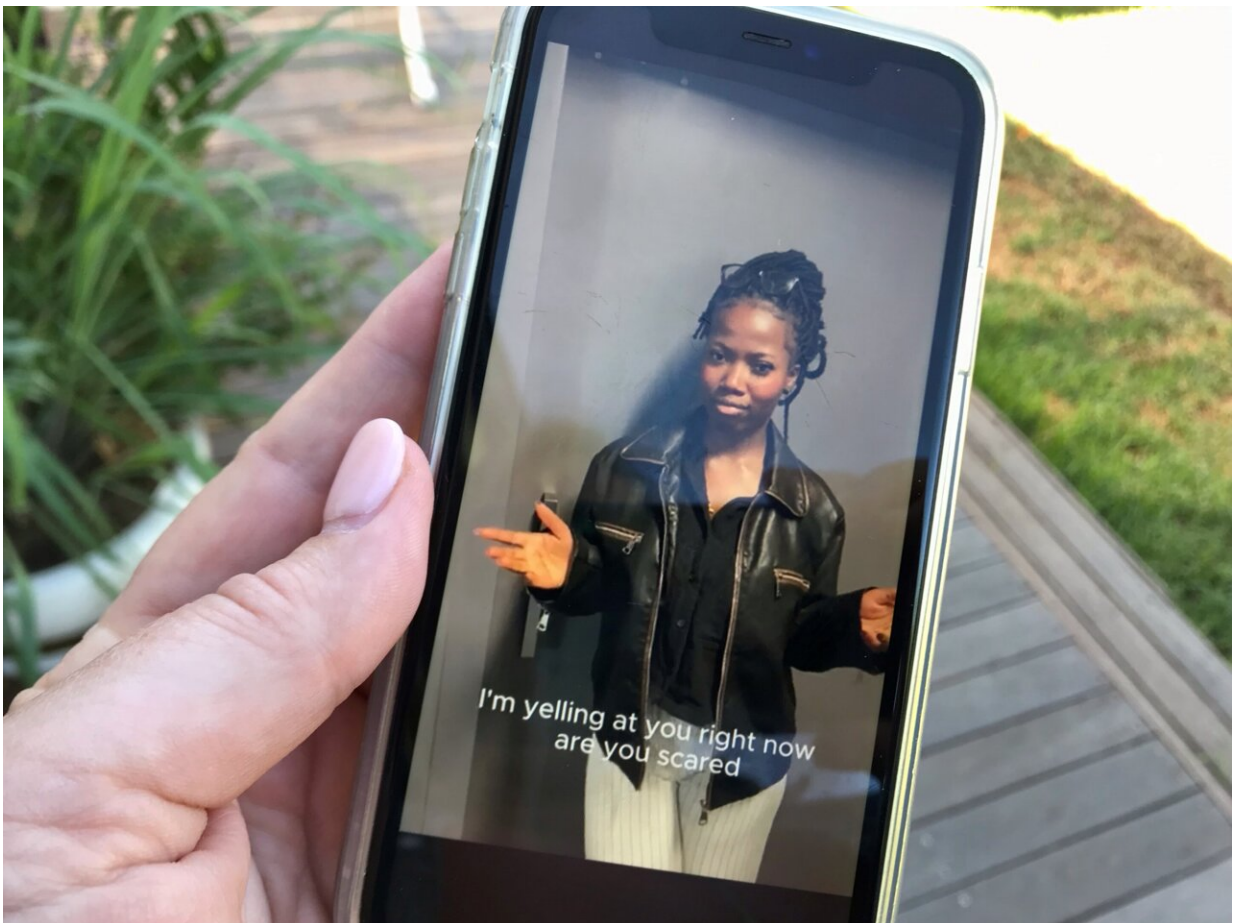


# Young African students in Australia call out racial stereotypes

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A new set of [TikTok videos](#) developed by Black African youth shows the veracity of racial stereotypes in schools. Credit: UniSA

Assumptions, misconceptions, and stereotypes—no one wants to be judged by how they look or where they're from. But for many Black African students, that's their reality and it's taking a serious toll on their well-being and sense of belonging.

In a new set of [TikTok videos](#) developed by Black African youth co-researchers in partnership with University of South Australia, the veracity of racial stereotypes is revealed, with striking examples of discrimination and typecasts from teachers and Australian students alike.

From extremes such as being called a "slave," to insensitive asks of "can I touch your hair," black African students are now calling out racial experiences in schools in a move to better educate Australians.

It's an uncomfortable truth ahead of the [United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) (rebadged as [Harmony Day in Australia](#) in [1999](#)) today, where the theme is "A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent."

UniSA project lead Dr. Melanie Baak says we must address belonging in schools to curb [racial discrimination](#).

"Australia is known as a vibrant, multicultural country with one in four Australians born overseas. But despite this we still see blatant cases of racism and discrimination," Dr. Baak says.

"In this project, we're collaborating with Black African diaspora young people who are greatly contributing to what we're learning about belonging and inclusivity in Australian schools.

"As the number of Black African diaspora youth increases in Australia, their sense of belonging becomes an increasingly urgent social issue.

"On the one hand, many black African students struggle to belong in hegemonically white Australian schools and society. But because 'belonging' reflects the norms of an Australian national identity, inclusivity is not so simple.

"Assumptions that a black African student is automatically 'good at sports,' or 'a refugee,' or simply 'lucky to be in Australia' all contribute to unbelonging, yet it's this ignorance that is compounding racial issues.

"Skin color has no place in influencing perceptions of truth, ability, attitude or capability, and in Australian schools the research shows that this is happening more often than we expect."

Racism is still a significant issue in Australia with [surveys showing that 44% of Australians hold an anti-African sentiment](#). The [2023 Scanlon Mapping Social Cohesion report](#) identified that only 51% of Australians have positive feelings towards immigrants from Sudan, in contrast with over 90% for immigrants from countries like the UK, US and Italy. This is exacerbated by political and media discourses which marginalize African diaspora youth, often associating them with criminality and an inability to integrate.

The videos are a key resource developed by the team as part of a broader [project](#) to counteract racial stereotypes and build belonging among African teens and children in Australian schools.

"Negative projections significantly inhibit young people's senses of belonging, which limits their social, educational and economic experiences, as well as longer-term pathways and outcomes," Dr. Baak says.

"Changing this during the formative adolescent years must be a priority.

"Authentic collaboration with the people most affected by racism is the key to changing [public perceptions](#) and understandings of African diaspora young people."

The research team will continue to work with the youth co-researchers for at least the next two years to influence what happens in schools and how this shapes the experiences of belonging for African diaspora youth in schools.

Provided by University of South Australia

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