

## Mixed heritage Indigenous only here because of First Fleet: Jacinta Price



*Jacinta Price reminds us she is half white as are other mixed heritage Indigenous Australians.*

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- Rachel Baxendale

Indigenous leader Jacinta Price says she and many other mixed heritage indigenous Australians wouldn't be here today were it not for the arrival of the First Fleet of British ships in 1788.

The Alice Springs Councillor and vocal supporter of keeping Australia Day on January 26 said indigenous people had a responsibility to make sure they did not pass the trauma of the past onto future generations.

"I'm not just indigenous. I'm half white Australian, and I wouldn't be here today if they hadn't arrived, and neither would many mixed heritage indigenous people who speak out against the date," Ms Price told ABC radio.

"I don't see how the date (of January 26) itself denies parts of our history. I think it's actually significant for our history to recognise that."

Ms Price said January 26, 1949, also marked the beginning of the Nationality and Citizenship Act, which meant Australians were no longer British subjects.

“So there’s I guess two significant historical reasons why we should mark the date, and I think I have this feeling that I guess for Aboriginal people, in order to actually really grow and move forward we need to do a bit of soul-searching within ourselves and not have this expectation that everyone else around us has to change in order to make us feel better about who we are within ourselves,” she said.

Ms Price said people had to “take the good with the bad” in considering the history of relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, citing her family’s involvement in the Coniston massacre of 1928, which is recognised as the last officially sanctioned massacre of indigenous people in Australia.

“My grandfather was around when that happened. I heard from people who were alive when that massacre occurred, and 75 years after that massacre occurred, we held a commemorative ceremony and we wanted to invite the killers of our families, their descendants to that ceremony, which included white people but also there was Aboriginal families involved, because one of the worst killers was an Arrernte man named Paddy tracker, and it was known that he tied up Aboriginal women, our women, and raped them before killing them, and he was particularly nasty to some of the children,” Ms Price said.

“Now this is why we have to learn our history because we have to learn it’s complex, not simply black and white, clear-cut and dried.

“But we invited the descendants to the ceremony because we wanted to say, we recognise this was a really tough time in our history, but we don’t hold you personally responsible for the actions of your grandfather, literally your grandfather, and we want to move forward together.”

Ms Price said it made no sense for white people today to feel guilt for the actions of people with the same skin colour in 1788.

“There are a lot of people who feel, ‘well it was us that did this to your people’,” she said.

“I hate when I hear that from white Australians.

“No, you didn’t actually do that. Yes, people with the same skin colour as you way back in our country’s history did those sorts of things I will agree, but I’m not going to hold you personally responsible for that.”

Ms Price also criticised the notion of trauma being attached to the January 26 date.

“In my regard with my family we don’t maintain trauma because of what happened in 1928, and I think it is our responsibility as responsible parents and adults in a family to not actually pass on what our pain was,” she said.

“My grandfather certainly didn’t pass on his pain to my mother or to me because of what happened to our people.

“At one stage in his life he was chained around the neck just like the pictures we see in history books and he was marched to Arrernte country and then forced to become a labourer in the army, and he’s never held that against white people or governments for what happened to him, but he understood that life was really difficult back then.

“When my mob were running around the bush, we had our traditional enemies who you killed and they killed you, and tried to steal their wives because we were human. We did everything that humans did and this was human behaviour right around the globe in 1788.

“But it’s not our responsibility to pass on that trauma to the next generation and the next generation and tell them that we were victims back then and hold onto that.

“We’ve got to become stronger than that. Really, if we want to start making changes we’ve got to be stronger than that and the change has got to start from within, not all around us to get there.”



*Carla McGrath.*

Carla McGrath, a Torres Strait Islander woman and deputy director of activist group GetUp!, said January 26 was a divisive date.

“Nobody thinks that we shouldn’t have a national day to celebrate us as a country and who we are, but I think what people are saying is we could find a date that is a lot more inclusive than the one that we currently have,” Ms McGrath told ABC radio.

“The one that we have, unfortunately holds a really traumatic place for a lot of people, it’s a day of mourning for many people.

“It doesn’t represent a day of unity, as we’ve hear a lot of people come out and say that it does, it doesn’t represent a day of inclusiveness, it systematically denies a really important part of the true history of this country and I think that if we want to move forward as a country, if we want to see the sort of healing that will result in the relationships that Jacinta’s talking about, then we need to engage in a process of truth-telling.”