

Intervention by the African Australian Delegation.

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Chair, panellists and delegates, we appreciate this opportunity to speak at this gathering about the experiences of African descendants in Australia. The visit by the expert group has confirmed many things that we know, and we are encouraged by the recommendations that were made.

Like other contexts, the Australian context is different. While we have had African descendants since the first fleet, if not earlier, the arrival of larger groups migrants, refugees and asylum seekers skilled migrants is something newer. We can say that the African diaspora is young and diverse. We are negotiating belonging, creating culture, and making community on the unceded lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are making community within the context of the Australian racial formation, which have privileged whiteness and white migration, but is also being transformed by black migration, migrants who are racialised and othered as culturally incompatible.

It is within this landscape of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander struggles for land rights and self determination and the broader context of whiteness/racism/multiculturalism that African diasporas are creating places and spaces to be in community. Through our community-engaged praxis and cultural action that is driven by and informed by the decolonial lens, we have learnt that people continue to face symbolic and structural violence and exclusion, and they devise responses, resistance, counter action, and counter spaces.

It is the activity in these counter spaces, rooted in desire for self determination, and in solidarity with different actors, the university, allies from different settings and groups, that young leaders are showing the way, showing how we can create spaces for education, training, and communing that harness our collective historical and ancestral memory, and build networks. They are building capital at the margins, they are doing so together, in alliance with First Nations and racialised people's. They are imagining and creating culture, and in doing so, expanding the public discourses about what it means to be agentic, empowered, African descendants.

As has already been mentioned in previous panel's with access to resources and support, ethical and relational engagement, members of the African diaspora are showing how they can be entrepreneurial, and enact their imagination towards a world in which they are empowered, belong, and can flourish. a world in which they have both strong wings and strong roots.

Chair, in conclusion, given our work and the deep ways in which race structures experiences of participation in everyday life, we support the recommendations of the working group in particular Recommendations 3, 6, 4, 52, 54. These suggest that we:

Address absences in the records:

The importance of truth telling about the histories of colonialism and racism in the making of Australia and how coloniality continues in shaping the opportunities of people in the present.

Advance Radical inclusion:

Include people in decision making structures that move beyond tick box inclusion, but are based in relational values and practices fully attuned to racialised power relations.

Promote Culturally responsive workforces for empowered communities:

Create spaces for training community and health services that embrace critical culturally responsive and intersectional approaches to service planning and delivery.