

NO SPACE FOR RACISM

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A joint initiative by
Western Young People's Independent Network and
Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria



Western Young People's Independent Network



EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY
COMMISSION
VICTORIA

NO SPACE FOR RACISM

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Written and researched by Susan Carland and Kavitha Chandra-Shekeran



equal
opportunity
commission
victoria



Western Young People's Independent Network

YOU
ME
AUSTRALIAN

Living in harmony

**Auspiced by the Inner Western Region
Migrant Resource Centre**

**This Project is proudly supported by the Commonwealth
Government's LIVING IN HARMONY initiative, which aims to
promote community harmony.**

acknowledgements

Titiana Varkopoulos	Drama Teacher
Kate Armstrong	Dance Teacher
Samantha McGuffie	Maribyrnong Youth Services
Marion Singer	Photographer

WYPIN wishes to gratefully acknowledge the support provided by Inner Western Region Migrant Resource Centre and the Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs for this project.

Published by the Western Independent Young People's Network
February 2003

ISBN 0-9750589-0-8

Copyright © 2003 Western Independent Young People's Network

This material (including photographs) is copyright and written permission from the publisher must be obtained before reproducing any part of it.

All photos appearing in this report were taken of the young people as they participated in the peer-education workshops. The words that adorn the photos are excerpts from the anti-racism rap songs the young people developed during the workshop.

WYPIN has chosen to maintain the privacy of the young people quoted in this report by referring to them only by age, gender, and ethnic background. WYPIN obtained written consent from the young people and their guardians to use their photos and statements for media and promotional purposes.

Western Independent Young People's Network
Level 2, 289 Barkly St, Footscray 3011
Ph (03) 9362 0257, Fax (03) 9687 9286
Email: wypin@vicnet.net.au
Web: www.vicnet.net.au/~wypin



3	contents	<hr/>
4	list of acronyms	<hr/>
4	organisations	<hr/>
6	project background	<hr/>
6	understanding racism	
7	the effect of racism on young people	
8	laws relating to discrimination	
8	the need for anti-racism education	
9	using peer-education to combat racism	
10	project structure	<hr/>
10	aims	
10	anti-racism youth forum	
10	peer-education workshop	
12	experiences of racism	
13	employment and racism	
15	structural and institutional racism	
18	gender and racism	
19	reasons for racism	<hr/>
20	young people's recommendations and summary	<hr/>
20	education	
20	school leadership	
20	government	
20	employment	
21	law-enforcement agencies	
21	general	
22	conclusion	<hr/>
23	references	<hr/>



list of acronyms

CLD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DIMIA	Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
EOC	Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria
ESL	English as a Second Language
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
RDA	Racial Discrimination Act 1975
RHA	Racial Hatred Act 1995
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WYPIN	Western Young People's Independent Network

organisations

The Western Young People's Independent Network (WYPIN) was started in 1989 by a group of refugee and migrant young people in the Western suburbs of Melbourne who were interested in challenging racism in the community, and empowering young people to develop programs and activities in line with their needs and aspirations. Working on the principles of youth empowerment and youth advocacy, the programs and activities are designed and implemented by young people.

WYPIN is well known for using drama and performance with young people as a community education tool. WYPIN's performance 'Time & Space' provides an alternative form of expression for the performers for who English is their second language. WYPIN is experienced in working with CLD young people to explore issues around race and ethnicity through drama.

WYPIN has also facilitated programs and discussions that recognise indigenous Australians as the first Australians and that Anglo-Australians were also once new settlers/migrants. Discussions around Australia's Black/indigenous history have helped refugee young people feel more accepted in the mainstream community rather than feeling like an outsider/The Other. WYPIN proactively works to combat racism and promote mutual respect in all of its projects.

Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria (EOC) is an independent body set up to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunity in Victoria by providing a fair, impartial, confidential and free complaint resolution service.

The Equal Opportunity Commission informs and educates Victorians about their rights and responsibilities through publications, workshops, consultancy services, community outreach programs and awareness campaigns.

we're all different, don't discriminate.
try to relate instead of hate.





project background

understanding racism

Australia has a long history of accepting refugees and migrants to its shores, with Victoria alone boasting a diverse population made up of people from more than 208 countries, speaking over 150 languages, and following more than 100 faiths. By and large, Australians are proudly multicultural and celebrate their diversity.

Despite this, racism, discrimination and prejudice continue to be an ever-present reality for refugee and migrant young people living in Australia. Young people experience racism and discrimination in overt and covert forms. Both are equally destructive, and have the potential to cause long-term social and psychological effects. Experiences of racism and discrimination instil in refugee and migrant young people that they are an outsider or 'The Other', even though they consider Australia to be their home.

Whilst racism still exists within society, it is argued that racist ideologies (opinions that rank races as superior and inferior) are not scientifically defensible but are instead a response to social conflict and crisis (Davey, 1983). The lack of scientific evidence for the biological nature of race was formerly established in 1964 by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), where it was declared that the genetic differences between individuals within a local population are far greater than the differences between the so-called races of humans (Davey, 1983). UNESCO also stated that "far from being divided into a number of discrete 'racial' types, mankind as a whole is a fairly homogenous species" (Davey, 1983:19). Thus, racism has been defined by many as a set of pseudo-scientific doctrines (Piper, 1998).

Therefore, race should not be viewed as a

... biological or genetic category, but rather, a way of interpreting differences between people which creates or reinforces inequalities among them. In other words, 'race' is an unequal relationship between social groups, represented by the privileged access to power and resources by one group over another. Race is socially constructed, created (and recreated) by how people are perceived and treated... (Marable, 2001:1)

The fact that race is a socially-constructed phenomenon and without scientific merit does not lessen the impact racism has on individuals and communities. Racial discrimination can be defined as

... any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social cultural or any other field of public life. (Diaconu, 1999:2)

the effect of racism on young people

Racism and discrimination can significantly add to the resettlement issues young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds already face. Resettlement issues include:

- Culture shock
- Language
- Accommodation
- Employment
- Social and racial discrimination
- Financial worries
- Legal Issues
- Identity loss
- Isolation and grief
- Intrusive memories of the past, as a result of torture and trauma
- Major family disruption/separation and family members still suffering in their home country

An important part of a young person's development is feeling part of the community and that their opinions are valued by society. "When people don't feel connected to others in a positive way... they may feel there's nowhere to turn when frustrations and conflict arise" (Kowalski, 2001:6). Racism works against feelings of connection to one's community, and can create a feeling of not being part of mainstream society, resulting in young people feeling isolated.

In addition to creating feelings of disconnectedness and isolation, racism and discrimination can seriously impact on young people's health and mental health, and places "minorities at risk for mental disorders such as depression and anxiety" (Surgeon general's report, 2002:1). It is proposed that racism jeopardises the mental health of minorities in the following three ways:

1. Racial stereotypes and negative images can be internalised, denigrating individuals' self-worth and adversely affecting their social and psychological functioning
2. Racism and discrimination by societal institutions have resulted in minorities' lower socio-economic status and poorer living conditions in which poverty, crime, and violence are persistent stressors that can affect mental health
3. Racism and discrimination are stressful events that can directly lead to psychological distress and physiological changes affecting mental health

(The Surgeon General's report, 2002:6)

As well as increased instances of psychological distress and depression, self-reported instances of interpersonal racism have been shown to be associated with raised blood pressure, stress, poorer self-rated health, and a greater number of reported days spent unwell in bed (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002).

Exactly how the socially-inflicted trauma of racism is related to health is little understood. It has been suggested that "longterm exposure to inferior treatment and a devalued status is damaging to self-esteem, invalidates self-worth, and may block aspirations" (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002: 7). It is also believed that discriminatory acts may produce a sense of threat within the victim, causing responses such as fear, distress, anger and denial. These responses may produce physiological responses (for example, cardiovascular or neurological) that will consequently affect health (Karlsen & Nazroon, 2002).

Karlsen and Nazroo (2002) also postulate that the negative health effects of racism occur because of internalisation of racist experiences. They go on to state that individuals who acknowledge the racist nature of their experiences report higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, compared with those who internalised or denied them.

laws relating to discrimination

Australia has made strong commitments to protect the rights of its communities through the initiation and signing of various legislation. Whilst such Acts are designed with the benefit of all of Australian society in mind, it is minority groups, such as refugees and migrants, that especially have a need to be protected by such legislation.

As a country that has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Australia has agreed (amongst other conditions) to:

- Not engage in any act or practice of racial discrimination against individuals or groups, and to ensure that public authorities and institutions do likewise
- To ensure effective protection and remedies for victims of racial discrimination
- To take special measures as necessary to ensure that disadvantaged racial groups have full and equal access to human rights and fundamental freedoms

Australia has also enacted the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) and the Racial Hatred Act 1995 (RHA). The RDA makes racial discrimination unlawful and applies to everyone in Australia. It stipulates that no one is entitled to racially discriminate against someone where their human rights are infringed.

The RHA amended the RDA by allowing people to complain about racially offensive or abusive behaviour. This Act covers public acts that are done because of a persons race, colour or ethnicity, and are reasonably likely to offend, insult, intimidate or humiliate the person.

On a state-level, the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (Vic) made it against the law to discriminate on the basis of race or religion. Further to this, Victoria has introduced the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. This act took effect on 1 January 2002, and acts to grant rights to victims of racial or religious vilification and provides them with a means of redress, as well as making all Victorians responsible for not committing acts that promote contempt or hatred.

Whilst the above policies indicate that Federal and State governments clearly prohibit racism and discrimination, the quotes made by young people during the anti racism project indicate that racism and discrimination are still prevalent in the wider society.

the need for anti-racism education

In recognition of the seriousness of racism and discrimination, the Anti-racism Youth Peer-Education project was initiated to address issues of racism and cultural diversity amongst refugee and migrant young people and the way in which racism impacts on their development and mental health.

The project was also initiated to provide an opportunity for refugee and migrant young people to voice issues of racism and have their experiences validated. More importantly, the project aimed to support young people to handle experiences of racism in positive ways through community education. Karlsen and Nazroo (2002) postulate that the negative health effects of racism are a result of the internalisation of the experience among those who would tolerate racism. Thus, the existence of social networks that allow victims to acknowledge and discuss experiences of racism with others may act to positively combat the link between health and racism. They also state that individuals who clearly recognise the racist nature of their experiences were reported to retain higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy,

compared with those who internalised or denied them. Thus, “the availability of sources of social support will influence the health effect of racism” (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002:8).

The project intended to give young people the opportunity to educate their peers as a way of shifting the negative experiences of racism and discrimination some young people had faced, into a positive education experience for themselves and their peers. Commenting on this practice, Gartner states, “it is through the act of helping others that really powerful learning takes place for the helper” (1996: 49). It also allowed the young people to discuss their experiences and ideas relating to racism and discrimination in a supportive, constructive environment.

using peer-education to combat racism

WYPIN has a history of using peer-education as an effective manner of educating young people about racism, discrimination, and tolerance. Through “peer programs, students become role models, and imbue the programs with their own idiom and style” (Gartner, 1996:47). Young people have the ability to convey information to their peers in the most youth-friendly way available; ensuring that the concepts conveyed will be received in the most desirable and effective form by their target audience.

Peer-education is also beneficial for both the educator and the audience. It has the ability to be an affirming and enriching experience for both parties. The educator “feels good about themselves for being able to help someone else, a key element in all peer programs” (Gartner, 1996:47), whilst the audience has a capable role model to which they may refer. Both the educator and the audience also benefit from an expansion of their knowledge.

The benefits of peer-education for both educator and audience are numerous, and include:

- a) development of emotional supports and friendships,
- b) improved self-esteem and confidence for mentor and mentee, and
- c) an increased set of knowledge and skills (Barton-Arwood, 2000)



project structure

The project was a joint initiative by the Western Young Peoples' Independent Network (WYPIN), and the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria (EOC), as part of the DIMIA - funded *Living in Harmony* scheme.

aims

1. To educate young people against racism and the value of diversity and mutual respect
2. To raise the significance of racism and how it impacts on young people and their development
3. To support young people who experience racism to deal with racism in a constructive way
4. Development of a youth anti-racism peer-education program, through the use of drama and youth based popular culture.

The project consisted of two parts:

anti-racism youth forum

30 young people from secondary colleges in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne attended the Anti-Racism Youth Forum. Young people enthusiastically participated contributing to discussions on their experiences of racism and ideas for dealing with discrimination.

The participants explored and expressed their feelings on racism through artwork, music and games. A presentation from the EOC and a local indigenous young woman were also used to educate and encourage discussion.

The forum was used as the platform to launch the peer-mentoring workshop.

peer-education workshop

20 young people attended the three-day workshop to be trained as anti-racism peer-mentors. The three-day workshop consisted of a visit to the EOC to learn about the Victorian Racial and Religious Vilification Laws and the role of the EOC in assisting people to combat discrimination.

Through discussions and guest speakers young people examined the reasons for racism and ways to deal with racism through community education. Young people formed small groups to develop short presentations using drama, hip-hop dancing, and rap music to raise the following issues:

- Dispelling racist misconceptions, i.e. refugees take jobs
- We are all one race
- Importance of tolerance and acceptance of diversity

Rap music and hip-hop dancing were chosen as they were started by an oppressed group, the African Americans, in the United States, as a way to voice their opinions. This was in line with the theme of the peer-education workshop. This style of music is also an easily accessible form of education for young people.



The young people voluntarily became involved in this project because they wanted to fight racism and discrimination in positive ways. They strongly believed that young people could be instrumental in positive social change. The workshop was seen by the young people as a valuable and cathartic experience to speak out about their experiences, as well as giving them the opportunity to educate other young people who may be unaware of the ramifications of their actions.

The result was a fun and interesting approach to an important issue that the young people will present to a number of schools around Victoria to educate their peers and the wider community about racism, discrimination, tolerance and harmony.

Throughout the project young people explored and raised a number of issues around racism and made positive recommendations to combating racism in the community. The following is an account of the issues and recommendations raised.



young people's voices

experiences of racism

Throughout the youth forum and the peer-education workshop, participants highlighted their experiences of racism and discrimination in Australia:

I've had people at school, even people I thought were my friends, tell me that Asians are taking over Australia. How would Australians feel if they had a war and weren't let into another country so they could survive?

(young male of East Timorese background)

Kids from my school used to say, 'Wog, go home!' to me when my family and I arrived in Australia, and they threw rocks at our house. It made it really difficult to study, and I didn't want to leave the house. One of my friends nearly failed their year because the teasing was so bad. We came to Australia to escape war, and this is what we have to face?

(young male of Serbian background)

I used to get beaten up every day at school because of my background.

(young woman of Aboriginal background)

People will stare at me on the street, and assume I am uneducated and can't speak any English, just because I'm a Muslim woman who wears a headscarf.

(young woman of Somali background)

I don't want to bring my family here anymore, because Australia has been a sad experience. I'd like to send them to Europe or Canada, maybe.

(young male of Iraqi background)

It makes you not want to go outside, knowing that you may be a target of racism.

(young male of Sri Lankan background)

No one wants to feel different and laughed at.

(young woman of Vietnamese background)

Strangers on the street will tell me to go back to my own country. 'Which country is that?' I ask them. 'I was born and raised here'. I'm sick of feeling like I don't belong in Australia.

(young woman of Eritrean background)

Many of the young people stated that being victims of racism created feelings of isolation and adversely affected their self-esteem, making them feel like they didn't belong and were not welcome in Australia. Racism in Australia often reminded young people of traumatic experiences in their home country, making resettlement more difficult.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged community members being seen as getting special assistance, more than mainstream community members, also perpetuated discrimination. More

community education is required around the need for protective and special measures in order to assist and support disadvantaged groups, so they are not viewed as getting unreasonable, favoured treatment.

Whilst a number of the young people articulated experiences of racism, they were eager to use such experiences as a starting place for positively combating racism. The young people incorporated these experiences into presentations to be performed and to educate other young people. A number of recommendations relating to policy change and community education were also identified.

employment and racism

Discrimination relating to employment is a major issue for young people, as often part-time and casual work offers critical financial assistance to remain at school, as well as potentially allowing young people to contribute to family finances. A number of young people claimed that they are discriminated against because of their cultural backgrounds or religious attire.

I feel that people don't want to employ me because I'm young and I'm a Muslim. I think they have all these ideas about who they think Muslims are, so none of them will employ me for a job, even though I have good references, and I'm a hard worker

(young male of Iraqi background)

I want to keep studying, but I don't get enough money from Centrelink. I'm finding it really hard to live with the small amount of money I'm given. I just don't get enough money for all the expenses I have. But I'd really like to keep studying.

(young male of Afghani background)

I received \$290 a fortnight, and my rent is \$85. I don't have enough money for the things I need; I have to buy all my food, and things for school, as well as my transport everywhere, and I also have pressure from my family back home asking me to send them money. It's hard, a lot of pressure, because if they send me home after three years, and I haven't been able to get a job, I'll have no money for my family. My mother tells me to think about my future, and to try to get a job. I wish I could find one.

(young male of Afghani background)

My parents came to Australia from Lebanon 6 years ago. As newly arrived migrants starting a new life with four kids, it's financially tough for my parents. My father works two jobs and my mother, who has limited English, stays at home to look after us kids. Coming here when I was 8 years old, I picked up English quickly and, much to my parents horror, I speak English with too much of an 'Aussie' accent. To help my parents out I decided to look for a casual/part time job with a large fast food chain.

As a young Muslim Lebanese woman I wear a hijab that covers my hair, but my face can be seen. It is with a hijab that I approached five fast

food stores only to be turned down despite having good communication skills and work experience.

Australia is my home, I have spent more than half of my life here and do not like to think of it as being a racist country, but after six months of trying to find a job I got sick of it and took up a friend's suggestion to apply for a job without my hijab on. So I applied for another job but this time did not wear a hijab and to my surprise was rung back and offered a job. Once offered the job I told the manager that in accordance with my religious beliefs I usually wear a hijab and asked if this was okay. The employer responded by saying that I hadn't worn one in the interview so why did I want to wear one now, but that I should turn up at the job and he would consider the situation. I was allowed to start the job and wear a white hijab in accordance with the uniform and, if anything, the hijab is hygienic, keeping my hair out of the food.

(young woman of Lebanese background)

As indicated above, most young people want to stay at school and complete their education. However, they need to be adequately supported to do this. Refugee and migrant young people often strongly desire to be at school, but discrimination they face either through employment or inadequate financial support can put young people in the unfair position of having to choose between employment and education.

Refugee and migrant young people's strong desire for employment coupled with a low level of English can make them vulnerable to unfair work conditions and pay. Often the only work available pays inadequately low wages and involves highly unskilled work, which can trap the young people in a cycle of low-paid, unskilled employment. Young refugee and migrant people need to be protected from such potentially exploitative situations and not have to choose between their education and adequate financial income.

Despite being a large employer of young people, many young people have been discriminated against by fast food chains because of their cultural or religious backgrounds, or who, for religious reasons, choose to wear hijab.

Young People's Recommendations:

- Increased education to employers about anti-discrimination laws relating to employment
- Young people from various cultural and religious backgrounds address groups of employers to change negative perceptions of people belonging to certain groups. Young people involved in WYPIN have already spoken at Rotary meetings in an attempt to address these issues.
- A whole of government response to racial discrimination, coupled with community education on the need for protective and special measures in order to assist and support refugees and migrants, who are disadvantaged groups
- Increased financial assistance available to young people at school

structural and institutional racism

“Institutional racism is support of implicit and explicit actions and behaviours by individuals and institutional policies and practices that by default or by design perceive and treat people in a manner that keeps them in an inferior status because of their race.” (Strumpf, 1999:3). A main issue of concern raised by young people during the workshop and forum was the lack of appropriate support available to them at school. Many refugee young people who arrive in Australia have had disrupted schooling experiences due to war, spending long periods of time escaping their home country and being in refugee camps. As a result of this, many refugee young people may be pre-literate or have limited language and literacy skills and find it difficult to settle into mainstream schooling. Limited funding to mainstream schools to address the specific learning needs of refugee young people results in high numbers of refugee young people failing to complete VCE and low school-retention rates. Inadequate educational support for newly arrived refugee young people in mainstream schools is discriminatory and prevents refugee young people accessing further education and employment and participating fully in the community.

Throughout the youth forum and workshop, the young people raised the lack of education about other cultures and their contributions to Australian society as a concern. They reported that the predominant focus on white, Anglo-Saxon history may reinforce ingrained racist attitudes by some Australians. They also highlighted their desire for school and community leaders to take an active stand against racism and discrimination

In addition to this, young people also expressed their concern over the treatment of refugee and migrant young people by police, citing experiences of victimisation because of their age and backgrounds.

Education

There are no ESL classes available at my school at all. I only arrived in Australia recently, and yet I have to go to year 11 English classes with everyone else, where we study Shakespeare. I have no idea what is being said, and am really struggling to keep up, but I have to hand in work to the same level as everyone else.

(young woman of Filipino background)

If they taught about other cultures at our school, it would help fight racism, I think, because it would show that other cultures have something to offer. It would make me feel proud of my culture if they taught about it at school. Most kids at my school haven't even heard of Eritrea!

(young woman of Eritrean background)

We only ever learn about Aboriginal people in relation to how white people took their land from them, never about their culture as independent of white people. We should learn about it as a subject. The fact that Australia's first people were black is important.

(young woman of Sudanese background)

They should teach about other cultures at school, but not as separate subjects, they should be part of the standard subjects we take. So we

should learn about the Arab mathematicians in Maths classes, and their styles of geometric patterns, and the Italian astronomers in science. We hear a little bit about some of them, but not very much. It should be in all areas of our education. There's just too much focus on British contributions.

(young male of Sri Lankan background)

The young people identified a need to further acknowledge indigenous Australian people, and to educate newly arrived migrants and refugees about indigenous Australian being the first Australians. Programs and discussions that recognise indigenous Australians as the first Australians will help refugee young people understand that Anglo-Australians were once also new settlers/migrants. Discussion identifying indigenous Australians as the first Australians also assist in challenging racist issues towards newly-arrived refugee and migrants.

School and Community

The principal needs to be clearly against racism; he should say something at assemblies and that sort of thing

(young female of Serbian background)

We should have anti-racism classes and discussions at school. These are things we need to talk about. I think that if these things were talked about at school, then maybe some of the racist people at my school wouldn't be that way anymore

(young female of Filipino background)

The government should give us funding for anti-racism awareness programs! We should have classes at school, with posters and stickers and websites, and there should be ads on TV

(young male of Eritrean background)

I think the police and the government need anti-racism education. They need to be role models for this sort of thing, but sometimes it can seem as if they are being discriminatory.

(young male of East Timorese background)

I think community leaders should be active in changing things. Sometimes it seems like all they do is talk.

(young female of Chilean background)

It is significant that young people have clearly identified their desire for strong leadership on the issue by their teachers and principals, as well as the need for schools to take a much more proactive approach in combating racism. Young people also need to feel that the government has their best interests in mind. It is important for schools to actively work towards the elimination of racism within their curricula, as well as governments taking a clear stand on such matters.

Police

I am of East Timorese background. The police automatically think I am a drug dealer when they see me walking in the street. I am sick of being asked for ID.

(young male of East Timorese background)

I will be walking in my neighbourhood and just because I am black, I get pulled over by the police and asked for ID, and where I'm going. In my culture, we don't look directly in people's eyes when you speak to them, you look down as a form of deference. But the police take this as me having something to hide.

(young male of Eritrean background)

I don't think the police are always fair. They pick on young people, especially young people that aren't white. They always come and ask me and my friends lots of questions, even when we're not doing anything wrong.

(young male of Somali background)

Nearly all the police are white males. You never see police officers from other cultural backgrounds, and very few women police officers. They seem biased against young people who aren't white, and they always ask so many questions

(young female of Eritrean background)

I had just walked into the shop when a security guard asked me to leave.

(17 year old of Sudanese background.)

Discrimination against young people in public spaces continues to be a serious issue for CLD young people. Young people continue to be moved on from public spaces such as shopping centres, and made to feel unwelcome.

There have been numerous citations by refugee young people of Horn of Africa backgrounds getting in trouble with the police because they don't look police in the eye when pulled over. Police and security guards need to go beyond seeing "ethnic communities" as problems and racially generalising specific groups. Greater education for police graduates and security guards needs to be undertaken to decrease misunderstanding between young people and law-enforcers. A conscious effort by the police and security guards to employ people of diverse backgrounds would also assist in improving relations between young people and law-enforcers.

Young Peoples' Recommendations:

- Young people strongly recommended the introduction of an innovative and all encompassing curriculum that highlights the contributions and achievements of all cultures and societies
- Programs and discussions in schools that recognise indigenous Australians as the first Australians, to assist refugee and migrant young people in understanding that Anglo-Australians were once also new settlers/migrants, and to challenge racist issues towards newly arrived refugee and migrants.
- Introduction of anti-racism education component into school curriculum
- People in positions of authority such as teachers, principals, the police and government to take an active role in combating racism, as well as being positive role models
- Police to undertake cultural awareness training to minimise victimisation of young people from certain religious and cultural groups, and to understand various cultural behaviours that may be misinterpreted negatively
- The active recruitment of police officers from various cultural and religious backgrounds of both genders

gender and racism

Many young refugee and migrant women are forced to endure the double burden of racism and sexism. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) have identified this double burden as the dynamic of race and gender intersectionality. They state that the very nature of the intersectionality of two forms of discrimination is qualitatively different to race discrimination or gender discrimination alone (HREOC, 2000), and needs to be considered as such.

In defining gender and race intersectionality, HREOC state,

It specifically addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, and economic disadvantage and other discriminatory systems contribute to create layers of inequality that structures the relative positions of women and men, races and other groups. Moreover, it addresses the way that specific acts and policies create burdens that flow amongst these intersecting axes contributing effectively to create a dynamic of disempowerment. (2000:1)

Young women in particular suffer many of the negative effects of the intersection of sexism and racism, for example as manifested in the portrayal of CLD women as submissive and exotic objects in the media. Negative perceptions of Muslims as being fanatical or oppressive can also cause identity difficulties for young people.

I am made to feel ashamed for wearing traditional clothes, such as my hijab.

(young female of Somali background)

I am sick of people thinking that just because I am a Muslim woman I am oppressed.

(young woman of Somali background)

Research into the area of refugee and migrant women's experience of discrimination has also highlighted the specific problems they face. These include female refugees generally reporting higher levels of psychological distress when compared with males (Mghir & Raskin, 1999), and that racially disadvantaged women may have greater difficulty in accessing services because of a range of barriers, including language difficulties, lack of financial resources and lack of access to information about their rights (HREOC, 2000). According to Karlsen and Nazroo, "women are reportedly more likely than men to internalise their experiences by accepting their subordinate status and unfair treatment as in some way 'deserved' and therefore not explicitly recognize or subsequently report them as being discriminatory" (2002: 2-3).

Such evidence indicates the specific issues refugee and migrant young women face, and the particular needs they have. Refugee and migrant young women require specific assistance to help them overcome the various forms of discrimination they face.

Young Peoples' Recommendations

- Specific programs and assistance for refugee and migrant young women that target areas of special need
- Media to stop promoting the ideal of the 'oppressed', 'fanatical' or 'exotic' Muslim in association with the hijab or other religious clothing



reasons for racism

The young people who attended the forum and workshop identified a number of key causes of racism:

- Fear of 'the Other'
- Jealousy - refugees and migrants are blamed for taking other peoples' jobs
- Ignorance
- Hatred
- Negative portrayals of certain cultural and religious groups by the media and government
- Desire for power over others
- Greed- not wanting to share resources
- Lack of understanding for the need of government support and vulnerability of refugee communities

The explanations for racism as identified by the young people above illustrate that forms of racism exist at all levels of society. There is the localised, personal racism such as fear, jealousy and ignorance, and racism at the level of leadership such as portrayals in the media, use of power, and negligence in creating understanding. Whilst it appears that there is a symbiotic relationship between these two levels, it is not clear which racism propagates the other- is it irresponsible leadership that leads to fear and paranoia in the layman, or is it the fear and panic in the layman that influences public policy?

Whilst it is clear that young people are only identifying what they see and experience and haven't placed any value judgements on the nature of racism, what is evident from their suggestions is that racism and discrimination are pervasive at all spheres of society.





young people's recommendations and summary

education

1. The development of a pervasive, non-compartmentalised multicultural curriculum for all schools that actively teaches and promotes the contributions non-Anglo-Saxon cultures have made to the development of the world, artistically and scientifically
2. Increased focus on Australia's Indigenous history in schools as a means of eliminating racism against refugees and migrants, as well as assisting refugee young people to understand that Anglo-Australians were once also new settlers/migrants
3. Anti-racism and discrimination workshops conducted in all schools, teaching young people about the nature and consequences of racism and discrimination.
4. Focus on laws relating to racism and discrimination and EOC education

school leadership

1. Teachers, principals and local leaders acknowledge the position they play as role models in the community in relation to handling racism and discrimination, and to take an active approach in tackling the issue publicly
2. Teachers and principals should regularly speak out against racism and discrimination during school assemblies and in class discussions

government

1. Government to address negative stereotypes, as well as promoting positive images, of refugees and migrants
2. Government to consider educating the mainstream community about Australia's international obligations to accept refugees and the reason refugees are forced to leave their home country.
3. Government to acknowledge the role racism and discrimination play in affecting refugee and migrant young people's mental health, and to act accordingly

employment

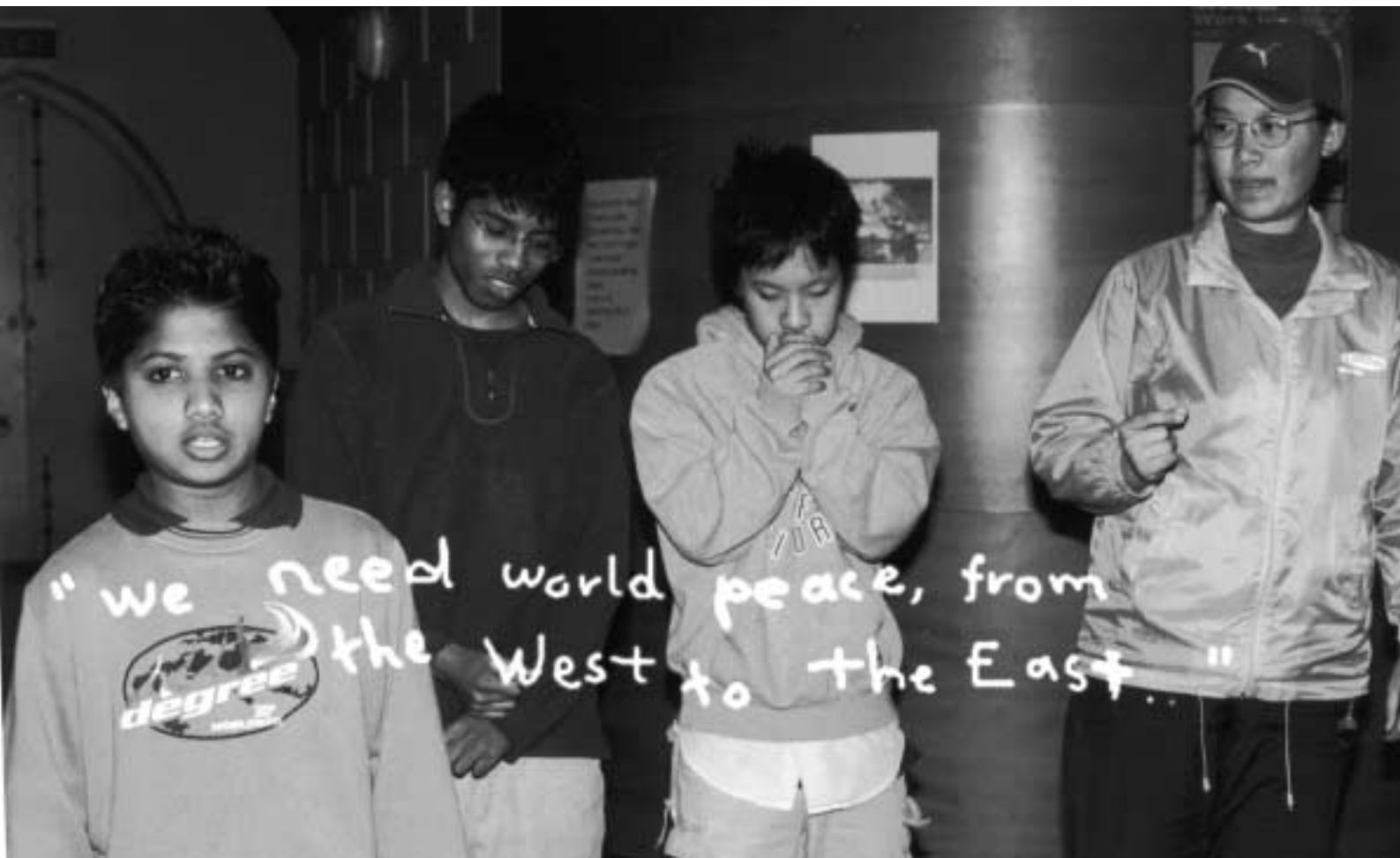
1. Education of employers about anti-discrimination laws relating to employment
2. Young people from various cultural and religious backgrounds to address groups of employers to change negative perceptions of people belonging to certain groups.

law-enforcement agencies

- 1 Police to undertake cultural awareness training to minimise victimisation and over-policing of young people from certain religious and cultural groups, and to better understand various cultural behaviours that may be misinterpreted negatively
- 2 The active recruitment of police officers from various cultural and religious backgrounds of both genders

general

1. Use of Internet and television for public education campaigns on racism and discrimination facing refugee and migrant young people
2. The on-going opportunity for refugee and migrant young people to actively contribute to and initiate positive social change and community education relating to racism and discrimination





conclusion

As reflected through the young people's quotes, racism is sadly an ever-present reality for CLD young people. Despite many being the recipients of racism the young people have addressed and challenged the issue in a positive way to bring about long-term change.

The project has provided an invaluable opportunity for refugee and migrant young people to voice their opinions around racism and develop innovative recommendations and strategies to deal with a critical issue.

Young people worked together to develop a community education tool to educate their peers on racism, discrimination, mutual respect and tolerance.

The young people involved will continue to mentor their peers, not only through public performances, but also through educating other refugee and migrant young people in the future on how to become peer-mentors.

It is hoped that through the young peoples' efforts, the wider community will be educated about the effects of racism and discrimination, as well as how to proactively address such issues. It is also hoped that the suggestions made by them in this report will be implemented for lasting social change.



references

- Barton-Arwood, S., Jolivette K., and Massey, N. G. (2000) "Mentoring with elementary-age students" *Intervention in School and Clinic*, September, 36:1
- Davey, A. (1983) 'Learning to be prejudiced- growing up in multi-ethnic Britain', Edward Arnold Pty Ltd: Suffolk
- Diaconu, I (1999) "The definitions of Racial Discrimination", Paper prepared for the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, United Nations, February 26.
- Gartner, A. (1996) "Converting peer pressure" *Social Policy*, Winter 27:2
- Gender and Race Intersectionality- Issues Paper, prepared for consultations for the World Conference Against Racism, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 21-24 November 2000, Zagreb, Croatia.
- Karlsen, S. & Nazroo, J. Y. (2002) "Relation between racial discrimination, social class, and health among ethnic minority groups" *American Journal of Public Health*, April
- Kowalski, K. M. (2001) "What teens are doing about violence" *Current Health 2*, March 27:7
- Marable, M. (2001) *Structural racism and American Democracy*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development: South Africa
- Mghir, R. & Raskin, A. (1999), "The psychological effects of the war in Afghanistan on young Afghan refugees from different ethnic backgrounds" *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Spring
- Piper, N. (1998), 'Racism, Nationalism and Citizenship- ethnic minorities in Britain and Germany', Ashgate Publishing: Suffolk
- Strumpf, L. (1999) Russell Ows Memorial Colloquium *The Impact of Institutional Racism and Employment and Educational Opportunities for Minority Youth* Annual Meeting, Academy for Education Development, Washington DC
- Surgeon general's report (2002) "Racism and Mental Health"
www.mentalhealth.org/cre/ch2_racism_discrimination_and_mental_health.asp

