

Thoughts of racism ...

“ Racism. I know what you are thinking. Not again. It is a topic that is a useful conversation starter, an easy prey for ill mannered jokes and a favorite for debaters. Why, the most popular girl at my school was the one who could put on several accents and ridiculed different races, not unlike famous standup comedian Russell Peters. However, why is it that such a widely addressed issue remains unresolved?

Racism is the belief that the culture and practices of a race or group of people is superior to that of others. Racist acts and thoughts demean individuals or groups by disempowering them. While there are, in extreme situations, psychological reasons for racism, not many of us can say that we suffer from xenophobia. Over the course of history, though fortunately few, there have been overt displays of racism that have significantly affected our experiences of racism now. The holocaust has created a world that is more tolerant of Jews for the hardship suffered by their ancestors while the world wars have created an integrating Japanese community which contributes tremendously to the global economy.

As much as Australia prides itself in being a multicultural society, one fact remains true: racism is a problem. Phrases such as “wogs” referring to Lebanese people and “fobs” or “curry” to indicate Indians are not uncommon. While you can say it is slang, it is a cause for division and disrupts the fabric of society.

It appears that multiculturalism has become a pride forced upon Australians than one embraced and desired in a futuristic approach.

Above all, it is an attack upon fundamental Australian values and the idea of a “fair-go”.

Within my first few weeks in Australia, I had my first experience of being a victim of a racist attack. Not only was I insulted and told to “go back to where you came from”, the attack persisted every morning on my way to school. What happened to freedom of expression and liberty? Should our already limited protection of human rights in the constitution be further limited by our intolerance for devout civilians to express themselves through their beliefs?

Instead, we will turn our focus onto the legal community. It may be obvious to some that the most influential high court judge’s bench is occupied primarily by aged white males. Although it could be reasoned that these judge’s are indeed qualified and possess the qualities most valued in the profession, it is also indicative of an underlying preference for people who fit this unofficial criteria to sit on the bench.

Regardless, Obama’s inauguration remains the most widely watched show, standing at 37.8 million viewers. This may seem to suggest that the many people are for change and transformation. Again, why is it that such a simple issue remains a huge problem to date? The answer would lie simply in the fact that change takes effort. An effort many aren’t willing to take and when they do, it is merely a small step forward. This small step is negligible in comparison to the people’s mentality which remains backward. Let’s stop acknowledging; or worse, denying; the existence of racism in our world. Let’s start with the man in the mirror and change in a holistic effort

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to make this world a better place.