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Quarterly Essay 65 The White Queen: One Nation And The Politics Of Race



Synopsis

Most Australians despise what Pauline Hanson stands for, yet politics in this country is now orbiting around One Nation. In this timely Quarterly Essay, David Marr looks at Australia's politics of fear, resentment and race. Who votes One Nation, and why? How much of this is due to inequality? How much to racism? How should the major parties respond to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim voices? What damage do Australia's new entrepreneurs of hate inflict on the nation? Written with drama and wit, this is a ground-breaking look at politics and prejudice by one of Australia's best writers. "This woman went to prison, danced the cha-cha on national television for a couple of years, and failed so often at the ballot box she became a running joke. But the truth is she never left us. She was always knocking on the door. Most of those defeats at the polls were close-run things. For twenty years political leaders appeased Hanson's followers while working to keep her out of office. The first strategy tainted Australian politics. The second eventually failed. So she's with us again" – the Kabuki make-up, that mop of red hair and the voice telling us what we already know: "I'm fed up." "David Marr David Marr has written for the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age and the Monthly, been editor of the National Times, a reporter for Four Corners, presenter of ABC TV's Media Watch and now writes for the Guardian. His books include Patrick White: A Life, The High Price of Heaven, Dark Victory (with Marian Wilkinson) and five Quarterly Essays: His Master's Voice, Power Trip, Political Animal, The Prince and Faction Man.

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Customer Reviews

A well thought out essay shining some light on Pauline Hanson's Party. Also in this volume were some excellent responses to Stan Grant's essay in the previous publication.

Not great David Marr. No real insights. Nothing new or perceptive about One Nation or it looney leader. Bit flat.

Although a David Marr essay is always a pleasure to read, "The White Queen" fails to fulfil as much as others. Marr brings little that is new to the table. He does, however, explain the Hanson phenomenon to those readers who do not have an intimate grasp of Australian politics. First and foremost, despite comparisons by many, Pauline Hanson is no Donald Trump. She will never be elected Prime Minister of Australia. She will never be able to effectively take over the existing conservative political parties. She also has none of Trump's strange appeal that he has to some of the American electorate. Yet, there are some Trump similarities. Her supporters have typically left school early. They're not poor either. They have often made a lot of things. They also hanker for a dim and distant earlier time. Just as Trump supporters want to "make America great again", Hanson's supporters want to go back to a time when there seemed to be greater certainty. They are also overwhelmingly white and Australian born. "They want to go back to a country that had factories and tariffs and a sure place for them" a country that was white. And they feel the loss of this Australia fiercely. Marr outlines the features of the Hanson philosophy very eloquently. This is perhaps to be expected as Marr is a fine journalist. However, there is little additional analysis to be found beyond what is largely known. Suffice to say that Pauline Hanson is a crank with a small but loyal following. She will never amount to much more than she presently represents. One can only hope that her demise will be sooner rather than later.

This essay by David Marr is well worth reading, especially by those of us puzzled by the impact of the Hanson phenomenon. Who'd have thought, after Pauline Hanson's brief period in the Australian Parliament as the member for Oxley between 1996 and 1998, that she'd be elected as a Senator in 2016, together with three other members of the Pauline Hanson One Nation party? And who'd have thought that the state of the Australian Parliament is such that Senator Hanson would have such influence in Australian politics? Who are Pauline Hanson's supporters, and why do they support her? Please explain. In this essay, David Marr sets out to explain some of the mysteries, some of the appeal of the Hanson phenomenon. Her supporters are overwhelmingly white and Australian born. They are also people who, while they left school early, have largely been successful. They are not poor. Generally, they want a return to a distantly remembered Australia, one in which Australian industries were protected by tariffs, one in which they felt safe, secure and part of a majority. How much support does Pauline Hanson actually have, and does it matter? While Pauline Hanson's following may be comparatively small, it matters. It matters because neither of the major parties in Australian politics have had the courage to tackle Pauline Hanson over some of her more outrageous claims. It matters because not challenging some of Pauline Hanson's claims and assertions sounds and feels like the major parties agree with them. It matters because many of those views are racist and are divisive. Since this essay was published, we've had the unedifying spectacle of Senator Hanson wearing a burqa into the Australian Senate as part of her move to ban the burqa. While this was broadly condemned, she also had plenty of support across Australia. The Hanson phenomenon will continue, while ever she can tap into the fears and discomfort felt by many as the world they once felt comfortable in continues to change. Tapping into anti-Muslim feeling at a time when Muslim extremism is driving many terrorist attacks is guaranteed to get attention for the foreseeable future. Worth reading, and thinking about. Jennifer Cameron-Smith

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