



Racism experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions: towards Ubuntu anti-racism strategies

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Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Community Fellows Program of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute (MSEI) and supported by the African Research and Engagement in Australia Initiative (AREiA), the University of Melbourne. The project focused on experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions and was a collaboration between the Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria (ECAV) and the Melbourne Social Equity Institute.

The Community Fellow and the Academic Mentor who completed this scoping review project wish to acknowledge the valuable support of Ms Charlene Edwards (Executive Officer, MSEI) and Mr Tesfaye Endeshaw (Chairperson, ECAV).

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria or the University of Melbourne.

We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the University of Melbourne is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders, past, present, and future.

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Suggested citation:

Mequwanint, Y., & Onsando, G. (2022). *Racism experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions: towards Ubuntu anti-racism strategies*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne.

Key words:

Africans in Australia, African students, African philosophy of Ubuntu, Racism in Australia, Racism in Australian educational institutions, Ubuntu anti-racism strategies

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Executive summary

Australia is traditionally owned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that was colonised by Europeans, and thereafter resettled by other culturally diverse immigrants, including a growing number of immigrants of an African heritage. Many African immigrants experienced racism likely as a continuation and an extension of the colonial historical constructions of racism in Australia. For many Africans, including students in Australian educational institutions, experiences of racism were quite dehumanising. We therefore applied principles of the African philosophy of Ubuntu to develop humanising anti-racism strategies to assist in ending experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions. The Ubuntu anti-racism strategies recommended empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling as an anti-racism counter narrative, encouraging involvement of members of family and community in educational matters relating to African students, and enacting bespoke Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives that acknowledge the historical constructions of racism in Australia, the permanence of racism in Australia, and the everyday presence of racism in the institutions.

We summarised the following policy implications and recommendations from the project:

1. African students in Australian educational institutions must be provided with opportunities and safe environments where they can articulate and express their own stories through, for example, forming active students' groups that catered for their personal, social, and educational wellbeing. Apart from affirming the students' sense of identity and belonging, such Ubuntu storytelling opportunities can be used as counter narratives against the negative racialised mainstream storylines about Africans, including African students in Australian educational institutions.
2. Students and educators who perpetrated racism against African students in Australian educational institutions lacked Ubuntu, yet having respectful relationships is a key principle in the African philosophy of Ubuntu. By way of having respectful relationships, the practise of Ubuntu can therefore be enacted as an anti-racism strategy where students and educators are obligated to engage respectfully with the African students in Australian educational institutions.
3. Australian educational institutions need to adapt culturally responsive ways of encouraging family and the community to be meaningfully involved in educational matters affecting African students. The African philosophy of Ubuntu encourages family connectedness and community engagement; from an Ubuntu perspective therefore, family and community could offer African students in Australian educational institutions the moral support needed against experiences of racism as well as assist in identifying and eliminating racialised educational inequalities affecting the students.

4. Anti-racism initiatives focusing particularly on supporting African students must be enacted in Australian educational institutions. The African philosophy of Ubuntu can offer institutional policy framework to address challenges of racism in Australian educational institutions, starting with an acknowledgement of the historical constructions of racism in Australia, the permanence of racism in Australia, and the everyday presence of racism in the institutions.

These policy implications and recommendations, if enacted, will significantly contribute towards ending experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions. Overall, guided by the principles of Ubuntu, governments, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders must work both independently and collaboratively to counter racism and discrimination experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions.

Introduction

Africans living in Australia

Australia is traditionally owned by a community of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; it was colonised by Europeans and has thereafter been resettled by other culturally diverse immigrants (Healey, 2003; Hollinsworth, 2006; Maddison, 2019), including immigrants of African heritage. The population of people of African heritage living in Australia is increasing. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed that the estimated resident population of people born in Africa and living in Australia increased during the 10 years from 395,750 in 2012 to 496,100 in 2021; in the same period, the resident population of people born in Ethiopia increased from 10,620 to 16,660 (ABS, 2022). Many African people value and continue to practise their indigenous traditions and cultures after they emigrate and resettle away from their home countries. For example, according to Ndhlovu (2014), members of African communities in Australia exhibited complex and dynamic patterns of their indigenous African identities and sociocultural worldviews developed through their experiences of resettlement in Australia. A common sociocultural notion from many African values and traditions is the practice of community collectiveness rather than individual ways of living (Nsubuga-Kyobe, 2007). Yet, the socially derived cultural heritage of people of African descent includes many intersecting and diverse subcultures. For some, the African philosophy of Ubuntu can inform and explain the various worldviews and sociocultural aspects of being a person of African descent.

The African philosophy of Ubuntu

The African philosophy of Ubuntu is often articulated by the maxim “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 214). In other words, Ubuntu is an understanding that humanity of the self is promoted and embedded through the humanity of and ethical relationships with others and, in turn, the others are obligated to us (Chisale, 2018; Cornell & Muvangua, 2012; Venter, 2004). As a relational philosophy of collectivism over individualism, Ubuntu is a living ethos of ethics that places humanity at the core of symbiotic relationships between an individual, family, community, and society (Letseka, 2013; Ntseane, 2012). As Ewuoso and Hall (2019) explained:

[U]buntu is an essentially relational ethics, which prizes relationships of interdependence, fellowship, reconciliation, relationality, community friendliness, harmonious relationships and other-regarding actions such as compassion and actions that are likely to be good for others, in which actions are morally right to the extent that they honour the capacity to relate communally, reduce discord or promote friendly relationships with others, and in which the physical world and the spiritual world are fundamentally united. (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 93)

The innate notion of humanity within the philosophy of Ubuntu makes it possible and appropriate to develop anti-racism strategies that can reverse the perpetuation of racism and colonialism (Douglas, 2015; Kobe, 2021). Ubuntu, therefore, inherently challenges the ontology, epistemology and ethics of racism while demanding the fight against racial discrimination (Cornell & van Marle, 2015). The African philosophy of Ubuntu, as an antithesis of racism, can inform the development of anti-racism strategies aimed at supporting and empowering African students experiencing racism in Australian educational institutions. While racism is aimed at dehumanising people, Ubuntu is an understanding that humanity of the self is promoted and embedded through the humanity of and ethical relationships with others. In this report, we use the philosophy of Ubuntu to develop anti-racism strategies that aim to support and empower African students experiencing racism in Australian educational institutions.

Racism in Australia

Racism refers to dysfunctional historical and ongoing systems of oppression that deliberately create and cultivate inequality and the exclusion of individuals or social groups based on perceived differences in race, physical distinctions, and sociocultural characteristics (Ben et al., 2022; Dunn & Nelson, 2011). Perpetrators of racism often aim at oppressing, excluding, subordinating, offending, humiliating, and intimidating their victims (Dunn & Nelson, 2011; Healey 2003). According to the UNHCR (2020), racism represented a manifestation of systems of oppression that subordinate some groups while reinforcing the privilege of others. For a better understanding of the experiences of racism that Africans and other minority groups confront in Australia, it is worthwhile to comprehend and acknowledge the historical constructions of racism in Australia.

Historical racism involves the domination, subordination, and oppression of certain groups of people from past to present through legal, political, and institutional frameworks, language, and cultural attitudes (UNHCR, 2020). Australia's colonial history has deeply embedded racism perpetuated by white European settlers who brutally oppressed, maimed and killed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Ben et al., 2022; Hollinsworth 2006). Years after colonisation, through White Australian policies, several laws were enacted to legalise racism by, for example, not recognising the existence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose land was forcefully taken and reconfigured into states and territories (Hollinsworth 2006; Healey 2003). While some historical aspects of racism have been outlawed, racism and racial discrimination continue to shape many aspects of the present Australian society (Ben et al., 2022; Molla, 2021a; Onsando & Billett, 2017). Many Africans, including students in Australian educational institutions, continue to confront racism in Australia.

Experiences of racism for African students

African students in Australian educational institutions experience racism and racial discrimination (Majavu, 2017; Onsando & Billett, 2009; Onsando & Billett, 2017). In this report, the term 'African students in Australian educational institutions' refers to students of African heritage in all sectors of the Australian education system. Studies have found racism continues to be a significant and widespread problem throughout Australian educational institutions (Baak, 2019; Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021; Majavu, 2017; Molla, 2021a; Yared, Grové, & Chapman, 2020). The lived experiences and voice of the Community Fellow in this project have been used to exemplify experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions. These include individual experiences of racism, racism perpetuated by students and educators and the institutional racism fostered in Australian educational institutions.

Individual experiences of racism

In the following vignette, the Community Fellow of this project narrated their personal experiences of confronting racism in an Australian educational institution:

My first introduction to outright, belligerent racism was during High School. While in a Geography lesson in Year 9, my class had been moved to the library where we were spread out across a number of smaller tables. I had sat with my new friends, when another student walked over and began to chat with the person beside me. Out of nowhere he turned to me and asked me if I had ever tried to scrub my skin off in the shower and as I shook my head dumbfounded at the vitriolic way he spoke about my blackness. He stated that he would if he were me. And as I looked around at the people who were my friends, what stuck with me was the way they all looked away. The same student on another occasion called me a 'slave' when I momentarily was carrying one of my friend's textbooks to allow her to tie her shoelaces. (Project Community Fellow)

As demonstrated above, young Africans have experienced a disturbing level of racial vilification and verbal abuse in their daily life and social interactions, including in educational settings (Majavu, 2017). Apart from such overt racist confrontations, African students have also experienced everyday racism; that is, subtle processes of racist tendencies and actions created and reinforced through everyday dehumanising routines, including denial of personhood, rudeness, neglect, and callousness (Baak, 2019; Majavu, 2017). Experiences of racism for African students can be a significant barrier to achieving their educational goals (Ben et al., 2022; Onsando & Billett, 2009). For example, victims of racism often suffer mental health burdens such as anxiety and depression (Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021; UNHCR, 2020). Furthermore, students who experience racism often have a lower sense of belonging to their educational institutions (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Lewis et al., 2021; Molla,

2021a; McGee et al., 2022), hence experiences of racism for African students have adversely affected their educational experiences and outcomes.

Racism perpetuated by students and educators

In relation to racism perpetuated by students and educators in Australian educational institutions, the Community Fellow of this project described their experiences in this vignette:

In school, there were continued instances of racism perpetuated by either my fellow classmates or teachers themselves. One of the most confronting experiences was when a friend of mine informed me that a teacher had said to him that she gave the darker-skinned students better grades because she didn't think they were capable of getting it themselves. And while this teacher had been one that had encouraged me to apply for a more advanced class the following year, for a long time I carried the belief that my academic achievements had not been by my own merit because I had believed what was said. In another racist episode, while in a group discussion activity, a fellow student that I had considered a friend at the time completely randomly turned to me and said, 'go back to Africa'. The loud silence of teachers who were meant to care for my well-being and the hostility of fellow classmates became a lesson on how the world saw me, outright racism was a lesson I received within the very institution that was meant to introduce me to the world. (Project Community Fellow)

As illustrated above, the racism that African students have experienced in Australian educational institutions was often perpetuated by students and educators (Baak, 2019; Majavu, 2017). Some educators, for example, perpetuate adverse stereotypes and negative assumptions about the academic abilities of students from minority groups, including African students (Alansari, Hunia, & Eyre, 2020; Baak, 2019). Ending racism experienced by students, including racism perpetuated by students and educators, must be a key priority for educational institutions (Priest et al., 2019), yet rarely do educators critique and evaluate their own racist attitudes and behaviour (Malisa, 2010). According to Yared, Grové and Chapman (2020), many educators were found to be incapable of discussing matters that involved racism against students from minority groups, lacking adequate confidence and competency to respond to incidences of racism and often ignoring students' experiences of racism.

Racism in Australian educational institutions

The following vignette was narrated by the Community Fellow of this project who described their experiences and perspectives of racism in an Australian educational institution:

Frankly, I didn't feel safe enough to speak to anyone about my experiences of racism, in my mind if the very institution that housed these experiences continued to remain as either silent bystanders or perpetrators of this overt othering; I knew no difference would be made if I spoke up about these experiences. The experience of never being quite enough to be Australian, is a burden that most children of non-white migrants can relate to. The pervasiveness of questions that began with 'were you born here?' and the accompanying surprise from my affirmative always made me question what about me was so different other than my blackness. Despite the blatant racism and the shame, it continued to evoke within me, the pervasive loneliness of knowing that I was so different, so unlike everyone else and so beneath people's basic empathy was a genuine struggle for me. Ultimately the message these educational institutions continue to perpetuate to African students is to remain silent in the face of these traumatising experiences, and that their experiences are never valid. (Project Community Fellow)

As exemplified above, African students in Australian educational institutions have experienced various forms of racism that adversely affect their educational outcomes (Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021; Molla, 2021a; Onsando & Billett, 2009). According to Miller (2020), institutional racism often reinforces racist attitudes and behaviour experienced by students from minority ethnic groups within an educational institution and, by extension, in society. Indeed, the racism that occurs in Australian educational institutions mirrors the racism present within wider Australian society (Baak, 2019; Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021). Racism in Australian educational institutions has likely been fostered and perpetuated as the institutions often ignored, denied, distorted or minimised the presence of racism (Alansari, Hunia, & Eyre, 2020; Majavu, 2017; Yared, Grové, & Chapman, 2020). It is evident that the racism African students experience will shape their overall educational experience and adversely affect their educational outcomes in Australian educational institutions.

Developing Ubuntu anti-racism strategies

It is disturbingly evident that African students continue to confront racism in Australian educational institutions. Anti-racism strategies must therefore be developed and enacted to end experiences of racism and racial discrimination encountered by African students in educational institutions (Onsando & Billett, 2017; Yared, Grové, & Chapman, 2020). The principles of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, an antithesis of racism, can be used to develop anti-racism strategies for Australian educational institutions. With its innate notions of humanity and being human, Ubuntu offers the required praxis of anti-racism strategies that contribute to having racially inclusive societies (Agyeno, 2019; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018), including dismantling systems of white supremacy and challenging racism in educational institutions (Lim et al., 2022). According to Kobe (2021), the principles of Ubuntu afford individuals the agency and resilience needed to confront racial dehumanisation while maintaining humanity and confidence in the self (Kobe, 2021). Indeed, the African philosophy of Ubuntu, as a culturally responsive concept, understands and acknowledges that the humanity of an individual is worthy of respect, dignity and acceptance and is in symbiotic creation with the community (Letseka, 2013; Sachs, 2012). Such Ubuntu-inspired initiatives, if enacted in Australian educational institutions, would likely improve African students' participation as well as their educational experiences and outcomes.

In this project, informed by the racism experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions and guided by the Ubuntu framework of support (Onsando et al., 2020), we developed Ubuntu anti-racism strategies. We included empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling as an anti-racism counter-narrative, encouraging the involvement of family and community members in educational matters relating to African students, and enacting bespoke Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives that acknowledge the historical construction of racism, the permanence of racism and the everyday presence of racism in Australia.

Empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling

Ubuntu storytelling could provide African students in Australian educational institutions with strategies to counter and deal with the racism they experience. With being human at the core, Ubuntu storytelling is a deeply empowering process of sharing life stories that provided the storyteller with a sense of self-identity, self-understanding, and self-respect, as well as respect for others (Horta, 2017). In White-dominated societies, racism has been enabled and perpetuated by harmful systems, structures, and policies as well as through propagating dehumanising narratives about people of African heritage (Majavu, 2017; Malisa, 2010; The Ubuntu Center, 2022). Such racialised narratives have likely caused African students to develop false personal beliefs of inadequacy, lack of human agency, and

apprehension of partaking fully in learning (Molla, 2021a; Onsando & Billett, 2017). African students in Australian educational institutions must be offered opportunities and safe environments where they can articulate and express their own stories to counter such racialised narratives. According to Moyo (2021) and Mucina (2011), Ubuntu storytelling can be used as a counter-narrative against the racialised mainstream narratives by advocating for the use of epistemologies and worldviews drawn from Ubuntu philosophy. Ubuntu storytelling can therefore be used as a counter-narrative that challenges and rejects racist narratives while empowering African students against the dehumanising experiences of racism in Australian educational institutions. Table 1 below is a summary of policy implications and recommendations drawn from empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling as an anti-racism counter narrative.

Table 1: Policy implications and recommendations drawn from empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling

Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African students in Australian educational institutions must be provided with opportunities and safe environments where they can articulate and express their own stories through, for example, forming active students' groups that catered for their personal, social, and educational wellbeing. Apart from affirming the students' sense of identity and belonging, such Ubuntu storytelling opportunities can be used as counter narratives against the negative racialised mainstream storylines about Africans, including African students in Australian educational institutions.

Ubuntu practises in Australian educational institutions

Practising Ubuntu in Australian educational institutions could provide safe learning environments for African students who have been dehumanised by experiences of racism. Students and educators who have perpetrated racism against African students lack Ubuntu; therefore, if such students and teachers embraced Ubuntu, this could contribute towards ending racism in Australian educational institutions. According to Dladla (2017) and Kaungu (2021), the philosophy of Ubuntu, with its ethos, is informed by notions of humanity and being human, which could play a key role in creating social cohesion in racist environments. In the African philosophy of Ubuntu, family is considered a basis for moral development through ethical relationships rooted in communities (Cornell & Muvangua, 2012; Ramose, 2002; Letseka, 2013). Indeed, Ubuntu understands belonging through the ideology of community collectiveness rather than radical individualism (Cornell & van Marle, 2015; Woldeyes, 2018). For these reasons, Mupenzi (2018) argued that the experiences of African students in Australian educational institutions have been particularly influenced by family

and community, among other relationships. From an Ubuntu perspective, therefore, family and community could offer African students in Australian educational institutions the moral support needed to deal with experiences of racism as well as assist in identifying and eliminating racialised educational inequalities affecting the students. Table 2 below is a summary of policy implications and recommendations drawn from practicing Ubuntu and encouraging involvement of family and community in educational matters.

Table 2: Policy implications and recommendations drawn from practicing Ubuntu and encouraging involvement of family and community in educational matters

Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and educators who perpetrated racism against African students in Australian educational institutions lacked Ubuntu, yet having respectful relationships is a key principle in the African philosophy of Ubuntu. By way of having respectful relationships, the practise of Ubuntu can therefore be enacted as an anti-racism strategy where students and educators are obligated to engage respectfully with the African students in Australian educational institutions. Australian educational institutions need to adapt culturally responsive ways of encouraging family and the community to be meaningfully involved in educational matters affecting African students. The African philosophy of Ubuntu encourages family connectedness and community engagement; from an Ubuntu perspective therefore, family and community could offer African students in Australian educational institutions the moral support needed against experiences of racism as well as assist in identifying and eliminating racialised educational inequalities affecting the students.

Enacting Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives in Australian educational institutions

Experiences of racism by African students are an indication of the lack of Ubuntu in Australian educational institutions; hence, there is an urgent need for enacting Ubuntu anti-racism policies and initiatives in the institutions. For anti-racist initiatives to be effective, educational institutions must first acknowledge the existence of racism (Majavu, 2017; Mupenzi, 2018; Onsando & Billett, 2009). One way that Australian education institutions can acknowledge, and address racism is for educators in those institutions to acquire culturally responsive competencies to attend to racial matters (Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021; Molla, 2021b; Yared, Grové, & Chapman, 2020). From an African student's perspective, institutional racism in Australian educational institutions can be addressed by developing a culturally responsive anti-racism framework informed by Ubuntu philosophy. The African philosophy of Ubuntu is grounded on anti-racist decolonising principles (Chigangaidze, 2020;

Moyo, 2016) and can, therefore, offer an institutional policy framework to address challenges of racism in Australian educational institutions. This starts with acknowledging the historical constructions of racism in Australia, the permanence of racism in Australia and the everyday presence of racism in the institutions. From such anti-racism frameworks, bespoke initiatives focusing on supporting African students must be enacted in Australian educational institutions. Table 3 below is a summary of policy implications and recommendations drawn from enacting Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives in Australian educational institutions.

Table 3: Policy implications and recommendations drawn from enacting Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives in Australian educational institutions

Recommendations

- Anti-racism initiatives focusing particularly on supporting African students must be enacted in Australian educational institutions. The African philosophy of Ubuntu can offer institutional policy framework to address challenges of racism in Australian educational institutions, starting with an acknowledgement of the historical constructions of racism, the permanence of racism, and the everyday presence of racism in Australia.
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Policy implications and recommendations

Principles of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, an antithesis of racism, can develop anti-racism strategies to be enacted in Australian educational institutions with an emphasis, for example, on the importance of having respectful relationships in the institutions.

Educational authorities must make meaningful efforts to afford African students Ubuntu learning environments where the students were valued and respected; an initiative that would likely improve the students' participation as well as their educational outcomes. On this basis, we make the following policy implications and recommendations:

1. African students in Australian educational institutions must be provided with opportunities and safe environments where they can articulate and express their own stories through, for example, forming active students' groups that catered for their personal, social, and educational wellbeing. Apart from affirming the students' sense of identity and belonging, such Ubuntu storytelling opportunities can be used as counter narratives against the negative racialised mainstream storylines about Africans, including African students in Australian educational institutions.
2. Students and educators who perpetrated racism against African students in Australian educational institutions lacked Ubuntu, yet having respectful relationships is a key principle in the African philosophy of Ubuntu. By way of having respectful relationships, the practise of Ubuntu can therefore be enacted as an anti-racism strategy where students and educators are obligated to engage respectfully with the African students in Australian educational institutions.
3. Australian educational institutions need to adapt culturally responsive ways of encouraging family and the community to be meaningfully involved in educational matters affecting African students. The African philosophy of Ubuntu encourages family connectedness and community engagement; from an Ubuntu perspective therefore, family and community could offer African students in Australian educational institutions the moral support needed against experiences of racism as well as assist in identifying and eliminating racialised educational inequalities affecting the students.
4. Anti-racism initiatives focusing particularly on supporting African students must be enacted in Australian educational institutions. The African philosophy of Ubuntu can offer institutional policy framework to address challenges of racism in Australian educational institutions, starting with an acknowledgement of the historical constructions of racism, the permanence of racism, and the everyday presence of racism in Australia.

These policy implications and recommendations, if enacted, will significantly contribute towards ending experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational

institutions. Overall, guided by the principles of Ubuntu, governments, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders must work, both independently and collaboratively to counter racism and discrimination experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions.

Presentation of findings and recommendations to ECAV

The findings and recommendations of this project were presented to our community partner, the Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria (ECAV) (see the presentation slides in Appendix A). ECAV is non for profit and a non-political community organisation that was established in 1984 to provide some settlement assistance to newly arrived Ethiopian immigrants. ECAV advocates on behalf of community members and links them to various services and works closely with local councils, service providers, and government agencies. The aim of the presentation was to discuss how ECAV could participate in implementing the recommendations, identify key stakeholders that could assist with the implementation, and explore how individuals, families, and community members could participate in supporting the implementation. ECAV could also use the policy implications and recommendations from this project to design culturally responsive community initiatives that will contribute towards ending experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions.

The project team profile

The Community Fellows Program of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute (MSEI) aims to meet the research needs of community organisations by providing support to undertake small scale, research-related projects in collaboration with university-based researchers. The program aims to promote opportunities for the University and community organisations to contribute their different knowledge, skills, and experience on an equal footing. The Community Fellows Program team for this project comprised of Ms Yohanna Mequwanint (Community Fellow) and Dr Gerald Onsando (Academic Mentor).

Ms Yohanna Mequwanint

Ms Yohanna Mequwanint has a bachelor's degree in Human Rights and a double minor in Politics and International Relations. Ms Yohanna currently works with a Victorian state department and volunteers with the Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria (ECAV). As a young person with lived experiences, Ms Yohanna is devoted to exploring approaches that will contribute towards ending experiences of racism for African students in Australian educational institutions. Ms Yohanna Mequwanint is the Community Fellow for this project.

Dr Gerald Onsando

Dr Onsando is a Research Fellow at the School of Social and Political Sciences and the Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne. As a practitioner and an advocate of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, Dr Onsando is keen in exploring ways research and evaluation projects could be culturally responsive, beneficial, and meaningful to community members. Dr Gerald Onsando is the Academic Mentor for this project.

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Appendix A – Project presentation



Racism experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions: towards Ubuntu anti-racism strategies

Melbourne Social Equity Institute (MSEI) Community Fellows Program

Yohanna Mequwanint and Gerald Onsando

A conversation with the Ethiopian Community Association in Victoria (ECAV)

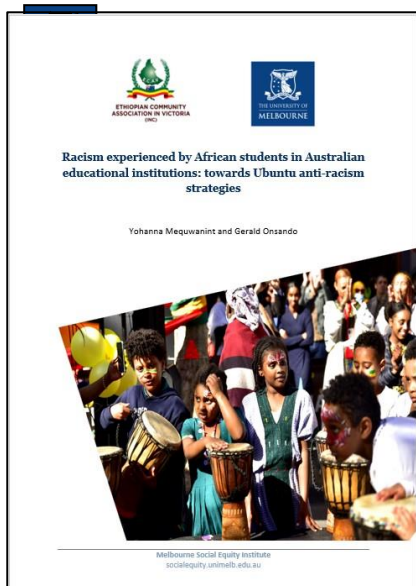


Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners



We would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the various countries on which we are located and pay my respects to their Elders, both past and present.

2



Project report

Yohanna Mequwanint and Gerald Onsando (2022).

Racism experienced by African students in Australian educational institutions: towards Ubuntu anti-racism strategies

Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne.

Community Fellows Program of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute

3



Introduction



- **Before colonisation by Europeans, Australia was a community of diverse cultural orientations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**
- **Since then, successive groups of immigrants, including those of an African heritage have made Australia their home**
- **Data from the ABS showed that the estimated resident population of people born in Africa increased 395,750 in 2012 up to 496,100 in 2021; (Ethiopia; 10,620 to 16,660)**
- **Many Africans continue to value and practice their traditions and sociocultural ways of living even after immigrating to Australia; as explained by Ubuntu**
- **The African philosophy of Ubuntu is often stated by the maxim “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am”; promotes collectivism rather than individualism**
- **Many Africans in Australia, including students in Educational institutions, experienced disturbing levels of racism.**

4



Empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling



Findings and recommendations

Findings

Africans experienced disturbing levels of racism in their daily life interactions in Australian educational institutions

Recommendations

African students in Australian educational institutions must be provided with opportunities and safe environments where they can voice and tell their own stories through, for example, forming active students' groups that catered for their personal, social, and educational wellbeing

Apart from affirming the students' sense of identity and belonging, such Ubuntu storytelling opportunities can be used as counter narratives against the negative racialised mainstream storylines about Africans, including African students in Australian educational institutions.

ECAV

In what ways can ECAV participate in empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling?

5





Practicing Ubuntu in Australian educational institutions

Findings and recommendations

Findings

The racism that African students experienced in Australian educational institutions was often perpetuated by students and educators

Recommendations

Students and educators who perpetrated racism against African students in Australian educational institutions lacked Ubuntu; through having respectful relationships, the practice of Ubuntu can therefore be enacted as one of the anti-racism strategies in Australian educational institutions.

Australian educational institutions need to adapt culturally responsive ways of encouraging family and the community to be meaningfully involved in educational matters affecting African students; as per the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

ECAV

In what ways can ECAV work with institutions to support the practice of Ubuntu in Australian educational institutions?

7





Enacting Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives in Australian educational institutions



Findings and recommendations

Findings

Racism is a serious challenge facing all levels of Australian educational institutions

Recommendations

Anti-racism initiatives focusing particularly on supporting African students must be enacted in Australian educational institutions. The African philosophy of Ubuntu can offer institutional policy and practice framework to address challenges of racism in Australian educational institutions, starting with an acknowledgement of the historical constructions of racism in Australia, the permanence of racism in Australia, and the everyday presence of racism in the institutions.

ECAV

In what ways can ECAV work with institutions to enact Ubuntu anti-racism initiatives in Australian educational institutions?

9





Conclusion



Principles of the African philosophy of Ubuntu, an antithesis of racism, developed antiracism strategies to end experiences of racism and racial discrimination encountered by African students in educational institutions.

Considerations for ECAV:

- In what ways can ECAV participate in empowering African students through Ubuntu storytelling?
- In what ways can ECAV work with institutions to support the practice of Ubuntu in Australian educational institutions?
- In what ways can ECAV work with institutions to enact Ubuntu antiracism initiatives in Australian educational institutions?

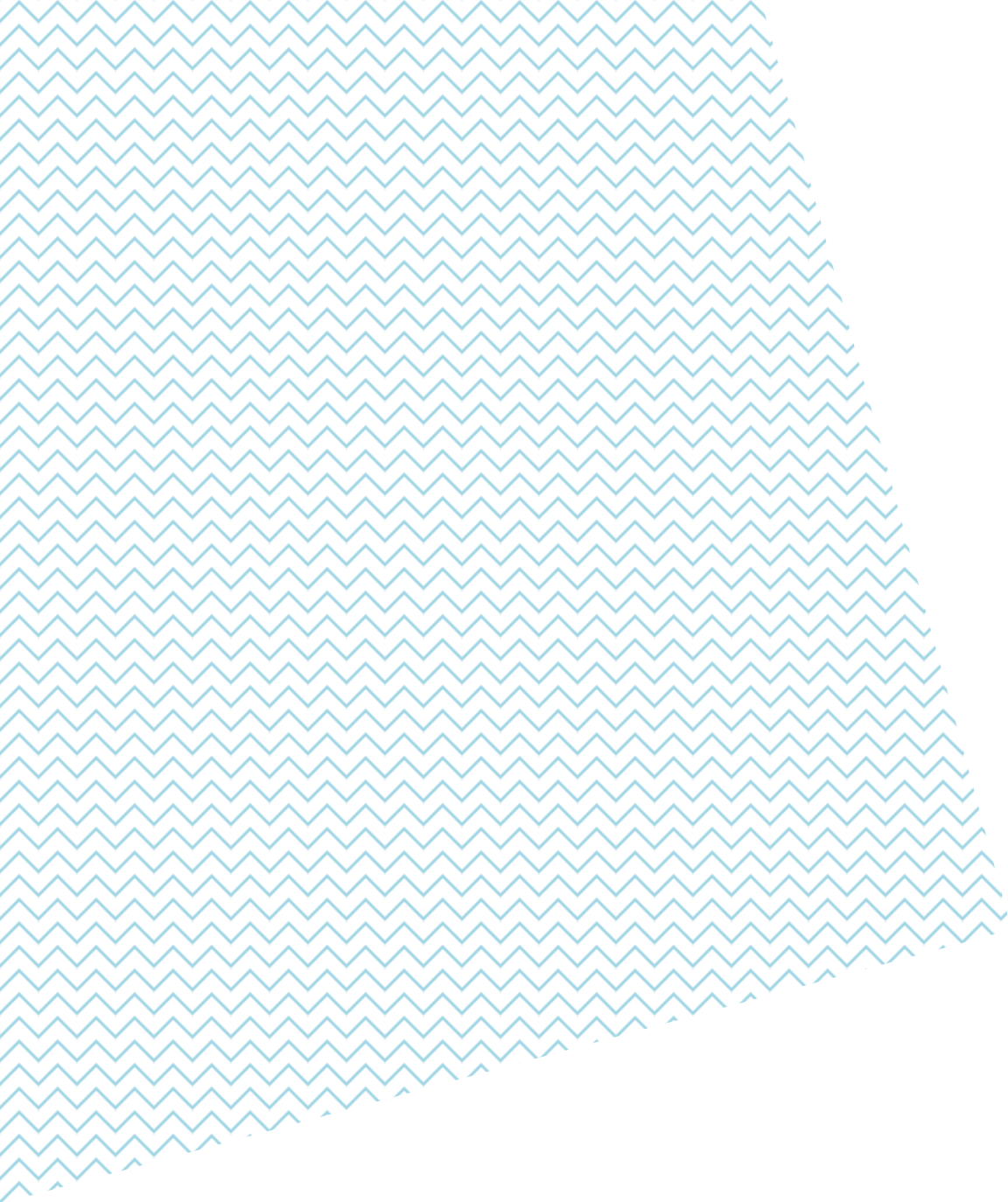
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Thank you

Yohanna Mequwanint and Gerald Onsando





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