2. Education

Access to Education

2.1 How do African Australians find out about education services available to them?

A majority of African Australians are notified of education services available through the community and reading material that is sent out. African families and people may be asked if they would like to participate in certain programs and activities that focus solely on education and learning, especially in communities that have a large population of African people. Also, they may find out about services available to them through community clubs and ethnic group meetings. Ethnic groups may have their own magazines or newsletters that are published in their own languages that may advertise education services. Since the magazine or newsletter is usually in an ethnic language, people of that ethnic group may consider and choose to use these services because they understand and feel more comfortable because their ethnic community supports these services.

2.2 What barriers do African Australians face in accessing education opportunities?

In my opinion, language is a major barrier in regards to accessing education opportunities. Many African refugees struggle to understand or know of these services because they do not have a good understanding of the English language in the first place. Education services are mostly advertised and promoted in English, however, depending on the community, some services advertise in different languages. Another barrier is affordability. Although most education services for refugees are free, some have fees that are costly or problematic. It can be stressful for refugees to have to pay this because they might be experiencing difficulty in obtaining a job or money adequate for their needs because of qualification issues.

2.3 What specific education opportunities would be most helpful to newly-arrived African Australians?

Language services are most needed for newly-arrived African Australians. Learning English is important because it can help you communicate with others, aid you with further studies, increase your chances of getting a job, and so much more. English is the official language of Australia, so refugees should be offered services that help them learn this language, because the benefit of learning English adds up and can open many windows and opportunities for those seeking peaceful life here in Australia.

Discrimination in education

2.13 Can you provide example of how African Australians are treated differently in the education sector?

African Australians learning and receiving education in educational institutions often are subject to discrimination and are victims of racism because of stereotypes and lack of recognition. When it comes to work, people underestimate the initiative and knowledge Africans have. From my experience, teachers and people of such do not expect schoolwork and effort of to be at or above standard from African people because there is a stereotype that Africans are not capable of doing just that. This can be demeaning and frustrating for those who do their work at a high standard. Socially, African Australians may find it harder to be accepted by other races because people are uncomfortable and or unsure about the way they look. This results in Africans having to resort to staying within their own ethnic groups when it comes to social groups.

2.14 What is the impact of this discrimination?

African Australians can start to doubt themselves because the negative stereotypes surrounding them. Socially, Africans may be excluded or may not feel as though they fit in. Social exclusion can lead to formation of gangs, which may affect their social growth altogether. In general, they may stop trying to put effort in academically and socially, and this is probably why stereotypes form. Racism, as most know, has a negative effect on anyone who experiences it. From my personal experience, racist remarks were usually made because people weren’t aware or didn’t know if they should associate themselves with people of African ethnicity. In this way, social help for Africans may be of some benefit.

The effect of religion, age, gender, sexuality, and disability

2.15 Are the education experiences of African Australians different based on religion, age, gender, sexuality, or disability? Please provide reasons for your answer.

Religion probably most affects the educational experiences of African Australians because prejudice is directed at those who follow religions that don’t receive positive recognition. An example is Islam. Muslims have to endure a lot of discrimination because people believe them to be dangerous, radical, or too devout. Having friends who are Muslim, I don’t think this is just and that it is once again because of stereotypes. Within school, Muslim females often cannot wear their headdresses, known as hijabs, because it breaches school uniform. For many Africans, religion is important, so restriction of faith in that sense does not leave many options in terms of schools for those of the Muslim faith. African girls and women are often subject to the stereotype that they are not competent and that they are only interested in fickle things. This is immensely degrading and does not allow for African females to have the opportunities they should have. This can lower confidence with identity as an African female in the Australian society.

Government and education policies

2.16 Do government education policies and program design meet the needs of African Australians? Please give reasons for your answer.

Generally, government policies and programs do meet and cater for Australian born Africans; however, newly arrived Africans may not be as accustomed to the education system. They may have had a more difficult or stricter system in their native country, so they may not bode well with the Australian (especially the Victorian) system of learning. The policies put down for education are good, however, programs need to be designed so that everyone benefits. This may mean having different levels of learning or extra help for those who need it.