

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK:

Making space for Sudanese young people in Queensland

**“She told us ‘don’t stand here or I will call the police.’”
- *Sudanese young person, Brisbane***

**“They’re all absolutely yearning for a place of their own.”
- *Adele Rice, Milpera SHS***

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
PROJECT BACKGROUND	5
BRIEF BACKGROUND INTO SUDANESE CONFLICT	6
SUDANESE SETTLEMENT IN QUEENSLAND	6
METHODOLOGY	7
LIMITATIONS (AND LEARNINGS)	7
1. Time and money	7
2. Language barriers.....	8
3. Cultural barriers	8
4. Connecting with the disengaged	8
5. Lack of statistical expertise in complex data collection and analysis.....	10
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	10
FINDINGS	10
1. What do Sudanese young people do in their spare time?	10
2. Where do Sudanese young people hang out?	11
3. Why do Sudanese young people hang out in public spaces?.....	11
<i>No community space for African young people</i>	11
4. Issues for Sudanese young people in public spaces.....	12
4.1 Police harassment.....	12
<i>Police perspective</i>	12
<i>Young persons' perspective</i>	12
<i>Service provider perspective</i>	13
4.2 Other racist attacks.....	14
<i>Direct racism</i>	14
<i>Racism in the media</i>	14
4.3 Complaints by local residents	15
4.4 Conflict with other space users	15
4.5 Harassment by security guards	15
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
1. Programs and spaces for African young people	16
2. Community education.....	16
3. Research and documentation	16
CONCLUSION.....	17
APPENDIX 1	18
Condensed questionnaire for young Sudanese	18
APPENDIX 2	19
Questionnaire for service providers.....	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Space usage has been identified by youth peaks and service providers to present a range of issues for young people across Australia.¹ Public space issues are generally more prominent for disengaged young people – that is, those who are not in school, not accessing services, and generally disconnected from their community. Young people hanging out on the streets due to homelessness, poverty, cultural displacement, lack of occupation and just plain nowhere-else-to-go are prime targets of police move-on powers and other anti-social rejection and abuse.²

Large numbers of Sudanese refugees (and most of these being under the age of 25) have settled in South East Queensland in the last five years (see below). Like any new group, Sudanese young people have struggled to find their place in their new society, and the places they have found are often public places.

Unfortunately, these “highly visible”³ and “culturally different” newcomers have not been welcomed by all: young Sudanese in public spaces have been targets of complaints by community members, harassment by police, security guards and other authority figures, and other outright racist attacks.

This paper explores the reasons why Sudanese young people are hanging out in public places and what they encounter there, and offers recommendations for making Queensland communities more welcoming for their *New Kids on the Block*.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

During 2003-2004, members of the Multicultural Youth Network Qld (MYNQ) repeatedly reported complaints by their young Sudanese clients and friends of being harassed by police and other groups and individuals when in public places. MYNQ’s Queensland Police representatives also came to the group seeking guidance as to how to cope with this new and very visible cohort of young people who seemed to be congregating on streets and in parks in Brisbane and surrounding areas.

This tension between Sudanese young people, members of the police force, and other members of the public was identified by MYNQ as a major issue for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people in Queensland, one with serious implications and needing urgent attention.

YANQ visited Toowoomba on three occasions after some serious issues were identified surrounding the large Sudanese community settled there. YANQ was informed of two fatalities in car accidents and two suicides within the Sudanese youth community late 2004. We followed up on this by co-convening a meeting with stakeholders in Toowoomba to tackle these issues. One outcome of this meeting was a Sudanese youth consultation/forum, where Sudanese young people in Toowoomba came together to

¹ See, for starters, Youth Action and Policy Association NSW Inc, *No Standing: Young People and Community Space Project Research Report* (1997); National Crime Prevention *Hanging out: Negotiating young people’s use of public space* (1999) National Crime Prevention, Attorney-General’s Department: Canberra.

² Queensland’s new VSM legislation, which has perturbing implications predominantly for Aboriginal young people (being the majority of homeless and chronic young people), has increased police move-on powers even further. See YANQ’s sniffing policy at www.yanq.org.au.

³ presumably because of their tallness and their dark black skin

identify issues and solutions themselves. Racism, police relations, and feelings of being out of place in their new town were all major issues identified by the young people.

Further in response to these loud, clear and consistent messages from the CALD youth sector, YANQ approached the Sudanese Youth Association of Queensland (SYAQ) to partner in a deeper investigation of the issues. It was time to ask Sudanese young people what was going on: why are they hanging out in public spaces, what's happening there, and how can government and community work together to improve understanding and make things better for the new kids on the block?

SYAQ agreed to the proposal and YANQ employed SYAQ's President, Abraham Akuot, to undertake consultations for this paper. He undertook consultations with Sudanese young people and agencies in Brisbane and Logan during February/March 2005.

YANQ then expanded the consultations across Queensland.

BRIEF BACKGROUND INTO SUDANESE CONFLICT

Sudan hosts the largest displaced population in the world and has produced one of every nine of the world's uprooted people. At the end of 1999, more than 4 million Sudanese remained internally displaced, and some 420,000 Sudanese refugees were living in neighbouring countries (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Congo-Kinshasa, Central African Republic, Chad, and Egypt). Since 1983, more than 2 million Sudanese have died because of the country's civil war, including one in every five Sudanese, according to estimates.⁴

Sudan has been in a state of civil war since its independence in 1956, with a brief period of peace in the 1970s and early 1980s. The root causes of the conflict are multiple. There is racial and religious tension between black, Indigenous, Christian Southerners and Arab, Muslim Northerners. The South has continually struggled for autonomy from the North, and Northern Government forces have brutally suppressed Southern rebel forces. Inter-tribal conflict in the South has been intensified by the provision of arms by the North.

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army was signed on January 9, 2005.

SUDANESE SETTLEMENT IN QUEENSLAND

During the last 7 years, more than 3000 Sudanese refugees have settled in Queensland under Department of Immigration Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' (DIMIA) Humanitarian Program.⁵ The majority of Sudanese are living in Brisbane, Logan and Toowoomba.⁶ Some 75% of these are young people under the age of 25,⁷ over half of

⁴ USCR *Refugee Reports*, Spring/Summer 2000

⁵ Humanitarian Settlement Client Information System, Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. This data does not include Sudanese who have self-relocated from other Australian states. For current settlement data, access DIMIA's interactive reporting system at <http://www.immi.gov.au/settle/data/index.htm>.

⁶ There are also small numbers of Sudanese in Cairns, Townsville, Gatton, Pine Rivers, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

⁷ This is age the breakdown in a sample of 500 Sudanese surveyed in Toowoomba: see Lifeline, Centacare and the Social Justice Commission, *Finding a Home on the Range: A Profile of Toowoomba's Sudanese Community* (June 2005).

which have one or both parents deceased or missing,⁸ and often suffering deep torture, trauma and grief issues and cultural shock, and with low literacy and English language ability.

While DIMIA projects that Sudanese settlement will continue in the coming years, other African groups are now also arriving in increased numbers and the subject matter of this paper may have increased relevance for them in the near future, as well as for other young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

The findings in this paper are based on extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including Sudanese young people, Queensland Police, and service providers for Sudanese young people in Brisbane, Bayside, Logan, Toowoomba and Townsville.⁹

YANQ engaged a young Sudanese man to consult with his peers and service providers in Brisbane and Logan. A reference group of academics and youth workers was set up to support the worker.

A total of 50 males and 32 females between the ages of 14 and 27 in Brisbane, Bayside, Logan, Toowoomba and Townsville were surveyed.

YANQ's Sudanese consultant surveyed the Brisbane and Logan contingent. Ten of these consultations were in-depth, one-on-one interviews with young Sudanese men living in Brisbane who had had direct experiences of racism and police harassment in public space. The rest of the Brisbane consultations were done through survey forms completed in English by young Sudanese at the 2005 Sudanese Youth Awards Night.

In the other locations, focus groups were conducted by teachers and social workers, who assisted the young people to complete generic survey forms in English. In these cases, the young people also helped each other to complete the survey forms.

All consultees were paid for their time.

LIMITATIONS (AND LEARNINGS)

1. Time and money

This project had a tight budget and a limited time frame. YANQ has funding for one part-time Multicultural Development Officer to advocate for the needs of CALD young people for the whole of Queensland. Many valuable and interesting leads were not able to be fully explored due to time restraints. Our Sudanese worker could only be hired for a limited time due to budget restraints. Time and budget restraints also meant that we could not engage a worker with statistical expertise to assist with data collection and analysis. Hence, one recommendation below is for more detailed research to be undertaken by a research centre.

⁸ Milpera State High School unpublished data.

⁹ Given the very small number of Sudanese families in Cairns compared with other new arrival groups (four or five at the time of contact), service providers in Cairns determined that participation in this project was not a priority for that community. They were, however, interested in the project findings as there may have been correlations for other more prominent cultural groups in that area.

2. Language barriers

The importance of consulting with communities in their own language cannot be underestimated; however, we encountered a number of difficulties in putting this into practice.

Verbal interviews conducted by YANQ's Sudanese consultant in the consultees' own languages were translated by the consultant into English for YANQ and the broader community's benefit. Although the Sudanese consultant's English language skills were competent, he was not a trained translator.

The remaining 72 consultations were done in English through survey forms. The consultees had to read the questions and write their answers in English. YANQ is aware that a major issue for Sudanese young people in Queensland is low literacy and English language skills. Coming from a long-term state of civil war, many Sudanese have missed out on years of education and upon arriving in Australia, cannot read and write in their own language, or speak English, let alone read and write in English.¹⁰

All respondents in Brisbane and Logan were assisted to fill out survey forms by Sudanese and other workers, and by their peers. However, many questions were still left unanswered, and some answers which were unclear had to be further interpreted. Even in the case of answers which read clearly, we cannot assume that the respondent understood the question and/or accurately expressed their views in their written answer. Where respondents were assisted with their answers, it is also possible that they may have written what was suggested by the person helping them. Also, newer arrivals in particular may have encountered increased linguistic and cultural barriers to participating in this survey.

All of this linguistic muddiness leaves the data open to interpretation, and therefore this report is best read as indicative of general trends and the need for further research.

3. Cultural barriers

Young people who have recently arrived in a new country, especially out of war situations, often have a fear of authority and mistrust in strangers. Hence, although the surveys were confidential, we cannot expect that respondents necessarily felt safe to share information about sensitive issues such as contact with the police and racist incidents. That said, it seems that the young people were quite frank about their experiences and views.

4. Connecting with the disengaged

As stated above, public space issues are more prominent for disengaged young people.

Disengaged young people are also disenfranchised young people: they are the most difficult to connect with and therefore lack the pathways to true social participation and inclusion, even in decision-making which directly concerns and affects them. Youth workers are generally the best equipped to reach out to these young people and communicate their needs to decision-makers and funding bodies.¹¹

Correlatively, for the Sudanese group, the subject of this report is probably most poignant for those with higher levels of disengagement. Anecdotal evidence supports this conclusion; however this was difficult to measure quantitatively within the constraints

¹⁰ See YANQ's report *Cultural Chasm: the changing cultural and linguistic demographic in Queensland schools and the need for reform* (2004), available at www.yanq.org.au.

¹¹ See YANQ's paper *Let's Invite Everyone* (2004).

of the project. Recent YANQ research into the education needs of CALD young people in Queensland shows that many Sudanese are struggling at school and dropping out.¹²

Therefore, it is likely that young Sudanese who are feeling persecuted by police and local residents in public spaces are those who have the most limited command of English, are dropping out of school because it's "too hard" or are excluded for misbehaving or not completing assessment, can't find employment because they have limited English and little education (and possible racial discrimination from employers), and therefore have no occupation, little money, and are socially isolated. These young people out-of-war are also likely to be suffering from the effects of torture and trauma, cultural shock, and more than half have one or both of their parents deceased or missing.¹³ Many young people who answered the surveys said that they spent a lot of time worrying about loved ones back home and are often shaken by tragic news from home.

Disengagement, intensified by cultural and linguistic barriers, make these young people especially hard to consult with. Firstly, Sudanese young people who have dropped out of school are difficult to track. Secondly, it requires a bicultural and bilingual worker who both has a rapport with the young people and holds the respect of the Sudanese community. There is little funding in Queensland for programs to target Sudanese young people once they have disengaged from school.¹⁴ The only program specifically targeting disengaged Sudanese young people in Queensland which I am aware of is the African Youth Peer Mentoring Project (commencing October 2005) run by Harmony Place in Brisbane¹⁵. Education Queensland's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF) has funded three workers in Brisbane to work with Sudanese and other African young people *at risk of* disengaging - and they are doing indispensable work, liaising between the young people, their families, schools, other service providers and the broader community.¹⁶ The Queensland police have also engaged a number of African police liaison officers during the last year - another important interface between the young people and the community.

YANQ drew upon the expertise of these bicultural workers and YANQ's Sudanese worker was also able to connect more readily with the "disengaged" in his consultations for this project, thus some of their experiences have been captured. However, all in all, it is important to note that 40 of the 50 Brisbane consultees were consulted at the Sudanese youth awards night, and that the entire Bayside contingent were consulted through homework club. Toowoomba and Townsville consultees were a mix of engaged

¹² For more on this, see YANQ's report *Cultural Chasm: the changing cultural and linguistic demographic in Queensland schools and the need for reform* (2004), available at www.yang.org.au. At present there is no quantitative data to say how many Sudanese are falling out of the school system, as Education Queensland has no method in place for tracking this. YANQ and MYNQ have advocated for better means of tracking who is "falling through the cracks" through the Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF).

¹³ Milpera State High School unpublished data.

¹⁴ Refugee and migrant young people receive excellent educational and emotional support when they are in school from their teachers (especially ESL teachers) and school counsellors, who also link in with specialist service providers such as the Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) and Mercy Family Services. Settlement support is only offered (under DIMIA's Community Settlement Services Scheme) for the first six months after arriving, and through Milpera State High School's Intensive English Language and Settlement Centre in Brisbane.

¹⁵ Although limited funding for this project means the budget is very tight - for more information contact Harmony Place on (07) 3891 7911.

¹⁶ The advice of one of these workers (Gabriel Ukuno) has also been indispensable in the consultations for this project and many others done by YANQ and other organisations.

and disengaged. Thus, the majority of the sample group were the high-achieving Sudanese youth¹⁷ and others currently engaged in school.

Further research would employ a methodology to connect with more of the disengaged group.

5. Lack of statistical expertise in complex data collection and analysis

Much of the data collected was quite complex – answers to some questions had close relationships with answers to other questions, for example, the young person's age and sex, time of arrival in Australia, town/city/suburb of residence, and whether or not they were in school, had close relationships, whether the young person was hanging out in public spaces, whether they were having trouble with police and other members of the community, whether they perceived that they were targets of racism, etc. Without statistical expertise it was impossible to fully explore the complex relationships between all of these variables. Our findings therefore point to general trends, however, a more statistical approach is recommended for further research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Public space issues for Sudanese young people in Queensland are a priority in Greater Brisbane, Logan, and Toowoomba – these are the places with significant numbers of Sudanese young people.

Public space issues are more prominent for Sudanese young males at various levels of disengagement – who hang out in public places more often, and also seem to receive more harassment from police, security guards and ticket inspectors, complaints from locals, and other outright racist attacks.

The young women seem to encounter other difficulties, in the “private sphere” – for example, in the Townsville group domestic violence emerged as a major issue. Pregnancy and birthing issues are other issues affecting young Sudanese women in Queensland.¹⁸

Young Sudanese, particularly those who are disengaged, hang out in public places such as parks because they like to (it's cultural practice), and because they don't really have anywhere else to go.

FINDINGS

1. What do Sudanese young people do in their spare time?

Most young men and women (48% and 37.5% respectively) listed homework as their main activity after school. Although this is evidence that many Sudanese young people are striving to do well in their studies, it does not necessarily show that around 50% of Sudanese young people spend their time studying – see the limitations section above regarding the difficulties of consulting with the disengaged.

That said, for those not in school who *were* interviewed, “partying” was a favourite pastime and boredom was a problem.

¹⁷ And there are plenty of these!!!

¹⁸ This would be the subject of a separate study.

41% of young women compared with 6% of young men were engaged in cooking and other housework after school. Other pastimes included watching TV, listening to music, and hanging out with friends and family.

Playing sport was the favourite pastime for the young men (36%), but only for one young woman. Hanging out with friends and family was another favourite pastime for young men and women.

2. Where do Sudanese young people hang out?

The favourite hangout for young men was at sporting fields and events (48%). The next favourite hangouts were home (40%), Southbank Parklands (32%), parks (30%) and the city mall (30%).

Most young men (46%) said they hung out in public spaces once or twice per week. 34% hung out in public spaces 3-7 times per week. 8% of young men hung out in public spaces more than seven times per week.

The favourite hangout for young women was home (43%). The next favourite hangouts for young women were shopping centres (34%), the city mall (28%), parks (21%) and Southbank Parklands (18%).

Most young women (50%) said they hung out in public spaces once or twice a week. 18% of young women hung out in public spaces more than 5 times per week.

3. Why do Sudanese young people hang out in public spaces?

36% of males and 38% of females said that they hang out in public spaces because they like to! According to the consultations, it is cultural practice for Sudanese to hang out in small to large groups in common spaces.

32% of males compared with 12% of females said they can't hang out at home and identified other housing issues.

16% of males and females said they couldn't afford to pay for entertainment and hobbies.

No community space for African young people

Only seven young people in the entire sample (8.5%) said they hung out at community centres. Four of these were in Toowoomba, two in Townsville and one in Logan; none in Brisbane.

At present, there is no community space in Brisbane where young Sudanese can casually hang out. Many Sudanese expressed that they would like to have their own African-friendly (though not necessarily exclusive) youth space, and service providers echoed this sentiment in their responses.

It has often been suggested at various meetings where this gap has been identified, that Sudanese young people in Brisbane could use the Police and Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYCs) to meet. A story from a member of the Sudanese community who has been working closely with the youth suggested the opposite: according to him, a group of Sudanese young people had been meeting at the PCYC in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. Some funding ran out and the doors were "closed in their faces". The young people then applied to Queensland Police to use an unused PCYC and were rejected.

Other space such as Marrymac Hall at Annerley which is often used for larger events by the Sudanese and broader African community is not available for casual use by groups of young people.

Hence, Sudanese young people have continued to meet in the parks and other public spaces, which are not necessarily safe and where they are not always welcomed.

Initiatives such as the building of a basketball court in Yeronga Park are positive for African young people, especially young men.

4. Issues for Sudanese young people in public spaces

Sudanese men encountered the most problems in public space. 37.5% of young women consulted said that they encountered no problems when they were in public spaces, compared with only 10% (5) of the young men consulted.

4.1 Police harassment

YANQ requested statistics from the Queensland Police Service about numbers of young Sudanese moved on, arrested, charged, sentenced and jailed for offences, but the information was not available for release due to confidentiality reasons.

Police perspective

Members of the police force in Brisbane said that Sudanese young people are not involved or associated with major offences, but said that “there is a core of people involved in anti-social behaviour and these few people are very visible, particularly to the general public. Drinking in public places and ‘hanging around’ in large groups can cause a lot of concern for members of the public and they then call the police and we must act on complaints.”

The Queensland Police also attributed the tension to a lack of understanding in the community. They said, “as with all new communities, there will be a ‘settling in’ period where the community and the government agencies and the wider community get used to each other.”

During April this year, DIMIA’s Brisbane office called together a reference group to respond to complaints from “elderly Anglo residents” of the Moorooka area (a suburb of Brisbane) about large groups of Sudanese who were hanging around in the parks and streets and making them feel “intimidated”. Like the police response, DIMIA’s response seemed initially to be more focused on the complainants’ interests than on the rights and interests of the young people.

The police group consulted believed that the number of incidents involving Sudanese youth had dropped slightly since the appointment of a Sudanese/police consultative group and the employment of a Sudanese Police Liaison Officer.

Young persons’ perspective

40% of the young men consulted said they had been harassed by police; only one young woman had come into contact with police.

In Toowoomba, five out of five young men consulted had had dealings with police.¹⁹ At a major Toowoomba Sudanese youth forum in December 2004 (attended by 36 young

¹⁹ One had been apprehended for stealing, one for a minor driving infringement, one for drink driving and drugs, and two were random police checks.

Sudanese), random police check-ups were a common experience of Sudanese boys and young men walking, driving and otherwise doing their own thing.

Random police checks were also common experiences for Sudanese in Brisbane and Logan. Some Sudanese young people expressed that police had mistreated them and were often suspicious. Many Sudanese felt targeted because of their skin colour, and felt offended when asked for identification, searched and questioned about incidents they knew nothing about.²⁰ Here's what some said:

"Some police are good but some of them are racist, teach the bad ones not to be rude."

Sudanese male, 18, Virginia

"Police mistreated me, take me to police station, and then ended up in jail."

Sudanese male, 20, Brisbane

"Twice when I was going to school, Logan Police just stopped me and asked me for identification which I found offensive."

Sudanese male, 19, Logan

"On the train my friend had an argument with a white boy so a policeman threw my friend and I off the train and left the white boy on the train."

Sudanese male, 17, Wynnum

Three out of three young women consulted in Townsville said police had helped them when they were in trouble (two specified that police had come to intervene in domestic violence disputes).²¹

Service provider perspective

Service providers stated that young Sudanese clients complain on a daily basis about issues of discrimination and racism when they are in public spaces. One Brisbane service provider reported the following case:

"Police did not follow proper process for dealing with under 17s. They interviewed him late at night alone in a police station (no support person for client). Also the police took advantage of his lack of legal knowledge to unlawfully search and take his property. Police harassed my client when he was in public space – they questioned him and checked his ID".

Another Brisbane/Logan service provider reported:

"Yes – [our Sudanese clients are] stopped when walking in large groups, asked for ID, asked about particular crimes, asked to move on. One young person was assaulted by police".

The following is another alarming case which will be heard in the Magistrate's Court in late 2005:

²⁰ For example, one Sudanese young man in Coorparoo (Brisbane) was taking his computer to get fixed and police stopped him to ask if he had stolen it. Another had his bag searched for alcohol at Southbank Parklands (he had none).

²¹ The service provider in Townsville who collected this data confirmed that domestic violence by Sudanese men against Sudanese women was a serious issue for the community in Townsville.

In August 2005, four Sudanese young men were waiting at Toombul train station (in Brisbane) for a cousin to finish school so that they could travel home together. All four of the young men had valid tickets for travel. One of the boys was approached by a ticket inspector, who asked why they were standing there. The boy explained that he was waiting for his cousin so that they could travel home together. The ticket inspector asked to see the boy's school ID card – when it was presented, the inspector ripped it up and threw it on the ground, and told the boys to leave the station. The ticket inspector left for some time and returned to find the boys still waiting. He told them to leave again. The boys did not want to leave as they thought they had a right to be there. The ticket inspector started to physically push the boys off the train station, was very rude and said racist insults such as “you black bastard Africans.” At this point, one of the boys called the police for assistance. The police arrived and spoke to the ticket inspector, then fined one of the boys \$600 for not leaving the station when instructed, and also physically pushed the boys off the station.²²

4.2 Other racist attacks

Direct racism

36% of males and 25% of females perceived that they had experienced racism in public spaces. This is a frightening statistic in itself, although it is heartening to see that 46% of males and 53% of females said that they had not been targets of racism, and some respondents said that white Australians were very welcoming.

Racism in the media

Racist attacks targeting Sudanese have had much airplay in the media throughout 2005. In July, *The Weekend Australian* reported the establishment of a neo-Nazi movement in Australia called the “White Pride Coalition”, targeting refugees from Africa in a “new race-hate campaign”. It reported that “one Sudanese family in Toowoomba was forced to leave its home after being harassed, and people being pelted with rotten eggs and potatoes.”²³ The same newspaper then published an article by Sydney's Macquarie University public law associate professor Andrew Fraser, which the *Deakin Law Review* had rejected following legal advice that publishing the article would breach the *Racial Discrimination Act*.²⁴ During October 2005, the *Toowoomba Chronicle* reported that a circular headed *White Australian Resistance* was distributed in a street into which a Sudanese family had moved only a few weeks before. The flier depicted two white youths in front of a map of Australia and the words “Youth, Nation, Destiny and Save the White Race” and a link to a “White Pride” website displaying Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi material.²⁵ Similar racist campaigns have also happened in NSW²⁶ and possibly other states.

²² Transcript of the story as reported to me by ETRF bicultural worker Gabriel Ukuno, who the young people turned to for advice. They didn't want to pay the fine as they felt their instructions to leave and the fine were racially motivated. The young men are contesting the fine in the Magistrate's Court with free legal assistance from Terry Fisher. The young men are seeking legal assistance to take make a racism discrimination claim against the ticket inspector and the police officer.

²³ *Neo-Nazis in a bid to drive out Africa refugees*, *The Weekend Australian*, July 24-25, 2005, p6 of “The Nation”.

²⁴ *'Racist' scholar's rejected white Australia essay*, *The Australian*, September 21, 2005, p 28-29 of “Higher Education”.

²⁵ *Racist fliers left in street with Sudanese family*, *The Toowoomba Chronicle*, 19 October 2005.

²⁶ See, for example, *Sudanese targets of race hatred*, 20 January, 2005, last read at <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,10117,11999411-1702,00.html> on 10 November 2005.

These racist campaigns may make Sudanese feel as though they are targets of racism and unwelcome in their new country. However, it needs to be said that although these racist campaigns are perturbing, they do not necessarily reflect the views of a majority. The Toowoomba community, for example, has responded to these incidents in a unified manner, taking measures to let Sudanese families know that they are welcome there.²⁷

It is essential that these aberrations are put into perspective through community action and positive portrayals of Sudanese in the media.

4.3 Complaints by local residents

24% of males and 6% of females said they had been the subjects of complaints by local residents when hanging out in public spaces.

4.4 Conflict with other space users

32% of males and 9% of females said they had had problems with other groups of young people also spending time in shared public spaces. Sudanese young people also expressed to me feelings of isolation from and lack of connection with their non-African/Sudanese peers.

4.5 Harassment by security guards

18% of males, 3% of females (1) said they had been harassed by security guards in shopping centres and various clubs.

²⁷ One concerned community member responded by posting signs on street poles reading “Sudanese are welcome in my city” and encouraging others to do the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the State Government level, meeting the needs of Queensland's new Sudanese residents requires a whole-of-government approach, with commitment of funding and resources from the Departments responsible for Education, Employment and Training, Sport and Recreation, Police, Child Safety, Health, Multicultural Affairs and Communities.

At the Local Government level, zones with high densities of Sudanese population need to offer affirmative funding and resourcing for the following recommendations.

At the Federal level, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs must assist with grants to Local and State Governments who have absorbed these new citizens into their communities in order that they may enact the following recommendations.

1. Programs and spaces for African young people

- 1.1 Continue and increase funding for programs targeting disengaged and at-risk African young people.
- 1.2 Create local African youth spaces: especially for Sudanese and other African young people, but inclusive of other cultural groups of young people.
- 1.3 Support projects that bring young people from different cultures together.
- 1.4 Make available education about public space usage for young people.
- 1.5 Make available training about laws and legal rights for young Sudanese people.
- 1.6 Make available training/programs for young people on how to deal with racism.

2. Community education

- 2.1 Provide better and more extensive training for police regarding Sudanese youth and culture.
- 2.2 Continue and expand the police liaison officer program and reference groups.
- 2.3 Increase community anti-racism education.
- 2.4 Begin community awareness-raising for local residents about Sudanese youth and culture.

3. Research and documentation

- 3.1 Construct better ways of monitoring and recording the nature and extent of racism in Queensland.
- 3.2 Undertake more research into the needs of Sudanese and other African young people in Queensland, including issues specific to Sudanese young women.
- 3.3 Sharing of best practise in providing services to Sudanese young people.

CONCLUSION

Sudanese young people in Queensland on the whole are trying very hard to find their place in a strange new world, and many organisations and individuals are doing fantastic work helping them in this endeavour. Many Sudanese young people who were interviewed in this project expressed that they were very happy in their new country and felt very welcomed – despite common issues of grieving lost loved ones and overcoming traumatic experiences from their homelands, struggling to get through school work and finding employment. Indeed, for many of these young people out-of-war, it is amazing just to be alive.

There is a definite cluster of Sudanese young men and some young women who are finding it very hard to fit into the system, have little to do and nowhere to go, and who are the targets of racism and harassment in public spaces. These young people need to be supported to re-engage in community and to understand their rights and obligations as new citizens. Correlatively, other community members and the police force and other authority figures need to be educated to better understand the ways, backgrounds, and needs of these young people, to treat them as equal citizens and not as objects of suspicion or race hatred, and to respect their rights to use public spaces.

APPENDIX 1

Condensed questionnaire for young Sudanese

1. How old are you?
2. Are you male or female?
3. How long have you been in Australia?
(a) less than 1 year – 1 year (b) 2-4 years (c) 5-10 years (d) 10 years and longer
4. Which council area do you live in?
(a) Brisbane (b) Logan (c) Other. Which suburb do you live in?
5. Do you go to school?
6. What do you usually do after school?
7. Do you ever get bored? If yes what do you do?
8. What kind of things do you like to do that make you feel good (eg going out to party)?
9. What stops you from doing what you want to do (e.g. no money or not allowed)?
10. Which of the following is your favourite place where you hang out or spend your leisure time with friends eg after school, work or on the weekend (you can tick more than one answer)?
(a) Home (b) Parks (which parks) (c) South Bank (d) City Mall (e) Shopping centre (which centre) (f) soccer or basket ball field as above (g) train stations as above (h) community centre as above (i) suburban street (j) other
11. Where else do you like to hang out?
12. Do you have a space that is all yours (with your friends) that you feel real 'at home'?
13. What motivates you to hang out in public spaces (you can tick more than one)?
(a) I like to (b) no alternative place (c) can't hang out at home (d) can't afford to go to user pay entertainment eg movies (e) not in school, so plenty of time (f) no job, so plenty of time (g) other
14. How many times per week do you use the specific public spaces you ticked off in answer to question 10?
(a) 1-2 (b) 3-4 (c) 5-7 (d) more
15. What obstacles do you find when you are in a public space?
(a) police harassment (need to explain this – police come & ask questions / where you live / move you on etc); (b) locals complain (c) problems with other space users (d)
16. Have you come in contact with police. What happened – please write the story of what happened in the space?
17. Have you come in contact with security guards what happened please write the story of what happened in the space?
18. Have you faced racism (people saying bad things, or showing bad attitude or behaviour towards you because of your skin colour or some other definition) in public places. If yes, then who from. What did you do in response to this racism?
19. Are you aware about laws governing public space usage? (a) yes (b) no
20. Do you want to know more about the law governing public space usage?
(a) yes (b) no
21. What do you think could be done to make things better?
22. Any other comments.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire for service providers

1. Does your organisation work with young Sudanese?
2. What age group are your clients mainly from?
3. Sex. M F
4. How long have most of your clients been in Australia?
(a) less than 1 year – 1 year; b. 2-4 years c. 5-10 years
5. Which council area do your clients live in? a. Brisbane b. Logan
6. Which suburbs do your clients live in?
7. Do your clients go to school? If no, why are they not in school?
8. What do your clients usually do after school?
9. Do your clients ever complain about boredom? If yes what ideas do you have about ways to stop them being bored?
10. What kind of things do your clients like to do that make them feel good?
11. What stops your clients from doing what they want to do (eg no money, not allowed by parents, the law)?
12. Which of the following is your clients' favourite place where they hang out or spend leisure time with friends? eg after school, work or on the weekend (*you can tick more than one answer*)
(a) Home (b) Parks (c) South Bank (d) City Mall (e) Shopping Centre (f) Soccer or basket ball field (g) Train stations (h) Community centre (i) Suburban street (j) Other
13. Where else do your clients like to hang out?
14. Do your clients have a space they consider to be their own?
15. Is public space an issue from your clients and organisational point of view?
16. What motivates your clients to hang out in public spaces (*you can tick more than one*)?
(a) They like to (b) No alternative place (c) Can't hang out at home (d) Can't afford to go to pay entertainment eg movies (e) Not in school (f) No job (g) Other
17. How many times per week do you think your clients use specific public spaces?
(a) 1-2 (b) 3-4 (c) 5-7 (d) more
18. What obstacles do your clients find when they are in a public space?
(a) police harassment (b) locals complain (c) problems with other space users
19. Have your clients come in contact with police? If yes, what happened.
20. Have your clients come in contact with security guards? If yes, what happened.
21. Have your clients complained about racism in public places? Who from?
22. Are your clients aware of laws governing public space usage?
(a) Yes (b) No
23. Does your organisation have any programs that focus on young (Sudanese) people in public space?
24. What do you think could be done to make things better?
- 25 Any other comments.