



Kathryn lives in Balmain. She was on her way to Orange Grove Market after yoga. Later she may go a writers workshop in Callan Park

Christian beliefs

The author of *Stuff White People Like* rates Inner Westies!

After having been officially sanctioned hate objects for the duration of the Howard years, you'd think we **latte-belt elitists** would have had enough of being slagged off. But if hits on Christian Landers' blog, sales of the resulting book, and attendances at his recent Sydney Writers' Festival lectures are anything to go by, we urban progressives love nothing more than being mocked as the Fair Trade-coffee drinking, *Mad Men*-watching, vintage T-shirt wearing, fixed-gear bike riding, yoga-practicing vegetarians we truly are. At the end of his recent field trip Down Under (which, of course, included a visit to Newtown) we asked the author of *Stuff White People Like* what he made of the locals...

How do Australian white people compare to their foreign cousins?

"Since I'm writing about a very specific type of white person, they tend to be the same wherever you go. Though you guys do have some fantastic slang, specifically 'try-hard'. Australians were interested in trying to see if I could pick up on any Aussie eccentricities. This was particularly funny for me as a Canadian since we always ask the same thing from Americans."

Australian white people like to congratulate themselves on having a sense of proportion and irony lacking in their earnestly PC American counterparts. Is this smugness justified?

"It's tough to make a conclusive judgement. I spent all of my time in Sydney and Melbourne, which probably gives me a very skewed view. It would be like only visiting New York and San Francisco and making a judgement on the US. (Huge gay population! Great art scene! So many heroin addicts!)"

Do you think Aussies and Canadians share a comic sensibility?

"There are many similarities. In both cases the countries are able to recognise their size relative to the rest of the world and that brings about a certain sense of self-deprecation and humor that can be hard to develop in America which is a true super power. Being Canadian means that you have to be an observer because you know that the rest of the world isn't watching you, so it's probably a good idea for you to watch them and make a funny comment."

Did you get to partake of any white person activities in Australia?

"I almost bought an awesome cardigan at a vintage shop but, alas, it didn't fit. I was unable to ride a bike, but in true white person fashion I was able to criticise a number of fixed-gear bikes for not being as cool as mine."

Do you ever worry you're handing ammo to the culture warriors of the Right?

"I think that it's important to make sure that the Left is capable of being satirised. Anyone who spends this much time patting themselves on the back and reaffirming just how correct they are needs to be reminded that they can be wrong or pretentious. So I don't think I'm giving ammo to the Right, but reminding the Left that we can be assholes too."

What do you make of your success with the very demographic you're lampooning?

"Self-deprecating humor is in the book [as one of the things white people like]. So it's pretty covered. Usually people who don't get the book or the blog are the wrong kind of white people or... what's the word? Idiots."

Interview: Nigel Bowen Photo: Ben Cregan

Stuff we like

If Christian Landers lived in Leichhardt, what would he be blogging about?

Like Christian says, white people are remarkably similar whether they reside in Newtown, Greenwich Village or downtown Toronto. But we got to thinking about what would be blog-fodder for Landers if he moved from LA to Leichhardt. Here's four likely suspects...

1. Loving forms of transportation no-one uses

Inner Westies love **light rail and bike paths**. The fact that no-one except a handful of, respectively, rubbernecking tourists and schoolkids who haven't qualified for their P plates yet uses either of these just goes to show that **many more millions of dollars** of rate and tax payers money **must be spent immediately** to extend the light rail through to Leichhardt, Lilyfield and Rozelle and construct enough cyclist-friendly thoroughfares to encourage everyone to start pedaling that 40km to work every morning. If one must be so *déclassé* as to purchase some sort of internal combustion engine powered vehicle, make sure it's a retro-looking **Vespa**.

2. Debates in pubs

Traditionally, debates have been held in public squares, university lecture theatres and town halls. But there's something **stuffy bourgeois** about debates staged in these venues. A debate in a pub, however is completely different, because pubs – even the type that charge \$6 for a schmiddy of beer and, um, host debates – are full of real, knockabout characters rather than the **overeducated wankers** typically attracted to debates. Indeed, older inner westies will often grow misty eyed at the recollection of the bohemian milieu that would turn up to debates at the (original) Harold Park Hotel in the Eighties.

If you're thinking about putting on a debate in a Glebe pub, you may be wondering what the topic should be. It should always be 'Australia's appalling treatment of **asylum seekers**'. Just make sure you arrange a private room well away from the main bar to avoid any interjections from the wrong sort of Inner Westie.

3. Marvelling at how multicultural the area is

Sure, the Inner West might now be **more Anglo** than an Australia Day race riot at Cronulla, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't congratulate yourself on how utterly unracist you are to live in an area that was, decades ago, home to a wave of white, Christian migrants. Of course, if you really want to demonstrate your cred, it's important to establish that you're not impressed by any but the most **authentic expressions** of said culture – ie – "Don't get me started on that sterile Disneyland simulacra of an Italian town square that so absurdly calls itself The Forum. In fact, I refuse to set foot in any of those overpriced tourist traps on Norton St. Everyone knows if you want authentic Italian food, you go to Haberfield."

4. Keeping Callan Park ours

There are many serious issues facing the world today but none so important as making sure the State government and/or property developers don't get their grubby hands on the primo bit of **waterside real estate** that is Callan Park. It's not as if we Inner Westies are unreasonable, so we're completely open to the park being used for something that provides some benefit to people unfortunate enough not to live within walking distance. Perhaps a **'city farm'** or **'sustainable living centre'** if anyone can figure out exactly what they are. Just so long as it doesn't involve anyone who's not a resident of Balmain or Lilyfield using the park, wreck the view, or lower our property values, we're completely open to suggestions.



Christian Lander was in Australia recently. He made a special visit to Newtown.

Like all white people, Inner Westies **love to recycle**. As Christian explains, it means they can "save the earth without having to do that much." *Stuff White People Like: The Definitive Guide to the Unique Taste of Millions* is published by Hardie Grant Books. **RRP \$24.95**