.

Along the way, there is joy, there is surprise, there is anger, there is hope, and there are even tears. Most importantly, though, there is a will to let love have the final say—love of my family, love of the people I know, and love of the country I hold so dearly in my heart.

I firmly believe that the personal element is a fundamental omission from much of the debate over race relations in New Zealand, or indeed anywhere. And I do not exclude academic writing from this aspersion. Contrary to what many people think, it is impossible to be objective in this world. There is no such thing as objectivity. If there is any grand theme that emerges in this book at a philosophical level, it is that every statement has underlying assumptions. Those who claim objectivity are simply those who are ignorant of the assumptions they make. I say this as someone with a higher degree in mathematics—perhaps the most objective field of study there is. Many people—including many with mathematical training—will be surprised to learn that even the topic of mathematics has subjectivity hidden at its core.

But I digress. What I am trying to say is that Māori are a people—a living, breathing people just like us Pākehā. We must not reduce them to a ‘problem’ to be ‘solved’, an ‘academic subject’ to be ‘studied’, or a ‘cultural curiosity’ to be ‘gawped at’. Instead we must treat them as a ‘people’ to be ‘loved’. We must treat them with all the humanity that we treat ourselves. This is what my journey teaches me.

And once I have learnt this lesson, I take it with me throughout the rest of the book. I go back to those topics that most of us wish to begin with when the topic of race relations rears its ugly head. I go back to those abstract topics such as justice, equality, giving compensation for the past, and how government should accommodate Māori demands, that we all want to talk about. I go back to those topics that most of us, on seeing them listed in the table of contents for this book, would turn to first. But I go back to them with a new attitude. I go back to them having made a difficult, and sometimes painful, journey to reach that attitude. I go back and explore the consequences of my personal journey towards reconciling the two opposing views of racism mentioned above.

This is why I ask that the reader will not dive straight in. There is a story line to this book. And like any story it won’t make sense unless one starts at the beginning. Or, to put it another way, consider the difference between someone who climbs a mountain under their own steam, and someone who gets to the top by cable car. These two people will see the same thing completely differently. The climber will have worked much harder to get there and therefore have a much greater appreciation for the view. They may be in the same place physically, but they will be in very different places emotionally and mentally.

Likewise those readers who begin at the beginning of this book and work their way through will have a much greater appreciation of the latter parts of the book than those who dive straight into the middle. Of course, this is true for any book. However it is especially true for this one. If one dives in, one might just see ‘bad and wicked’ and quickly close the book again without looking any further. However if you climb up the mountain with me, then it is my hope that you will not see ‘bad and wicked’, but a new way to view the world, and a positive path toward a better world.

The main point of this book is the journey. It is my journey, and I invite you, the reader, to come along too, so that it may be your journey as well. But don’t worry. I’m not being a slave driver. I am not saying that you need to read every page of this book. As I said at the beginning, the basic message is quite simple. Once this message is understood, it is possible to dip into later sections of this book and fully appreciate what you’re looking at. It’s just a matter of knowing how and when.

Don’t Go Just Yet:

By now I am hoping I have explained several key points about this book:

- It is about Pākehā attitudes towards Māori—first and foremost, my own.
- It is for everyone—but most particularly Pākehā;
- It is not as scary as it may, at first, seem;
- It is not like a reference book—it is a journey with a story line.

I felt I had to make these points as quickly as possible, particularly the one about the journey, before anyone stopped reading the introduction and started flicking through the book. With these explanations and

cautions in place, hopefully I am can relax somewhat and expand on the above. However, if you are just keen to get on with this book, then by all means do so. It is not necessary to read this whole introduction before starting. In amongst the general overview of this book in the text below, there is a lot of tying up of loose ends, plugging of gaps, general cautions, apologies, and other seemingly pedantic, albeit necessary, details.

If you simply want to get going, then the recipe for reading this book is simple. Most New Zealanders can begin at Chapter 1. Other readers should start at the prologue. If you wish to continue beyond Chapter 1, read the rest of Part One in sequence. After that you may dip into the book more or less at random. The important thing to note is that Part One is the core of this book. *Most people will completely miss the point of this book if they dip straight into Parts Two, Three or Four.* Right, I've said it. You can definitely go now. Have a good read. I will catch you later.

P.S. You may want to cast your eye over the short poem at the end of this introduction before you begin.