Activists holding back change

THE biggest shame about the reconciliation movement is that Aboriginal activists – not white people – are the most divisive force at play.

As the dust settles on another year of Invasion Day/Australia Day, it seems that just when some headway in race relations is made, an activist will remind everyone of Australia’s racist past and how discrimination and racism are still a part of black people’s everyday lives.

The sabotage by activists comes into sharpest relief when you have prominent Aborigines such as Noel Pearson, federal government advisor Warren Mundine and Alice Springs councillor Jacinta Price decrying welfare dependence and encouraging their people to take more responsibility for their lives and circumstances.

As wider Australia nods in approval, up step the activists spouting toxic rhetoric and seeking to breathe life back into an argument just as it appears to be close to a resolution.

The buzzword in discussions on Aboriginal issues is “reconciliation”, but of the following two statements, which one seems more likely to inspire people to reconcile?

1. “I want to pull my people out of the crippling state of mourning and I don’t want anyone to feel guilty or bad for feeling joy and celebrating a country we love.” – Jacinta Price.

2. “Invasion Day, Survival Day – call it what you will, today marks the beginning of our cultural, physical and social destruction. Invasion Day is every day of the year for our mob.” – activist Gracelyn Smallwood.

Throw in Anthony Mundine’s refusal to stand for the national anthem in his next fight, and it’s clear that the main ones fanning the flames of race tensions are on the Aboriginal side.

Dr Anthony Dillon, an Aboriginal lecturer at the Australian Catholic University, is not a fan of changing the date.

He lamented the fact that so many thousands could march to change a number on a calendar, but the same fervour wasn’t shown to stop Aborigines living in unsanitary conditions, assaulting and killing each other, and abusing their children. Spot on.

In the ideological battleground that our proud national day is descending towards, people are starting to wonder when the activists are going to make some concessions.

White Australia has officially said sorry for the “stolen generations”; Aborigines have been awarded Native Title by white judges and politicians; billions of dollars have and are being spent on helping improve Aborigines’ lives and get them off welfare; there are Murri courts specifically to cater to Aboriginal cultural sensitivities; and there are seemingly countless government and non-government groups offering support, money, counselling, housing, training and education.

But despite all this, activists still claim deeply ingrained white racism and “intergenerational trauma” caused by colonisation 220 years ago completely negates all the good work.

Not only is this of questionable truth, it gives less fortunate Aborigines a great excuse for their circumstances rather than anything that might have to do with themselves.

Critics of modern-day claims of racism wonder how much so-called discrimination occurs because of a person’s behaviour or appearance rather than their skin colour.

Recently a black man in the US did a social experiment and discovered people were much nicer to him when he dressed well, as opposed to getting around looking like a gangster.

People do judge each other by how they look, but often it’s got nothing to do with skin colour.

If you’re drunk in a park, abusing passersby and trying to bum smokes off everyone, it’s very likely you will be shunned and criticised, but it’s not because you’re an Aborigine.

A white person doing the same thing would cop the same scorn and derision.

It appears reconciliation can only occur on Aborigines’ terms, but figuratively jamming a finger into someone’s chest every time they offer the hand of friendship and apology is not the way to encourage reconciliation.

Such virulent activism also has the effect of shaming Aborigines into subscribing to the victim narrative.

If you’re an Aborigine who doesn’t believe your race is holding you back and that white fellas aren’t responsible for life’s difficulties, are you going to break ranks and say so?

You’d be very brave if you do.

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