

The stolen generation and its effects upon identity of the Aboriginal people in Sally Morgan's My Place

By

Ali Baram Mohammed

Computer science Dept, DTI, Sulaimani Polytechnic University

Latef Berzenji

College of languages, Al-Kitab University /Iraq

Abstract

The stolen generation are the children from the Aboriginal Australians who were taken away from their parents from (1907) until around (1970). The white authority of Australia would steal the Aboriginal children and displace them in order to brainwash and ethnocide them, which greatly affects the psyche of the children and their parents. The survivors of this practice still suffer its longterm consequences and cannot relate to their cultural heritage. Sally Morgan, an Aboriginal writer, in her autobiography My Place reveals the atrocities the Aboriginal people have gone through in their country by the consecutive acts of the government. This study examines the traumatic effects of the stolen generation on the identity of the Aboriginal people through Frantz Fanon's theory of Psychoanalysis.

Keywords: identity; behaviour; Sally Morgan's

Introduction

The Aboriginal people of Australia have undergone myriads of calamities and adversities throughout the country's history. The Australian government has exploited the rights of the Aborigines in various ways; one of the most devastating and heartless process of these policies was indubitably displacing and removing the children of the indigenous people, which is today known as stolen generation, or stolen children. The public remained unaware of this policy until the end of the 20th century, with the publication of several memoirs and autobiographies by the people who were relatives of or their families were affected by this policy (Krieken 1999).

The "stolen generation" is a term that refers to the children of the Aborigines, or Australian indigenous people, who were forcibly taken from their home and family by the respective laws of parliament in the federal Australian state in the beginning of the 20th century. These children were called "half-caste" by the government, which means belonging to or from "mixed race" and they had to be assimilated into the new culture. The displacement and removal of the Aboriginal children commenced precisely in 1907 and continued until 1970 or late 1960s. The consequences of this process still remains today and there are myriads of children who cannot still relate to their roots or find their ancestors. These children have lost their connection to their culture, family, language and more importantly their identities. The survivors of this cruel treatment still suffer great deal of anguish and trauma for they have lost their sense of belonging and are lost in their native land (Renes 2011). This chapter is designed to examine the practice of stolen generation in detail and show its reflection in literature, particularly in Sally Morgan's novel, My place. It further applies Fanon's theory of psychoanalysis to the characters of the novel who are children of the stolen generation. As they are detached from their cultural heritage, they have developed identity crisis.

Indigenous people

The United Nations define indigenous peoples as the descendants of the previously colonized people. These people have a very close relationship with their land and soil both economically and culturally. Each group of these indigenous people has unique characteristics, they speak different languages and have as diverse traditions as of their lands, but at the same time they all share certain basic principles. For instance, they say: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect" (Gosart 2012). They mainly focus on treating the earth well as they believe they are not the sole owners of it and they need to preserve it to the new generations to live on. They also deem that the soil under our feet is very sacred and everyone has to respect it. They are attached, more than anything else to the green fields of nature, mountains and lakes, which for them symbolize the sources of life. "I prefer my journeys into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty brooks, and the sweet fragrance of flowers. If this be Paganism, then I am honored to be called a Pagan" (ibid).

Indigenous literature

Indigenous literature, which is an important part of contemporary literature, is any form of literature, such as; poetry, drama, fiction, or nonfiction writing such as memoirs, biographies, etc, written by the native people of the country or their children to celebrate their values and preserve their cultures. In this movement of literature, autobiographies are particularly of great significance. They reflect the contextual background and the culture in a way that makes it easy to understand the indigenous culture. The indigenous people are mainly the Aborigines or the first nations of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United states of America. For the indigenous people, land, heritage or the earth in general is very precious and it has to be a place for all, not only the powerful. The mankind, on the other hand ought to be the steward of the earth to protect, validate and take care of all who dwells upon the earth. Every nation has a history, a set of values, traditions and a language that must be kept safe and respected by all, which is what the indigenous literature mainly focuses upon (Blasio 2019).

The Stolen Generation

The stolen generation are the children of the Aborigines, or Australian indigenous people, who were forced to leave their homes and families. This practice was conducted under the respective laws of parliament in the federal Australian state in the beginning of the 20th century. From 1907 until 1970, it is believed that among every three indigenous children one was taken away from their family, which in turn had a negative effect on the majority of the Aboriginal communities and the Torres Strait islander societies of Australia. This dislocation of the children has caused a huge amount of pain and disappointment to the families on one hand, and the children themselves, on the other hand, who could not grasp the reason behind their removal in their homes (Krieken 1999). These children have not committed any sins, their only crime was they were born black, which confirms Fanon's ideas that blackness is related to evil and treachery.

The consequences of this process still remain today and there are myriads of children who cannot still relate to their roots or find their ancestors (Lavarch 1997). These children have

lost their connection to their culture, family, language and more importantly their identities. The survivors of this cruel treatment suffer great deal of anguish and trauma for they have lost their sense of belonging and are lost in their native home. Each of these survivors has their own tragic story to tell and/or bitter experience to remember, but at the same time they share immense sufferings of living in the poorly-run institutions and other maltreatments they had received. They were obliged to live in other houses rather than their indigenous homes, treated like slaves and local servants, and eventually reduced to stockmen or unpaid workers (Van Krieken 1999).

However, it was not only the physical pain that these children were exposed to, but they were also denied any access to their families; they could no longer speak their mother language and were even given new names instead of their real names. Not only this, the government has repudiated to retain any records of the date or place of birth of most of these children, which further hindered their reconciliation with their biological parents when they were older. This fact is well-presented in Sally Morgan's novel, *My place*, when Arthur writes:

My name is Arthur Corunna. I can't tell you how old I am exactly, because I don't know. A few years ago, I wrote to Alice Drake-Brockman, my father's second wife, and asked her if she knew my age. She said that I could have been born around 1893-1894. Later, her daughter Judy wrote to me and said I could have been born before that (206).

The government would abduct the children and usually locate them in other places far away from their home to avoid any eventualities of reconnecting to one's real family and ancestors. The children were, therefore, left with no options except assimilating to the non-indigenous culture imposed upon them by the government.

The indigenous researcher, Judy Atkinson castigates this large-scale displacement of the indigenous children and calls it "cultural and spiritual genocide" and "the greatest violence". She asserts:

Cultural genocide not only works to destroy the cultures of oppressed peoples, it also eradicates the sense of self, of self-worth, and well-being in individuals and groups so that they are unable to function from either own cultural relatedness, or from the culture of the oppressors. "They feel in a world between, devalued, and devaluing who they are." (Atkinson 2002)

She believes it is because of this cultural and spiritual genocide that the identities of the Aboriginal people have fractured and lost, which inevitably results in a state of depression and decline of self-recognition.

Stolen generation narratives

This critical issue of separating the indigenous children from their families has been neglected for a long time. It was only in the 1997 that a report by Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home*, accentuated this fact and brought about a kind of revolution about it. The report, which is a tribute to the strength and adversities myriads of indigenous Australians encountered in their lives, contains real accounts of those children who were courageous enough to narrate their stories. Further, it is a national call for all Australians to be aware of the country's history and a special inquiry to the government to compensate the families of the stolen generation. In the report one of the stolen children writes:

So the next thing I remember was that they took us from there and we went to the hospital and I kept asking – because the children were screaming and the little brothers and sisters were just babies of course, and I couldn't move, they were all around me, around my neck and legs, yelling and screaming. I was all upset and I didn't know what to do and I didn't know where we were going. I just thought: well, they're police, they must know what they're doing. I suppose I've got to go with them, they're taking me to see Mum. You know this is what I honestly thought. They kept us in hospital for three days and I kept asking, 'When are we going to see Mum?' And no-one told us at this time. And I think on the third or fourth day they piled us in the car and I said, 'Where are we going?' And they said, 'We are going to see your mother'. But then we turned left to go to the airport and I got a bit panicky about where we were going ... They got hold of me, you know what I mean, and I got a little baby in my arms and they put us on the plane. And they still told us we were going to see Mum. So I thought she must be wherever they're taking us (Lavarch 1997).

After the publication of this report, stories about separating the indigenous children from their parents prevailed in Australia and assumed great significance, which later came to be known as "stolen generations narrative". Since then stories about stolen children emerged in various literary genres. Initially, they were collective stories or memories of Aboriginal people only, but later changed to be a symbolic representation of the colonization in Australia for the nonindigenous people as well (Chair and Markus 2018).

These narratives of the stolen generation are of vital significance for the indigenous people's quest for their history and recapturing their real identity. On the other hand, it raises the non-indigenous awareness about this issue in order for them to reconsider the relationship between themselves and the indigenous peoples in their country. There are multiple indigenous narratives which are mostly produced by women writers or historians in the form of memoirs and/or autobiographies. In these narratives, the indigenous writers recover and empower their sense of subjectivity when they assert the sovereignty of the native people (Schaffer 2002).

Among these narratives Sally Morgan's autobiography, *My place* is regarded as one of the best testimonies concerning the displacement and its consequences. It was published in 1987 and considered as a literary revolution that brings Aboriginal literature from the fringe into the mainstream (Kumar 2015). The storytelling and/or overall mode of *My place* is deeply connected to the aboriginal identity. The success of Morgan's *My place* has paved the way for a huge number of women writers to begin publishing their own narratives of the stolen children. These narratives focus mainly on the strong relationship between the indigenous people and their families, particularly the strong ties between mother and daughter. Analyzing women's stolen generation narratives, Anne Brewster states that the most important inspiration for these writers is the family, through which they draw their empowerment and resistance (Brewster 1996).

My place has a very complex narrative structure for it includes; expanding the frame of Morgan's own autobiography, the events or records of her study trip interweaved, and three oral narrations of her family members. Through narrating her personal story and listening to her family members, Morgan finds and builds her aboriginality, she also gives voice to all the indigenous people of Australia who were silenced for a long time (Arthur 1987). The following sections will examine Sally Morgan's depiction of stolen generation and reveal how Morgan's quest for her ancestral history in *My Place* enriches our understanding of this historical event in the indigenous heritage. It also uncovers the struggles she and her peers encountered on daily

basis for not being white and how they had to wear certain masks to disguise themselves.

Sally Morgan and My place

Sally Morgan was born in 1951 in Manning, Perth region, the capital of Western Australia. She received her Bachelor and postgraduate diplomas in Psychology. She is currently a professor in the school of indigenous studies in the university of Western Australia. She published her first book, *My place* in 1987 and soon it became the best-seller, it was reprinted thrice in the same year (Sonoda 2009). Overall, more than half a million copies of the book were sold in Australia and abroad. Not only this, only within ten years of its publication, *My Place* became part of the school syllabus in the departments of Literature and Australian cultural studies (Jaireth 1995).

In *My Place* Sally Morgan reveals how she has discovered her Aboriginal identity. The first section of the book is dedicated to give an account of Sally's younger years; some general facts about her childhood, school and home. It also indicates that Sally was not aware that she was Aboriginal until the age of fifteen. Before this age she used to say that she was Indian, when her friends asked about her identity in school (Morgan 1987). However, when she realizes she is an Aboriginal, she goes further deep in this quest and decides to write a book about her past;

What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? I'd never lived off the land and had been as hunter and a gatherer. I'd never participated in coroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I'd lived all my life in Suburbia and told everyone I was Indian. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean for someone like me? (165)

The book contains interviews, storytelling and journeys to the indigenous landscape. For instance, she interviews Gladys, her mother, Daisy her grandmother and Arthur, her great uncle. Sally begins her emotional journey to decipher her past and history, however as she digs deep in her research, she realizes that the past of her family is not a very pleasant one. She discovers that her family has been a part of the displacement and removal policy of the Australian government known as stolen generation. These children were forcibly taken by the white government and placed in missions of the Anglo-Saxon people, who taught them their Christian values, and utterly brainwashed them. For example, Daisy lived with Drake-Brockmans, a white family that owned Corunna-Downs Station. When they took Daisy, they told her mother that they take her to be educated, but in reality she was to become a servant for the white family:

They told my mother I was Joined to get educated. They told all the people I was Join to school. I thought It'd be good Join' to school. I thought I'd be somebody real important ... (Instead) I did all the work at Ivanhoe, the cleaning, the washing and the Ironing. There wasn't nothing I didn't do. From when I got up in the morning till when I went to sleep at night, I worked. That's all I did really, work and sleep. (Morgan:380)

Sally Morgan presents a story that is relevant and relatable to both indigenous and nonindigenous people of her country. She urges the native and the white people to evaluate the history of indigenous people, which has been told to them and to decide whether or not it is an accurate one. She also wants to persuade the indigenous people to seek their lost identity and regain it, even though it might be painful. She insists on the importance of retrieving the past

of the family and reconciling with one's true identity and homeland; "How deprived we would have been if we had been willing to let things stay as they were. We would have survived, but not as whole people. We would have never known our place" (Morgan:6).

The struggles of the Aboriginal people in My Place in the light of Fanon's theory

Frantz Fanon states that blackness is related to vice while whiteness is virtue. Therefore, most of the black people and their children, who live in the white society, try to imitate and appear as the white people. Further, the best means through which a black person can survive and thrive in a white community is by distancing themselves from their black heritage and embracing that of the white man (Jean-Marie 2017). From a very young age, Sally Morgan experiences that in school. She narrates one day in her second term in school, Miss Glasberg, one of their teachers, asks the kids to draw a picture of their parents and the best ones will be chosen for display on parents' 'Night'. Sally puts an arduous effort to draw the best picture, however having the black culture in mind and drawing it accordingly, Sally's drawing upsets the teacher who ultimately scrunches the drawing and puts it in the bin. "Oh, my goodness me. Oh no, dear, not like that! Before I could stop her, she picked up my page and walked quickly to her desk. I watched in dismay as my big-bosomed, large-nippled mother and well-equipped father disappeared with a scrunch into her personal bin. I was hurt and embarrassed" (17). This incident, Sally writes, has resulted in developing her dislike for school and a sense of boredom and loneliness prevailed in her. She says that, after this incident, she began to hate school as "I felt different from the other children in my class" (25).

Moreover, as her siblings attend school and she herself grows up, Sally encounters further challenges because of her complexion. The kids at school start to ask her about her nationality and race, which inevitably puzzles her as up to that epoch of her life, she had always thought that she is the same as the other kids, She is an Australian citizen. However, when she replies to the kids and says that they are Aussies like them, they would say "Yeah, but what about ya parents, bet they didn't come from Australia?" (40). Therefore, when they return home, Sally questions her mother about where they are originally from and the mother is pained to hear that. However, after much agitation she reluctantly tells Sally:

Tell them your Indian.

Are we really Indian? And when did we come here?

Along time ago. Now, no more questions, you just tell them your Indian. (41)

Sally says the children were satisfied and they were happy when we told them we are Indians as they just did not want us pretending we were Aussies while in reality we were not. The mask of being Indian, thus helps the kids in this stage of their lives to be accepted by their white playmates at school.

When she grows up, Sally becomes more and more aware that she is different from her peers at school and the white kids commence to distance themselves from her. She asserts: "By the time I turned fourteen and was in second year high school, I was becoming more and more aware that I was different to the other kids at school...When I looked at other people, I realized how abnormal I was" (99). However, in reality this abnormality has no basis, it is only the stereotypical images of the black kids that lead to this self-loathing. Fanon claims as they are black, these young children associate every ugliness to blackness and thus to themselves, which is resulted from the media depicting blacks as villains or ministers. Fanon states: "As I begin to recognise that the Negro is the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro" (Fanon:189).

Sally's grandmother also adds insult to Sally's injury when she tells her that she is cursed with blackness and cannot undo it; "You bloody kids don't want me, you want a bloody white grandmother, I'm black. Do you hear, black, black, black!"(112). Through this emphasis upon her color, she reveals the long-term calamities that she had faced and the evil treatments she had received because of her colour.

The grandmother later reveals to the kids that they are Aboriginal and not Indians. This bitter fact deeply annoys the kids as Sally says "God, of all things, we're Aboriginal!, there was a great deal of social stigma attached to being Aboriginal at our school"(112). The other parents prevent their children from mingling with the Morgans' as they are a bad influence. For instance, Mary's father warns Sally to cut her relationship with his daughter instantaneously. Mary's father one day approaches Sally and says:

Well, Sally I want to ask a favour of you.
Sure, anything.
I'd like you to stop mixing with Mary.
Why? I was genuinely puzzled.
I think you know why.
No, I don't.
You're a bad influence, you must realise that (119).

This act upsets Sally so much that she begins a proper investigation to know more about Aboriginal people and asks her grandmother "What people are we?"(122). Sally later realizes that her family had paid a huge price for not being white in Australia. There were times, when her grandmother, Daisy, sincerely wished to be white as she knew "If you're white, you can do anything"(125), which inevitably indicates if you are not white, you cannot do anything. Daisy had developed inferiority complex and is still afraid of the whites and believes she is nothing without their approval. Inferiority complex is a psychological status where humans feel inferior and/or inadequate. It either comes from a real physical defect or it is only the environment (one's surroundings) that imposes upon them to feel that they are less intelligent or important than their peers (Plumptre 2021). One day Sally is shocked when she sees a group of white people from the Jehova's Witness Church in her yard, who want to see her grandmother. They inform Sally that they visit her Nanna every week who is a very kind old lady that perpetually donates for the church. Sally is disturbed to hear this and dismisses them right away by telling them that her grandmother is not at home (125). Sally is sad as she thinks that her grandmother still believes in the superiority of the white people; her donation to the white people, in Sally's perception, is to induce the white to accept her.

Sally later wants to find out the real cause of her grandmother's long-term fear and digs deep in her journey to know her roots. She later finds out that blackness has caused her grandmother a great deal of pain and anguish. As a child she was part of the stolen generation and forcibly taken from her parents to live and work for a white man's household far away from home. Although for her entire life she has been a law-abiding citizen, Daisy is still afraid of the government people (The whites). Since previously she has been a victim of color and racial segregation, the fear is deeply instilled in her psyche. When Sally informs her about the scholarship for the Aboriginal people that she is applying for, Daisy is threatened and begs Sally not to tell them anything about her grandmother. "You won't ever tell them about me, will you, Sally? I don't like strangers knowing our business,

especially government people. You never know what they might do” (161). Sally is frustrated and thinks about all the agony her grandmother and the Aboriginal people have undergone because of the Australian government. “I began to wonder what it was like for Aboriginal people with really dark skin and broad features, how did Australians react to them? How had white Australians reacted to my mother in the past, was that the cause of her bitterness?” (163).

Sally wants to know more about her past in order to be able to cope with her present, however, Daisy is reluctant and prefers to bury her past. She, therefore seeks help from her mother, Gladys and her grand uncle, Arthur, who is Daisy’s only brother. While she talks with her mother, Sally is heartbroken to know about her tragic history and how she had also been a victim of her face and race. Thus, Sally and her mother beg Daisy to inform them about the past of the family and who they really are. Gladys tells her mother “ All my life, you’ve never told me anything, never let me belong to anyone. All my life, I ‘ve wanted a family, you won’t even tell me about my own grandmother”(174). Arthur who is present in their house also attempts to persuade Daisy to tell them about her past, but she still repudiates and then Gladys says: “Sometimes, I think she thinks she’s white. She’s ashamed of her family”(174). Daisy so desperately desires to be white as whiteness seems to give her worth and provide her with security. Therefore, she does not want to be reconciled with her painful black history. This very example confirms Fanon’s idea where he says: “For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white” (Fanon:30). However, as Daisy keeps rejecting their requests and is psychologically hurt, Gladys tells Sally that it is in vain and they ought to let go of the past. “Can’t you just leave the past buried? It won’t hurt anyone then”(179), but Sally says it has already caused us a lot of harm; “It’s already hurt people. It’s hurt you and me and Nan, all of us, for years, I’ve been telling people I’m Indian! I’ve a right to know my own history”(180).

Sally is determined in her endeavours to relate to her Aboriginal heritage and find out as much information about her own people as possible. For that purpose, she commences to write a book to contain everything about her roots, which are hidden, distorted or stolen for years in the white dominant society of Australia. When she is asked about her reasons for writing a book about her past, Sally says there is nothing written about the Aboriginal people from their own personal view and the country’s history is all about the white man. She asserts that no one knows how their life was, who are their real ancestors, their history has been lost, and people are too scared to say anything about it. Further, the government does not release the files of the Aboriginal people that go way back as there are myriads of instances when the police has abused the Aboriginal people, whereas they were supposed to protect them. The government still has a terrible policy in dealing with the history and heritage of the Aboriginal people; therefore, Sally wants to raise public’s awareness about this fact in writing the book (193).

Sally later embarks on a journey of collecting data for her book, for which she and her mother, Gladys visit their native land, interview some of their relatives, and record their stories. This pilgrimage to their family place is very important for them because, through listening to their stories and the events occurred in their lives, they come to the realization that these family members are real, even though they have never met them in person. They attain a sense of kinship and attachment to the land of their ancestors.

She starts writing the book by first reordering Arthur’s story that takes three months, as they go through every single detail. In the recording, Arthur says: “My name is Arthur Corunna. I can’t tell you how old I am exactly, because I don’t know. A few years ago, I wrote to Alice

Drake-Brockman, my father's second wife, and asked her if she knew my age. She said that I could have been born around 1893-1894" (206). Here, we can clearly see the damage the stolen generation has brought about to the lives of the Aboriginal people. The government did not keep any record of their birth certificates; therefore, these people are completely ignorant about their age. Arthur adds that prior to the separation, he was living happily with his Aboriginal parents and sisters in the Corunna Downs Station in the Pilbara, that is in the north of Western Australia. He also recalls that his Aboriginal name was "Jilly-yung, which meant silly young kid, as "When I was a child, I copied everything everyone said"(207).

Arthur adds that he remembers how the white people tortured the black people and chained them behind the police station. He also says that he was sympathising, even as a child, with these innocent black people and wondered what wrong they might have done to be treated like that. He also says that very often he found himself crying for them as they were so brutally tortured by the policemen. He even states that sometimes the blacks were killed by the white people as some kind of sport "We'd hear about white men goin' shooting blackfellas for sport, just like we was some kind of animal"(213). Arthur goes on narrating his life story saying one day the government people came and took him away from his family, which was quite shocking and irrevocably planned. When they took Arthur and other kids, the government people told their parents that they will bring them back soon:

"They told my mother and the others we'd be back soon. We wouldn't be gone for long, they said. People were callin', 'Bring us back a shirt, bring us this, bring us that.' They didn't realise they wouldn't be seein' us no more. I thought they wanted us educated so we could help run the station some day, I was wrong"(214).

They took them to the missionary and the first thing they did to them, Arthur says was to 'christen them'. This too is a part of the forced assimilation policy that the colonizers resorted to and wanted to make everyone Christian. There were also bullies at the mission and they were treated like servants or even animals. Arthur then offers a proper insight about how life was at the school and how hard they had to work from dawn to dusk. They were never educated and reduced to mere objects or machines to work. He also states that life was extremely difficult in the missionary; therefore, when he is about fifteen or sixteen years old he decides to flee the camp (219). After his escape from the missionary, his life does not become any better. At times, he had to disguise himself and take on another name and character in order to survive and to be given work. In some other days, he would remain without food and/or shelter in the cold for days. Arthur's story is a long and catastrophic journey of a man who tries to survive the segregation and the prejudice of the white people in general and the government men in particular.

Sally and her mother continue their journey and revisit Corunna station in order to attain further detail about their history. They meet Jack, who is a relative of their ancestors and whose Aboriginal name is Jiggawarra. Jack adds some missing parts to their story and says: "Most around here remember the kids that were taken away" (257). While informing them about their past, Jack tells Sally and Gladys that there are some Aboriginal people who are ashamed of their own language and only use the language of the white; "Shame! There's mulbas here know their language and won't speak it. I'm not ashamed of my language. I speak it anywhere, even in front of white people" (257). This fact verifies Fanon's ideas when he says most of the colonized people believe that if they can master the language of the colonizer and speak it well, they would become a whole person. However, in reality embracing the language and culture of

the colonizer only distances them further from their own culture and would not help them to be integrated in the White society(Fanon:38).

Jack later speaks for Sally and says it is really heartbreaking not knowing who you truly are. He gives example of hundreds of other children, he sees on television, who are descendants of the Aboriginal people and are now lost in the white culture. "It was real sad. People like you wanderin' around, not knowin' where you come from. Lightcoloured ones wanderin' around, not knowin' they black underneath. Good on you for comin' back, I wish you the best"(259). The masks of whiteness have only intensified their fear and internal sufferings. He commends Sally for deciding to remove all the obstacles and reuniting with her black heritage and past.

Sally is then able to retrieve some part of her own mother's story and how she was left in a school, which was run by English nuns. Gladys recalls some of her painful memory in the school and remembers how the nuns treated them with cruelty. The kids were left hungry very often and the food was scarce. Life at the school was exceedingly difficult for the Aboriginal children as they did not have anyone and most of them had been taken away from their families who lived hundreds of miles away. She also adds that the Aboriginal parents had to obtain a special permission to be able to travel, which meant the children were left waiting for their parents' visits (292). Gladys says that as they were growing up, the young girls could not grasp the changes happening to their bodies and no one in the school bothered to inform them anything. "Even though I was twelve now, no one had told me the facts of life. We were totally ignorant about the things that could happen to our bodies"(310). Because of these maltreatments and the color prejudice, Gladys says she has always wished to be white as she was certain that whiteness will secure her and other girls a better life. "I wanted to be white. As a child I even hoped a white family would adopt me"(350). Even as a teenager she was still cursed with blackness and when a stranger asks her about her nationality, she would be reluctant to tell the truth and sometimes would say she is a Heinz variety. She lied about her nationality as she says: " There are still times when I'm scared inside, scared to say who I really am"(351).

As Sally continues in her endeavours to figure out her true self and race, something serious happens at home. Her grandmother becomes dangerously ill and as she is taken to the hospital in their neighbourhood, she is treated with a lot of cruelty and brutality. She tells Sally that she was ignored at first and when she shouted for help some men, who were only registrars, came and took her to a room, removed all her clothes and started to thump her chest, which "hurt real bad"(361), as she asserts. Daisy describes her torture in the hospital as:

They was all strangers,' Nan interrupted, 'Strangers, Sally! There I am with nothin' to cover me. I felt 'shamed.

The bastards,' I said angrily. 'Why on earth didn't you yell at them to stop, Nan?'

'I did! I begged them to stop, but, even though I was sobbing, they wouldn't leave me alone. I was hurtin' real bad. My chest feels so sore. (361)

Daisy tells Sally that she was expecting this sort of behaviour and they have harmed her all her life because she is black. "They cruel, Sally, real cruel.They was only doin'that cause I'm black! That's what it was, Sal, it was my colour!"(362). She is helpless and believes that the situation would stay the same for eternity. This is exactly what Fanon points out regarding the color prejudice that haunts the psyche of the marginalized. Fanon claims: "Color-coded racism

would ultimately bring about an inferiority complex in black-skinned subjects who found themselves unable to change the discriminatory status quo” (Mirmasoomi and Roshnavand 2014).

Sally is inconsolable to hear that incident and as she cannot do anything for her Nan, she keeps on writing her book in order to raise public’s awareness about the misery of the Aboriginal people in Australia. She adds the final recording, which is the story of her grandmother, Daisy Corunna. “My name is Daisy Corunna, I’m Arthur’s sister. My Aboriginal name is Talahue. I can’t tell you when I was born, but I feel old”(372). She says that she was about fourteen or fifteen years old when they took her from her home, the Corunna station to Perth to live with a white family. She also says that throughout her staying in the school, which was run by English female teachers, she was not treated like a human being because she was black and therefore she always wished that she were white. “I wanted to be white, you see. I’d lie in bed at night and think if God could

make me white, it’d be the best thing. Then I could get on in the world, make somethin’ of myself”(381).

Daisy reveals that in those days it was considered a big triumph and privilege if white men desired to have sexual intercourse with these black women. However, if these black women gave birth to children, the government and the nuns would take them away, if the children were white, but if they were black as their mothers, they would be given to their mothers. “You was only allowed to keep the black ones. They took the white ones off you ’ cause you weren’t considered fit to raise a child with white blood” (384). On the other hand, the black men also were affected by this and really felt low, when most of the girls preferred the white men. The lighter skinned black girls would never look at the black man and wait for the white ones and some other girls would stuck in the middle. For instance, Daisy says “I was too black for the whites and too white for the blacks” (384). Fanon refers to the same phenomenon where he states that the lighter skinned people of Antilles do not make connections with the darker skinned blacks as they think of themselves superior and closer to the white people (Fanon:26).

Daisy asserts that a considerable number of black men, who were a bit lighter than the others, disguised themselves as white and asked for the girls’ hands. Daisy says that they were not to be blamed as they were really miserable and led a very bad life because of being black. She also discloses that one of their black girls managed to find a white husband, but she had promised him previously to cut all her ties with us the blacks and her native people. She visits her black sisters one day to bid them her final goodbye and all begin to cry as she leaves. “We was all cryin’. She’d promised her husband never to talk or mix with any natives again”(384). Yet, Daisy says, we could not blame her as it was clear for all of us that he could not have married her otherwise.

Daisy’s story is yet another painful journey of a black child who, for most of her time, goes through calamities and adversities because of colour prejudice. She recounts myriads of hurting memories as a child, teenager and even when she is the mother of Gladys. However, she repents all the times she wished to be white and looked down upon herself, as it neither ameliorated her situation nor changed the white man’s perception on them. Therefore, now she urges her grandchildren not to make the same mistake and to be proud of their colour, race and

origin. She also begs them not to forget their history and pass their legacy on to the coming generations. As for herself, she is very tired of this world and yearns to die and begin the next life. She sighs “You know, Sal ... all my life, I’ve been treated rotten, real rotten”(399). She hopes that things might change in the future and they might not be owned by others. “ I was owned by the Drake-Brockmans and the government and anyone who wanted to pay five shillings a year to Mr Neville to have me”(397).

Just before she dies, Daisy talks about an Aboriginal bird that God sent him in order to tell her that she is going back home. “Home to my own land and my own people. I got a good spot up there, they all waitin’ for me”(405). This is a symbol of her union with her past and in the very end Sally also says “I heard it, too. In my heart, I heard it”(406). Sally is also related to her past and after her long journey of writing the book, she too is happy to announce her Aboriginal roots and is proud of it.

Conclusion

Although a number of critics question Morgan’s authenticity and argue that she is probably not aware of her being a part of the political movement for the indigenous rights, yet *My place* breaks the silence of the stolen generation and brings about a new era of interest and curiosity about the stolen generation. Morgan also invents the literature of reconciliation with the indigenous identity and opens a space for it in the country’s literary culture. Morgan is to be credited to construct her aboriginality through writing and listening to the storytelling of her relatives, although she has never lived within her indigenous community. This individual experience of Morgan’s is also the expression of an aboriginality, which can be shared by many more indigenous people from the stolen generation, who lost the connections and traces to their past. Further, this unprecedented way of depicting the stolen generation greatly influences the nonindigenous Australians to have a better and more accurate understandings of the past and culture of their country. The nonindigenous people previously did not have enough knowledge about the indigenous people and only related to the stories of the former colonists, but because of such stories now their consciences is awakened to the problem of native people in their country.

Works Cited

- Atkinson, Judy. *Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*. Melbourne: Spinife, 2002.
- Blasio, Francesca Di. "We Are Going by Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Aboriginal Epos,." *Australian History, Universal Poetry*, 2019.
- Brewster, Anne. *reading aboriginal women's autobiography* . Sydney: Sydney university press, 1996.
- Chair, Board, and Louise Markus. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare , 2018.
- Gosart, Ulia. "Indigenous Peoples: Attempts to Define." In *Biomapping Indigenous Peoples: Towards an Understanding of the Issues*, by Berthier-Foglar and Susanne, 12. Amsterdam: Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2012.
- Jaireth, Subhash. "The 'I' in Sally Morgan's *My Place*: writing of a monologised self." *Westerly* , 1995.

- Krieken, Robert Van. "The 'Stolen Generations' and Cultural Genocide." *British Journal of Sociology*, 1999.
- Kumar, Rajesh. *Australian Aboriginal Autobiographies: Reading Identity, Aboriginality and Belongingness*. New Delhi: Sangharsh Publication, 2015.
- Mirmasoomi, Mahshid, and Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand. "Blackness, Colorism, and Epidermalization of Inferiority in Zora Neale Hurston's *Color Struck*: A Fanonian Reading of the Play." *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (University of Tehran), 2014.
- Morgan, Sally. *My place*. Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Press, 1987.
- Plumptre, Elizabeth. "What Is an Inferiority Complex?" *Very well Mind*. July 18, 2021. <https://www.verywellmind.com/understanding-the-inferiority-complex-5186892> (accessed November 19, 2021).
- Renes, Martin. *The Stolen Generations, a Narrative of Removal, Displacement and Recovery, in Lives in Migration: Rupture and continuity*, 2011.
- Schaffer, Kay. "Stolen Generation Narratives in Local and Global Contexts." *Antipodes* (Wayne State University Press) 16, no. 1 (2002): 5-10.
- Sonoda, Hirokazu. "A Preliminary Study of Sally Morgan's *My Place*." *The Otemon Journal of Australian Studies* (Otemon Gakuin University), 2009.
- Van Krieken, Robert. "The 'Stolen Generations' and Cultural Genocide." *Childhood* (The university of Sydney), 1999: 297-311.