



UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT
(UNPFPAD) from 16-19 April 2024

by [Councillor Waskam Emelda Davis](#) for City of Sydney and speaking as CSO
Chairwoman of [Australian South Sea Islanders \(Port Jackson\)](#)

on

'Education overcoming systemic racism and historic harm' 17th April 2024

My name is Waskam Emelda Davis and I attended the UNPFPAD in hope to speak from the floor on the importance to include the Asia Pacific Region for People of African descent as part of the global narrative and a significant community existing our side of the continent of Africa itself.

As the first black woman elected to the City of Sydney Council in its 180 year history and founding chairwoman of not for profit Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) based in Sydney Australia, I represent an important cultural demographic as a person of African descent that is also second generation born descendant of [Australia's blackbirding](#) trade of the Asia Pacific region and of First Nations heritage with kin and bloodlines to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Australia was founded on a '[White Australia policy in 1901](#).'

Racist legislation denied First Nations peoples existence of the five hundred [Aboriginal clans](#) that existed pre colonisation. The policy ordered all people of colour to be deported up until 1908. Furthermore lets not forget this policy informed apartheid in South Africa.

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Africans in Australia have an evident kinship and bloodlines with First Nations and Australian South Sea Islander communities and across the Asia Pacific region dating back to the first fleet in 1788.

People of African descent continue to face many barriers post settlement. Some of the main issues impacting African-Australians include racial profiling and targeted surveillance, educational challenges, mental health and lack of support for those requiring trauma treatments.

Today's over representation of African youth in the Australian criminal justice system is fueled by fundamental needs not being met coupled with the same overt and subtle racism experiences as First Nations Australians.

On the 8th April 2024 I received Councils bipartisan support requesting our Lord Mayor write to the NSW Premier, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs conveying the terms of my motion that opposed the 'NSW Parliament - [Bail and Crimes Amendment Bill](#).' This [Bill](#) was also strongly opposed by numerous justice professionals and advocates.

Point (c) of the motion said ... 'While applying to all young people, the impact of the new laws will be disproportionate and potentially disastrous for young people of colour and First Nations children.'

The Australian Government has a First Nations reconciliation action plan and a Closing the gap policy. This framework could be adapted to culturally specific need for PAD across the Asia Pacific modeling community wellness and the rights of marginalised PAD on these principals.

The African Australian Advocacy response report titled '[We Belong Here; Framework for Human Rights and Equity for Australians of African descent](#)' was drafted on the findings by the United Nations Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent after their 2023 trip to Australia on the government invitation. The working group findings noted the importance of African's in Australia and their contributions, the growing population and issues faced by Africans in Australia.

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An important educational resource, the recommendations are a historical first and valuable opportunity to implement a cultural specific community led framework that can be funded through philanthropy opportunities, the United Nations and PAD funding organisations as part of an affirmative action plan. Such a plan would strengthen self-determined organisations and building on their leadership capabilities that draw on localised knowledge and solutions across the region.

Mapping the Asia Pacific demographic to identify the needs for PAD will advance significantly education on human rights and social justice, access and equity pathways.

This 2nd Decade for PAD does have a duty of care to finance our marginalised community groups to do this work in breaking the cycle of systemic racism, inform and rewrite culturally specific policies that will benefit our communities.

END