

One Parramatta: Addressing Racism in Western Sydney

A project by All Together Now



All Together Now promotes the prevention of racist behaviour in Australia. It is Australia's only national charity that has a sole focus of addressing racism.

Every year, at least 2.5 million Australians experience racismⁱ. One in 10 have racist attitudesⁱⁱ. Because prevention is more effective than attempting to manage the aftermath of racist incidents, All Together Now promotes the prevention of racist behaviour. Our vision is for an Australia that embraces cultural diversity and is free from racism.

Using courageous, positive and evidence-based messages and images, our work focuses on:

1. **raising awareness** among Australian residents about different cultures, thereby breaking down misconceptions, dispelling myths and challenging xenophobia;
2. **increasing empathy** among Australian residents towards people from different cultures, thereby lowering people's biases against them;
3. **educating** Australian residents about how racism manifests and the effects it has on people subjected to it, thereby increasing personal accountability;
4. **promoting values** that underpin cultural diversity such as mutual respect, empathy, insight, compassion, dignity;
5. **empowering** Australian residents to embrace their own culture/s without fear of prejudice or prosecution, thereby enabling people to understand the importance of culture;
6. **building positive social norms** through the use of popular culture such as advertising and social media; and
7. **measuring** – and learning from – our work and sharing our evaluation with others.

These tactics are based on the *Building on our Strengths* frameworkⁱⁱⁱ to reduce race-based discrimination. This framework was co-authored by Associate Professor Yin Paradies who is a Director on All Together Now's board.

All Together Now's role is to provide tools and information for adults so they learn what racism is and what they can do about it. One Parramatta is an excellent example of how the organisation has achieved this, and how it will continue to do this into the future.

WHAT IS ONE PARRAMATTA

One Parramatta is an ambitious project that set out to reduce interpersonal racism in the Parramatta local government area and beyond.

Established in April 2012 by All Together Now, the One Parramatta project provided young adults with information about how to speak up when they witness racism and encourage them to reflect on their behaviour towards people of different races, ethnicities and cultures.

Our primary demographic was 18-25 year old males living and working in the Parramatta local government area; however we knew that our resources would reach far beyond this group.

This demographic is important because – as the Challenging Racism project and recent racist incidences in the region demonstrated – young men in this age range are most likely to be the perpetrators and targets of racism in Sydney’s mid-western suburbs. It is also an important group to reach because there is no racial literacy education directed at this group. In the few instances where there are resources they are usually directed at school students, or adults who are already engaged in human rights or community service work.

All Together Now wanted to do something extraordinary to speak to this important group. It needed to go beyond forums and conferences, arts and music projects, sports rounds and other common methods of engaging young adults in “understanding cross-cultural diversity”, “intercultural awareness” and “social cohesion/harmony”.

To address racism in Parramatta in this demographic we knew it was important to be very specific about what we were trying to do. This meant using the word RACISM – which until 2012 with the launch of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s anti-racism campaign was a rarely utilised tactic in Australia.

We also knew that using the word RACISM might be pushing the boundaries too far for some people due to low exposure to the use of this word and negative connotations associated with it, so the activity would also need to be engaging and unexpected to counteract any suspicion.

The concept

Our brief was to run a 12-month project in a specific locality (selected by us) that would address social, racial and religious intolerance. It needed to be community wide (i.e. we could not focus on one or two ethnicities or religious groups) and reach a substantial audience size. Our cash budget was \$50,000 but our potential in-kind budget was limitless.

To match this brief, our concept was to film interviews with people on the streets of Parramatta by asking them questions about values, racism and the benefits of cultural diversity. We knew that people would give the first answer that would come into their head while answering to camera, but that many of them would then go away and think further about their answers. This self-reflection was key to the project as it is in that moment where there is potential for behaviour change to develop depending on the individual’s prior experiences of racism and capacity for honest self-reflection.

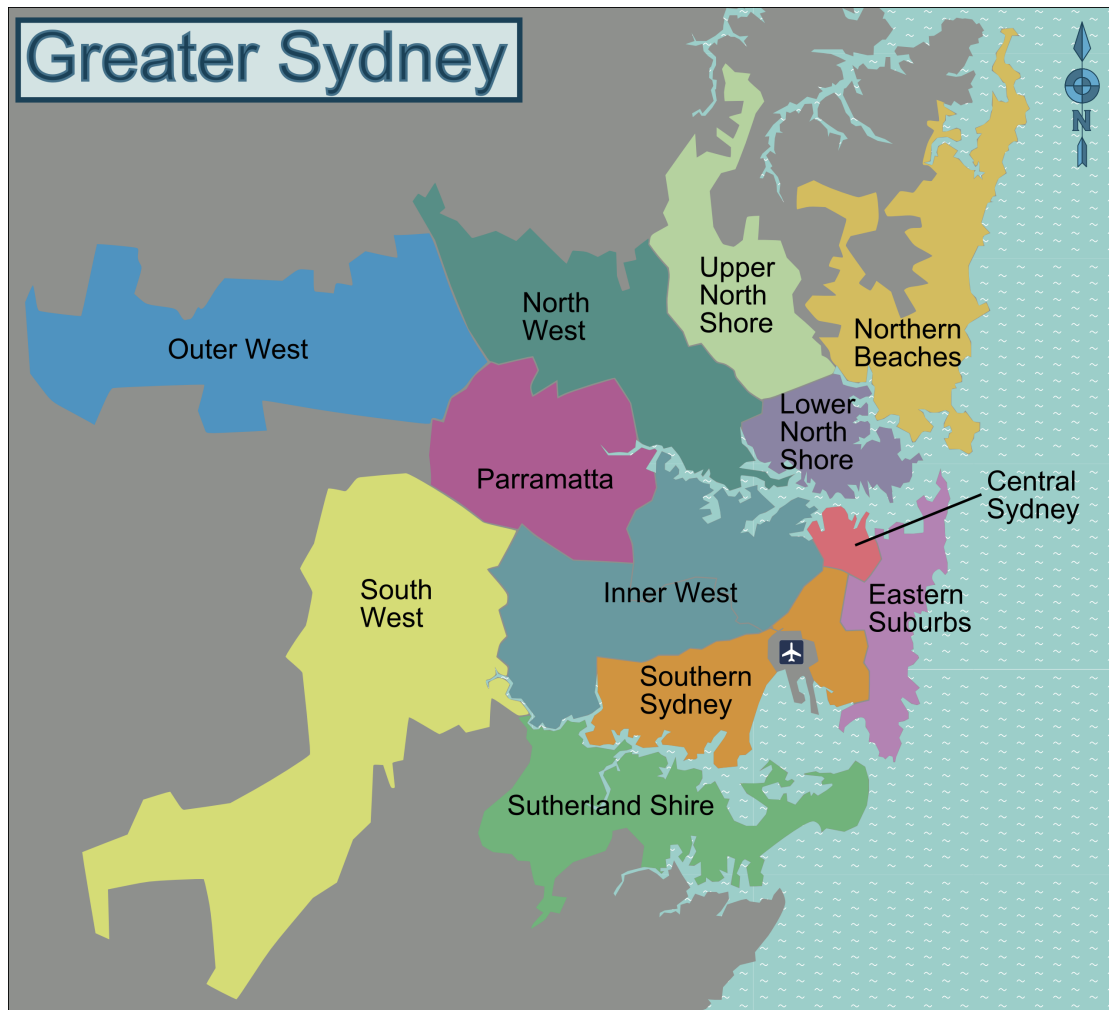
We edited seven one-minute voxpop episodes created from the interviews, and screened them at Parramatta cinema. Each episode was shown for seven weeks and then swapped for the next episode, totalling a 12-month advertising campaign.

WHY WE DID IT

Parramatta is a very culturally diverse area with a higher-than-average rate of racism.

Parramatta City:

- has a population of nearly 20,000,
- is 23 kilometres west of Sydney,
- is the centre of Greater Sydney with regards to population distribution, and
- is the largest non-capital city in Australia.



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater_Sydney.png.

When establishing the project we knew from the 2006 Census that Parramatta is an unusually diverse region, with:

- 51% of the population of Parramatta born overseas; and
- 50% speak a language other than English.

Further, the Challenging Racism Project, lead by Professor Kevin Dunn at the University of Western Sydney found that in the Parramatta region:

- more people hold racist beliefs than the national average: 23% of survey respondents from Parramatta self-identify as racist, compared with 13% in NSW and 12% nationally;
- 35% feel they are treated with less respect due to their race or cultural background;
- 31% have been called names or insulted due to their race or culture; and
- 30% have experienced racism while at a shop or restaurant.

However our decision wasn't based purely on statistics. We selected to run this project in Parramatta for a range of additional reasons:

- Parramatta is one of the fastest-growing populations in NSW^{iv}. This means that if racism goes unaddressed in this area the problem has the potential to grow rapidly.

- Parramatta is a mere 45-minute train journey from All Together Now's head office, making it an ideal location for a pilot project (due to saved project travel costs compared to running a project in an area outside Greater Sydney).
- Parramatta's size makes it ideal for this concept because it has one local cinema, a busy outdoor mall suitable for filming in, and a compact central business and shopping district.
- Racism in Parramatta is not simply a "white versus black" issue, it is a "whole of community" issue. For example in 2009 the media reported incidences of racism between Lebanese and Indian residents in the Parramatta region.

The complexity of racism and societal dynamic of this region means that racism cannot be addressed by focussing on a specific race or cultural group/s. This is the dynamic in which All Together Now works best as a secular, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation with a national focus.

Goals of the project

The overarching goal of this project is to reduce the incidence of interpersonal racism among 18-25 year old males in Parramatta by increasing the number of people who have the courage and commitment to speak up when they witness racism.

This project contributed to this overarching goal by:

- raising racial literacy;
- providing information about how to speak up when people witness racism in the community; and
- encouraging people to reflect on their behaviour towards people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds living and/or working in Parramatta.

Success was measured by an increase in the number of people who:

- understand what racism is better than they did previously;
- feel more confident about speaking up when they witness racism; and
- have not directed a racial slur towards somebody else since participating in this project.

These indicators would show us whether adults in Parramatta are better equipped to deal with racist incidents and are less likely to behave in a racist manner due to the One Parramatta project. All Together Now measured these three indicators through:

- a survey on the One Parramatta project website;
- two in-foyer surveys;
- two focus groups;
- feedback received during filming Episode 7; and
- post-project interviews with community leaders in Parramatta.

Theory of change

Using “Max” as a hypothetical local who represents our target demographic, All Together Now’s hypothesis for social change during One Parramatta was as follows:



1. Max hears about One Parramatta by seeing our film crew on Parramatta’s Church Street mall and agreeing to do an interview.
2. Max tells our film crew about a racist incident he witnessed. We give him a postcard that explains why speaking up is important, and add him to our email list so we can stay in touch.
3. Max later thinks about the racist incident he witnessed and his own reaction to it.
4. Max understands a little more about what racism is and why it is important to speak up when he witnesses racism. His confidence and racial literacy increases.
5. Max speaks up next time he witnesses racism, thereby forming new social norms and reducing racism.

A second supporting hypothesis was that when a person sees a One Parramatta film at the cinema or online – or finds out about the project’s aims in the news media or social media – they will learn more about the extent and impacts of racism. This may compel them to visit the One Parramatta website to find out how to speak up when they witness racism.

Although watching a film is likely to have a lower social impact than being interviewed, we do not want to under-represent the impact it had on some people. Showing interviews of local people in a local setting at the cinema was like holding up a mirror to the community and showing them what their community thinks about shared values, cultural diversity and racism.

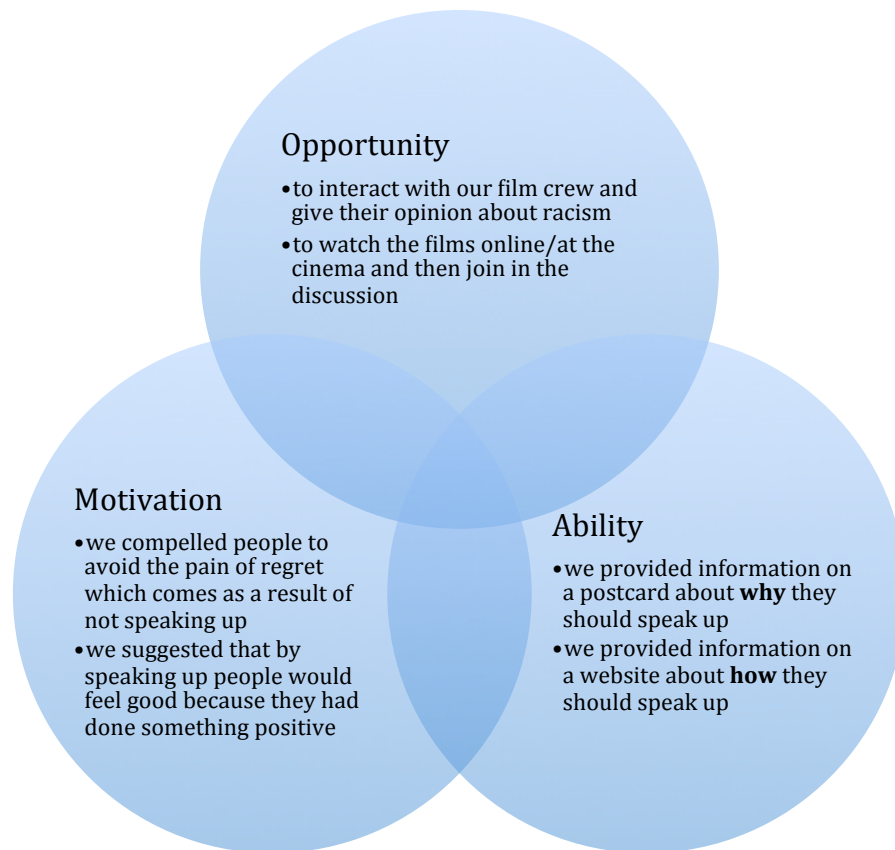


Director: *What are your values?*

Interviewee: *Family first. Family over everything.*

Evidence base

As a social marketing campaign, this project drew heavily on social marketing theory. All Together Now used the AOM behaviour change model. This means the probability of behaviour change (or lack thereof) is proportional to the Ability, Opportunity and Motivation of our target demographic to change their behaviour^v.



The One Parramatta project draws on additional research and practice including:

- The **Challenging Racism Project**^{vi} that provides both suggestions for types of anti-racism initiatives, as well as statistics on the levels of racism across regions in Australia.
- Australian research by Professor **Rob Donovan** that examined previous anti-racism and pro-diversity campaigns^{vii}. This makes several recommendations for anti-racism social marketing that informs our work.
- The **Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD)** interventions in Victoria are an excellent example of how place-based social marketing can be implemented. Our project is based on these examples and the principles behind them.
- The **Building on Our Strengths framework** suggests many strategies including that interventions to reduce race-based discrimination should target the whole community rather than just the effected groups.
- Entertainment-education whereby the community is exposed to a fictional series in which characters find themselves in situations that require them to change their behaviour. This has been used effectively in **South Africa's Heartlines program** in 2006 to address racism, discrimination, and other social issues^{viii}. These principles have direct relevance to the effect the filmed conversations have on audiences.

- **Adaptive leadership theory.** Ronald Heifetz^{ix} is recognised for his seminal work in this area. The theory suggests that everybody has the capacity to exercise leadership in his or her community. By asking tough questions, community members are empowered to look within themselves for answers to create social change, rather than relying on authority figures to solve problems for them (and in most cases accusing them of failing the community for not living up to their unrealistic expectations).
- **Media evidence** that suggests racism has been bubbling away under the surface within the Parramatta region^x.



Director: *How can we stop racism?*

Interviewee: *In order to fight racism you have to fight fear, and in order to fight fear you have to educate, and in order to educate you have to communicate.*

HOW WE DID IT

While the success of the project was ultimately tied to the strategy, the process was important to ensure that the One Parramatta project team approached the project in an ethical and authentic way.

The 7-8 week process to create each episode involved:

1. Organising the film crew and volunteers ahead of time and arranging permissions to film in our selected location/s;
2. Production team meeting to discuss the intended outcomes of the episode and the questions the director would need to ask to achieve those outcomes;
3. Shooting the film on the streets of Parramatta, including approaching people to ask them to participate, interviewing them to camera, asking them to fill in a release form, giving them a postcard which includes the website for more information;
4. Meeting with the director to see the first cut (first edited version) of the episode;
5. Reviewing the second cut and seeking approval from the project funder;

6. Agreeing on the final wording of the supers and having the artwork drawn up;
7. Sending it to post-production so it could be formatted for cinema release (a 2-week process);
8. Adding the episode to YouTube, the oneparramatta.com website, and promoting it on Facebook, Twitter and via our email list; and
9. Screening it at Parramatta cinema for 7 weeks.
10. Rinse and repeat, with minor variations.

In all, the One Parramatta team interviewed and videotaped 170 people on the streets of Parramatta, and spoke to an additional 70+ people. Everybody who filled in a release form at a film shoot was added to the project email list so they could be informed when a new episode was released. In this way the team was able to keep everybody who was interviewed for the project involved and up-to-date.

Due to this distinctive approach to anti-racism, the project attracted a significant amount of local media coverage including the Parramatta Sun (circulation 53,000) and Parramatta Advertiser (circulation 81,000).

Event

In addition, All Together Now held an event to coincide with Harmony Day (Australia's version of the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination) on 21 March. Holding this event was incidental to the project (i.e. the project could have reached the same social change results without it) and was held as part of our Agreement with our funder.

All Together Now invited their Ambassadors Kristy Best and Andy Minh Trieu to host the event held at Parramatta cinema. We showed the first six episodes of the series interspersed with an interview with somebody who had been involved in the series: an interviewee, an event organiser, a local businessperson, a local charity, and so on. We provided free soft drinks and popcorn to attendees to ensure it had a celebratory feel. NSW local MP Geoff Lee attended the event, as well as students from two high schools, interviewees and other participants of the project.



Event hosts Kristy Best and Andy Minh Trieu.

Themes

During the concept creation phase All Together Now decided on themes to explore during the project. The intention was to apply adaptive leadership theory^{xi} that says everybody has the capacity to show leadership in the community rather than relying on an authority to tell them what problems need to be solved and how to solve them. A method of empowering people to do this is for people in the community to exercise leadership by asking provocative questions designed to encourage deep thinking and action.

However the team found that some flexibility was required to ensure that watching the seven episodes sequentially would tell a story and take people on a journey – as well as each episode needing to be a stand-alone piece. Doing this required a degree of curation.

In the end, the team created three sets of two complementary episodes on (1) multiculturalism in Parramatta; (2) racism intervention; and (3) creating an atmosphere of welcome; with the final being a stand-alone episode asking “what’s next?”.

Episode 1: What are your values?

Episode 2: Who are your neighbours?

Episode 3: Do you have the courage to forgive?

Episode 4: Who is responsible for preventing it?

Episode 5: Talk+ Listen = Respect

Episode 6: Everyone is welcome

Episode 7: This is just the start of the conversation

Partners and supporters

All Together Now was able to leverage \$50,000 from a grant provided by the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship to secure \$250,000 of additional support. One Parramatta’s major partners – providing substantial in-kind support during the entire project – included:

- Noble Brands Worldwide (art direction)
- Shoot To Kill (film direction and editing)
- UFO Film (film production)
- Val Morgan (cinema advertising)
- Cutaway studios (soundtrack)
- Edge DP (post-production)
- The Elk Group (design)

This support was secured thanks to the extensive network of All Together Now’s board member Monty Noble.

In addition All Together Now attracted support from 15 businesses, local government bodies and education institutions that provided specific in-kind services or discounted products, along with 16 volunteers who gave substantial time to contribute to the success of this project.

WHO WE CHANGED

The films were shown at Parramatta cinema over 12 months. Each film was roughly 60 seconds long and shown during the ad segment prior to the feature film. This meant that unlike television, radio or billboard advertising, One Parramatta films had the undivided attention of people in the cinema. Further, we were able to tell Val Morgan which feature films we wanted One Parramatta to be screened alongside so that we could ensure we were targeting our primary demographic of 18-25 year old males.

Nearly 46,500 locals watched a One Parramatta film at the cinema, and an additional 5,500 people visited the One Parramatta website.

During surveys we conducted in the foyer of Parramatta cinema, 100% of people were able to remember the message, a quote or statistic two or more hours later (i.e. after watching the feature film). Everybody surveyed was very positive about the films and gave feedback like:

- “good perspective”,
- “thought-provoking”,
- “very good concept”,
- “challenging and genuine”.

Among the more insightful feedback from the foyer survey included these quotes:

“I really like this initiative. We all have to learn about different people and different cultures. All as in everyone, not just the majority group(s).”

“I was happy someone took action and stood up for people in our society who are treated this way. There is no place for racism in our society!”

All Together Now received unsolicited emails from people who had seen a One Parramatta episode at the cinema, for example:

"Congratulations to the team for embarking in such a worthwhile cause. I saw an episode while waiting to watch a movie at Parramatta. To bring awareness and then change through the medium of short movies is fantastic. I was very moved by episode 2. I am a principal at a new primary school at Westmead just beside Parramatta. Our school mirrors the diverse cultural mix you describe. If you see any value in using the opinions of Children 6-11 years old, we would be happy to support this project. All the best,"

- Principal from local primary school

"I have recently come across the 'One Parramatta' project while going to the movies, and I thought it was a great idea. I would like to ask if there are any chances that we could help out with your project in any way. Unfortunately, this might only be a one day thing so perhaps we could help promoting and raise awareness about 'One Parramatta'. I am not quite sure what exactly we can do, so it would be appreciated if you could give us some ideas if we have 30-50 boys helping out."

- Senior student from local high school

As a result of watching an episode of One Parramatta at the cinema:

- 88% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “I am more likely to be welcoming of cultures as a result of watching one or more of the One Parramatta films”.
- 79% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “I understand racism a little more as a result of watching one or more of the One Parramatta films”.

All Together Now conducted two focus groups – one with people who had been interviewed for the project, and another with people who had not been exposed to the project. This helped us measure the success of the three factors that would indicate social change, as follows.

- **Understand racism is better than they did previously.** There is qualitative evidence to suggest that this objective has been met. Several focus group participants (who participated in the project) commented that after being interviewed by the film crew they had reflected on racism and could identify it more clearly. Smaller, everyday incidents that had previously been overlooked or not noticed were now identified as racism, like snide remarks and jokes and stereotypes. This ability to more sharply define racism suggests a better understanding of the nature of racism. May explains: “I was interviewed at the NAIDOC Festival in Parramatta. And the person who interviewed me asked me: “If I have ever fought racism”. And I realized that I have never thought of that before. And then I realized that I should/could fight. I remember that for days after the interview, I kept thinking of this question. And yes, I realized that I have the right to fight.” After seeing a One Parramatta film, one of the participants of the second focus group said: “Sometimes, I ask myself if I’m not racist either”.
- **Feel more confident about speaking up when they witness racism.** There is qualitative evidence that suggests this objective has been met. Simon explained how this happened for him, after being interviewed for One Parramatta: “I have a friend and we’ve been playing squash together for 15 years. Except that he kept calling me Bruce Lee. The fact of being involved for One Parramatta and All Together Now helped me be more conscious about everyday racism. And I finally found the courage to tell my friend to stop and that it wasn’t funny at all.”
- **Have not directed a racial slur towards somebody else since participating.** There is no evidence either way however several participants spoke of being more aware and more sensitive to racism as a result of participating which suggests they would be less likely to make racist comments themselves. Tam said: “it’s not a big deal... eventually everything gets right by itself. There are a lot of racist comments between colleagues; they use it as a joke and as a way to connect together. On the surface, it works OK but I’m not sure on what this really means underneath. I don’t really know the state of racism in Parramatta.”

Interviewees asked for a national non-government voice that would lead the move to tackle racism across the country. All Together Now has the ambition, expertise and business acumen to answer this call. One Parramatta was a fantastic location-based anti-racism pilot project that examined how this might be implemented on a much larger scale.

WHAT WE LEARNED

At the conclusion of the project, All Together Now met with three community leaders on a 1-on-1 basis to seek their feedback about the project.

Overall, the One Parramatta project was seen as a positive and professional project. Its capacity to emphasise how the differences and the versatility of Parramatta’s communities can work together for the better was particularly praised.

"Overall, I think it's a very interesting way of addressing the issue of racism. This is a good beginning. The videos made during the project were a great tool. I found the project to be really well-executed".

Sophia – Parramatta Artist Studio

"I have to admit that from the very beginning, I felt really excited about the project and particularly with the scale of the project and the quality of the partnerships she [Priscilla] managed to gain. Having a partnership with Val Morgan to have the episodes distributed was the guarantee that the message will get out there, to most of the people living and working in Parramatta area".

"I think that the vox pop styles and the process of filming on the streets are really efficient: it makes people think about the issue of racism and how they can do something about it. I think that racism is an important topic that should be discussed in every community. Based on my experience as a community manager, the best way to engage people is to make them speak to each other, and this is something that One Parramatta project managed to achieve very well."

David - Parramatta City Council

"I work at ICE and I am a member of the One Parramatta management committee. My role is to provide advice, to help with the development of the website and the promotion of the campaign. When I heard of the project, I thought it was a fantastic idea and I really like the video content: I think it's beautiful".

"I don't think the project fully reached out to Parramatta people. The fact is that when a project is brought in by an organisation based outside Parramatta, no one listens. The campaign is really great but it should have been based in Parramatta. All Together Now did an amazing job but they are not part of the community. Which explains why the project did not have the impact it could have; there were not enough local voices to help amplify the project".

Indu – Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) local community arts organisation

Based on the combined results of all evaluation methods, All Together Now has learned the following lessons for future iterations of this project.

On working in the community:

- localised involvement and resources amplifies the message;
- forging partnerships with businesses and organisations increases our reach;
- being outsiders means we're not involved in community politics.

On engaging people in anti-racism:

- people look for direct and specific information: what to do when they witness racism;
- humour is one of the best ways to get people's attention;
- integrate campaigns with local events where racism might happen for direct impact;
- All Together Now should facilitate the community's response to racism, i.e. centralise the responses;
- people change when they are pushed to reflect on their past behaviour.

The future of One Parramatta

All Together Now asked some key community leaders in the Parramatta area what they would like to see happen with the project after the seventh episode and it appears that some bodies would agree to continue the project in partnership with All Together Now, with some variations. It is our intention to meet with these bodies and see how we could develop the project further.

Two main suggestions have been made:

- **Develop a partnership with Parramatta Artist studio.** They really like the videos and suggest that some of their artists could use them as a tool to discuss racism and cultural diversity in various schools around Parramatta.
- **Develop a partnership with ICE.** As Indu explained: “I think that ICE and All Together Now should get closer to develop Phase 2 of the One Parramatta project. There is a lot of work to do about racism here and lately, I have noticed that South-Asian members of our community are more often victims of racism”.

There is a demonstrable need for more projects like One Parramatta, both in the Parramatta region and on a national scale.

MORE INFORMATION

The One Parramatta films can be viewed at www.oneparramatta.com. More information about All Together Now’s anti-racism work is available at www.alltogethernow.org.au.

About the author

Priscilla Brice is the founder and Managing Director of All Together Now, Australia’s only national charity that has a sole focus of addressing racism. Priscilla was recently awarded a University of Western Sydney Community Award for establishing the One Parramatta project and All Together Now more broadly. Priscilla was recently awarded a Churchill Fellowship that will enable her to investigate and learn from antiracism NGOs in Europe and North America during 2013-14. Priscilla has several years of experience managing social marketing projects, with a particular focus on online social media. She completed a Graduate Certificate in Social Impact at the University of NSW in 2011 and the Sydney Leadership Program in 2008.

ⁱ Markus, A., (2012), *Mapping Social Cohesion 2012: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys National Report*. Full report, Scanlon Foundation, Melbourne, available at: <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/social-cohesion-report.php>.

ⁱⁱ *Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project*. Available at:

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ⁱⁱⁱ Paradies, Y, Chandrakumar, L, Klocker, N, Frere, M, Webster, K, Burrell, M & McLean, (2009), *Building on our strengths: a framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria*. Full report, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, available at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au.

^{iv} Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2009-10*.

^v Wymer, W., Knowles, P., Gomes, R., (2006), *Nonprofit Marketing*, Sage Publications, CA.

^{vi} *Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project*.

^{vii} Donovan, R.J. & Vlasis, R., (2006), *A review of communication components of anti-racism and prodiversity social marketing / public education campaigns*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

^{viii} Papa, M.J. et al, (2000), *Entertainment-Education and Social Change: An Analysis of Parasocial Education, Social Learning, Collective Efficacy, and Paradoxical Communication*, *Journal of Communication* 50:4.

^{ix} Ronald Heifetz: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/ronald-heifetz>.

^x *Harris Park – tensions in a racial melting pot*, The Telegraph, 10 June 2009, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/harris-park-tensions-in-a-racial-melting-pot/story-e6freuy9-1225731825254>.

^{xi} Adaptive leadership theory as described by Ronald Heifetz: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/ronald-heifetz>