

Alternatives to anti-Māori themes in news media

Theme 5

‘Good Māori/Bad Māori’

In this negative theme, Māori who are seen as happy with their lot, ‘fitting in’ or achieving in settler society are described as good, while Māori who resist, seek restitution, demand recognition or do not achieve are bad.

The same person or group can be described as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ from moment to moment. When the speaker is vague about how many people are ‘bad Māori’, they can then dismiss protesters as a minority who lack support from their people.

How this is being said in the news

‘Good’ - law-abiding, polite, happy, rural, older, hard-working, dignified, co-operative, punctual, clean and tidy, footing it with the rest of us.

‘Bad’ - poor, sick, lazy, urban, young, criminal, aggressive, complaining/protesting, bludgers, stupid/dumb, greedy, dishonest.

Examples

- ‘It’s time to knuckle down, Hone. Go look at your colleague, Te Ururoa Flavell, as an example of someone who does the hard yards and is mightily respected for it.’ John Armstrong, *NZ Herald*, Oct 23, 2010.
- ‘No longer is Harawira the fire-wielding, foul-mouthed attack-dog, but the considered, studious critic seeking cross-party support.’ *Otago Daily Times* online news, July 31, 2010.

What does this assume?

- Pākehā have the right to judge Maori.
- Good Māori don’t make a fuss.
- There are always ‘bad’ Māori; Māori don’t have occasional bad apples as Pākehā do.
- Good Māori fit quietly into Pākehā society.
- Bad Māori make poor decisions that reduce their life chances and outcomes.
- Good Māori don’t need ‘special treatment’.

What does this do?

- Makes it normal for Pākehā to judge Māori in ways Pākehā do not apply to themselves.
- The existence of ‘good’ Māori implies it is possible for any Māori to ‘fit in’.
- Blames Māori for social inequities.
- Represents protest and dissatisfaction as arising from a minority of Māori.
- Encourages Māori to discipline and judge each other.

Other ways to talk about this

- Māori are diverse, and like any group, have a range of opinions.
- Judge Pākehā by the same criteria as Māori are judged.
- Passing judgement on minority groups is a privilege of the dominant group; ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are defined by Pākehā and serve their interests.
- Is being Māori relevant to telling this particular story?

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See www.trc.org.nz/theme-5-good-m%C4%81ori-bad-m%C4%81ori

Submit your own examples of this theme in the media and suggest your alternatives. Suggestions will be moderated and uploaded to the site.