

Thousands flock to The Block to see the truth revealed about Australia's Apartheid-like treatment of First Nations people

This is the real Utopia!

By National Indigenous Times reporter Geoff Bagnall



The premiere of John Pilger's *Utopia*, his fourth offering featuring the reality of living conditions for Indigenous Australia, brought more than 4,000 First Nations people, their families and supporters to see the premiere fittingly held at Australia's first Aboriginal land grant, the now vacant Block in Redfern that was once Aboriginal housing.

A world-renowned journalist and filmmaker, Pilger's exposé of the treatment of Australia's First Peoples once again showed the huge disparity between black and white Australians.

The film opens with Mr Pilger ostensibly "looking for holiday accommodation" at one of Sydney's wealthiest suburbs, Palm Beach accompanied by a real estate agent. The weekly rent on the house he is shown is \$30,000 per week. Yes there were meant to be that many zeros, and yes, that does say per week.

The scene cut then takes us to Canberra which Mr Pilger describes as white Australia's Utopia, leafy, green, wealthy and the seat of national government.

The next stop is that other Utopia, the one of the film's title, in the Northern Territory, a place Mr Pilger tells the viewer "is the poorest place in Australia".

It is a place of the worst, most dilapidated housing, if it could even be called that. Sheds with no electricity, no water bar a communal outside tap, cooking done on a fire in the yard.

This is one of the communities the government has withheld services from because the people refuse to have their land stolen with a 99 year lease.

Utopia Elder and former Shire President, Rosalie Kunoth-Monks was present at Redfern for the film's premiere describing it as a "milestone".

"I believe it's a milestone in our battle to express ourselves to the authorities. But it's not only that, it's much more than that," she said.

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“Get a life. Don’t listen to the victim brigade” - then Shadow Indigenous Affairs minister, Tony Abbott said, claims Pilger

Among the many terrible examples of the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians depicted in John Pilger's *Utopia* perhaps one of the most disturbing was the revelation by Mr Pilger about how Tony Abbott, now the self-proclaimed Prime Minister for Indigenous Australians, reacted to the conditions at Utopia when he was serving as Shadow Indigenous Affairs Minister in the John Howard Government.

Mr Pilger told the thousands who had flocked to the Block at Redfern to view the premiere of *Utopia* of an incident when the United Nations Special Rapporteur, distinguished Native American professor, James Anaya visited Utopia. Mr Abbott was also present.

"When James Anaya came to Australia," Mr Pilger told the audience, "he went to Utopia and was shocked at the living conditions and said 'why is this going on? This is racist'. Mr Anaya had come to Utopia in the wake of the infamous Northern Territory Intervention and declared it was racist.

"The reaction of the then Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Tony Abbott was 'get a life, don't listen to the victim brigade'. Those were his words.

"This man is now the Prime Minister of Australia," Mr Pilger said.



John Pilger and Rosalie Kunoth-Monks discuss the reactions from the thousands of people who attended the premiere of *Utopia* at The Block in Redfern last Friday. Image: Geoff Bagnall

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