



CREATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

TO: Legal Affairs & Safety Committee**RE: Inquiry into Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes**

Access Community Services
92 Wembley Rd, Logan Central, QLD, 4114
3412 8222

Approved by Social Services Director, Lisa WARD. [REDACTED]

Authored by Jantina KRAAI & Zac SCOTT – [REDACTED]

Access Community Services supports victims of vilification and hate crimes, and through casework and our work with various Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in the Logan and Ipswich areas of Queensland (through amongst others, the provision of settlement and youth programs to recent refugee and migrant arrivals), we are regrettably aware of racial vilification and hate crime experiences. Some of these experiences and stories that were recently shared with us (in the month of June 2021) through surveys and face-to-face interviews we share with the committee below; at the end of this document.

SUMMARY

Demographics & nature of incidents

- Respondents reflected a diverse sample where no two people reported identical ethnicities.
 - 60% of respondents reported a variety of ethnicities of African descent.
- 80% of our respondents were female, and 20% male.
- From the survey respondents 53% identified as Muslim, compared to 13% Christian, 7% Seventh Day Adventist, 7% Roman Catholic and 20% reported that they did not follow a religion.
- 84.6% did not report to the police.
- From all responses, 93% of incidents occurred in a public space.
- In regards to the question whether the racism experienced was a single incident or a repeated pattern of incidents; 86% stated it to be a repeated pattern of incidents.

Types of racial vilification and hate crimes

When describing racism, a distinction is made between covert and overt racism. *Covert* incidents are the ‘micro-aggressions’, remarks that are disguised as non-racist but are in fact racist. It includes staring, touching of hair, favouritism towards white peers, being ignored when waiting in line at stores, the locking of car doors or grabbing for purses when [someone of a different culture/race is] walking past, to name a few. *Overt* incidents are described as those incidents that are clearly racist and are direct remarks to the victim such as verbal abuse.

The issue of intersectionality appears in some of the stories; where a person identifies as a female, a Muslim (referring to Islamophobia), and of a different race or skin colour. This leads to an increased vulnerability to racial vilification and hate crimes.

Impact of vilification and hate crimes

The impact of racial vilification/hate crimes is far reaching. It causes a sense of non-belonging for victims; and creates a feeling of being “*an outsider*”, and the need to “*always trying to fit in*” as well as the inability “*to embrace [their] own culture*”. Others report a tendency to work harder than anyone else to get somewhere, to always be on their best behaviour and ensuring “*not to judge others*” but also to be more “*vigilant*” of their surroundings. Other impacts cited are shame, humiliation, feeling unwelcomed but also a changed belief in society and place in the community, as well as a decreased level of safety and security: “*I feel like a walking target with a hijab on*”. Others report to have given up and feeling “*numb*”. One respondent explained that the perpetrators “*do the hurting and then I have to do the healing.*”

Underreporting & a lack of community confidence

From the interviews we conducted and surveys collected, we especially see the issue of “low levels of reporting or underreporting and a lack of community confidence” (as also outlined in the Cohesive Communities Coalition’s report: ‘*Serious vilification and hate crime: The need for legislative reform*’) evidenced.

The reasons provided for non-reporting include; a lack of knowledge on how and where to report, including not knowing racism is something a person can report to the police at all. For recent migrant arrivals it was also noted that a lack of English skills and access to legal knowledge/information prevent from making a police report. Some respondents thought that a report could only be made if the incident included physical abuse/danger, or if it would lead to serious mental health issues/self-harm for the victim

A theme emerged about a lack of trust that the police will really listen, and if they were to listen, that they do not have the instruments to impact change, resulting in the police unable to “*do anything about it*”. Another reason provided for non-reporting is that of systemic racism: “*I hear the leaders/politicians of Australia share the same values and beliefs as the perpetrators*”, as well as the belief that the police is not “*an ally*” but rather operates from similar (racist) ideas and at times targets CALD people, which could potentially explain why there are currently no adequate measures in place to penalise perpetrators.

Another reason cited for non-reporting is that “*dealing with racism has become normalised for us*”, through repeated experiences, and regular ‘micro-aggressions’. This normalisation leads to becoming “*desensitised and learning to live with it*”. One more respondent felt that their experience was “*too personal*” to share publicly.

Effectiveness of current legal protections & future recommendations

Access Community Services wholeheartedly agrees with our communities and community members that we spoke to and received surveys from, that the current legal protections for vilification and hate crimes are insufficient. The lack of community confidence in for example the capacity of police to enforce current laws indicates that it is not effective, and unsupportive of victims. It is our position that current protections need to be revised and stronger criminal laws around vilification and hate crimes are implemented.

Suggestions to address vilification and hate crime more effectively, as we see them and as identified by our respondents, are; rehabilitation of perpetrators, training for police regarding cultural diversity but also to become more approachable, and setting up a CALD-focussed advocacy group (it was suggested that Access Community Services could potentially play a role in this), including the provision of funding for victim

support advocacy groups. Another important measure identified is the need to recognise racial vilification and hate crimes as a hate crime within the law, through for example a civil hate crime injunction; as some other countries currently have in place (an example mentioned was the USA) (and as outlined/recommended in the before mentioned Cohesive Communities Coalitions report). This would make imposing penalties on perpetrators possible, such as fines, imprisonment and payment of compensation to victims. *Additionally, we would encourage for inclusion of other categories, such as disability, within revised hate crime laws.*

Education was identified as a major need by almost all respondents. Education of both the general public as well as of perpetrators. Education will be foundational to decreased feelings of difference (prejudice reduction) and subsequent improved social cohesion. Educational approaches should be implemented as both proactive, preventative measures, as well as reactive, corrective instruments. Education on racism and cultural diversity should be incorporated in the curricula of primary and high schools, *“schools should address both, children in classrooms, and parents via community education”*. Education will be essential to fostering cultures throughout Queensland society where racism is not tolerated. With education, parents can begin fostering our most critical settings for healthy cultures; the home. As one respondent put it, *“it starts in the home”*. A mandatory educational program for perpetrators should be implemented. Other types of educational rehabilitation that were suggested include Community Service and volunteering with organisations that support CALD people. Another recommendation is to facilitate conversations between different groups (race/religion etc.) within society to allow for a decrease of *“fear of the unfamiliar”*.

Multiple respondents identified that biased and misreporting in the media is a major issue, and that it contributes to polarisation within society and incites racial vilification and hate crimes. Media propaganda focussing on differences within cultures and of a racist nature, should be stopped.

Experiences of Racism in Queensland

Runaway Bay, 2012.

I am 36 Year old, Congolese male.

Incident

I was working for a not-for-profit organisation in a promotions role. We were stationed at the Runaway Bay mall for one week, seeking donations from community members for refugees. A man and his wife approached us. This particular man stood out to me. Mostly people were avoiding our salesmanship, presumably wanting to avoid being “sold” something. But this man walked right up to us, with some intention. I presented the information about our organisation and our service. Then he began to speak. He yelled at me aggressively for what felt like 30 minutes. He said, *“The problem is not refugees. The problem is you people. You people have so many children. You black people come to our country. You black people just beg for our money!”* He was pointing his finger right in my face. I went numb. I remember his wife was smiling at me. He continued, *“You shouldn’t be here. You African people should all be deported. Who gave you the right to be in this shopping mall anyway!?”* He said so much more awful stuff and then he walked out of the shopping mall. I did not know how to respond. My colleague, who was also African, had come closer to me once the man had started speaking. But neither of us could say anything. What could we say? I had only been in Australia for 1 year, at this time.

I remember the man’s wife smiling and standing by her husband. She was not shocked but his comments. She was not intervening. I could only reason that they must have had previous conversations about these ideas and that these were very strongly-held beliefs.

No one intervened whilst the man was yelling at us. It was a shopping mall, people were walking by. Once the man had left, another gentleman approached us. He asked what had happened. He showed us empathy and gave us a grain of hope, when we were feeling very hopeless.

Impacts

My colleague and I now knew there people nearby who hated us. I had come to Australia with a degree. It had not been recognised. So now I was doing a job, which I was not very enthusiastic about and this man comes to me and tells me how worthless and unwelcome I am here in Australia. I wanted to leave Australia.

Our employer had us staying in a hotel for the week, whilst working the mall, at Runaway Bay. So I only had phone communication with my wife for the next few days whilst I travelled between the hotel and back to the mall where the incident had happened. I could not stop thinking about whether the man would come back, perhaps with a weapon. That was the nightmare. It was worse than the initial experience. My wife was suggesting that I come home to Brisbane, leave that toxic environment where this trouble had happened. But I was worried about maintaining my employment. I was balancing earning an income against my humanity and my dignity.

For me individually, if incidents like this had compounded, and I had not healed from them then I could flee to Congo OR Tanzania. The life there is more difficult, but I might be able to get a sense of belonging back. But for my children who are born in Australia that will never be a choice. They would not survive in East Africa. So when I attend local parks or shopping centres, I fear for my children being subjected to racism and hate and the lack of belonging that comes with those experiences of hatred. If their home is not Australia, then they have no home.

Reporting

I did not report the incident. I had been told for 30 minutes how worthless, second-class and unwelcome I was. I was completely powerless. I could not have the strength to report it, even if I had known how or where to, which I did not.

On another occasion, I reported a similar incident to a shopping mall's centre management. They removed the person from the centre, but to my knowledge that was all that was done.

Recommendations

I did not know that what was done to me was illegal as a hate crime. The public needs to know that this demonstration of racism is illegal and will not be tolerated, in Queensland. I expect that there were people who passed by who wished to support me, but no one knew what to do or how to help.

I think that after some time had passed if I was assured some safety protections and was empowered to do so, it would have helped me to talk to the man. I would have liked to tell him, that I am only different in that I am born in a part of the world where people are born black.

What has helped me the most since this, and other similar incidents, is every instance of being welcoming, every instance of being given the chance to feel that I do belong here in Australia. In the moment that someone provides me an opportunity, I believe that that someone believes that I have dignity, as a human being.

■■■■■■ Browns Plains

I am an 18 year old, Australian-Indonesian female, practicing Islam.

Incident

I was driving in the car with mum to exit the ■■■■■ car park in Browns Plains, and a man in his 30's, who was standing outside car, yelled: "Take your ■■■■■ thing off your head". We remained quiet and continued driving.

Impacts

We felt scared, threatened and upset. We felt shame and humiliation and being discriminated against, and hurt. This experience made me feel different. This happened because of my skin colour and religion.

This experience also made me try not to judge others.

Reporting

I did not report to the police, as I thought it too personal. Also I don't think the police would really take notice, if I reported it, or do anything about it. At the time I did not really think about the option of reporting either; I hope that if something ever happens again, I will be able to report it.

Recommendations

Advertise on what racism is, a way of treating people differently. Organize for different groups to come together and meet each other.

The police should do more.

Burleigh Heads, 2020.**I am a 30 year old Brazilian male.****Incident**

Three months after I arrived in Australia, I travelled with a friend to Burleigh Heads to see the sunrise. After leaving the headland by car to return home to Logan, we were waiting at a red light at the intersection of Goodwin Terrace & the Gold Coast Highway. My car was rear ended. The perpetrator performed a U-turn behind us and evaded the scene. I turned also and followed him for a few blocks. I pulled up beside him at another intersection. We each wound down our windows and then he spat out his window at me. Thankfully, the spit hit the outside of my car door, and not my face. I was shocked. I pulled over and the man pulled in behind me, rear-ending my car again and blocking my car from any escape. I got out of the car and so did the man. The man was shouting a lot of words. At that time, my English was not what it is now and he was so speaking so fast and aggressively that I was not hearing much of the content. My friend began crying. She was visibly upset. She told me that his reason for the rear ending and the spitting was because he *“didn’t like black people!”* The man fled the scene in his car. My friend recorded the man’s license plate number.

Impacts

In the moment, I felt I had no protections other than to fight back. I felt anger. I felt like I could only respond with violence. I did not understand much English, at that time. So I had no escape, no way to speak for myself. I did not attack the man, but at the time it felt like the only thing I could do.

Before I came to Australia, I believed that Australia was safe and peaceful. I think I was wrong. I don’t believe that anymore. Being subjected to racism was normalised for me growing up in Brazil. I thought I would be free from that here in Queensland. But I have now normalised it here also. I feel like there has been no more progress. I can see and feel covert racism often.

When I am in public and I wear nice clothes or drive a nice car or show that I have some money, I worry. I worry that people will assume that I must have stolen them, that to have nice things and to be black, then I must be a thief.

Reporting

We called the police, provided the license plate number and they attended the scene. The police informed us that the car matching that license plate number had been stolen and the thief had not yet found. The police were mostly concerned with why I followed the man after he had initially rear-ended us. It seemed like they didn’t understand.

The police told me that I could legally pursue the matter, pointing out that it might be worthwhile because of the presence of my friend as a witness. The police told me however that it would be difficult to find the perpetrator. The police communicated a difficult and lengthy process would be involved. I chose not to invest my time in this pursuit. It didn’t seem like there would be much of an outcome. I thought that perhaps the perpetrator would simply give some mandated, meaningless and empty apology, “I’m sorry”. But it would be an empty apology.

I think I would have pursued the judicial processes if I had had confidence that the corrective measures would have educated the man.

Recommendations

Education would likely be foundational to addressing this problem. When I see young people touting problematic or racist ideas on social media or in public, I think that these young people are simply parroting/reproducing

these words, these racist ideas. I think that at first they are just carrying on the messages of their ancestors. I think these young people don't really know what they are saying yet, but the problem is they are beginning to speak these wrong ideas. Teaching and learning from history is important and powerful.

I wish that the police had been more enthusiastic about tracking down the man. If I felt that the police were an ally I might have been more inclined to pursue the course of justice.

I worry that punitive measures like fines won't make any positive difference, rather it might just perpetuate racist feelings.

Gold Coast, 2014.

I am a 19 year old, Ethiopian-Somali female and my religion is Islam.

Incident

To tell you my experience of racism would require me to tell you the collation of incidences like being called the n-word by strangers and classmates, or being spat at by a when I was 13 by a stranger walking by, witnessing girls in the community bleaching their skin because of internalised racism, being yelled by strangers every second day or week calling me a 'terrorist', telling me to 'go back to where you came from', 'disgusting' 'extremist', 'n-word'. For every spike in terrorist activity, there is a spike in racist vilification and hatred towards me, a visible Muslim with my head scarf.

Choosing only one story is difficult. On top of the problem of having so many stories to tell, there is an intersectionality problem. Unless the perpetrator is clear about their insult, it can be difficult to know whether they are attacking my religion or race.

One story: I was around 12 years old and I went to the beach with my sister. We had already been experiencing some insults, being called 'terrorists'. My sister went to the bathroom and I proceeded to the carpark on my own. I heard a big car come behind me. There were a bunch of guys, in the car, with their windows down. At first I could not decipher their comments but eventually, I heard, "terrorist", "extremist" and "go back to where you came from". They were driving around the carpark. I felt circled, trapped. In the past when I had experienced similar events, I had always been in the company of one of my sisters, they had acted as a shield. Being alone made it more intense. I was lost for words. I think I was in shock. I was unsure what was going on. Surely, they would know I am a child. I went home and looked at myself and thought, "these people don't see a child, in a scarf." They see a Muslim (to which they believe is synonymous to terror and violence). They look at us through an entity perspective, as if one equals all. Even if I hadn't been wearing a scarf, I felt like they would have seen a black person, rather than a child.

Impacts

I always fall into the traps of feeling inferior, lack of belonging, unable to have the freedom of religion, freedom to take up space, freedom to simply go to the beach let alone anywhere without being intimidated or have hatred come my way.

Later that day, I had opened up a conversation with my family. I was confused and angry. I asked "Why do I have to go through these experiences, as a 12 year old?" To which they had only one answer to it. "Because they choose not to learn about us, they choose to listen to the media, and they grow up with this built-in racism"

As a child, my worldview was surrounded by my parent's separating, going to school and doing my homework. These are the things that were supposed to be most prominent, most influential, in my life and have the most significant impact. But instead when I put on my scarf, the world was quick to vilify that choice. This became

part of my identity. Public enemy number 1, since birth. I have learnt to just check-in with myself, learn how to love myself and talk to my family. The outcome is just the validation of my feelings and the normalisation of the acts. We end up relating to each other and sharing experiences. What this does just shows me that it is a classic case. That's all it does. I have to go do my own healing.

In life, I have to protect my peace. I do that by embracing my ethnic identity, my religion. I cannot remove hijab to please the people. However, even though I am doing everything I can to protect my rights and myself, it should not be my responsibility to deal with everyone else's unlearning of their racism/bigotry. It's like they do the hurting and I have to do the healing, reflecting, and self-love.

I often make choices to avoid potential for racism. I changed how i write my resume. I have added my father's name, Daniel as my middle name because i feel like i get more responses with that, than with my own name. I became scared of customer service as i knew i would encounter racism. So my experience played a big part in me not applying for any jobs as a high school student. I have just channeled my energy towards my community, with being a part of youth groups and advocacy through school, university presentations, and discussions about Islam in Brisbane City with a group where we would have people come and ask us questions - consciousness raising. We encountered racism yes but i was surrounding myself with strong Muslims and my siblings so i felt safe.

Reporting

I think I have never reported because I believe that the police would only respond to things that are "bigger". I did not know that racism was a crime. And even now with the knowledge that it is a crime i still would not report as I do not think they would be able to identify the perpetrators, so what could they have done for me, really.

If I cannot provide the extensive list of details that I understand the police typically request, then the report doesn't go anywhere. If I could not answer the Police's requests for details then I would feel helpless and hopeless. It is a protective, coping strategy to not start something which will only fail. So instead I would start "gas-lighting" myself. I would start minimising the problem. I would think to myself, "maybe I am making a bigger deal about it than it is. Maybe this will be my life and i just have to get used to it."

Recommendations

I wish I felt able to report the incident.

We cannot simply "eliminate" racism, which has deep structural roots. But what we can do to protect vulnerable people from racism would be by making the penalty for racism acts include a program that educates them on ethnic peoples, racism, historical facts, how the media is filled with fallacy, quiz them before on whether their hatred is based on their first-hand experience with an ethnic person or was it just through media. If they miss this session they should be fined. There should be a campaign about these penalties to deter potential perpetrators.

I believe there should also be a bystanders program that teaches people how to react to racism, besides picking up their phones to record.

I also believe there should be sessions for those who have experienced racism to sit together and talk about their experiences. We could also talk about resilience and invite external providers to educate us on how we can report incidents, and the benefits of reporting. Because at the moment we see these acts as normal and cope by minimising them.

Gold Coast, October 2018

I am a 28 year old woman, from South Sudan, and identify as a Christian.

Incident

A group of South Sudanese event planners had organized annual boat parties, which were held in different states annually, for about 3-4 years. These parties, which went for about 2 days, were attended predominantly by African youth from Queensland and other states, but others were also encouraged to join. In 2018 however, the news about “African gangs” was a hot topic and the police and the venues at the Gold Coast had decided to cancel venues and not allow many African youth into the venues.

My friend and I were tired, so we thought we would go and grab some food at one of the venues and head home. As we approached the venue, we got our ID’s ready to present. The security guard said “sorry we aren’t letting your people in”. Confused we asked: “what do you mean by your people?” He proceeded to ignore us, then rudely ask us to move away from the line. Meanwhile he was letting people of fair skin in. We stood for a while debating with him as the line was empty now. Two dark-skinned African people approached and were also refused entry.

The two security guards had called to police to escort us without giving a proper reason as to why we were refused entry. One of the patrons, who had seen what happened, came out and asked the security guard why there weren’t letting people of dark skin in, to which the security guard responded she should go back inside. When the police arrived, I asked the officer why weren’t allowed in the venue. His response was “If we let one or two of you in, the rest will come congregating over”. When asked for more clarification, he said “Africans, and there has been a major gang issue in Melbourne. I explained I was from Brisbane, and that I was offended by the assumption that I would be affiliated with such behaviours, as I disagree with anyone who breaks the law.

Impacts

It was shocking, and I and my friend could not believe what was said. I felt hurt, humiliated, discriminated against, belittled, and treated like an animal, unwelcomed and very confused. We eventually left in tears. I contacted management of the venue in the following days and they continued to stand by their decision.

A longer term impact is that I avoid certain places, to avoid putting myself in a similar situation. I feel I should not need to do this. The above story was one example that stood out the most, but I have experienced racism on various occasions. Especially when going out with a group of dark-skinned African people, but also when I visit little country towns with my partner. People just stare, and it is uncomfortable.

Reporting

I contacted the Anti-Discrimination Commission and Legal Aid for advice. I did this because I felt I was discriminated against, and I feel that I have to stand up for my rights. If I don’t do anything about it, nothing will change and I want to be part of the change. Legal Aid supported me and we went to mediation, with the owner of the venue and the security guard present. An agreement was reached, and the owner had to pay me compensation. Also when asked, I requested to go over the anti-discrimination policy of the company, which they changed and let me review. This was a stressful, lengthy, humiliating and draining process, especially because it was also in the media.

Recommendations

Government and community should take this issue more seriously, and have punishments in place, as well as update their policies to allow more serious punishments.

The media plays a big role also; groups of people are targeted in the media which leads to racist sentiments within society. For example during COVID, when the two African girls returned to Brisbane, current affairs programs explained “it might be because of their culture; they don’t understand social distancing”, whereas in actual fact no interpreters were used in communicating the message.

Education is important; to teach people it is not ok to treat people differently, and increase their understanding, so that they don’t act out of fear for people they are not familiar with.

If racist incidents like mine, where people are targeted based on their race, would be labelled and recorded a hate incident or hate crime (just like they recently did in America) that would be helpful. I think one of the punishments to start with should be something like community service; where a person has to volunteer with an organisation like Access, to learn more about cultural diversity, and other groups of people in society.

Brisbane, South East Queensland; School, Sports, [REDACTED] Garden City 2021

I am a 28 year old female from Ethiopia, and I practice Islam.

Incident

I have experienced a lot of racism, living in an Anglo-Saxon, white community. I was put in an ESCL class, even though English is my first language. In school I would be chosen last for lead roles. One example of this is drama class, where many students/people believed I should have been chosen for a musical, but I did not. I suffered from favouritism to white peers in sports, even though I have out-skilled them in the sport. In shopping centres I would line up and have white individuals behind me in line be served first. This occurred at [REDACTED].

In Jiu-jitsu training there were comments like: “All lives matter” and, “black on black crime.” when I attended with a fellow dark-skinned class mate. I was the first Black Muslim woman in a hijab to compete in Jiu-jitsu. Spectators have talked to the organiser to remove me or remove my hijab. One (anonymous) spectator looked in the rule book to find reasons to make it harder for me to compete. He found that the Nike symbol on my hijab was not allowed which would stop me from competing. However I put the hijab inside out to hide the symbol.

When I identify as black to my non-black friends, usually males, they would say: “You are not really black, you’re a NICE coffee colour”. This degrades black skin, implying it is not pretty and not worthy. Or they would say: “Pretty for a black girl”.

Islamophobia is a big one. I have been yelled at, abused, told to “go back where I came from”, intimidated, have had things thrown at me, and spat at.

Impacts

It highly impacts my decision making; where I go, where I shop (I no longer shop at [REDACTED]), the way I work, the way I interact with people. It frames my daily interactions.

I feel like I am treated less than my peers and “othered” by society. I feel undervalued, angered, and emotional; but in the end it only fuelled my belief in myself. It made me work harder than; twice as hard as my white peers.

Reporting

I once reported to the police and they did nothing. They said: “Sorry, there is nothing I can do”. Since then, I never reported again.

I do report incidences to my family and friends, who provide emotional support.

Recommendations

They need to EDUCATE these individuals. Perpetrators should be put through a mandatory 12 week educational program on racism; educating them on what racism is, the micro-aggressions, and all of that.

Introduce stricter laws on racism, as it is a crime. I believe perpetrators should be penalised through fines, paying compensation to the victim for counselling sessions.

Brisbane, 1997 – 2021.

I am a Somali man, aged 32, and my religion is Islam.

Incident

I was working as a receptionist and assisting a customer with her appointment, when she made a remark saying “There is no job in this country for Australians like me, you people took all our jobs”. I didn’t react, just smiled and said “Is there something I could assist you with? Otherwise you can speak to my manager”. The woman continued complaining about immigrants taking all the available jobs.

Another incident occurred when I was shopping with my wife at stores like [REDACTED], where we were followed by a security guard. He tried to be inconspicuous, but we noticed it.

When I was a child; I was in grade 4 (8-9 years old), in a Brisbane school, I was bullied by kids my age, based on the colour of my skin and my hair texture.

Another incident occurred where I was stopped by the police, prior to stepping into my car near my home. The police requested to see my ID, which I had left in my house. I told the officer I would get my ID from the house, to which he replied: “You people always do this.... [Forget to bring your ID]”.

Micro-aggressions occur regularly. For instance, when I walk into an elevator, women tend to grab their purse. Or, when I walk past a car from the front, they lock their car.

Impacts

I feel shocked, frustrated, confronted and funny (i.e. weird) in regards to these experiences. It also makes me feel ‘un-Australian’.

In general it makes me more vigilant of my surrounding (which I never used to be). I lived like anyone else, until I experienced racism.

Reporting

I did not report to the police, as I haven’t felt that I needed to. At the time I was quite young also and I didn’t know exactly where to go; there doesn’t seem to be any information available on this. Also I feel nothing would eventuate from it, it wouldn’t have been heard. There is no support, nor are there repercussions for perpetrators. At this point in time I feel I would report though.

The incident at my work place is where I reported to my manager, who asked for the lady to leave, because she did not calm down.

Recommendations

Education; in primary schools and high school. But it starts at the home. If a child learns it at school, but then comes home where he learns something different, it won’t work. And stopping the media propaganda against black people. On penalties I am 50/50. I feel it could deter people from racist actions, however it could also bring more (unwanted) attention to the CALD communities.

Sandgate, 2016.

I am a 60 year old Filipino female, who is Roman Catholic.

Incident

I was waiting to get a carpark to go with my teenage daughter to the market. A middle-aged man approached a car, and I thought I might be able to get his carpark, once he had vacated the space. So I waited nearby. He could see me and I could see him start to get angry towards me. I had my windows wound up. But I could see and slightly hear him yelling at me and pointing his finger at me. Then he got into his car and hung his head out of the window and continued yelling at me as he drove away. I could still see him yelling when he was far away. I could feel his aggression, his violence, his hatred. There was nothing inappropriate about my driving conduct. So I could only reason that his behaviour was due to my physical representation as a member of a minority group, due to the colour of my skin.

Impacts

I have experienced a number of similar incidents. I try to ignore incidents like this but sometimes I feel angry and hurt. Then I think that I do not belong here in Australia. My children were born here, in Australia. So this is my children's home country. But for me individually, I feel rejected and that I don't belong here in Australia. I am not sure that I would belong in the Philippines anymore either. I feel like I am in limbo, stuck in the liminal space.

I overcompensate by displaying my best behaviour in public. I have to be on my best behaviour all the time, in order to not attract attention. I try to avoid giving potential racist attackers any reason to further single me out and attack me. I know that they can already see the colour of my skin. I tone down my natural assertiveness in order to not attract attention, in order to blend in.

Reporting

At the time, I was not aware that racism could be reported to the police. I was very hurt and I will not forget this experience. It was completely in just, but what evidence could I have provided to police about this incident. If I had gone to the police I do not think that they would have been able to help me. So instead I try just to forget about things like this, but I never will.

Recommendations

I hope that people will stop doing these hurtful things. It makes me feel like I don't belong, even though I am a citizen. I want to be able to feel like I belong here in Australia. I want to be free from this worry.

Education could be a possible intervention. I would like education to teach that all human beings have similar needs. I think it is ignorance and a lack of relevant education that leads to strongly-held stereotypes, which are required in order for this racism to manifest.

Perhaps people in general, but specifically perpetrators, should interact with persons from CALD backgrounds. I think that evidence to the contrary would challenge people's strongly held beliefs and would decrease feelings of difference and promote a sense of cohesion. Then maybe I would feel a bit more of a sense of belonging.

South East Queensland, 2001

I am a 55 year old female of Somali-Ethiopian background. My religion is Islam.

Incident

In 2001 the 9/11 incident happened, and I had a small baby at the time. People started to vilify me and say things like: “It is you who blew America”, and: “You are a terrorist”. As time passed, we got used to people staring at us, cars passing and screaming slurs and vilifying us for the religion that we love and for the actions of a few. A German lady next door used to check up on me when I isolated myself and she told me she understood, as a Jew living in Germany she went through a similar situation (i.e. vilification) and comforted me, telling me to be strong and patient; “It will take time, the same thing happened to us”.

Eventually I became tired of isolating myself, and wanted to go out there, meet new people, and teach people about Islam if they were to approach me. In 2004 I enrolled in [REDACTED] to study a diploma in Community Services, where I met many people from all walks of life. I was the only African in the class. One day a classmate said: “You are Osama Bin Laden”. This statement brought back all the memories, and I just got up, faced him and said: “The day you learnt Osama’s name was the same day I heard about him”. The classmate said: “He is a Muslim, like you”, to which I replied: “Yes, but he is over there, and I am over here, why should I suffer for his actions?”

Impacts

When it first happened, I felt like our lives were over. I looked at my baby and wondered what the future would have in store for us. I was worried, and so I locked myself in the house, afraid for our safety, and the safety of my children (I have 5 in total).

Later on, and after I went to [REDACTED], I started talking about my religion, about how peaceful it is, and educating others. I took on the responsibility and was open to answer any questions people might have. People need to learn from the people they meet.

However, the micro-aggressions of racial vilification don’t end. I have become numb to it and do not look at people now. I just move with purpose and avoid looking at people as I know they would say something otherwise. I am not going anywhere or run away. I am here, living peacefully, making sure I and my kids are safe, and prepared for when terrorist actions spike, as the hate crime will spike then too. It is all about survival mode in those moments.

Reporting

I did not report any of the incidents to the police, as I didn’t want to bother with all the formalities. In fact I did not report it to anyone. At the time I didn’t know the English language too well, and I did not know the law, so I kept quiet. Even now that I am fluent in English, I am still unaware of where to go to report, what the formalities are, and who to speak to. I am only aware of reporting big incidences of racial vilification and would not report small incidences. Another reason I do not report, is that I hear the leaders/politicians of Australia share the same values and beliefs as the perpetrators. I give up and I become numb.

Recommendations

EDUCATION. Educate everyone in general about different people. In the end we are all human beings, trying to get through life and grow.

I would like the government to implement laws that explicitly protect victims from racial vilification in schools, community’s spaces, everywhere.

I can’t really pin point exactly what to do, as it [racism] is everywhere...

██████ Qld, 2003.

I am a 58 year old, Afghan-Australian female. I practice Islam.

Incident

I experienced a repeated pattern of racist incidents when I first came to Australia. My classmates used to mock me which made me feel very uncomfortable. For example, I used to curl my hair under my scarf (I wore a scarf but I didn't cover all my hair). As soon as some of my classmates saw me they made gestures to others implying that I had a big head. Then their friends, who were also in my class would laugh. They would mock things about me that were different to them. They mocked me about different things at different times.

There were other hurtful behaviours too. A lot of people used to look down on us because we are from Afghanistan. As we came in 2002, a year after September 11, a few times people asked me if I was related to Osama bin Laden and that made me very sad. On other occasions, professionals like the receptionist at my GP would treat us poorly.

Impacts

Following every one of these incidents and more, I felt very uncomfortable, I felt like I was nothing, like I was worthless.

I will never forget how these people treated me and made me feel. They made me feel that I was a bad person for wearing a scarf. I ended up taking my scarf off to please people and fit in. I look back and wish I could have confronted those people and told them how racist they were. I wish I had been brave enough to tell these people how racist they were and how their actions impacted me.

Since I started living in Logan, I feel much more comfortable as people are more open minded towards other cultures and religions. I see a lot of women wearing scarves and this makes me confident in fighting racism. Nowadays, I don't let people's racist comments or stares affect my decisions on what to wear and how to practice my religion. I am more confident and I have my children, who are adults now, as my support I wear my scarf.

Reporting

I didn't know I could report it to Police. In our culture we are not supposed to create problems or complain about things that happened to us. We are supposed to be grateful for being accepted in a peaceful country like Australia. Also I always thought that the problem was mine to fix, not theirs. I always wondered how I could improve myself, even though (I have learned that) it wasn't my fault.

I did not report these incidents to anyone else either. My children were young and I didn't have any other family members to report it to. I didn't tell my husband about it either as I didn't want him to feel sad.

Recommendations

One way that I think that governments and other institutions can help to address racism is with education. There should be more education for people new to Australia about their rights and protections and how to fight racism.

██████████ Primary School, 2006, ██████████ State School 2010, ██████████, South
Gladstone; 2015

I am a 22 year old female from Zimbabwe, and identify as Christian.

Incident

Where do I start? My first ever experience of racism that I can recall, was my first day in primary school in Australia. The teacher put me at the front of the line and I heard children in the back say: “She is chocolate”. Identifying my differences. In grade 2 I remember being surrounded by 7-8 year olds looking at me. At school, I would be made fun off for my food, even when it wasn’t traditional food. In grade 6, once during PE, I did not have a partner and there was only one guy left; he was from PNG. I asked if he wanted to be partners but he said: “Ew no, you are black”, which was confusing to me as he had dark skin himself, although a lighter skin colour than me. Kids would make black jokes. A typical joke is when the class room light would be turned off for the projector, and they would all yell “Where is ██████?”

Fast forward to now, I am experiencing micro-aggressions. Nothing explicit, but racism seeping through actions and words. For example, people touch my hair randomly and however they like. Once, I was 15 or 16 years old, when I was with my mum at the supermarket standing at the till, I was staring across the room, and a couple who thought I was looking at them, started yelling “Go back to your own country”, “Why are you here?”

Impacts

When I was a primary school student, I felt weird, I had a feeling in my stomach that it was not right.

I feel like I am treated as a zoo animal, different.

It changed my concept of self; I felt like I shouldn’t be African and I couldn’t embrace my African heritage; I tried to fit in with others.

At times I am fuming and want to give it back to people and stand up for myself. However, I felt like I did not have the power, and remain quiet.

It changed my belief of society and my place in the community; as a black person you are always looked at and judged. You need to always be the best; at school and at work.

Reporting

I did not make an official report (to the police), as 1. It never came to mind (I didn’t really know that the police could help with this) and 2. It was not serious enough to report. But if it was a physical attack or danger, or if it came so far that it would result in myself experiencing mental health issues, or self-harm, that’s when reporting would occur.

The incident with the PNG guy in school was reported to the school. The teacher brought me and the PNG guy into the classroom and asked the guy “Do you look in the mirror every day?” Afterwards the guy never said anything to me again. The teacher would check up on me and reassured me it should not have happened and people should not “other” me.

Recommendations

Educate people on NOT “othering”, and seeing people as the same, acknowledging their past history. More education in primary and high schools on how racism is not always overt, but that it can be subtle, like micro-aggressions. Children need to learn this, because they’re not aware of their actions being classified as racism.

Laws around racism should be enforced, to hold perpetrators accountable. I am actually unaware of anti-racist laws and policies to penalise perpetrators. This needs to be changed.

The message should be made more explicit, through advertisements/ signs in public places like super markets, public transport; just like there are signs for littering and the zero-tolerance for aggression. And it should have a penalty attached to it.

South East Queensland

I am a 19 year old female, originally from Sudan, and my religion is Islam.

Incident

In prep, a boy told me that I should not play on the stairs, as I am black. In school, I felt that teachers treated me differently. I also overheard my teacher say: “This is not Africa”.

Impacts

I was confused when I was younger, as to why people would react this way towards me. Now, I have a sense of disbelief, since this country belongs to the blacks, and the fact that these people feel superior towards us.

Racism makes me feel disgusting, and like an outsider.

Reporting

I did not report to the police, as I don't believe that if I made a complaint they would do anything about it.

Recommendations

Government and community (services) should take accountability for what they do, and act on their authority and ability to make a change towards people of colour.

South East Queensland – on the road, 2004; Hospital and [REDACTED] Supermarket.

I am a 27 year old female from Ethiopian/Egyptian background and I practice Islam.

Incident

The racism I have experienced is mostly covert racism. I recall several times waiting in lines at stores, where I am not acknowledged and the person behind me is being addressed instead. I experience micro-aggressions like this throughout my life.

Some examples of more overt racism; I remember being in the hospital when I was pregnant. I was speaking to a nurse, and a man (medical staff) came, without introducing himself and blatantly commented: “I did not expect that accent”. I laughed because I was flabbergasted and replied: “I have never heard that one before”. The man did not say anything nor did his facial expression show any regret. No-one in the room said anything, and he got away with it. Another incident was when I was a 10 year old child. I was in the car with my family and I was wearing a headscarf at the time. Our car pulled up to a red light and we were parallel to a car on my side of the window, which was open. So was the window of the car next to us. The adult male inside the car looks at me and grabbed his t-shirt and pulled it over his head and laughs, mockingly. The female driver, also an adult, starts laughing and smacks him lightly and says “stop it” in a laughing manner. I was the only one in our car that witnessed it. The two young girls in the back, who looked like my age, looked embarrassed. Another incident occurred when I was at [REDACTED]. I chose to wear the Niqab in public on this occasion. When I came out of the [REDACTED] there was a man sitting outside, and he said “Excuse me, can I ask a question? Why can't I wear shorts in Saudi Arabia?” “If the Niqab was banned here, would you still wear it?” He expected me to answer for the laws of a country I have no connections to. I answered his last question unfortunately,

and replied “I would not wear if it was illegal” to which he smiled at. My mum later told me that she had seen the man waiting for me to come out of the store.

Impacts

I don’t know how to do something about covert racism. I believe it is hard to really distinguish between racism and rudeness. I feel stuck in the middle; in my thoughts trying to figure it all out. I feel anger, sadness, hurt and shock.

When I was a child I felt overwhelmed, really sad and hurt, and humiliated, and I broke down (especially re abovementioned car incident). They were adults, they didn’t have to do that, I was just a kid.

These incidences really take away from my level of security and safety. Hearing my friends go through similar experiences, even where they are physically attacked, makes me feel unsafe as a woman who wears a hijab. I feel like I am a walking target with the hijab on, inviting racist people to say and do as they please.

It has come to a point now, where it is **normalised**, I have become desensitised and learn to live with it. There are still times where I become emotional.

These experiences have prompted me to be more vigilant and mindful of how I conduct myself and how I speak. I always check on my English, to prove that we can speak fluent English. I am wearier of people’s demeanour towards me and how they interact with me.

I feel, we feel, alone in this.

Reporting

I never reported it to the police, because I never felt that level of support, or never received an invitation to report those incidents. Also, as the police is working hard to monitor MY community, I never felt supported by them, but instead monitored. For example; the police would state: “if you see a bag laying around, report it”, this is drilled into the community, but there is NOTHING about reporting racism. Because of this I don’t feel the support is there, so why bother.

Recommendations

A stronger voice condemning racism and discrimination not JUST in the work space, but the broader community. I want a community that advocates on how intolerable racism is. We should work towards a community that fosters a culture of inclusiveness. Not only by raising awareness of racism within the ethnic communities (where the majority is ethnic) but also in the non-ethnic communities. Community Services should organize events, in communities and schools. Start educating at a very young age to raise awareness of racism and racial vilification, and demonstrate how micro-aggressions are part of racism.

There should be a fine for the perpetrator. If it was abuse, harassment, physical violence; there should be imprisonment as well as a fine.

Private Girls School, 1990-1999.

I am a 39 year old Australian female of Cambodian descent.

Incident

Unfortunately I have experienced several incidents of racism, in my life. Some of them happened during my school life.

I was primary school age and was walking home from school with my twin sister. My sister and I were both spat on by an adult man. We asked him why he did that. He responded because we were “Asian” and he “did not like the way we looked”.

When I was in high school, I attended a prestigious, privileged private all girls’ school. The school was predominantly made up of 98% Anglo Saxons. Being one of the very few Asian students studying there, on a daily basis I was subjected to a lot of bullying. I was called a “Chin Chong” countless times by a group of popular girls in my year level, during high school. One girl in particular would call me “Chin Chong Chang” all the time. The slur made it obvious that it was racially motivated.

I had peers who weren’t the ones perpetrating the racist bullying but they also didn’t present as allies. I think they probably knew it was wrong, but either didn’t know how, or have found it too hard, to stand up for me.

The teachers at the school were similar to the girls at the school. Teachers were predominantly white, high-income earners. I remember them as gossipy and completely out of touch with the reality of my circumstances and my experience.

Impacts

It would make me angry. I felt upset and just wanted to be WHITE. I did not feel I belonged in the school. I ended up leaving. I wished the girls were dealt with but unfortunately I did not feel comfortable telling the teachers what was happening, as I felt they were unsupportive too. To this day, I have sad memories of the school and am hopeful that the girls have changed and reflected on their behaviour.

I have tried to cope with these incidents and more by confiding in family member. My family understood because they have similar stories.

It has had a massive impact on my life and the way I treat people. I never would want people to feel as I have. I teach my own children proper values so that they will never cause anyone to feel as I have been made to feel.

Reporting

I did not report these incidents. I was young and it is hard to voice things when you are younger. I thought I might lose friends by reporting. My family did not have the financial backing, the economic status that my peers had. So I already had to compensate for that. I was worried about being bullied about my family’s economic position. I did not want to attract further unwanted attention.

I am doubtful that I would report to police, even in my adult life. I have found police to be ineffective, inefficient and to not have much information following submission of a report. Once my parent’s house was robbed. I was frustrated by the lack of communication by police after we made our report. The police did not update us or provide follow-ups. They never got back to us. I understand there might not be any leads or suspects. But that in itself could have been an update. I have a cousin who is a police officer, maybe I would call them to ask about reporting processes.

Recommendations

I think the culture within the school was a major factor in why I suffered a repeated pattern of racist bullying. The dominant white culture was not challenged there at all. School should work hard to build healthy cultures where racist bullying is not accepted. Schools could address both children in classrooms, and parents via community education.

One preventative way to address racism could be through multimedia. I think that documentaries that depict real life examples and show how marginalised people feel can send really powerful messages to the broader community.

I think that what happens after an incident of racism is important. I think that professional support for my psychological wellbeing would have helped. Also, when I have experienced these things that make me feel that I don't belong, the people around me have an opportunity to either perpetuate my feelings of being marginalised OR make me feel supported and that whoever has attacked me is only a small outlier.

Noosa Hinterland, 2019.

I am a 38 year old Australian Papua New Guinean female, and my religion is Seventh Day Adventist.

Incident

I have experienced plenty of racism in my life. The intimidation and misappropriation of power I felt when I had an incident with police is one such story.

I was driving home after having picked up my 12 & 16 year old daughters up from violin practice when I was pulled over by police. It was dark and we were on a quiet road. Two policemen approached the car and began questioning me aggressively, shining their torches in my car and in my face. The car was registered to my husband. There were a lot of questions about who owned the car. I presented my driver's license which showed my home address, which was probably only 5 kilometres away. They continued to press me for what felt like 20 minutes.

The two policemen used no pleasantries, no respect and no polite words. Surely, they could see that I was a woman with two young daughters and they were two men and we were on a quiet, dark road. There was no effort from the police to minimise the intimidating power differential. I tried to relate to them to create some sense of humanity by asking them which station they were from and talking about the beauty of the local area. They did not waiver in their accusatory approach. Next, I tried to play the class card mentioning that we had moved to Cooroy after my husband got a job as an [REDACTED]. I mentioned the violin lessons that my daughters were taking, thinking that's what rich people do, isn't it. Their approach seemed to soften a little, but not for long. I felt like I was in danger and that this was a very unsafe place for me and my daughters to be. Eventually, they let me go.

I could not think of any substantial reason why we were targeted with these forceful and intimidating policing tactics. I could only reason that we were suspected of theft because of the colour of our skin.

Impacts

In the moment I felt intimidated, vulnerable, unsafe and in danger. The power differential was immense. The policemen could have asked all the same questions in a different tone and got all the same responses. But instead their approach was so excessive.

When I got home I had to help my daughters understand what had happened because the policemen's behaviour had been unreasonable. For their own safety, I had to tell my daughters that they will have to make compensations in life because of the colour of their skin. They will have to provide people with extra information in order to try breakdown engrained prejudice. They will need to consider how they present themselves, how they do their hair. They will have to be extra nice. On other occasions, I've told my daughters "make sure you always get a receipt" so that you can prove that you paid and, "consider whether you really need to take a bag, because it's something that can just be searched."

I work really hard on first impressions. I remember one example. On my first day at university, it was so hot. I wanted to wear my tongs but between the colour of my skin and wearing thongs, I was sure that the associations that would be made about me would not be ones that were conducive to success. So I wore ballet flats, instead.

I feel despair. I want to positively impact racism and it's something that I am working towards as a vocation. But when these experiences start piling up then I feel defeated. My hopeful naivety is dwindling. This sense of despair

is a factor in my mental health. Last year, I had to take time away from my studies because my sense of hope in the world had been defeated by despair.

Reporting

Of course reporting a situation like mine to police, would be counter-intuitive. I did not report this incident to police. I am well connected with some multicultural organisations and have spoken to them about similar incidents. They want to help and hear these stories. However, it seems to me that they do not have the resources to really follow-up. It seems like the reporting of incidents of racism does not fall neatly inside any one organisation's scope of work.

I know four different police persons. However, I don't view the police the same anymore. Up until this incident, I would defend the police. My husband has had some bad run-ins, as a Samoan man. I used to say to him, "you just have to be friendly." But these sort of run-ins have been happening for the past 20 years of our lives. He was once pulled over by police over and asked, "Why are you driving with a hood on?" He has been thrown on the ground by police, who threatened to spray him with pepper spray. He was the dux of our school, he has three degrees, he's a doctor but it will never matter. I just can't defend the police anymore. I now think that giving them the benefit of the doubt, trusting them too much might just put me in an unsafe scenario. But what can I do, it's the police, you have to comply. If it is someone else in the community that's discriminating against you then you can try to evade the situation, choose not to engage, pretend you're on your phone. If it's the police then you have no choice, you have to abide.


Recommendations

I think there should be an independent reporting and investigatory body established. A place where reporting racism is core business, rather than an additional piece of work that is out of scope for existing entities. It is critical to not feel like how stories are a burden, otherwise people won't speak up.

Yes, I think it would have helped me to speak to a wellbeing professional following my experience. It doesn't address the problem at its roots but it could have helped address the hurt inside. The hurt I feel from these incidents is a bit like the hurt I feel from the physical injuries I suffered playing club basketball when I was 15 years old. i.e. Now that I am a bit older, I can start to feel the pain creeping back into my body. I am starting to remember those experiences of racism more and more.

Regarding rehabilitation and punitive measure for perpetrators, I think that educational courses can impact change. The content should include unconscious biases and the history of racist structures and tragedies that occurred in our societies and communities and which still exist today. Not only should there be reactive education for perpetrators, but also proactive education of anyone in a position of power; police, doctors, teachers etc. Education should seek to evoke empathy and respect.

Access Community Services
92 Wembley Rd, Logan Central, QLD, 4114
3412 8222

Approved by Social Services Director, Lisa WARD. 
Authored by Jantina KRAAI & Zac SCOTT – 