



The Struggle for Generational Legitimacy: Youth, Antiracism and Counter Movements in Australia since the Mid-1990's

Robert A. Carr
PhD Research Candidate
University of Wollongong

**Paper presented to the Social Change in the
21st Century Conference**

**Centre for Social Change Research
Queensland University of Technology
28 October 2005**

The Struggle for Generational Legitimacy: Youth, Antiracism and Counter Movements in Australia Since the Mid-1990's

Robert A. Carr

PhD Research Candidate, University of Wollongong

This paper examines the ways in which many young people have attempted to directly assert and define their place in Australian life since the mid-1990s. It analyses how young people have attempted to actively grasp a sense of social power through racial debates. Since the mid-1990s, a great number of young people have become active participants on two opposing sides of the antiracism movement. On the one hand, many young people attempted to resist mainstream political rhetoric on immigration, land rights and multiculturalism, partaking in protests and school walkouts. On the other hand, counter to antiracism, there have been movements in which young people have become more active in the Patriotic Youth League and other groups. Whilst the antiracism movement often aligned itself with socialist and more progressive political blocs, various counter movements have promoted national identity and populist rhetoric. This paper explores how many young people have also, indirectly, asserted their views on race. These have been passively expressed via socially orientated events, such as rock concerts. This paper also investigates the idea that, with some young people agitated into often direct (and sometimes violent) confrontations over race issues, national imagining has largely been taken for granted by a generational-based authoritative voice and in government policy.

Keywords: antiracism; Australia; counter movements; generation gap; government policy; Hanson; Howard; One Nation; Patriotic Youth League; political correctness; Resistance; Windschuttle; young people;

Youth Antiracism: Methodology and Definitions

In defining key terms of the debate, the concept, “young people”, relies upon standardised definitions. Youth services in Australia loosely define young people as those male and female persons between and including the ages of 12 and 25 years. In this paper, many of the insights obtained, including oral and from the media, were taken from this age group.ⁱ In the title of this paper, the idea of “generational legitimacy” implies an age-divided struggle over public discourses on racism. This paper views a generation of active young people involved in this struggle against an older, authoritative and conservative voice. This “voice” assumes a degree of automatic generational legitimacy, based on “years of experience” and insight.ⁱⁱ Throughout this paper, I also refer to the concept, “generational authoritarianism”, which *is* the assertive voice resulting from such automatic assumptions. Young people have not only been forced to be consistent in their reasoning for antiracism actions, but also grant immediate concessions to the opposing voice based upon age. In this slanted discursive environment, young people have been worthwhile contenders, as can be viewed through their continuing efforts to promote social justice.

To further elaborate on the term, “youth”, and in exposing some of the assumptions within the authoritative generational voice, it is important to view some of the myths surrounding young people since the mid-late 1990s. Julie Macken (1997) argued that myths surrounding young people, that they were apolitical and selfish, were incorrect. Citing data collected by an award-winning Harvard scholar on “Generation X”, Macken pointed out, eighty-two per cent of youth respondents stated they were interested in politics and were involved in their own way (Macken, 1997). Further, Macken cited Labor Senator Stephen Conroy, 34 years of age at the time:

‘My generation is far more aware and active when it comes to looking after the environment. And while the Boomers gave themselves the big agenda item of “changing the world”, we’ve got our work cut out just looking after each other and cleaning up after their party.’

That clean-up involves more than just the obvious issues of global warming, salination, deforestation, nuclear and chemical waste disposal and species extinction. It also involves the re-creation and re-negotiation of social, familial and religious structures - none of which survived the exuberant experimentation of the Boomers. (Macken, 1997)

Indeed, there are indications that whilst there was a vibrant body of young people acting collectively against racist sentiment, there were a great number that did not partake in any form of direct political movement. Diana Smart (et al, 2005) provided insights into the social and political roles of young people in the late 1990s and early 21st century, citing the Australian Temperament Project (ATP). This project, an ongoing, longitudinal study has followed the progress of a large, representative group of Victorian children from infancy to 19-20 years of age (in 2002).ⁱⁱⁱ One area of the ATP data collected in 2002 was related to pro-social attitudes and behaviour of young people, and their engagement in civic events. In relation to their participation in antiracism, ATP data demonstrated lower engagement in activities that may have been more overtly politically oriented. Over four-fifths reported taking actions to care for the environment, while almost two-fifths had undertaken voluntary or charitable work. Moreover, whilst 51 per cent had signed a petition, only 16 per cent had supported an environmental lobby/political group, and 6 per cent had taken part in a

political demonstration (Smart, 2005). From these statistics, it could be suggested that many young people were apathetic towards important political issues in the late 1990s and early 21st century.

On the contrary, lax youth attitudes to complex social concerns can be juxtaposed, as Tim Martyn (2005) points out, to increasing numbers of youth involvement in social or environmental organizations which address “the big issues” of national imagining. Martyn argues that whilst young people have become slightly complacent with the political process, this has been largely due to disillusionment with political parties;

One only has to look at the declining numbers of young people joining political parties to discover that something is afoot. Yet this trend does not illustrate that younger generations are apathetic towards Australian democracy – far from it.

... [As] vehicles for change, the parties have lost sight of the big picture. The Australia Project – who we are and where we are going – has been all but abandoned over the last decade and a half.

Australia’s democratic process has entered a political era when the aspirational voter is king; where it pays to be acquisitive, not inquisitive. As a nation, we’re debt-laden but looking to own more, leaving the vast majority anxious about house prices and interest rates. (Martyn, 2005)

Further, Martyn argues that young people in contemporary society have their gaze fixed on bigger issues, such as “What sort of country is Australia becoming?”, “What is happening to our environment?”, and “How can something be morally wrong but economically right?” (Martyn, 2005) Martyn also suggests that mainstream political parties have become increasingly divorced from the concerns that once defined them - their membership – by exploring, for instance, phone polling rather than community consultation as the preferred method for taking the communities’ pulse (Martyn, 2005). Further,

It is therefore no surprise that when young people get politically active these days, they are more likely to join a social organization or environmental group, for it is there that they are able to engage with the big issues. It is there they are able to sidestep factional infighting, cynical politicking and deal-making and get straight to the point: imagining Australia. (Martyn, 2005)

Martyn outlines that more Australians should follow the lead of young people, by engaging ‘with what sort of country they would like their children and grandchildren to live in, instead of the houses they would like to live in.’ (Martyn, 2005).

To further define the world-view of Australia’s young people – at least their views on race and culture - it is worthwhile turning to a study by Jennifer Grafton (et al, 2000). Here, a survey was conducted with students, mostly under the age of 25, at the University of Melbourne in 2000. Interestingly, Grafton outlined that respondents to the survey were largely aware of the language of political-correctness in their response, aware of the social need to be culturally sensitive. This can be viewed as positive reinforcement of, as Martyn outlined above, the suggestion that young people in the late 1990s and early 21st century have been highly concerned and socially aware citizens. Grafton also suggested, however, there remained a degree of “surface tension” relating to student segregation, in and outside of the classroom.^{iv} Grafton added,

Tensions over the segregation of students into groups by language were also evident from comments made by several Anglo-Saxon students. These students expressed feelings of discomfort towards other students communicating amongst themselves in a language that they could not understand or contribute to. Often Anglo-Saxon students associated sentiments of rudeness and arrogance towards students in enclaves conversing in a foreign language. (Grafton, 2005; p49)

Many young people were evidently conscious of social isolation, and their need to feel secure about and understand social spaces. Anglo students were also concerned that Asian students were too academically competitive, and were also offended by the ability of international students to pay up-front tuition fees.^v Combined with common youth anxieties, relating to future wellbeing and the social world, such insecurities are not unusual, and have even become the basis for radical nationalist groups such as the Patriotic Youth League (PYL). This is discussed further below.

It is clear that, whilst young people appear to have become less involved in direct political processes since the mid-1990s, they have expressed their political voice by participating in more socially orientated activities. Ideas about social and group cohesion provide some understanding as to perhaps why young people join youth-based political groups, such as Resistance and the Patriotic Youth League. These groups look to express their identities first and foremost - not only in terms of their political leanings, but also a collective recognition of youth-orientated grievances. Highly compelling (and harmful) combinations of employment worries, the increasing presence of drugs, growing levels of suicide, depression and identity anxieties in a globalised world are but a few of the overwhelming factors facing young people over the last decade. It is fair to suggest, too, that this combination has been unknown to generations prior. As discussed below, despite some criticism for perceived complacency, young people have participated in race debates by being involved in, not only antiracist, confrontational movements, but also through the socially inviting avenues of music and sport.

Antiracism and Australia

Antiracism in Australia has not been a uniformly organised course of actions, but rather a plurality of ideas, organizations and people working sporadically, although movements have often crossed paths. Since the mid-1990s, antiracism has linked with issues from the 1960s and 1970s, mainly regarding Indigenous land rights and multiculturalism. However, contemporary antiracism movements have largely acted in response to a new type of conservatism, endorsed by stirring New Right historiographies and particular sentiments within governmental mandate.

Currently, it is within this predominantly populist and conservative social setting that scholars attempt to deconstruct discourse on race debates. In an environment in which conservative, popular rhetoric has convinced the nation that racism against non-whites does not exist, scholars must recognise the trappings of political correctness (PC). Keith Windschuttle (2004), conservative historian, wrote:

[In recent] language wars, conservatives have not been completely subdued. Indeed, they scored a notable triumph in the 1990s when politically correct became part of common usage. Politically correct had the great virtue of being a satirical term. It was used by conservatives to send up leftist attempts to

impose speech codes that forbade negative descriptors based on race, sex, class, ethnicity, sexual proclivity and disability. (Windschuttle, 2004; p15)

Windschuttle also suggested that PC has often been portrayed as a 'conservative plot against the left' (Windschuttle, 2004; p15). However, he outlined, PC works "so well" for conservative (or right-wing) scholars 'because it satirises terminology long used by the left itself' (Windschuttle, 2004; p15). Moreover, Windschuttle perceived,

It was the left's attempt to impose its brand of authoritarianism through various speech codes, racial vilification and anti-discrimination laws that provoked conservatives into a reaction. All they needed to do was reproduce the left's own terminology verbatim for most people outside these circles to recognise it for what it was. (Windschuttle, 2004; p16)

This use of PC by conservative scholars, Liberal Party MPs and media commentators has largely undermined suggestions for more socially progressive, culturally sensitive ideas. Firm theoretical approaches to whiteness theory and the concept of hegemony should be applied when addressing such work.^{vi}

Undeniably, PC, intentional or not, has been a shortcoming for antiracism, unconsciously attacking the very premise on which much of it is, but claims not to be, based upon – "popular", functionalist rhetoric.^{vii} PC promotes a determinist, or functionalist role for antiracists, as suggested by Grafton (2005):

The underlying rhetoric of political correctness was premised on the notion that persons of differing cultures should regard each other as resources that offer differing and complementary competencies. (Grafton, et al, 2005; p50)

In this sense, PC destroys its own foundations of democratic liberalism - the right of individuals of all races and cultures to pursue life's chances at their own will without interference from others. In promoting liberal democracy, social connectedness and harmonious interaction between people, it assigns them, paradoxically, a pre-determined, illiberal life doctrine in which every person functions according to a short-winded and often corporatized social ideology. Antiracism must retrace its liberal foundations, and overcome such stigma by recognising it as part of the Australian social psyche.

Since 1996, antiracism movements in Australia have been embattled in this way, in a struggle for discursive space. In the metropolitan newspapers, letter writers from both sides of the debate have corresponded to denounce the other as, on the left, PC and pink-skinned, or, on the right, racist and insensitive. Talkback radio and right wing columnists frequently confronted (and continue to confront) any hint of social progressivism in antiracism movements, dismissing them as PC nonsense and being over-inflated in their sense of social compassion. With mass media support, the New Right had gained by the mid-1990s all moral "high ground" on race debates. In reaction to the progressive blocs, a popular counter movement began to emerge beyond 1996, encouraged by both One Nation and the Liberal-National coalition, who each capitalised upon the concerns of disenfranchised voters. Like progressive movements, the conservative chorus was located in a variety of organizations and events. Youth-based contingents from both movements, outlined in more detail below, have included the Patriotic Youth League and Resistance.

Youth Issues and the Anti-Racism Movement

Disillusionment and De-legitimisation of Youth Experience by Government

Young people in the mid-1990s were already largely involved in issues including Jabiluka and anti-globalisation. It was also the growing perception that Pauline Hanson's ideas were beginning to flourish that triggered antiracism action by Resistance, as well as other youth-based activities. Dr Damien Cahill (2005), a National Union of Students (NUS) antiracism campaign organiser in 1998, and 25 years of age at the time, outlined in a series of recent interviews:

'I think the main concern for young people was, well the main thing that motivated them, I think, certainly that I felt and that I identified in other people, was just a profound sense of injustice. They felt that the government and many sections of the media, lots of television and Murdoch press in particular, were really misrepresenting the issue of race and were trying to mobilise ... [racist] prejudice essentially, [against] already marginalised groups in society.' (Cahill, 2005)

Belinda Selke, between the ages of 17 and 19 years and a Resistance antiracism campaigner in the mid-late 1990s, also stated:

'For me it had more to do with Indigenous rights. I think that was the main thing that I was kind of aware of and that other people around me were talking about is how [Hanson's] views on Indigenous people in Australia getting, you know, not being disadvantaged - in fact the opposite, getting more than white people and it being, you know, reverse discrimination or whatever against white people... To hear those views putting the absolute opposite story, for me, was kind of outrageous and shocking.' (Selke, 2005)

Many young people in the late 1990s had difficulty in understanding the government's failure to support more progressive approaches to immigration and multiculturalism. In my interviews with persons involved in anti-racist action in the late 1990s, all respondents noted similar reasoning behind this disillusionment with government policy, media and conservative commentators. This was due mainly to the experiences of those attending primary and secondary educational institutions from 1972 onwards.^{viii} Cahill noted,

'I suspect that a lot of young people these days have been through a school system, public or private, where they've been educated about the history, to some extent, of our history of Aboriginal dispossession, and to some extent about multiculturalism. Probably a lot of the students, actually, are familiar with people who come from other countries, have them as classmates, in their neighbourhoods, so all of those things probably contributed to the young people involved in the antiracist movement.' (Cahill, 2005)

Here, we can see the social implications of such approaches to education; through pro-multicultural policies and diversification of language education, governments had, to a degree, successfully engineered outward-looking and culturally confident traditions within the intellectual make-up of many young people in Australia.

With this experience in mind, many young people, in fact, gave quite responsible and informed opinions on the issue of racism.^{ix} Reaffirming these youth sentiments at the time, the *Green Left Weekly*, on July 22nd 1998, cited seventeen-year-old Justin Harman from WA:

'You can see exactly how racism works in country towns like Meekatharra in WA, where I've been. People have very little access to services and high unemployment, and you see the tension that's created between different racial groups. While I was there, a road going into the town hadn't been fixed for 12 years, and the government stopped funding to it. They spent a minuscule amount on the Aboriginal community, but that was taken up by the rest of the town as evidence of the fact that white people were discriminated against. Really, it was this problem of everyone not getting much.' (MacDonald, 1998)

It is, of course, fair to suggest that only a small percentage of the youth population of the late 1990s had actually taken part in direct anti-racist action (such as protests). However, this was enough to produce a generation of alarm amongst young people, whose belief systems were suddenly pulled from under them by a culturally insensitive, and economically elitist, government. It is not surprising, then, that "last generation" White Australia-ists were more willing to support Hanson and the government on talk-back radio, whose memories of social inwardness and insensitivity were only a generation behind. Media support for generational authoritarianism is discussed further below.

Finding Voice in the Media

'[In the Resistance] campaigns, the media and especially the right-wing shock jocks and other people made a big deal about the fact that if, 12, 13 and 14 year olds were going to rallies and getting involved then they must have been brainwashed by adults with different political agendas. [But] they weren't, they were responding to the issue [of racism].' (Selke, 2005)

Typically, the commercial media in Sydney was largely critical of young people involved in protest actions and other youth-based antiracism activities. Talkback radio unleashed an unrelenting assault upon students walking out-of-class to attend rallies. In 1996, it is clear that talkback radio was already leaning towards a pro-Hanson stance. Radio station 2UE pursued the September 10th maiden speech by Hanson with overwhelming support. Free speech, concerns over Asian immigration and multiculturalism were the motivating factors behind unprecedented ratings success of the station. The 40-somethings, parents and the media – the authoritative generation – were gaining widespread approval of their endorsement of Pauline Hanson. There had been over 37, 000 calls to the show hosted by conservative critic Alan Jones on the 11th and 12th of September 1996, with the overwhelming majority unanimously supporting Hanson's views (Kitney, 1996). 2UE, along with other stations around Australia, pursued Hanson with ferocious intrigue, not only because of the right-wing position of the broadcaster, but because of the commercial viability of the issues she addressed. The sheer number of calls demonstrated great commercial viability, and it is clear why other media (including television and newspapers) designated thousands of hours and newspaper sheets to what soon became the catch-phrase, "Hansonism." In this commercially and populist-driven media environment, young people gained little exposure about their views on antiracism.

Much of the media exposure designated to the antiracism campaigns between 1996 and 1998 was largely critical, on the basis of little else than youth inexperience and ignorance on race issues. Similarly, Claire Lowrie (2005), a year eleven student in 1998, and who had taken part in antiracism school-walkouts that year, commented on a protest in Wollongong Crown Mall,

'... [The] woman in the newsagency had a lot to say about "these kids", you know, in a derogatory way. And just stuff like, "These kids don't really know anything", and, you know, they're too young to understand these issues, and that was the focus that the media took as well. And I mean [...] even amongst [people in] left-wing organizations like the Wilderness Society, that was the attitude, that you were too young to understand.' (Lowrie, 2005)

On 4th August 1998, the editorial of the *Courier-Mail* typified many of the authoritative generation's concerns that followed growing youth activities and street protests organised by Resistance. Rather than addressing youth concerns over racism, it portrayed Resistance as a socialist splinter group, using 'race politics to draw attention to itself, increase its membership and fulfil its Leninist dream of conquest through division' (*Courier Mail*, 1998).

Political Representation and Political Vocality

The youth voice remained largely unheard, ignored and even smeared by politicians. Young people faced significant challenges to being supported and represented by Federal and State MPs. Following Hanson's maiden speech, it became clear to many Labor and Liberal MPs that her views resonated to a broad cross section of people within their electorates. MPs reported a remarkable number of calls from people applauding Hanson and urging them to follow her lead (Kitney, 1996). In August 1998, Labor leader Kim Beazley criticised young people involved in the antiracism movement, whilst some political leaders and media organizations made concerted efforts to de-legitimise the youth voice. They cited Resistance as the main youth antiracism organization, and looked down upon its socialist undertones. From a youth perspective, Lowrie argued,

'[Young people] weren't taken seriously, even when we did try and have a voice, and you know, participate in the public scene and public debate, yeah, we were patronised and not taken seriously. [And] that is a real lack of power and kind of being robbed of your agency.' (Lowrie, 2005)

In similar fashion, Beazley argued that the real debate about immigration and population could not take place until after the upcoming federal election. Pressure of time and the impossibility of a rational debate in the current political climate preclude any challenging exchange, Beazley argued. Further, in the Editorial of the *Courier Mail*, on 4th August 1998, the newspaper supported Beazley's more "rational" approach that Australia "could do" with a discussion on tolerance, but free from sloganeering and cheap politicking (*Courier Mail*, 1998). Resistance protests were quickly written-off by those in power, by the middle-Right of politics, and, through the media, in the eyes of mainstream society. Without the freedoms of national imagining, the youth voice was ultimately disillusioned, with some young people joining radical or even violent nationalist campaigns.

Youth Antiracist Action

Mass protests and participation in the wider progressive movement

Young people, although many would become organised within smaller action groups, had also taken part in broader antiracism protest actions in the mid-late 1990s. One of these included a march in Sydney, on 23rd November 1996, against the Prime Minister's failure to sufficiently rebuke racism. Around 10, 000 people gathered in protest in torrential rain, chanting "Shame, Howard, Shame", and listening to speeches in support of multiculturalism and slamming Pauline Hanson (Gora, 1996). A sea of banners proclaimed slogans such as, "Jobs, not racism", "Pauline Hanson should apologise", and "Racism kills" (Boey, 1996). Another rally was held in Melbourne on December 8th 1996 called the "People for Racial Equality" march, attended by around 35, 000 people (Haslem, 1996). Lisa MacDonald (1998), of the *Green Left Weekly*, however, later criticised the wider progressive movement for not continuing with antiracism campaigns, especially whilst Resistance continued to lead youth-based campaigns:

... [T]he mainstream anti-racism "movement", organised principally through Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation and the peak migrant rights bodies, has become almost invisible, having abandoned even the minimalist public protest activities against Hanson and her ideas it organised last year. (MacDonald, 1998)

"Rock Against Racism" and Music

By late 1996, youth antiracism had taken on the slogan, "Rock Against Racism". In January 1997, 20, 000 fans and 31 bands were to wear orange ribbons at the Adelaide Big Day Out Festival in support of the slogan (Ramsey, 1997). Most headline performers at later Big Day Out concerts in Sydney have also followed a tradition of proclaiming the day - which always occurs on Australia Day - "Invasion Day", in support for Indigenous rights. Other concerts were organised under the banner "Rock Against Racism", although the concept was merely a title, and not representative of a singularly co-ordinated series of music events.^x Pop and alternative music provided a major forum for indirect participation in the antiracism movement, at least through airing antiracist sentiment. Satirist Pauline Pantsdown became popular through several sample-based songs featuring Hanson's voice. These songs appeared on national ABC youth radio Triple J, providing a cultural forum for young people to participate in race debates within the familiar confines of music.

Resistance: Town Hall Blockades and School Walkouts

By mid-1998, activist group Resistance had organised many protests and blockades of Hanson speeches in local town halls around Australia, giving voice to the highly charged youth-based movement in regional centres. Resistance maintained a more youth orientated approach in its activities, and was partly funded by the Democratic Socialist Party. By July, the movement was drawing Sydney school students out-of-class and into the streets, despite growing criticism.^{xi} On 25th August 1998, *Reuters'* Michael Perry reported on the increasing number of Sydney's young people undertaking protests against One Nation and Federal immigration policies. By late August, thousands of Sydney high school students had twice walked out of classes. Perry argued that, behind the angry protests was despair among young Australians

about their future, fueled by record youth unemployment and one of the world's highest suicide rates (Perry, 1998).

By this time, politicians and media critics began accusing the movement of being irrational and misguided.^{xii} On the issue, journalist Sue Williams, however, argued that Australia's future was in safe hands, and that, despite high unemployment, along with 'a pitifully weak dollar, continuing forecasts of economic gloom and doom, and the rise of the ghastly One Nation trolls, you'd expect the strain to start showing in such a racially diverse society as ours' (Williams, 1998). Moreover,

When the Government refined the benefits system, forcing some back home this week to their parents because they'll have nothing else to live on, they weren't even grateful...

Instead, we have young students, usually too mired in worry over job prospects, cuts to education and repaying their loans, suddenly emerging as the conscience of the nation. (Williams, 1998)

Williams also criticised the Department of Education for saying those marching without parental permission would be treated as truants. Moreover, she argued that it will be a sad day indeed when we start punishing young people for having the courage to stand up and be counted, when so many of their elders, who should know far better, are doing their best to "melt" into the background.

The involvement of young people in the anti-racism movement has not always meant participating in street protests or contributing to the *Green Left Weekly*. They were also involved, indirectly, by celebrating diversity and racial harmony through sporting prowess. This was especially prevalent in the lead up to and during the Sydney Olympics in 2000. For many young people, sport has played a significant role of breaking down racial barriers indirectly, without having to debate the issues in confrontation with, for example, more ideologically inclined members of Resistance or, what would emerge in 2002 as PYL.

The Patriotic Youth League – A Counter Antiracism Movement

In contrast to youth antiracism movements of the late 1990s, more recent times have viewed resurgence in the Australian nationalist front. Small collectives of nationalist youth organizations have also taken part in the race debates, although in support of racist and anti-PC sentiments. PYL has been one of the more active nationalist youth groups. The group currently promotes its slogan, "Youth, Identity & Freedom", on its web page above a painting of the Eureka Stockade.^{xiii} Based at the University of Newcastle, Stuart McBeth, national president of PYL, said in August 2004 that there were about 50 members in PYL (Thompson, 2004), although membership has continued to grow. PYL was founded in late 2002 by McBeth, as the youth wing of the Australia First Party (AFP), and was closely linked with AFP founder Graeme Campbell. Dr Jim Saleam, a member of AFP and a pro-Hitler activist since the 1970s, has heavily mentored PYL (Fightdemback! (c), 2005).^{xiv}

By 2004, PYL boasted branches at four NSW universities (Robinson, 2004), and would later set up at campuses in Melbourne and Western Australia (Fightdemback! (a), 2005). A student-led movement, PYL can also be characterised by its tendencies to link youth and student anxieties with the ideas of scholars firmly located within the Australian New Right. In direct confrontation with education practices at universities,

PYL advocates an indirectly racist agenda with leanings towards the more “open-minded” historical interpretations of Keith Windschuttle (see Moore, 2005).^{xv} What is immediately striking here, and in other articles on the PYL website, are underlying references to not being “heard”, amongst a clutter of dominant, more authoritative voices. PYL is also linked with other Australian nationalist organizations, including, apart from AFP, the Australian League of Rights, the Voice of the People Lobby Group^{xvi}, and the Australian Nationalist Ideological, Historical and Legal Archive.^{xvii}

Particularly in more recent times, PYL has campaigned strongly to make its youth “voice” heard. PYL has been involved in activities ranging from street propaganda to public protests and providing online forums. Much of the propaganda outlined PYL’s objections to foreign students, being displayed at various universities, mainly in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. In mid-August 2004, PYL began its propaganda campaign at La Trobe and RMIT Universities in Victoria, as well as at its other bases (Robinson, 2004). By September, the group campaigned for an end to international students, unless on exchange programs, to leave room for locals (Regidor, 2004).^{xviii} Here, PYL attempted to gain the support of struggling Anglo-Australian students by exploiting concerns over student poverty and debt. It also combined these insecurities with reports in recent times of illegal upgrading of international students’ grades (Kemp, 2004). Speculations (followed by denials) of violence inflicted by PYL members against foreign students have also been reported in the media, in academic reports and by international student representative bodies.^{xix}

Outside of universities, PYL has created growing controversy, including in December 2004, when more than 140 PYL posters and stickers were placed on telegraph poles, road signs and signal boxes targeting Asian-owned businesses and homes in Sydney’s north-west (Vella, 2004).^{xx} The PYL stated that it hoped to recruit high school and university students, distributing material at Carlingford High School and Marist College (Bennett, 2004). Stuart McBeth also confirmed 12 high school students, including some from local schools, had been recruited in Sydney in the past month, whilst members had also been recruited from Macquarie University (*Northern District Times*, 2004; p1). In January 2005, PYL also organised the Concerned Citizens Collective (CCC) “sausage sizzle” in Newcastle, to protest against Sudanese refugees settling in the area (Kirkwood, 2005).^{xxi}

Following a yearlong promotional campaign, in June 2005, PYL claimed success, with reports in the media of foreign student numbers declining by two-thirds.^{xxii} Throughout an Executive statement on the figures^{xxiii}, the group demonstrated its abilities as a youth “voice”, particularly for those disillusioned and disempowered by social and economic forces. Key points of discourse, for example, can be located in words such as ‘system’, ‘elitist’, ‘exposure’, ‘fraud’, ‘corruption’, ‘pointless’, ‘responsible’, ‘controversial’, ‘direct action’, ‘sale’ and ‘expense’ of education, ‘unfairly directed’, ‘open and free’, and ‘future’. Each of these concepts can be linked to underlying fears and economic insecurities of young people, particularly students.

Recently, PYL was bolstered with support from Macquarie University Economics Professor Andrew Fraser, who admitted links with the group. Reported in *The Australian*, and in support of a sticker campaign at Newcastle University, Professor Fraser stated he would not resile from his opposition to African refugees, and that,

‘There are substantial risks associated with their settlement in terms of increased levels of violence.’ (Roberts, 2005)

PYL welcomed Professor Fraser's support, with spokesman Luke Connors, who conducted an online poll asking whether "abbos, curry munchers, wogs or chinks" are the most troublesome minority, said it added authority to the group's views (Roberts, 2005). Connors told *The Australian*,

'The fact is that the Africans have a culture of tribalism and violence that we don't want.' (Roberts, 2005)

The Australian also suggested PYL and other nationalist groups were behind similar campaigns against African refugees in Blacktown and Parramatta.

Conclusions: Youth Anxieties Vs Generational Authoritarianism

In conclusion, youth antiracism movements provided an avenue of expression for the great mass of unheard youth voices in media and political debate. Generational legitimacy has worked to displace youth concerns, based on the premise of age and life experience over other types of insights. Both Resistance and PYL have provided voice to the usual concerns of youth powerlessness, about their future and other social anxieties. In regards to the later, however, the influence of regressive agenda within national histories can easily exploit youth concerns. This is especially harmful for young people developing their world-views, not by imagining the nation with positive reinforcement, but in accordance with tendencies to divide and rank society along racial and cultural lines. Generational authoritarianism has sent young people sprawling in desperation – and sometimes even through ultra-nationalist violence - for guidance, at a time when national imagining should be encouraged. The voice of generational authoritarianism has continued in recent years, criticising other youth-led protest actions, such as in the lead up to the Iraq War. With the sole aim of controlling the moral "high ground", generational authoritarianism is a self-serving, class-conservative approach to social issues, creating a body of young citizens highly restricted in the ways they able to imagine the nation.

References

Bennett, Adam, 'Race hate group unstuck', *Sun Herald* (Sydney), 19th December 2004, p. 37

Boey, K.C., 'Multiculturalism through the prism of two women', *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), 27th November 1996, p. 14

Bonnet, Alastair, *Anti-Racism*, Routledge, London, 2000

Cahill, Damien, Interview and Transcript, interview by Carr, R., University of Wollongong, 8th August 2005

Fightdemback! (a), 'Mission', cited online at <http://www.fightdemback.com/about/mission/>, accessed 21st August 2005

Fightdemback! (b), 'A Sticky Situation', cited online at <http://www.fightdemback.com/2005/08/20/a-sticky-situation/>, accessed 21st August 2005

Fightdemback! (c), 'The Life and Times of Jim Saleam', cited online at <http://www.fightdemback.com/2004/12/02/the-life-and-times-of-jim-saleam/>, accessed 12th August 2005

Finnane, Kieran, 'Racist Pamphlets are out of Step with Spirit of the Alice', *Alice Springs News*, 8th December 2004, cited online at <http://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/1145.html>, accessed 21st August 2005

Gora, B., 'Crowd condemns Howard; Cries of shame as thousands flock to anti-racism rally', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 24th November 1996, p. 3

Grafton, Jennifer and Lye, Joanne M., 'Political correctness, surface tension and passive racism', *Youth Studies Australia*, September 2000, v19 n3, pp. 44-51

Haslem, B., 'Thousands march against racism', *The Australian*, 9th December 1996, p. 2

Kemp, Miles, 'Academics find papers not marked the same way; Foreign students' easy ride', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, Australia), 20th October 2004, p. 13

Kirkwood, I., 'Community rallies behind Sudanese', *Herald* (Newcastle), 21st January 2005, p. 3

Kitney, Geoff, 'The lesson in Pauline's perils', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13th September 1996, p. 11

Lowrie, Claire, Interview and Transcript, interview by Carr, R., University of Wollongong, 5th August 2005

MacDonald, Lisa, 'Not too young to fight racism', *Green Left Weekly*, 22nd July 1998, pp. 3-4 cited online at [http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1998/325/325p3 .htm](http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/1998/325/325p3.htm), accessed 15th August 2005

Macken, Julie, 'The Baby Boom Is Over: Generation X Files For A Piece Of The Action', *Australian Financial Review*, 11th October 1997, p. 2

- Martyn, Tim, 'Advancing Australia Fair', *Eureka Street*, May 2005, p. 29
- 'Mission Statement', *Australian Nationalist Ideological, Historical and Legal Archive*, cited online at <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/>, accessed 4th August 2005
- Moore, J., 'Our Unis = Marxist Robot Factories', cited on Patriotic Youth League (Online), at http://www.freewebs.com/nationalist_journal/articles.htm, accessed 4th August 2005
- O, Brendan, 'Concern at outbreaks of race hatred', *The Australian*, 8th September 2004, p. 46
- Patriotic Youth League National Executive, 'Press Release: Patriotic Youth League achieves smashing victory over elitist system', Patriotic Youth League (Online), cited at <http://www.freewebs.com/nationalistjournal/news.htm>, accessed 4th August 2005
- Patriotic Youth League (Online), cited at http://www.freewebs.com/nationalist_journal/, accessed 4th August 2005
- Perry, Michael, 'Young Australians cry out for their future', *Reuters*, 25th August 1998
- Ramsey, A., 'Festival goes orange to fight racism', *The Australian*, January 31st 1997, p. 5
- Regidor, Caroline, 'An education in economic reality', *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 9th September 2004, p. 28
- Roberts, Greg, 'Refugees from Africa focus of hate campaign,' *The Australian*, 23rd July 2005, p. 6
- Robinson, Natasha, 'Racist taunts draw blood', *The Australian*, 25th August 2004, p. 41
- Selke, Belinda, Interview and Transcript, interview by Carr, R., University of Wollongong, 8th August 2005
- 'Separatist fury', *Northern District Times*, 8th December 2004, p. 1
- Smart, Diana and Sanson, Ann, Paper (untitled), *Family Matters*, Autumn 2005 i70 p46, cited online at Expanded Academic ASAP Database, University of Wollongong Library Services, accessed 18th August 2005
- Thompson, Matthew, 'Neo-Nazi link to campus anti-foreigner campaign', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31st August 2004, p. 4
- 'Time for a debate about tolerance' (Editorial), *Courier Mail*, 4th August 1998, p. 10
- Vella, Joanne, 'Residents remove league sticker', *Northern District Times*, 22nd December 2004, p. 7
- Voice of the People (Online), cited at <http://www4.tpg.com.au/cheese55/>, accessed 4th August 2005
- Williams, Sue, 'Future in Safe Hands', *Sun Herald* (Sydney), 5th July 1998, p. 39

ⁱ The interviews conducted in researching this paper were based upon this definition, with the interviewees, as participants in antiracism protest actions, being between the ages of 16 and 25 at the time of their participation. This paper concedes that only several, recently obtained, oral accounts regarding young peoples' involvements in antiracism movements of the mid-late 1990s were used. There are, however, references to a number quotes by young people as cited in the *Green Left Weekly* at the time. It is clear that these accounts alone cannot, in one sense, be representative of the concerns of an entire generation of young people. However, their insights are important and can be viewed as indicative of a pattern of ideas, supported by media accounts and wider antiracism movements at the time. Here, historical interpretation and theoretical insights also play a role in determining the direction of and discourses involved in antiracist activities.

ⁱⁱ Broadly, this group can be viewed as predominantly over 40 years of age, and traditionally the audience of talk-back radio, for example, hosted by the John Laws and Alan Jones.

ⁱⁱⁱ ATP examines the lives of 2,443 persons, who were recruited in 1983 as infants aged between 4 and 8 months. Thirteen waves of data have been collected up to the year 2002, via annual or biennial mail surveys, with the aim of elucidating the pathways to psychosocial wellbeing and maladjustment over the lifespan (Smart, 2005). The data for this paper was cited from the 13th ATP survey, collected whilst participants were 19-20 years of age in the year 2002. This would place the participants between the ages of 13 and 17 in the years 1996-1998, when a great deal of youth-based antiracism activity occurred.

^{iv} Grafton says, 'The propensity of Asian students to remain in close-knit ethnic groups was immediately evident as a source of this tension. It was generally perceived that they did not attempt to integrate with other students.' (Grafton, 2005; p49)

^v For example, Anglo-Saxon students viewed them, 'as occupying a place which they believed rightly belonged to an "Australian" student. Asian students were often perceived to be "buying their way into the course."' (Grafton, 2005; p49)

^{vi} As an example, Alastair Bonnet (2000) theorizes, 'Anti-racism is routinely posited as a spirit of defiance... This association is, however, based on a very narrow view of anti-racism's relation to modernity. For anti-racism is not merely about resistance. It is also about the creation of sustainable states, the reproduction of modern economies and the establishment of internationally accepted principles of political legitimacy...' (Bonnet, 2000; p46) To elaborate, he suggests that, in the contemporary world, the corporate sector also participates in the rhetoric of racial tolerance, approaching antiracism with a certain hollowness that is fashionable amongst nationalists and capitalists (Bonnet, 2000; p47).

^{vii} Here, it is implied that "popular" antiracist discourse existed in so far as it was viewed by New Right critics from the 1980s onwards. This was largely based upon their reactions to Labor government endorsements of Land Rights and multiculturalism, viewing them as PC-tinged race policies.

^{viii} Selke recalled, for instance, 'For young people I think, their direct experience of multiculturalism, because a lot of the people involved in the campaigns in Sydney came from schools where, you know, all the people around you - your friends - are of all non-Anglo ethnic backgrounds, and so multiculturalism is really a reality for all these young people. Growing up their whole life, this is, you know, what we're used to and what is good and - well, not even what is good, but just to hear people attacking multiculturalism when young people in Sydney ... in the schools, that were involved, were... it was just going against their experience, I guess.' (Selke, 2005)

^{ix} For instance, Selke recalled: 'There was a lot about people being too young to form political perspective... I remember at the time, like 13, 14 years olds speaking to the media or getting up at rallies, and just giving incredibly articulate explanations for why they were there, why they opposed racism and Pauline Hanson and One Nation. And anyone who would listen to what those people were saying would have been able to tell that they weren't being brainwashed by left-wing groups or whatever. That, young people are able to form political opinions and should have the right to. And, um, I don't think they were too young to understand what was going on, in fact kids, I reckon, can be quite clear about issues to do

with justice, equality and fairness... It seems like a lot of kids have a natural ability to grasp, "What is justice?" and "What is injustice?" (Selke, 2005)

^x These included a concert co-organised in Parramatta by Belinda Selke; 'After that, it was kind of a thing that happened more frequently, and the name changed to Rage Against Racism and people tried them in different cities. I think it was a success because young people enjoy going to see bands and it was something they could do to be involved and express their opposition to racism but also have a fun day and get together. And for the bands as well, most of the bands were young, probably under 25, and they, for them also, it was their way of contributing something to the campaign as well, just contributing their time and their music...' (Selke, 2005)

^{xi} MacDonald, in the *Green Left Weekly* wrote, '[S]econdary student members of the socialist youth organisation Resistance have launched into action, with a campaign of school walkouts and public rallies begun two weeks ago. A national walkout is being planned for July 24 (July 28 in Brisbane).' (MacDonald, 1998)

^{xii} On 22nd July 1998, MacDonald also noted, 'Predictably, the actions so far have been condemned by Hanson and many in the media as dangerous stunts involving "kids too young to know what they're doing" who are "being manipulated by older activists with a hidden agenda"' (MacDonald, 1998)

^{xiii} See Patriotic Youth League (Online), cited at <http://www.freewebs.com/nationalistjournal/>, accessed 4th August 2005

^{xiv} For more information, see Fightdemback! (Online), cited at <http://www.fightdemback.com/2004/12/02/the-life-and-times-of-jim-saleam/>, accessed 12th August 2005

^{xv} For full citation, see Moore, J., 'Our Unis = Marxist Robot Factories', cited on Patriotic Youth League (Online), at <http://www.freewebs.com/nationalistjournal/articles.htm>, accessed 4th August 2005

^{xvi} For further information, see Voice of the People (Online), cited at <http://www4.tpg.com.au/cheese55/>, accessed 4th August 2005

^{xvii} For further information, see 'Mission Statement', Australian Nationalist Ideological, Historical and Legal Archive, cited at <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/>, accessed 4th August 2005

^{xviii} PYL posters were appearing on campuses across Australia, in an attempt to further expand its base from Newcastle, down the NSW central coast to Sydney, Wollongong, various universities in Victoria and even in Western Australia (O, 2004). The PYL website stated at the time that it was "not against foreign students who visit our campus on an exchange program in order to learn in Australia... [Rather] we are totally against the industrialisation of our higher education system ... in order to bring us into an Asian economic order" (O, 2004). PYL also credited the establishment of two relatively new branches in Brisbane and Perth prompted by a student backlash: 'As PYL members suffer both verbal and physical abuse by student union members across universities, there [sic] less political friends now come to there [sic] defence and the battle grows.' (in O, 2004)

^{xix} PYL activities have included an incident in May 2004, when a Kenyan student was assaulted in a race-based attack at Newcastle University. In August 2004, the student, Herbert Gatamah, decided not to pursue racial vilification charges. Gatamah had initially complained to police that racial comments were used when he was verbally harassed and grabbed around the throat at the University bar. Michael Whitebread, the Newcastle University student association president, outlined that a racist campaign against African and Asian international students had been simmering since the beginning of 2004. This was due, various news sources reported, largely to sticker campaigns warning white women not to have sex with black men, blaming them for the spread of AIDS, which many people viewed as either generated if not implemented by the PYL (Robinson, 2004). The PYL denied any involvement in the attacks, and suggested the stickers and posters had been distributed by another neo-Nazi group. Fightdemback! outlined, however, 'Naturally, the PYL denies all involvement, though Victorian representative Luke Connors admitted that the student had been "outspoken against us from the start" and that similar attacks could occur at other places where the PYL set up' (Fightdemback! (c), 2005). In August 2004, too, the National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia (NCL) reported a series of racist attacks at several universities in Victoria and NSW (O, 2004). A study released by Adelaide University in October 2004 also confirmed that international students in NSW had been

subjected to physical and verbal abuse at the hands of PYL. Some students had also complained, in the report, of racist posters and graffiti on university noticeboards telling them to "go home" (Kemp, 2004).

^{xx} Here, Ryde Council passed a motion to remove all PYL material, with up to 40 community members turning out to assist and to denounce PYL activities in their LGA. The material beared slogans such as "End all immigration before it ends Australia", "Australian an identity defined by ethnicity, not paperwork", and "Mass immigration = water restriction."

^{xxi} According to the Newcastle *Herald*, Newcastle's Sudanese community – about 500-strong - had come to national attention since leaflets were distributed advertising the Islington Park "sausage sizzle", with Dr Jim Saleam as a speaker. A PYL statement suggested the Islington gathering would encourage Newcastle residents "to keep our suburbs free of violence, freaks and loonies" (Kirkwood, 2005).

^{xxii} The following is an extract the PYL website: 'The Patriotic Youth League was also responsible for educating Australian students in the fact foreign students underpinned the *industrialisation of education*. A controverisal [sic] campaign agianst [sic] foreign students has yeilded [sic] the fantastic result of a 2/3 reduction in overseas enrolments [sic]. Unlike the poitnless [sic] ravings and protests for free education by leftwing controlled student groups, the PYL's direct action has thrown a spanner in the works for those who wish to privatise education. The exposure of a corrupt system financed at the cost of Australian student placements has set 'alarm bells ringing' for the elitiest [sic] proponents for the sale of education. Our advice to foreign students is this, finish up and Go Home!' (see Patriotic Youth League National Executive, 2005)

^{xxiii} For full citation, see Patriotic Youth League National Executive, 'Press Release: Patriotic Youth League achieves smashing victory over elitist system', Patriotic Youth League (Online), cited at <http://www.freewebs.com/nationalistjournal/news.htm>, accessed 4th August 2005