

# Title: The Belong – Antiracism Project

# Location: Melbourne Australia

# Start and Completion Date: April 2022-Ongoing

**Social Initiative Project**

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# Abstract

Despite lack of empirical evidence on the level of racist attitudes, generally defined, in Australia, there is a strong commitment to promoting social change and liberation. However, such commitment to social change only attracts very few community psychology models for creating systems change to address oppression.

Given how embedded racism is in institutions toward Africa Australian Community, a significant shift in the system's policies, practices, and procedures is required to address institutional racism and create organizational and institutional change.

This paper presents a community focus intervention to address racial inequities against Africans Australians community called an end to racism. The Antiracism approach assumes through the Belong Initiative emerged as a result of the intersection of multifaceted resettlement and multifaceted problem (racism). Thus, Belong is an anti-racism project designed to counter this narrative. It aims to create positive experiences and resources to inform all Australians of the rich cultural and social contributions the community makes to Victoria.

This paper further describes the theories behind ending racism, the basics of the intervention strategy, and the strengths and limitations of this change approach.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction and Background: (800words)

Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice whether individual or institutional is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress or limit the rights of others. Race and racism have been central to the organisation of Australian society since European colonisation began in 1788. As the First Peoples of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have borne the brunt of European colonisation and have a unique experience of racism. The process of colonisation, and the beliefs that underpin it, continue to shape Australian society today.

Racism adapts and changes over time, and can impact different communities in different ways, with racism towards different groups intensifying in different historical moments. An example of this is the spike in racism towards Asian and Asian-Australian people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Racism includes all the laws, policies, ideologies and barriers that prevent people from experiencing justice, dignity, and equity because of their racial identity. It can come in the form of harassment, abuse or humiliation, violence or intimidating behaviour. However, racism also exists in systems and institutions that operate in ways that lead to inequity and injustice.

In recent years, a negative narrative around the South Sudanese community has gained traction among certain areas of the media and Australian society. Belong is an anti-racism project designed to counter this narrative. It aims to create positive experiences and resources to inform all Australians of the rich cultural and social contributions the community makes to Victoria. It will also give voice to the struggles of South Sudanese Victorians to ensure understanding. The aim is to counter the negative stereotyping currently marginalising and stigmatising our community and educate the community regarding the many and valuable contributions South Sudanese bring to any community they are a part of.

The project will encompass:

* Staging four informative culturally safe events to engage in constructive intercultural awareness raising, counter negative stereotyping and showcase South Sudanese Culture and food with key stakeholders.
* A social media campaign focused on a series of positive short stories about the South Sudanese community.
* Engage media to screen positive stories through a targeted communications campaign.
* Engage government to support and fund antiracism initiatives.

# Problem Statement: (250 words)

The South Sudanese Australian community faces many challenges the broader community will never have to overcome. Many of these issues have a lasting impact on the safety, employment, economic prospects, and social and emotional wellbeing of people in the community.

These issues include:

* Persistent racism disempowers the community from attaining access to employment, sporting, educational and other opportunities.
* Lack of educational engagement amongst young people
* Impacts of the pre-migration refugee experience and trauma
* Economic, mental, and emotional impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic
* Lack of employment opportunity despite high levels of Australian tertiary qualifications
* Lack of culturally appropriate health providers
* Lack of appropriate, end-to-end intervention programs to support employment and education
* The impact of racism is felt throughout the community and can often ripple across multiple generations.
* Community-wide mental health issues
* High levels of suicide risk and incarceration rates amongst young people
* Family breakdown and family violence
* Lack of aspiration and disengagement from education due to lack of outcomes
* Lack of aspiration, hope, pride, particularly amongst young people
* Entrenched social problems, i.e. alcohol use
* Lack of individual and community finance capital
* Low social capital and community esteem

# Goals and Objectives: (400 words)

Belong aim to help build the capacity of communities to be able to engage in constructive intercultural and interfaith dialogue as a means of addressing local challenges to social cohesion through specific targeted events that build understanding. The events are structured to include two general-audience events and two events more targeted to specific demographics (one focused on youth and the other on women). The aim is to engage both South Sudanese and wider community members to explore and gain deeper intercultural understandings, and a deeper grasp of the damage that occurs as a result of racism (often intergenerational), while developing resilience and strategies to deal with future issues of racism through a positive and appreciative methodology. The events also provide an opportunity to ensure people are advised and understand their rights in the face of injustices based on racism. This provides the community and bystanders with the tools to empower them in reporting incidents.

The initiative also provide an opportunity to create resources to counter the racist narrative that has disempowered and caused genuine harm to the South Sudanese community. A positive approach is used to document and develop stories of employers and employees working together in an inclusive manner, as well as successful South Sudanese sports-stars and other community representatives sharing their stories and strategies.

The resources will be made available for distribution to young people through schools, and to the broader public via a dedicated website and associated communications campaign. The campaign target media outlets to engage them in supporting the initiative and remedying the negative rhetoric currently characterising the broader media narratives.

**Challenges and mitigation strategies:** (400 words)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Challenges | Mitigation |
| Project stakeholders are exposed to culturally unsafe conditions during course of project. | * Ensure that all elements of stakeholder engagement, including training, Project, Advisory Group and Storytellers Group, are subject to principles of cultural safety. * Set up a reporting and response mechanism for the project for the event of a cultural safety breach. |
| Covid-19 limiting engagement of community members | All stakeholder engagement and communications are conducted remotely as required by current COVID-19 restrictions Broad number of community members to be engaged to ensure project continuity. |
| Unable to recruit enough and/or drop-off during project of Project Advisory Group representatives. | * Prepare a back-up list of community representatives who can be potentially recruited. * Remunerate representatives in a fair and equitable manner commensurate with their engagement. |

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review (1000 words)

The plethora of writings related to racism across the various disciplines encompassed by the social sciences is testament to the fact that racism remains a significant issue in the world today. Despite various political reforms in the countries that make up the Western world, racism persists, often, but not always, manifesting in more covert and subtle ways than in by-gone times. Indeed, according to Pettigrew (1989), the overt expression of racism has become increasingly socially unacceptable, whereas similarly claim that there has been a public repudiation of racism and a stigmatization of overtly racist expression. Such observations have stimulated social psychologists to proffer various accounts of both the changing nature of racism and the reasons why it persists. However, in recent years, the systemic nature of racism has been recognized, and rather than focusing on the nature of racism, and the traits and characteristics of racist individuals and societies, some researchers have redirected their efforts to exploring the way racism is experienced by its targets and victims. For example, Essed (1991, 1992) has studied the everyday racism experienced by Black women in the Netherlands and the United States, and Feagin and Sikes (1994) have reported on the experiences of Black men in the United States. Similarly, some affected individuals (e.g., Durodoye, 1999; Wilbur, 1999) have recorded accounts of racism in their own life experiences. (Mellor, D. 2003).

The emphasis in this study was to interrogate racist attitudes in Australia, building on Dunn and McDonald’s (2001) pilot study in New South Wales. Among applicable theories, we include the thinking of traditional urbanists, neo-Marxist explanations, the Chicago School (Park 1950) and more recently, social constructivism. Each of these retains substantial explanatory potential, but here we focus on social constructivism. Constructivism, according to Jackson and Penrose (1993, 3) works by identifying the components and processes of category construction: categories of cultural identity as well as what constitutes racism itself. This approach is particularly useful for uncovering background ideologies that sustain both racist attitudes (broadly defined) and anti-racism. Racist and anti-racist (or non-racist) attitudes are often coexistent, and a social constructivist approach also aids an understanding of that apparent contradiction. For example, contested discourses of the nation as multicultural in official rhetoric of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (and its successors), or as Anglo-Celtic in political debate and in the media feed into varied and complicated everyday understandings of nation and citizenship. Social constructivist perspectives identify different forms of racist beliefs and contexts, focusing especially here on links between racism and national ideology, critiques of sociobiological understandings of race, critical analyses of cultural privilege, and specific assessments of the disparagement and lesser regard experienced by Australians who belong to certain cultural groups.

In this theorization, two main types of racism are recognised: ‘old racism’ and ‘new racism’. The first of these, highlighting inferiority, prevailed from the time of Federation in 1901 until the early 1970s and the end of the White Australia policy. Then this ‘old racism’ was largely supplanted by a ‘new racism’ or ‘cultural racism’ based on the ‘insurmountability of cultural differences’. Thus ethnic minorities are no longer viewed as inferior; rather they are differentiated as threats to ‘social cohesion’ and ‘national unity’, that is, to the cultural values and integrity of the dominant (Anglo-Celtic) ‘host’ society. The ‘new racism’ operates more through stereotypes of cultural traits of groups, or surrounding notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and the national space (Cole 1997). The latter are reproduced in the media and in political debates. Arguably, overt racism has been replaced by new constructions of covert racism, manifest as cultural intolerance has argued that these two logics of racism are nonetheless strongly inter-dependent, and that they combine in effective ways, citing examples of Rwanda, the Balkans and Islamaphobia.

The ‘old racism’ embodies a broadly sociobiological understanding of race. It includes arguments that ‘racial groups’ should be separated from one another, or that some ‘racial groups’ are naturally superior to others. These have also been referred to as ‘blatant’ or ‘old fashioned’ racisms (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). These include belief in racial hierarchy and racial separatism. The three old racism themes operationalised in our survey were belief in a racial hierarchy, in racial separation, and in ‘race’ itself.

The ‘new racism’ embraces three main and somewhat inter-related aspects:

### Out-groups

Contemporary racism in Australia, and intolerance towards specific cultural groups, is seen by many researchers as linked to historic constructions of Australian national identity and who does and does not belong. Asian-Australians, Muslims, and Indigenous people have long been identified as key others to the Australian national imaginary. Intolerance of these groups, as stated in attitudinal surveys, had been detected in previous studies. Intolerance of Indigenous Australians, for example, has been a feature of attitude polling, with specific findings that such intolerance is sustained through core stereotypes. These stereotypes surround complaints about supposed welfare dependency, drunkenness, and failure to ‘assimilate’Anti-Asian sentiment, and anti-Muslim feeling, has also been strongly recorded in attitude polling in Australia. The stereotypes that sustain such intolerances have been best outlined in qualitative work and media studies.

### Cultural diversity and nation

The ideology of nation is important to understanding racism what is an Australian?. The findings of public opinion polling on Australian national identity and support for multiculturalism are varied and often quite contradictory. On the one hand respondents have tended to respond favourably to questions asking them about the desirability of cultural difference. Yet poll findings have also reported concerns regarding cultural maintenance amongst migrant groups. For example surveys in the mid-1990s found that while 60 per cent of those polled agreed that migrants should not maintain their own cultural traditions, only 20 per cent thought that multicultural policy should be abolished. Yet cultural maintenance is a core principal of official multiculturalism (Commonwealth of Australia 1999: 19; Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989: vii). Similarly, recent work by Ang et al. (2002: 17-20) found that 60 per cent of Australians are positive about cultural diversity, although support for the policy of multiculturalism was only about 50 per cent. Clearly, there is an unresolved, and widespread, tension in attitudes towards cultural diversity in Australia.

### Issues of normalcy and privilege

Critical race theorists have commented on what they have called the ‘normalcy’ of racism (Kobayashi and Peake 2000: 394-6). Some argue that there is a privilege of Whiteness, which is associated with a way of life and perspective where racism is unseen or is considered an exceptional aberration (Bonnett 1997). These twin themes of denial of racism, and denial of privilege, were examined in the survey. The survey questions tested the extent to which respondents recognised a problem of racism in Australia, and the extent to which they recognised that Australians of a British background enjoy a privileged position (as an indicator of Anglo-Celtic (or British) cultural privilege). Most respondents (83 per cent) recognised that there was a problem with racism in Australia, and about 8 per cent denied any problem. These accords with Brian Sweeney and Associates who found that 79 per cent of telephone survey respondents (sample of 1250) were concerned about the level of racism in Australia and felt that racism was “rife”. This suggests that at the everyday level, a substantial majority of the population would appreciate a need to speak about racism and for anti-racism initiatives.

## Theoretical Underpinnings (1000words)

Racism is defined as a prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior. The term “racism” is often used interchangeably with “racial discrimination.” However, there is a distinction between the two terms. Racism is a more encompassing term that includes both individual attitudes and institutional policies and practices that promote discrimination on the basis of race. There is no one theory that can explain all manifestations of racism, but there are a few theoretical frameworks that can help us understand racism at different levels. At the individual level, racism can be explained by theories such as social learning theory and cognitive dissonance theory. Social learning theory posits that we learn racist attitudes and behaviours from our interactions with family, friends, and the media. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests

### Functionalism Theory

Robert Merton's functionalist perspective suggests that social institutions and their policies are intended to produce beneficial outcomes, while latent dysfunction is a harmful latent outcome of an institutional policy or practice. Examples include New York City’s “Stop-and-Frisk” policy, which led to disproportionate stopping and detention of Black and Latinx men, and growing distrust in the police and racial minorities. Racism can also contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-groups members and ostracizing out-groups. However, dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group and the diversion of resources from other purposes.

Racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-groups members through ostracism of out-group members, while dysfunctions associated with it include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group and the diversion of resources from other purposes to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. This can increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access and reduce the need for separate and unequal educational systems prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

### Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. They examine past and current struggles between the white ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the people of colour. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of Black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited Black political and social power. Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the Black surgical technician who helped develop the ground-breaking surgical technique that saves the lives of “blue babies” was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have seen a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighbourhoods.

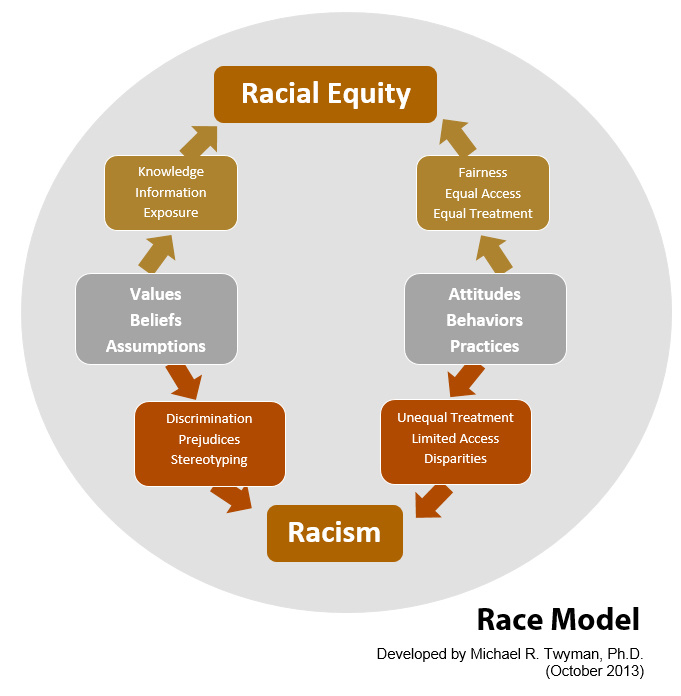
### Ethnic antagonism theory

Edna Bonacich (1972) proposed that ethnic antagonism often has economic underpinnings due to the capitalist owners of the means of production preferring to pay workers from a particular ethnic group lower wages than workers from a dominant ethnic group. This would benefit the capitalist class by lowering production costs and maintaining a divided labour force, which would explain the ethnic antagonism between white workers in the US and undocumented workers from Latin America.

### Change theory and how it was applied: (700 words)

The Institute on Race and Ethnicity's Theory of Change, which contends that racism, is a socially constructed disease that is treatable and curable, is explained by a psychosocial model. According to this strategy, racism is predisposed to some extent due to a variety of factors, and the cure must combine science and education in order to change unwholesome thinking and speed up the healing process.

Racism typically comes in three basic forms: individual, systemic, and institutional, despite the fact that there is disagreement among scholars as to what racism exactly is. A person who is entitled to social benefits, services, facilities, opportunities, or other resources but is denied them because of their race, colour, or national origin is said to be experiencing racism in its most basic form. The use of power is not restricted to the conventional ideas of power and can be both legal and illegal.



Individual racism refers to overt and covert behaviours that may result in physical harm, mental or emotional harm, injury, death, property damage, or denial of services or opportunities. Racial minorities' access to and quality of goods, services, and opportunities are frequently adversely impacted by institutional racism, which is frequently more subtle and involves institutional policies, practices, and procedures. Individual and institutional racism are based on systemic racism because it is a society's ingrained value system that encourages and supports racial discrimination.

The Institute is aware that in order to create a social movement in Arkansas that actually achieves racial justice, it must participate at all three levels. The Institute's Theory of Evolutionary Dynamics is embodied in the five-stage process that is described below.

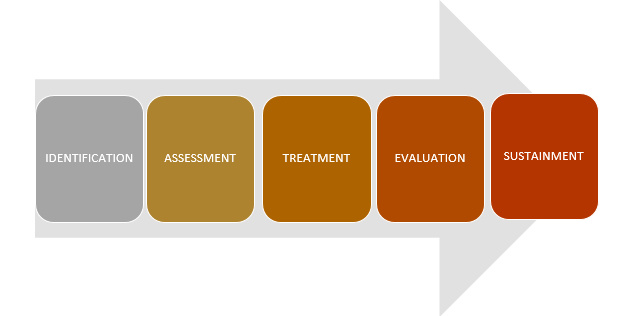
**Identification**  
Racism is pervasive and often insidious; its existence must be called out for what it is, even when perpetrated unintentionally.

**Assessment**  
Because racism is a disease of the mind, it is important to understand how and to what extent it manifests itself in individuals and institutions.

**Treatment**  
Fostering a culture of acceptance, fairness, and equality is the best remedy to erasing racial stereotypes and assumptions.

**Evaluation**  
Appropriate measurements must be instituted to determine the effectiveness of interventions aimed at attacking racist attitudes and behaviors.

**Sustainment**  
Individuals and institutions must commit to ongoing self-evaluation of their racial prejudices and racist actions.



## Methods and Design: (800 words)

Celebrate local communities

Show your support for diverse ethnic groups in your community by attending, promoting or helping fund events run by local organizations and houses of worship that bring people together: festivals, film series, guest lectures, language classes and celebrations. Bring your children. Stand up for cultural diversity and inclusion by supporting local businesses run by immigrants. Try foods and recipes from a range of culinary traditions. Watch films from other countries with your kids and read them [stories that celebrate diversity](https://www.thebump.com/a/childrens-books-about-diversity).

### Call out bigotry and hate speech

Stigmatization is cruel and unproductive. There has been a disturbing increase in hate speech among Europeans in recent years, often blaming immigrant and minority groups for the difficulties of their own countries. If you overhear someone tell a racist joke, speak up and let them know stereotyping isn't harmless. Let your children know they should feel free do the same. There's nothing funny about using “humor” to normalize dangerous ideas and perpetuate ugly stereotypes.

If you see something in the newspaper or on social media that reflects prejudice, write a letter to the editor or leave a comment to let others know that intolerant remarks are unkind and uncalled for.

### Teach children kindness and how to talk about differences

Prejudice and hate are not innate. They are learned behaviors and they can be unlearned. Children absorb biases from the adults around them, and from the media, books and their peers. [So set a good example.](https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/how-white-people-can-talk-their-kids-about-racism/37361) The process of countering negatives with positives begins at an early age. Explain that what makes actions harmful is impact, not intent. Talking about differences does not increase prejudice in children. Make sure children understand all humans are the same inside and each one of us has a right to feel safe and valued. Name-calling is uncivilized and will not be permitted.

Stand up for people being harassed intervene if it's safe to do so

When the public stands in solidarity with immigrants and marginalized groups, bullies lose their power. If you see someone being harassed or physically attacked, it is important to help if you can do so safely. Make your presence as a witness known. Make eye contact with the person being attacked and ask if they want support. Don't escalate the situation. Verbal and physical abuse is wrong and should not be tolerated. All people deserve to be treated with dignity and humanity.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Interventions and Activities: (1200 words)

Belong” is anti-racism project designed to positively inform the broader Australian community of both the huge contribution South Sudanese Victorians make to the community, and some of the struggles they face. It hopes to educate people in Australia about the valuable place South Sudanese Victorians hold in their community.

The project will encompass:

1. Staging cultural events to showcase South Sudanese culture and food across Melbourne.
2. A series of positive short stories screened on social media.
3. Engage media to screen positive stories.
4. Engage the government to support antiracism initiatives.
5. **Cultural Events**

South Sudanese have a very reach culture which most Australians don’t know. The initiative includes cultural events where South Sudanese showcase their traditional dances, foods, dressing etc. This will develop Australians understanding of South Sudanese culture. Cultural awareness allows for more meaningful interactions with those around us. Initiative hopes to build respect and empathy for South Sudanese people and help in celebrating the differences as well as similarities.

1. **Sharing Positive Stories**

In Australia, the South Sudanese community are making an enormous contribution to Australian Society. However, these stories are not told hence don’t reach majority. The negative stories aired through main media outlet and social media about the community tend to take people attention. Hence, this initiative was designed to promote positives stories through social media and mainstreams media. The initiative capture stories in form of interview, interactions, events, drama and more.

1. **Engage Mainstream Media to Screen positives Stories.**

Media play major role in influencing society opinion. Throughout the last half of last decade, media has play a very negative role in racism against Africans Australian, in particular, the South Sudanese community. This initiative engage media so they could air positive stories more than the negative once.

1. **Lobbying Government**

Government should the leading body in any campaign against racism. They make laws that protect equal right, they create opportunity for the disadvantage, their fund antiracism initiatives etc. Henceforth, this initiative, work to lobby be actively involved in dismantling racism.

**Key Findings/Impact**

**Impact**

* Key partnership Secured; Partnership with Society of South Sudanese Professionals Australia (SSSPA) has been secured to help delivered the project. South Sudanese Professionals are key advocate in the fight against Racism. Having them as partners is a key achievement for the initiative.
* A one year's funding has been secured from the Victoria Government manage by SSSPA. The Government of Victoria has offered $51,000 to help fund the delivery of the initiative within 1 year period with possibility of further funding. This gave weight to the initiative as well as putting the antiracism campaign in the government priorities.
* Project Coordinator recruited. From the funding offered by the government, a project coordinator has been recruited to help deliver the project. This has freed me to do the support work and it has also increased the support for the initiative.
* Social Media Campaign has started over 8months ago. Many positive stories have reached many Australians. This has made some impact so far. We are hope for more positive replication from the stories.

**Key Findings**

* Project stakeholders are exposed to culturally unsafe conditions during course of project. This has been resolved through the training of volunteers and staff.
* The scope of the initiative has underestimated the magnitude of the issue. During the delivery of the project, more issues that cannot be resolved through our initiative emerged. There are issues that need research, others need active advocacy or government intervention which are this project limitation. The initiative aimed to resolve this shortcoming through collaboration.
* Many aspects of the project required fundings – Thanks to Victoria Government for granting funding.
* Impacts are only visible in long term – so we have adjusted our expectations of making immediate impact.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The developing literature on the community experiences of African Australians in Australia highlights not only the insecurity of contingent belonging, constant frontier work and resulting experiences of combatlessness that they must contend with at multiple systemic and contingent levels, but also the various strategies of resilience employed in response to those difficult circumstances. Solutions proposed in the literature include finding belonging and solidarity in united migrant communities and developing a "negotiated" or "stretched" borderland identity "so that both cultures become part of their way of life in Australia". As we have emphasized throughout this article, understanding, and addressing the effects of racism has important implications for public policy and practice to support the well-being and health of the African Australian community. As ongoing discussions and debates about migration are complicated by the growing influence of nationalist discourses in the context of closing international borders and growing social anxieties, it is imperative that the stories and experiences of African Australians are effectively shared and documented with a valuable sociological nuance and that the importance of anti-racism in Australian public health debates will be greatly enhanced.

Navigating the formation of new and resilient diasporic identities is a central theme in the literature on African migration to Australia. Moral panics and the construction of black African "alienation" present challenges to overcome the implications of reified and homogenized black/African immigrant/outsider labels. Because of such experiences, dirt can be carried as a burden in a settler-colonial society such as Australia. As African migrants are one of the most 'visible' social groups in Australia in terms of phenotypic differences, their significant problems of marginalization and marginalization extend beyond poor physical, psychological, and economic outcomes. As this is a very visible aspect of migrant subjectivity, we see a need for further research exploring the nuances of new diasporic identities and their metamorphosis through different environments and experiences. Furthermore, it is important to examine how black Africans develop resilience in dealing with the consequences of excessive visibility and control and invisibility. We conclude this article by looking at the words of Falk of, who emphasized that moral pains have "ideological motivations, they are the stories we tell ourselves and each other to help us feel the uncertainty and social change" This means there are ways to tell new stories about what it means to be Australian, apart from endlessly recycling racial moral panics. Acknowledging the diversity of Australian culture and the subjectivity of different experiences requires a significant transformation of the Australian community that can own the reality and effects of past and present racism and find a place for those who were historically constructed as such. "strangers" in the crowd.

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**Appendix**