

## Grade 11

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre is pleased to offer a series of eight (8) units covering the following Grade 11 CAPS topic:

*Ideas of Race in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries – What were the consequences when pseudoscientific ideas of Race became integral to government policies and legislation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?*

*Case studies: **Australia** and the indigenous Australians; Nazi **Germany** and the Holocaust.*

### Unit 4

Case Study: Australia

In this unit you will learn about the following:

- Australia's racial and eugenicist policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the early colonisers of Australia forced the indigenous Aboriginal people off their land**
- **They stole Aboriginal children and used them as slave labour**
- **The violence and disease that resulted from people being displaced off their land led to the death of many Aboriginals. Their numbers dwindled rapidly. The Social Darwinists said that this was an example of the natural processes of "survival of the fittest"**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the early colonisers of Australia forced, physically forced, the indigenous aboriginal people off their land. Indigenous means the people who were there first; it refers to the original inhabitants of a place.

Aboriginal Australians were forced off their land, often in very cruel and heartless ways. The colonisers stole aboriginal children and used them for slave labour. They brought violence and terror onto communities of indigenous people. They forced many aboriginal people into overcrowded compounds, which led to diseases being spread from people displaced off their land; many aboriginal people died and their population dwindled.

The population of aboriginals got very small very rapidly and, of course, the Social Darwinists said: "Here you go, here is an example of what we call the natural process of natural survival of the fittest. Those who are able to survive do, and those who are weak just die off!"

Remember how, in Unit 1, we mentioned that governments *often* employ pseudoscience to justify their actions? Here, the Australian colonial government was able to justify its cruel policies using the 'pseudoscience' of Social Darwinism.

- The policy of removing indigenous children from their families and communities was due to the influence of Race Theory, Social Darwinism and Eugenics
- They believed that the non-indigenous Australians were from a superior civilization because of their Northern European heritage and that the Aboriginal people were inferior

**So... how would they keep Australia “White”?**

The policy of removing indigenous children from their families and communities came about because of the influence of race theory, Social Darwinism and, of course, eugenics which you learned about in the last unit.

The colonial government which put these practices into place in Australia believed that settler Australians, who came from England, Ireland, Wales and other countries in Northern Europe, had a “superior” civilization and “superior” heritage. Meanwhile, they said that the aboriginal people were “inferior” and that their culture was “inferior” as well. Therefore, they said, taking the pseudosciences of race theory, Social Darwinism, and Eugenics to their logical conclusion, the European settlers had the right to dominate the indigenous aboriginal people.

What you also need to understand is that the Australian colonisers very much wanted to make and keep Australia “white” – they didn’t want any aboriginal people living there at all!

How were they going to do this?

## **Immigration: “White Australia” policy**

In order to make Australia “white”, they came up with two government policies. The first policy was a “**Whites Only**” immigration policy where you could only go and settle in Australia as long as your skin was white. This policy remained in place for many, many years until 1973. Only white people could immigrate to Australia. That was the first arm of their brand of eugenics.

What was the other arm?

## **“Biological Absorption”: “Breeding Blackness Out”**

Since Australia already *had* indigenous people living there whose skins were not white, the government needed additional policies to make – and keep – Australia “white”. They decided to “absorb” black people into the white population by “breeding out” blackness. Here, you need to remember the words we covered in the section on eugenics. They said that if you only *bred* black people with white people, then their descendants would all be “white”...

Let’s see how they planned to do this.

The half-caste is intellectually above the aborigine, and it is the duty of the State that they be given a chance to lead a better life than their mothers. I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half-caste from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring.

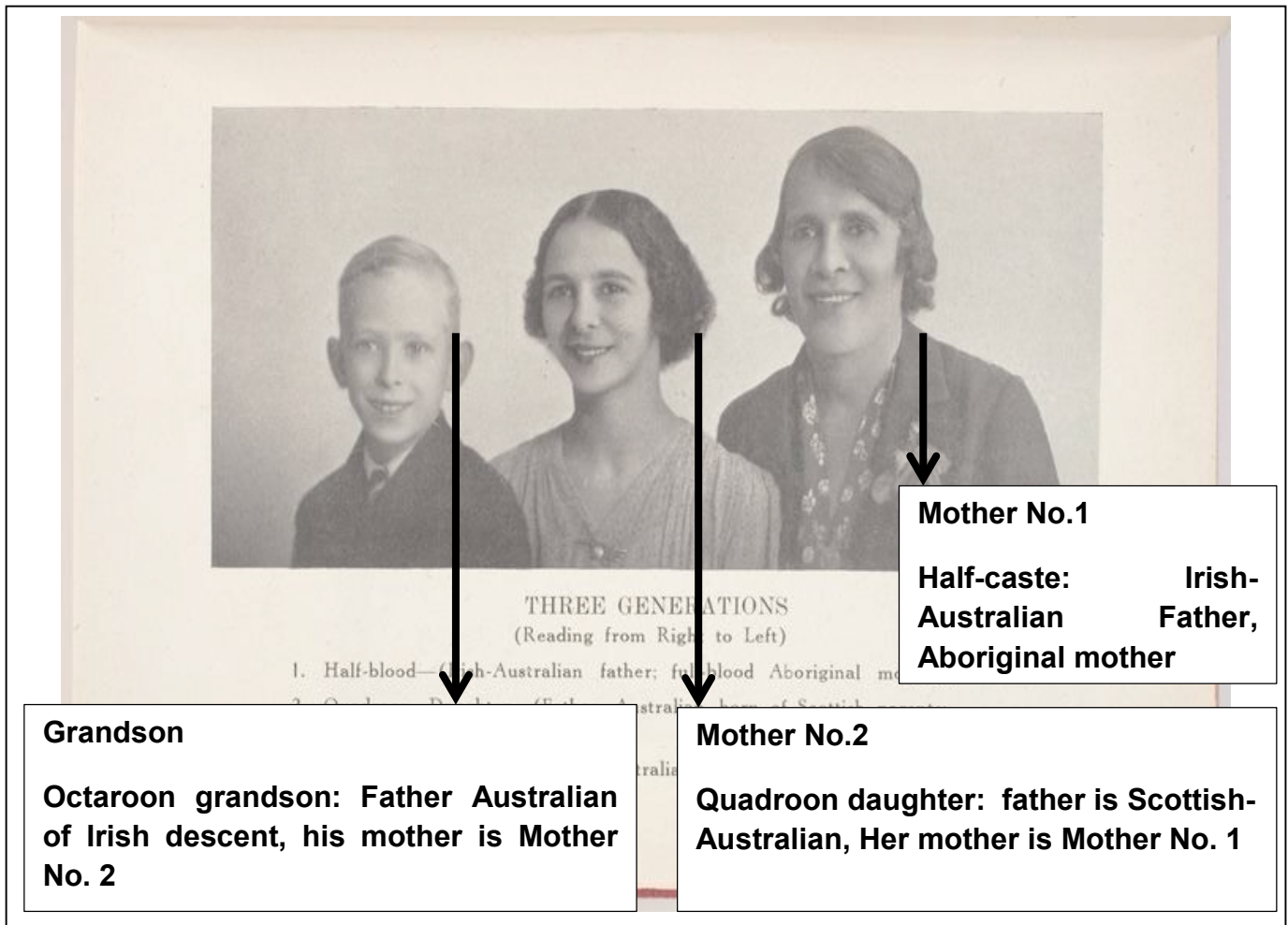
*James Isdell, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Perth, 1909*

This is a piece of writing from a policy recommendation from James Isdell who was the Chief Protector of Aborigines. So already you've got white people feeling that they are in charge of the aboriginals, protecting the aboriginals and telling the aboriginals what to do. This was a policy put to parliament in 1909 and this is what he says: "The half caste"

Now, what does that mean in terms of Australia at this time? That means that someone has an aboriginal parent and one white parent. To quote from the source:

"The half caste is intellectually above the aboriginal and it is the duty of the state that they are given a chance to lead a better life than their mothers. I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half cast from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring".

This is a primary source, these are words that were written by the chief protector and it shows us very clearly, the attitude towards aboriginal people. Firstly, because someone is half white, they immediately, according to these people, are intellectually above a full aboriginal. Secondly, the aboriginal mother, says James Isdell, won't feel grief, because aboriginals will forget their offspring. So he is talking about aboriginal people as though one talks about a cat that had kittens and you take one away and the cat will forget about it. So there is this idea that the aboriginal people are not really human like white people, and if you breed out the aboriginal then everyone eventually would be white. Now let's see how this is put into practice.



**Grandson**

**Octoroon grandson: Father Australian of Irish descent, his mother is Mother No. 2**

**Mother No.1**

**Half-caste: Irish-Father, Australian Aboriginal mother**

**Mother No.2**

**Quadroon daughter: father is Scottish-Australian, Her mother is Mother No. 1**

**THREE GENERATIONS**  
(Reading from Right to Left)

1. Half-blood—(Irish-Australian father; full blood Aboriginal mother)

This is going to get complicated. That's because these ideas, these pseudoscientific ideas, are so crazy it's difficult to explain them because they make so little sense!

The lady who is wearing the flowered shirt and jacket will be called Mother No. 1. Her parents are an aboriginal mother and an Irish-Australian father. So, in other words, Mother No. 1's mum was an aboriginal woman and her dad was white. This makes her what James Isdell and other Australians would have termed a "half-caste". Mother No. 1 grew up and had a child with a Scottish-Australian. Their daughter is Mother No. 2. Her parents are a white dad and a 'half-caste' mum. This makes her a quarter aboriginal, and she is known as a Quadroon according to the government. Mother No. 2 then grows up and has a son with an Australian-Irish man. That boy has a white father and a 'Quadroon' mother, and so he is called an Octoroon. He is only an 8<sup>th</sup> aboriginal; only one of his great-grandparents was black.

So the Australians believed that if you carried on in this way – if that little boy would eventually have a child with a white woman and their children "bred" only with white people – that in the end there would be no "blackness" at all.

- **In Australia the key issue was skin colour – and the belief in breeding blackness out by the predominance of “white” blood**
- **Whites only immigration policy only came to an effective end in 1973**
- **Crucial and important difference between this Case Study and Nazi Germany:**
- **In Germany you had to have “PURE GERMAN BLOOD” anything else and you were not considered German**
- **You were considered to have contaminated blood and could not be allowed to infect “pure” German blood**

In Australia the issue was skin colour. They wanted to breed out blackness by that “white blood” dominated. If you have followed the units, you will remember that there is no white blood or black blood.... There is simply red blood that flows through each and every one of us.

It is now very important to understand that there is a crucial difference between Australian eugenics and German policies.

The case study of Nazi Germany is really important for us because South Africans have a direct connection to that history, which will be explained to you in later units. In Germany you had to have “pure German blood”. If you did not, you were not considered German. The Nazi Germans believed absolutely in the purity of blood and if you were not pure German according to their ideas then you were considered to have contaminated blood and you could not be allowed to infect pure German blood. There was no way to “breed it out” – you would have to be destroyed!

We will look at this more in the next units.

## QUESTIONS

1. What policies did the Australian government create to “keep Australia White”?
2. Summarise, in your own words, how Social Darwinist principles were invoked in Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries
3. Summarise, in your own words, how the principles of eugenics were applied in Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries
4. Remember that all histories are unique. With that in mind, identify and critically reflect on two parallels that you can find between the Australian policies as described in this Unit and the policies of the South African apartheid government

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Caught up in a scientific racism designed to breed out the black:

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/caught-up-in-a-scientific-racism-designed-to-breed-out-the-black-20080214-gds108.html>

Killing Without Murder: Aboriginal Assimilation Policy as Genocide:

<https://preserve.lehigh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=cas-lehighreview-vol-13>