African Expressions
of Christianity
in Australia

Contents

Introduction

African Expressions of Christianity in Australia was commissioned by the African Australian Advocacy Centre (AAAC), a grassroots organisation that represents African communities in Australia in the areas of advocacy, research and policy. The purpose of the report is to highlight the complex relationship between African expressions of Christianity and settlement in Australia, and to proffer evidence-based recommendations aimed at government, not-for-profit organisations and other settlement support services. These recommendations support productive engagements and partnerships with churches given that they are important social centres for the vast majority of people of African heritage who identify as Christian living in Australia.

This report is based on research that was conducted between March 2020 and June 2023 as part of the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project DP190102911 entitled 'The African Diaspora and Pentecostalism in Australia.' This project aims to understand African migrant settlement in Australia through the lens of Christianity. The project has conducted research in the form of participant observation, interviews, and focus groups with Christians of African heritage in Greater Western Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. We also interviewed members of grassroot settlement and advocacy organisations that serve people of African heritage.

This report uses the term 'people of African heritage' to refer to people who were either born in Sub-Saharan Africa or who have familial and cultural connections to countries in this region. This is a broad term that includes those who identify as African, African-Australian, Australian or a variation of identities that include ethnic affiliations. The African diasporas in Australia and elsewhere are superdiverse (Vertovec 2007) in terms of country of birth, ethnicity, language, class, religion, financial agency, life stage, genders and migration pathways and settlement status. While the term 'African heritage' does not convey this superdiversity, it captures common settlement experiences shared by people who are negatively racialised and trace their heritage to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa while making Australia home.

Importantly, this report does not include white people who were born in Sub-Saharan Africa and have migrated to Australia (the majority of whom are South African or Zimbabwean).

This cohort most often trace their heritage to Europe, and their white privilege (both in their African countries of origin and in Australia) has meant that not only have they oftentimes started from relative positions of advantage, but they also do not have to navigate racial discrimination in their migration and settlement journeys (Forrest et al 2013: 53). That is, although decentred as migrants in the local context, their whiteness links them to the centres of international power economically, culturally, politically, and socially (Steyn 2005: 125). The report also does not include those who, although born or are citizens of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, may also be Christian, and negatively racialised, but claim descent from other countries. For example, those South Africans of Indian descent who have migrated to Australia (Govender 2022). Foundational to the discussions in this report is the racialised context of migration and settlement in Australia (see section one). Race is a social construct not embedded in any objective reality (Berger and Luckmann 1963). However, it has very real social implications for how we live our daily lives. In Australia, and other white-majority (and settler-colonial) nations such as the United States, Canada and European countries, white skin is racialised as the social norm, an invisible centre against which the black-skinned Other is peripheral. Black skin (as a visible phenotypic cue) is negatively racialised, coded as counter to that of white skin and is a signifier of that which is less than white, inferior, and problematic (Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo 2017; Udah and Singh 2018). Certainly, as Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo (2017: 10-11) assert, for black Africans living in a race-centred society like Australia, it is not the difference of their (dark) skin colour or Africanness per se that is the problem; rather, it is how that difference is perceived, interpreted, and acted upon, which is never to the benefit of those who are coded black. Skin colour matters in determining life chances for black Africans in Australia (Udah and Singh 2018: 20).

There is no consensus on Blackness[1] given the different historical trajectories, contemporary experiences and self-making of those who are racialised as black or who claim Blackness. However, it can, as Dei (2018: 119) argues, be understood as a continuum that is link to Africanness, one that historicises African and Black experiences. The colonial mechanisms that made autochthonous people on the continent of Africa black were (and continue to be) applied in (former) colonies.

In Australia, Indigenous peoples and black skinned African migrants may share common experiences of anti-black racial discrimination but articulate their Blackness in different ways. As Aboagye (2018: 77) points out, "Indigenous Australians utilize blackness as a political assertion to their right to exist and claim a distinctly Indigenous—often expressed as a "black" or "Blackfulla"—way of cultural being." For African migrants who are racialised as black, their becoming Black in Australia is more recent. This report follows Gatwiri & Anderson's (2022) articulation of an "Afro-Blackness" among black migrants from Africa. This acknowledges that not all Black people are of African descent, and not all Africans are Black, but that people visibly marked as 'black' and 'African' within white contexts relate to each other given their shared similar experiences (Gatwiri & Anderson 2022: 5). This is even though they are diverse across all demographic indicators. Moreover, as Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo (2017: 2) posit, we consider Blackness within the context of migration and settlement in Australia, a socio-political relationship and political ontology.

Christianity has a long and complicated presence in Africa. From the time of the first Christians, through to its role as part of the 'civilising' machinery of colonisation, Christianity has been embraced by, or imposed upon, large sways of Africa. Today, Africa is a dynamic centre of Christianity. In addition to mainline denominations (now mostly run by African peoples themselves), Christianity has experienced an 'Africanisation' with the proliferation of AICs (African-Initiated churches, also known as African Indigenous Churches and African Independent Churches). These new denominations and Christian institutions were founded separately to the mission churches and their colonial legacy (Meyer 2004). Whilst AICs still enjoy some popularity, the growth of Pentecostal Charismatic Churches (PCCs) on the African continent over the past thirty years arguably constitutes the most radical transformation of faith across Africa, with Pentecostal-style worship becoming increasingly dominant. Moreover, the Pew Research Centre (2022) expects that by 2060 four-in-ten of the world's Christians will live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

For Christian people of African heritage, Christianity is central to most aspects of their lives. Such is its importance that African peoples themselves have engaged in so-called 'reverse mission' (Freston 2010). Usually unsuccessful, this is an ambition to return Christianity to their European former colonisers (who have largely become secularised) through

dedicated missionising crusades or as part of their migration narrative.

African expressions of Christianity in Australia, as we show, reflect the continent, in that they are as diverse as the people of African heritage who live here. Church communities respond to the settlement needs of their congregants in different ways. For instance, diasporic churches provide congregants with a culturally and spiritually familiar environment and supports. Mainline denominations, such a Catholic and Anglican churches, may have well-established connections to Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) that are vital in offering settlement supports. Some Pentecostal megachurches, such as Australia's Hillsong, speak to middle-class sensibilities and offer business and social networking opportunities beyond African communities (Rocha et al 2021).

An important point to make is that whilst churches provide essential settlement support, they can also hinder wider connections with other parts of Australian society. This is so because they may encourage the maintenance of cultural borders, or their conservative values (particularly in regard to gender and sexuality) may rub against secular Australia. In addition, these conservative views end up ostracising members of their own communities (such as LGBTIQA+ Christians). In section two of this report, we explain the importance of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in settlement and migrant/refugee advocacy. Notwithstanding their roles in settlement support and migrant advocacy, the focus of the report is on churches. This is so due to their social and spiritual centrality in the lives of Christians of African heritage.

This report is intended to be a high-level snapshot of the relationship between churches and settlement for people of African heritage in Australia. It begins by explaining broad migration patterns from Africa to Australia. It then discusses the key role Christianity plays in this process and how these beliefs and religious institutions have supported these communities since the Covid pandemic. Subsequently, it points to some of the main challenges faced by this cohort. The report concludes with eight recommendations for the inclusion of churches in government programs for refugees and migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, the report is intended to produce a better understanding of how religious beliefs and institutions may play an important role in community support and settlement together with governmental and non-governmental services.

---

[1] Following Lewis Gordon (2020: 42), we distinguish between "black" and Black capitalised, to denote that "...the former is the idea of a people forged by antiblack racism and the latter is the transformation of those people into agents of history." That is, "black" as produced by antiblackness and Black by people who claim an identity in opposition to their dehumanisation.
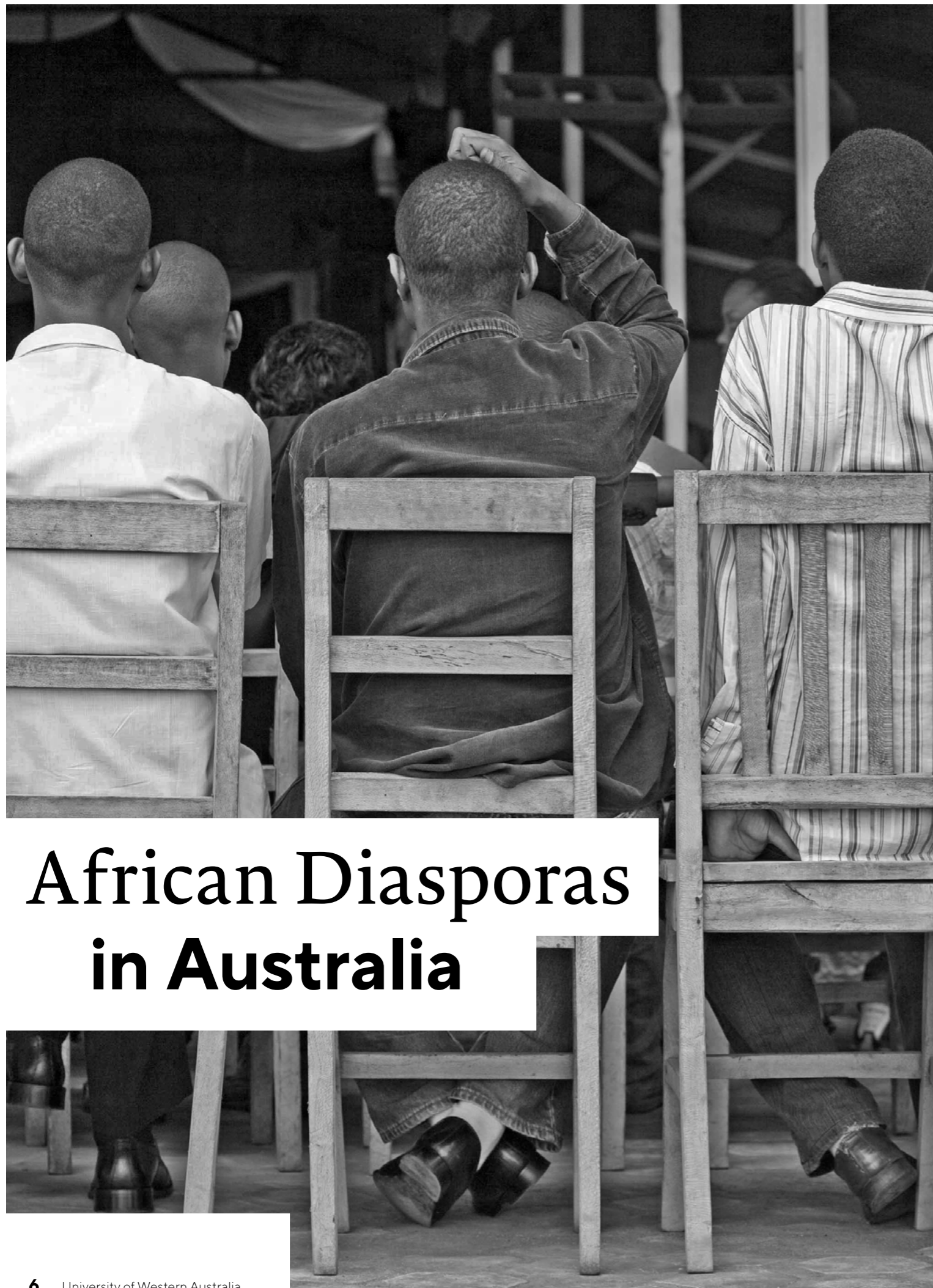
African Diasporas in Australia

EARLY MIGRATION

Contrary to common understanding, African migration to Australia is not a recent phenomenon. People of African descent have had a recorded presence in Australia since the First Fleet landed on Aboriginal land in 1788. African convicts, servants and settlers were present on almost every convict ship travelling to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (present day Tasmania) during the early days of British colonisation, from the late-18th to mid-19th centuries (Pybus 2006: 40).

Upon Federation in 1901, however, and with the subsequent instatement of the Immigration Restriction Act (popularly known today as the 'White Australia Policy'), immigration to the newly decreed Commonwealth of Australia became tightly restricted and highly racialised. Udah & Singh (2018: 21) explain this legislation to be largely motivated by the prevailing idea that 'culturally different groups would pollute the society and never assimilate into an Australian way of life,' which was at the time understood to be Anglo-Celtic, Christian and white. As such, it became near impossible for groups outside of these categories to successfully immigrate to Australia throughout the first three-quarters of the 20th century. In the years immediately following the second World War, most of the migration from Africa came from the Coptic Christian community in Egypt. By 1971, the number of Africans in Australia had almost reached 62 000, with roughly 28 000 of these being from Egypt (Hugo 2009).

In addition, a small number of students from West Africa (mostly Ghana and Nigeria) started arriving in Australia under the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan in the mid-1960s (Okai 2001). Around the same time, Southern African Black students travelled to Australia as part of a larger plan to build coalitions in Australia with anti-apartheid movements against South African and white colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) (Jakubowicz 2010:6).

However, because of the highly restrictive immigration policy of the day, the largest groups to migrate from Africa to Australia were white South Africans and Zimbabweans. Such migrants were not seen to pose a threat to the racial and cultural ideals of white Australia. Even today white South Africans represent a significant portion of African migrants and their descendants in Australia.

DISMANTLING THE WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY

The first step towards the dissolution of Australia's racist immigration policies came in 1966 when the Holt government introduced new laws that *all* potential migrants were subject to the same rules and restrictions, with the potential of citizenship after five years. Migrants were granted entry to Australia based on their skill, not their race. The Whitlam government radically overhauled Australia's approach to immigration in 1975, denouncing the racial prejudice of past policies and replacing the White Australia Policy with that of a Multicultural Australia Policy. Despite the reform no longer restricting the intake of migrants on a racial basis, migration was still heavily regulated, and admission into Australia remained highly scrutinised.

Following these changes, Black Africans began to migrate to Australia, albeit slowly at first. Conflicts on the continent saw an increase in this movement through refugee and humanitarian streams. Refugees from the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea) have continued to arrive since the 1980s, however the quickest growing group of humanitarian migrants during the early 21st century was from Sudan, and what is now South Sudan. The number of Sudanese and South Sudanese migrants increased from 4 900 in 2001 to 24 796 in 2008. Other smaller groups of humanitarian arrivals have come from Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Hugo 2009: 19). Refugee arrivals from the continent is only part of the contemporary migration picture from Africa to Australia.

According to the 2021 Census data 447 523 people were born in an African country[2], with 742 000 people recording one or both parents as having being born in Africa. Africans and people of African heritage living in Australia are incredibly diverse across all demographic indicators, so much so that some questioned the use of single terms such as 'African-Australia' (Phillips 2011) and the African diaspora *singular* (Fozdar et al 2022) to refer collectively to these migrants. Hiruy and Hutton (2020) in their attempt to capture both the intra-diasporic diversity and solidarity among these migrants in common 'African-ness,' have used the term 'New African Diaspora' (NAD) to draw attention to contemporary migration from Africa. In this report, we use the terms 'Africa diasporas' (plural) to address the cultural diversity of these communities and their continued links to their homelands.

---

1   This number includes all countries on the continent of Africa. The data does not capture race. Thus, the data should be read with the understanding that not all migrants from Africa are black / negatively racialised as is the case of South Africans (with a very large proportion of white South Africans) and Mauritians (which has a significant demographic of people of South Asian and European heritage).

A growing number of Africans have arrived through the 'skilled stream' visa category working in professions such as tertiary education, health, and mining. They start their migration journeys from a place of relative privilege. Moreover, international students from Africa studying in Australia are largely part of the urban middle-classes who can avail of an international education endeavouring social mobility and class maintenance. Many have been privately educated at home and continue to make significant investments in their tertiary education overseas. The number of international students from Africa is somewhat small with students from Sub-Saharan Africa making up only 1.6% of the international student intake between 2002 – 2019 (Department of Education and Employment n.d.). Some of these students will go on to remain in Australia entering the Australian labour market as skilled professionals.

(RE) SETTLEMENT AND EVERYDAY RACISM

Although the accessibility of migration to Australia has markedly increased in the last four decades, there are still multiple existing barriers (see section four) curbing the capacity of many African migrants to thrive. These challenges take place within a context of a racially fraught Australian social landscape.

Whilst Australia now celebrates and is celebrated internationally for its multiculturalism, the White

Australia Policy has also left a deeply entrenched legacy of pervasive racism (within a contemporary global rise of populism and right-wing politics) and a national narrative dominated by white Anglo-Celtic culture and norms. Regardless of class and privilege, the lives of negatively racialised Africans living in Australia are affected by everyday and structural discrimination. That is, they are placed outside of this narrative and are associated with backwardness, burden and danger to white Australia (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo 2017). Although their blue Australian passports may grant Africans legal status to reside in Australia, their black skin places them outside of national belonging. Indeed, as scholars have long pointed out, successive versions of Australian multicultural policy continued to be racially inflected, in that they continued to construct Anglo-Australians as the legitimate custodians of the country's social, economic, educational, legal, and political structures that govern everyday life, whilst relegating culture of racialised migrants to folklore (Castles et al. 1990; Hage 1998). Recently, writing on 'dark-skinned Africans in Australia', Gatwiri and Anderson (2021a: 8) made the same point: they are visually Other, 'perpetual strangers' and 'objects of curiosity' for the white gaze.

Ndhlovu (2013), for instance, argues that regardless of whether they pass the Anglocentric citizen test, Africans cannot become Australian because they are physically 'deviant' from the imaginings of what

Australians look like (white European) and are always "too something" to be Australian. For Africans in Australia, their blackness is a burden, a marker of difference and of that which is undesirable (Gatwiri 2019; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo 2017). As Ramsay (2017: 184) notes in her research with Central African Refugee women in Australia, resettlement is embedded in colonial legacy and the civilizing process, where humanitarian assistance also encompasses a domesticating imperative influenced by 'colonially informed racisms of disgust'. By this, she refers to the fact that even if these migrants from the African continent are granted civic inclusion, this does not equate to being treated with social worth but rather as 'dirty' and 'savage' (Ramsay 2017).

This is especially so for youth who are negotiating being of African heritage and Australian (Lindegaard Moensted 2020: 281). African youth (either born in Australia or who have come to Australia as young children) widely report feeling they are outsiders in Australia, even if they were born here. Baak's (2019) research with children of South Sudanese heritage in Australian schools highlights that many African children experience everyday racism and Othering. This often leads to poor academic outcomes making tertiary education and good employment hard to access. Difficult school journeys are made more so for African youth of refugee backgrounds who may also have to manage language issues, previous education disruptions and individual and collective

trauma (King & Owens 2019). Importantly, African youth are finding ways to claim their place in Australia and challenge the stories told about them through digital practices (Moran & Mapedzahama 2022; Moran and Gatwiri 2022), novels and essays (Beneba Clarke, Yussef, and Magan 2019; Akec 2022; Anyieth 2022) and community activities (Riordan & Claudio 2021). Nevertheless, they still have low educational attainments and social integration. This is especially true for those of refugee backgrounds (Molla 2020). Moreover, negatively racialised people of African heritage are further challenging racist narratives across other everyday avenues such as parenting practices (Gatwiri & Anderson 2021b) and ongoing resilience in their daily lives (Mwanri et al 2021).

Faith plays a prominent role in how Africans respond to the myriad of struggles they face making Australia home. Churches are central to African communities whether on the continent or in the diasporas. In Australia, the array of churches Africans attend is as diverse as these communities themselves. It is in these trusted institutions that the spiritual, socio-cultural, emotional and material needs of congregants are attended to as they settle in their new homes. These places of worship are, in fact, total social institutions, in that they usually incorporate all family members, frequently conduct outreach to people's homes, and have the potential, at least, to engage will all aspects of people's lives from their economic to their social affairs.

Christian Africans in Australia

RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian religious landscape has become more complex in the twenty-first century (Bouma, Halafoff and Barton 2022; Bouma and Halafoff 2017). Since 2001, census figures have pointed to a decline in Christianity, a growth in the so-called 'nones' (those ticking 'no-religion'), and in religious diversity. Followers of Islam (3.2%), Hinduism (2.7%), and Buddhism (2.4%) are increasing, albeit from a low base. Regarding Christianity, while in the 2011 census Christians comprised 61% of the population, by the 2016 census this figure had dropped to 52%, and in 2021 it was down to 44%. Of these, in 2021, the largest denominations were Catholicism (20%) and Anglicanism (10%). New waves of migrants from Africa, Latin America and Southeast and East Asia have kept Catholicism numbers more stable, in addition to increasing followers of Pentecostalism (ABS 2021).

Indeed, although Pentecostalism numbers have not changed in the past three censuses (1.1%), the 'Other Protestant' category has grown 80% since the 2011 census. This growth, together with that of 'Christian not further defined' (2.7% in 2021), shows a decline in the significance of denominational labels and indicate the rising numbers of people who prefer to just identify as 'Christians' and who may be part of unaffiliated congregations and Pentecostal megachurches. Australian Pentecostal megachurches, such as Hillsong, C3, Planetshakers and Citipointe, have grown exponentially and have established branches overseas. As they create global spiritual communities, they facilitate migrant mobility to their headquarters in Australia.

RELIGION AND RESETTLEMENT

Religion is key throughout the migration process. Even before departure, churches may play a significant role in migration. Migrants may resort to religious rituals in order to have some agency as they endeavour to leave their country of origin. Dennis (2017: 128-131) has shown how Ghanaians have developed Pentecostal rituals to assist their migration to Australia. Purportedly guided by the Holy Spirit, pastors in Ghana perform pre-departure rituals to produce 'journey mercies or travel mercies' for the prospective migrant in the presence of trusted family and friends. Among these rituals are prayers for travel visas, private counselling sessions, and giving special spiritual directions (*akwankyer*s) for the journey. They are performed not only to guarantee a safe journey to the host country but also 'the opening of the supernatural door to opportunities abroad. In that respect, migrants frame the receipt of the visa and departure as a sign of God fulfilling His covenantal obligations. It means "a divine endorsement" of the journey' (Dennis 2017: 134).

Throughout painful and tumultuous processes such as fleeing war, seeking asylum and settling in a new country, faith often provides a sense of existential meaning and providence, encouraging resilience and strength. Faith provides not just a sense of personal protection, but also a moral framework through which to understand and process experiences of migration. Worshipping and participating in church communities provide support and social structure. Faith and faith communities therefore emerge as primary institutions through which African migrants seek out support, community and meaning amid the often difficult processes of migration (particularly forced migration) and settlement.

According to Wilkinson et al (2017: 211), in the context of South Sudanese migration to New South Wales, local churches provide an 'invisible level of socialisation and capital building [...] outside formal educational settings.' This suggests that churches are spaces where people of refugee background and migrants can feel safe and supported, whilst also learning about the host country, thus acquiring knowledge and skills to better integrate into prevailing norms and practices.

Christian African migrants and those of refugee background usually join churches that either belong to the denomination they used to be part of in the homeland (Catholic, Anglican or Independent Pentecostal churches) or those which are established by their compatriots in Australia. Oftentimes, these overlap but not always. After the first years of settlement, when their more immediate needs have been met and they feel more at home in Australia, they may move to multicultural churches. Multicultural churches provide migrants with the opportunity to interact with others from outside their ethnic communities (Lejukole 2009) and meet other Australians (Rocha, Openshaw and Vokes 2022). Indeed, such churches can act as a 'bridge into the White Australian community' (Wilkinson et al. 2017: 215) whilst still being places where migrants can participate in culturally important practices such as worship.

In their study of middle-class professional African migrants at Hillsong - the Australian Pentecostal megachurch - Rocha, Openshaw and Vokes (2022: 4-5) found that, 'Although these individuals have not abandoned Australia's (many) African-Initiated and -Majority churches, and/or their associated social networks, they all nevertheless consciously favoured Hillsong.' They did so because 'as an Australian-founded church with a global reach, Hillsong is perceived to offer networking opportunities with educated Australians and other skilled migrants, affording both new friendships, as well as business opportunities.' As such, they offer the possibility of upward mobility. This was also a church that appealed to their children due to its entertaining services and activities geared for them. Importantly, being a global church with branches in many cities worldwide, 'Hillsong had featured in their spiritual imaginations even before arrival in Australia' (5).

FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Religious organisations have an extensive history of providing support to new migrant arrivals, not only in Australia, but in a global context. In instances where government support for new arrivals is lacking, particularly for asylum seekers or migrants on humanitarian visas, faith-based organisations and religious institutions have often filled this void, providing shelter, amenities, support and services to these populations. In Australia, the government provides almost no direct support to people of refugee background and asylum seekers, but instead outsources this to NGO settlement services' agencies. Most of these are faith-based organisations (FBOs). Whilst founded and motivated by religious faith, these organisations generally operate on a level above local churches, mosques, synagogues or temples. As not-for-profit, they conduct operations for humanitarian reasons.

In their UK study, Mayblin and James (2019: 376) demonstrated that asylum seekers and refugees are left economically disadvantaged by the meagre financial support they receive from social services, as well as their exclusion from participating in the labour market. They contend that civil society, including churches and FBOs, often turns out to be the primary institutions to provide support and care for these populations.

In the Australian context, people of refugee background on humanitarian visas are able to work (and the vast majority of African refugees arrived on these visas) and tend to receive more government financial support than in the UK. However, religious organisations still remain primary institutions facilitating community, social support, the provision of various amenities, as well as a sense of belonging to new migrants, specifically amongst Sub-Saharan African populations (Wilson 2011; Earnest et al 2015).

Whilst not explicit places of worship, FBOs of a Christian tradition are very much driven by Christian ethics, particularly regarding their approach to the asylum seeking and humanitarian migration processes. Such ethics include 'the dignity and sacredness of every human being,' and 'a commitment to following the example of Christ in welcoming the stranger' (Wilson 2011: 549). These organisations often justify and advocate for asylum seekers and people of refugee background on theological grounds, regardless of the religion of the migrants. However, FBOs may interrupt aid provision and information dissemination if a client is seeking assistance that contravenes the FBOs values (e.g. Catholics FBOs are not likely to offer pregnancy termination referrals).

Despite being institutions generally motivated by religious principles, many FBOs have regulations which prevent their members from 'proselytising;' that is, attempting to convert migrants of a different faith (or no faith at all) to the faith or denomination of the organisation (Wilson 2011; Eby et al. 2011). Although many refugees from African nations such as South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo are predominantly Christian, these FBOs provide equal support to people of refugee backgrounds from predominantly Muslim nations, such as Somalia, and largely do not conduct their operations with an agenda to convert. This is not to say that at worst there are FBOs that are manipulative and coercive with a view to convert those seeking services, or that in other instances clients do not feel beholden to the organisation and the faith it represents.

SECOND GENERATION AFRICAN AUSTRALIANS AND RELIGION

Churches are also important sites for new generations of migrants. According to Wilkinson et al (2017: 214–215), churches support South Sudanese youth by providing:

- moral directives (explicit norms and standards that guide young people towards more pro-educational choices);

- positive role models (adult and peers);

- network closure (social networks that link young people and their peers to other adults, including their parents – thus serving as 'sources of information' as well as influencing and keeping a check on youth's behaviour).

Lejukole (2009) also recognised the role that churches play in assisting South Sudanese youth. In addition to providing food, clothes, furniture and other basic items to families, they often facilitate youth education in various topics. Lejukole (2009: 173) described local churches teaching South Sudanese children 'their mother tongues, culture and stories.' This suggests that churches are capable of fulfilling dual functions: they facilitate spaces where new migrants can learn about and immerse themselves in a host culture, whilst also providing culturally safe places where they can access and participate in the practices and beliefs of their home community.

It is important to note that there are also concerning issues regarding the power churches exercise in the African diasporic community. These will be addressed in detail in section four. Here it suffices to mention two key ones: the charismatic authority of male pastors whose actions often go unchecked; churches' conservative mores that are out of step with those of Australian society at large, particularly regarding gender norms. This means that instances of domestic violence may be ignored and LGBTQIA+ members of the community may be ostracised.

As we also discuss in section four, the second-generation as well as those who migrated at a young age, however, face a unique circumstance in which they are raised in a society that is considerably less religious than their heritage culture. This poses a unique set of challenges as they endeavour to feel a sense of belonging in Australia while their parents expect them to follow community norms. Some abandon church altogether. In focus groups and interviews, African migrants mentioned an increasing number of African youth in Australia who are beginning to interpret Christianity as a weapon of European colonisation in Africa. Others theorised that declining religiosity amongst second generation African youth stemmed from the relative material comfort experienced in Australia in comparison to their parents back in Africa. That creates conflicts with parents and the community. Others identified a correlation between African youth embracing (what they perceived to be) 'mainstream' Australian cultural values and a decline of Christian values. However, a majority expressed their commitment to Christianity as an important element in their moral universe. They expressed a desire to integrate religious institutions more strongly into their cultural communities in order to maintain faith amongst younger generations.

> 'Church is more than just religion – it's community, it's family, it's fellowship … Sudanese people are a very collectivist culture, so they like being together.'
> Rose, South Sudanese, Perth.

> 'The first church that we ever attended in Australia was the Salvation Army, because they came knocking on our door and they gave us welcome packages, food and like drinks and stuff. They would take my parents to and from appointments. We had only been Australia for a week so we didn't know anyone. And then we started attending their church.' Yvonne, Burundian, Perth.
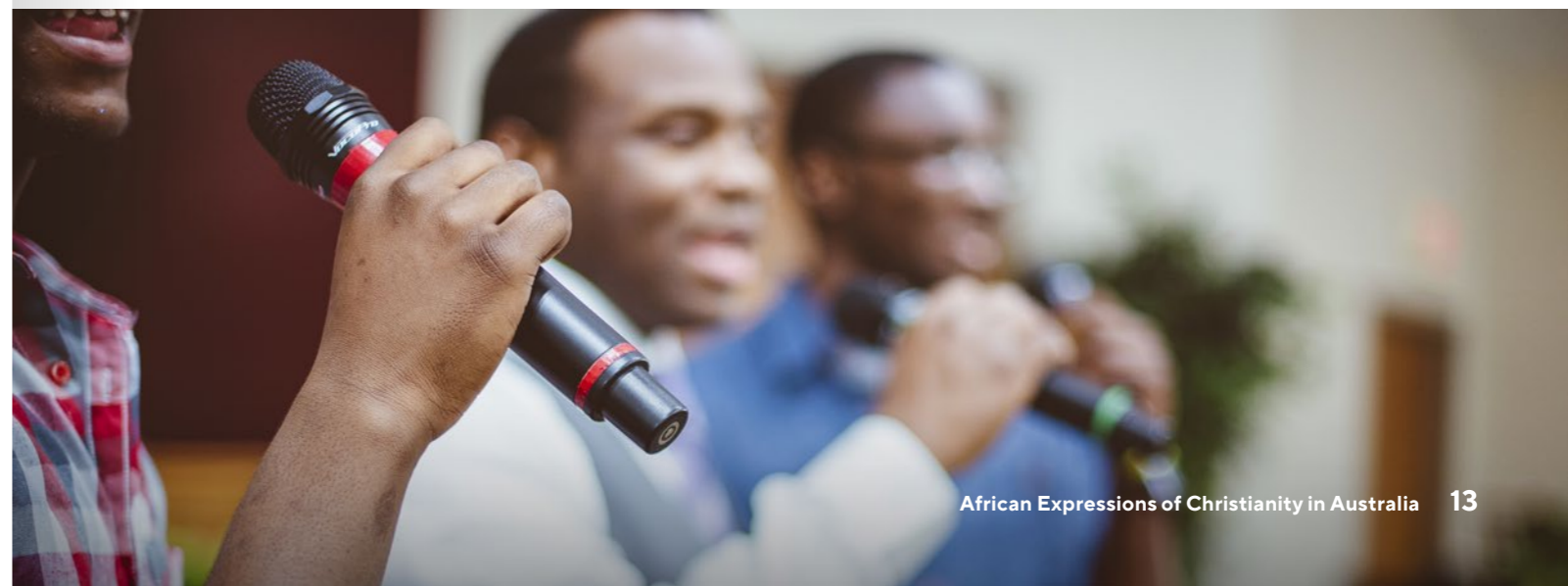
Christian Africans and Covid-19

Churches and faith-based communities and organisations play an indispensable role not only in the spiritual lives of many people of African heritage, but also in their communal, social and cultural lives. They also play an important role in civil society, providing support, and sometimes even healthcare, in the absence of such services being provided by government.

The global Covid-19 pandemic posed a significant challenge to the structural integrity and continuation of such communities and services. Beginning in early 2020, with government-mandated lockdowns and restriction measures, the gathering of church communities was suspended, and many African (and global) populations lost their primary node of social support, fellowship and community. Faced with these mobility restrictions, many groups and organisations, both formal and informal, turned to new online forms of gathering as an assumedly temporary substitute for physical congregation.

However, for many older and poorer African migrants and those of refugee background the online interface posed a considerable challenge. Some people lacked familiarity with particular technologies, lived in areas with poor internet connection, and/or were not able to afford computers or home Wi-Fi. To counter this situation, some pastors endeavoured to continue to support their congregations by holding services and pastoring in a hybrid manner. In addition to holding online services, one pastor started burning DVDs, which he dropped off personally to those who lived locally or mailed to his congregants. Another took to printing his sermons onto paper, along with accompanying prayers and relevant Bible passages, and distributing paper photocopies. Another, prayed over the sick during phone calls (Openshaw, Vokes & Rocha 2021).

RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF COVID-19

The advent and spread of the Covid-19 virus is often filtered through religious cosmologies, with the pandemic being explained by many adherents as holding spiritual or biblical significance. Many worshippers interpreted the epidemiology of the virus—its contraction and spread—as containing a moral dimension.

For instance, Kirby, Taru & Chimbidzikai (2020) noted that many African Pentecostal groups 'portray the coronavirus as a "spiritual force of evil" rather than as a biomedical disease,' suggesting that within these groups the advent of the pandemic represents a culmination of human corruption and the spread of moral evil throughout the world. Through these interpretations, infection can be prevented through maintaining religious devotion and Godliness.

More radical interpretations of the virus emerging from Protestant traditions include the interpretation of the pandemic as the harbinger of the end of the world and the subsequent second coming of Jesus Christ (Ukah 2020). White (2022: 150) noted that, 'Pentecostals' spiritual interpretations of the ... scripture is that the sinfulness of humanity has reached its peak, hence the pandemic.' In our research in Australia, we found some Christians from the African continent had a similar interpretation. That is, God had sent a plague as a punishment to show His unhappiness with humans. Others thought God was inspiring scientists to find a cure for Covid-19.

Millenarian sentiment is relatively common amongst African Pentecostal populations, and as such the interpretation of Covid-19 as displaying the markers of religious significance were not unforeseen. Indeed, this sense of 'Pentecostal exceptionalism', through the overlapping of the virus with a moral logic, led many African Pentecostal churches to ignore government restrictions, continuing to congregate in Africa (Ukah 2020). This is the case of the Living Faith Church in Nigeria:

> David Oyedepo, the founder-owner of the Living Faith Church franchise, ... claimed that '[s]hutting down churches would be like shutting down hospitals. There are many, many places that would never have any medical solution but in church ... It is not a number of people that makes [sic] fellowship, it is the gathering of the brethren' (Ukah 2020: 455).

This excerpt demonstrates the relatively common prioritisation of gathering in prayer and worship as an effective defence against infection, with the moral force of the Pentecostal community understood by these populations as protection against the evil elements of the virus. In Australia, the large majority of African churches respected the lockdown orders. However, the Blacktown branch of the Pentecostal megachurch Christ Embassy Church, headquartered in Nigeria, refused to do so. In August 2021, they were fined by the police for breaches of public health orders as police found them congregating in person during lockdown (n/a 2021).

As Ukah (2020: 448) explains, 'in the African worldview, religion, disease and healing and health are intimately intertwined,' not simply owing to the Protestant tradition, but to long-standing spiritual and cultural beliefs. With poverty and epidemics being prevalent historical and continuing experiences on the African continent, Ukah (2020: 449) therefore argued that 'existential and ontological insecurity, risk, and uncertainty could be said to be a default situation in Africa.' Thus, religious and cultural understandings of disease and health in general have a greater historical precedent.

THE EXPERIENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF WORSHIP

Across most religious traditions the space in which one worships holds great significance. According to Bryson, Andres & Davies (2020: 362), 'Christian theology has long acknowledged the importance of place, recognising purposefully-consecrated ground and buildings.' There is a congregational and participatory element to in-person worship that contributes to, and enrichens, the experiential processes of religious practice. A prevailing belief often implicitly (or explicitly) exists that 'God is present in the church building,' which is in turn observed and celebrated through group participation in ritual, as well as through the observation of certain behavioural and dress codes out of respect and reverence (Mhandu & Ojong 2021: 11).

The new 'telemediation' (Bryson et al 2020: 365) of church proceedings thereby presents something of a challenge to the notion that the geographical and social elements of worship take precedence over the individual act itself. Hence, 'adaptable and a-spatial worship practices have emerged with a new role for domestic space, as materialised spaces for worship or as spaces offering tools to access virtual services' (Bryson et al 2020: 365). The home was temporarily transformed into an 'intersacred place,' where the sacred nature of the physical church is analogised in the worshippers' homes.

New forms of engagement and communication also arose through these digital means of worshipping. Mhandu & Ojong (2021), in the context of Pentecostal churches in Durban, South Africa, noted the use of emoji reactions and the chat box as new ways in which worshippers could directly participate with the pastor or church leader. In this sense, digital processes of worship, whilst markedly different in form, could still be understood to replicate some of the experiences of in-person worship, including the authority of the religious leader, and the myriad ways of offering praise to God.

Whilst the transition to online worship may be easier for younger worshippers who are more accustomed to the dynamics and conventions of digital space, such experiences can be wholly foreign and disorienting for older generations. Indeed, our interviewees noted that older worshippers from their congregation view churchgoing as an essential service that should remain open, much like shopping centres.

Despite the widespread transformation of the worshippers' home into 'main sacred spaces for online liturgical practices' (Mhandu & Ojong 2021: 3), scholars and worshippers alike have noted an uneasiness or discomfort with the transition to online worship, out of fear that the sacredness of physical worship is not easily transferable to these digital spaces. Worshippers often attempt to counter that by simulating the sacred and processual experience of churchgoing through dressing in formal church-wear to attend these online church services. However, they note that such practices are but a poor substitute for the in-person experience.

Indeed, as Addo (2021: 49) observed, 'the sensory engagement brought by music, dance, and exorcism are what could be deemed "too sacred" to be performed in the cyberspace of Zoom and Free Conference Call.' Hence, in this view, there are sacred and holy experiences that could be understood as inappropriate to be conducting from one's home. Much of this dissonance could be attributed to the absence of a 'sacred energy' in the home (Mhandu & Ojong 2021: 19), in comparison to a physical church setting which is deliberately curated to amplify the sacred and sequestered nature of the space.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

In addition to the absence of this geographically delimited sacred energy, physical churches (and religious institutions in general) are often central nodes of community and support for African communities, and particularly for African migrant communities such as those in Australia, as we have been detailing in this report. Wild-Wood & Chow (2020: 475) describe the popular understanding that 'expression of faith is not just a private, domestic matter' for an important element to religion and worship is indeed its collective nature.

In this sense, the absence of churchgoing as a central practice of community and sociality left many groups and individuals feeling isolated and unsupported, despite the facsimiles of communal worship offered through online means. According to Osei-Tutu et al (2021: 2239), in the context of Ghanaian Christians, 'the loss of fellowship was a disadvantage to those who needed help,' thus directing focus towards the role that church-going plays in both identifying and subsequently supporting vulnerable members.

These sentiments are transferable, especially in a diasporic context. Whilst discussing Pentecostalism amongst African migrants in the UK, Burgess (2009: 256) observed that 'African migrant churches [are] social and religious support networks for their own members,' often acting as a provider of food, shelter, education and other services to assist with integration and acculturation. Burgess also identified participation in these migrant church communities as a means to facilitate further participation in wider civil society.

As such, the embodied social support provided by these physical religious networks is more difficult to replicate or simulate in the transition to digital worship, where people cannot access the other functions of church congregation. Indeed, for African Pentecostal populations living in Australia, 'churches are not just places of worship, they are pivotal institutions for their congregants' social worlds, which provide spiritual, sociocultural, emotional, and material support' (Openshaw, Vokes & Rocha 2021). It is therefore understandable why many churchgoing populations were more concerned about the discontinuation of physical services, rather than the direct threat of the SARS-CoV-2 virus itself.

> 'In traditional African belief, people say that if anything happens like this, like a plague, it's because men have done something that disappointed God. It's a warning that we are steering away from the right path. Like man-to-man marriage, woman to woman, lesbian and all these things. These things happened in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah in the bible.' **South Sudanese Anglican Pastor**

> 'I think now because we have COVID, and there are bible verses that do say that ... in the end times, you won't be able to get together and pray. I think more people are becoming more in tune with their religion, with praying and worshipping now. I think people are scared now also, of what's coming next.' **Young woman of Burundian heritage**

> 'We have church on Zoom, and it's been really good actually […] But you can tell, especially with the older generation people, they are having a really hard time. They don't understand why things are like this, why we have to be in our homes. [They say,] 'if the shops can be open, then we can go to the church.' **Burundian woman**

Moving to a new country brings with it a multitude of challenges that are not evenly experienced. Indeed, the dynamics of class, the circumstances under which people migrate, educational qualifications, language proficiency and financial agency all influence the ways people create a home abroad. These can be further compounded by experiences of racism in the host country. One of the ways in which migrants respond to the myriad of compounded struggles is through their Christianity and faith communities. Critically, whilst these spaces can respond to the complex needs of their African-heritage congregants, they can also inhibit integration, be exploitative and be places of (racialised) violence. This section of the report discusses the relationship between Christianity and settlement challenges for Africans in Australia.

1. LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Low-level English language skills may inhibit migrants from fully participating in Australian society. Establishing social relationships, accessing healthcare and welfare services, securing suitable employment and housing, as well as negotiating life administration, all become more difficult without proficient English. This is particularly prominent among elderly African migrants, who may typically speak several languages but not English. By contrast, younger migrants and children of migrants have the opportunity to attend school in Australia, becoming proficient early on.

This language proficiency divide between parents and children can have some negative implications. A common generation concern for migrant families is being unable to connect meaningfully in a common language.

Language and literacy barriers inhibit parents from being able to fully support their children in an educational context. Moreover, whilst language brokering (when children interpret and translate for their migrant parents) is an important contribution to the family, these interpretation activities can also be socially and psychologically burdensome for young people.

Angelina: It was almost like going uphill with a bag of rocks ... because you'd come home, and where other kids would have their parents supporting them with projects and stuff, you were like 'I have to do this myself!' Literally by myself! ... These little things like this are like pebbles – you know, they're not that heavy but when you have them again and again and again and it mounts. They impact your capacity to really be your best self, and to present yourself in the way that you truly are.

Although eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants can access the free Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), local churches are key in responding to the English language needs of congregants. Often run by volunteers and members of the church community, they offer support such as basic language classes, conversation opportunities, combination bible and English study classes as well as aid in matters of life administration, and children's schoolwork. Given these activities take place in a familiar and trusted spaces they are also useful opportunities for proselytising and instilling the church's values in the attendees. Churches are important in the social lives of elderly members of the community who may be able to attend services in their home languages and to build social ties with people with whom they share the same languages.

2. LIVING AND MAKING-A-LIVING

Meaningful Employment

Access to meaningful employment is an important indicator of positive settlement. However, many Africans experience substantial challenges to labour market participation for two broad reasons:

Pre-Australian lives

Issues such as difficulties learning English, education disruptions, a lack of work experience, or qualifications that do not translate means that finding a job or moving beyond lower skilled and lower paying employment is very difficult (Hebbani & Colic-Peisker 2012: 530).

Racism

Even those with tertiary qualifications, professional expertise and excellent English report difficulties securing work or are underemployed. This is due to being on the receiving end of negative assumptions by potential employers about their competency and capacity (Udah et al 2019). When in employment, many experience racial microaggressions in the workplace (Gatwiri 2021). Moreover, racism shapes youth market experiences with African youth being positioned as inferior workers (Kalemba 2021).[3]

[3] Following the World Health Organisation's definition 'youth' usually denote young people who are aged between 15–24 years old. However, some churches consider congregants 'youth' up to about 30 years old.

Challenges

3. POOR MENTAL HEALTH

In the preliminary findings from their first visit to Australia (December 2022), the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD 2022) highlighted high levels of mental illness, self-harm and suicide within African Australian communities (especially that of the South Sudanese youth). These are due to complex and compounding circumstances experienced among the African diasporas in Australia:

- Personal and collective high levels of trauma from conflict exposure (Hancock 2009: 10);
- Navigating resettlement frustrations in Australia;
- Racism and structural barriers;
- Fractured social and kin networks;
- Burdensome demands on time and resources by some churches;
- Complexities of homeland politics in the diaspora;
- Substance dependency (Horyniak et al 2014; Horyniak et al 2016; Mwanri & Mude 2021);
- Problems recognising mental health issues;
- Help-seeking barriers – stigma, lack of mental health literacy, financial cost deterring access, lack of cultural competency of formal help sources (McCann et al 2016);
- A white-modelled mental health system (Wamwayi et al 2019).

Churches and their leaders play a key role in providing pastoral care to their congregants. This care is informed by a religious and a cultural lens. This thereby reinforces expected behaviour norms that may in fact be further detrimental to the mental health of help seekers. Moreover, some churches attribute mental health maladies to spiritual causes (curses, spirit possession and witchcraft) and offer spiritual solutions such as deliverance and spiritual healing (Openshaw 2020; Mude et al 2020). Whilst these approaches may prove effective in some instances, most religious leaders are not mental healthcare professionals, and consequently, are not equipped to address the complexity of the mental health needs of their congregants. These needs may not be remedied with spiritual healing.

To be sure, given the centrality of churches in African communities, they are well placed to promote mental health literacy and reach those who may be overlooked by Australian social services, if they desire to do so. Indeed, Fauk et al's (2022: 5) African-Australian research participants recommended that religious leaders be educated on mental health issues and be informed of appropriate services available to their congregants.

4. OVER-POLICING, INCARCERATION AND IMMIGRATION DETENTION

People of African heritage in Australia report unfavourable engagements with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. For South Sudanese communities in the state of Victoria this is a particular concern (Pittaway & Dantas 2021; Shepherd & Spivak 2020). There are multiple reasons for this:

- Racial profiling (Hopkins 2020a, 2020b; Run 2013; Tamar 2020a, 2020b);
- Over-policing of the public and private lives of Africans (Ramsay 2018; Weber et al 2021);
- Unmanaged trauma, settlement difficulties and survival crime (crimes committed out of necessity for basic survival) (Shepherd et al 2018).

Moreover, those who come to Australia via humanitarian avenues under the Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Act 2014 can have their visas cancelled by the Minister of Home Affairs should they fail to meet the good character test, a test that is largely reliant on an imprisonment clause. That is, those who serve a sentence of imprisonment on a full-time basis in a custodial institution for more than 12 months or have been convicted of a sexual offence against a minor could have their visas cancelled. After being released from prison some people find themselves stateless, (indefinitely) imprisoned in immigration detention facilities and threatened with deportation.

Australian media and nationalist politicians may magnify the relationship between criminality and people of African heritage (particularly youth), conflating blackness with criminality. This plays out in the form of racialised moral panic (Benier et al. 2021; Molla 2021) fuelled by racist media narratives of unruly 'African gangs' as a danger to Australia (Majavu 2020; Weng & Mansouri 2021). African migrants may be cast as a (singular) problematic group that does not assimilate and this narrative pushes them to the social margins of Australia diminishing their sense of belonging.

Whilst communities grapple with these issues, progressive sectors of the media and politics, NGOs and churches have pushed back. It is commonplace for church leaders to publicly call out racist and politically divisive characterisation, whilst also addressing these issues from their church pulpits. Many churches prioritise youth programs to get young people in the church pews rather than on the streets. They also offer pastoral care for those in who are imprisoned. This care takes many forms, such as translation work, religious counselling, raising money for bail or legal costs, and referrals to (legal) resources. It can also extend to support for families who may have trouble negotiating the justice system and supporting their incarcerated loved ones. But not all churches are attractive to those at risk and may not have the resources and skills to tackle the complex reasons people fall into crime.

Adequate Housing

Housing is a major challenge for African migrants affecting all aspects of their wellbeing. Many are locked out of the housing market due to its prohibitive cost. In addition to an inflated private rental market, racial discrimination provides a further barrier during the rental application process and in how African tenants are treated by unscrupulous landlords. For those who are most vulnerable, the wait and suitability of social housing is yet another concern when trying to secure a place to live in Australia.

'Culture shock'

New living circumstance can prove disorienting for African migrants. Some of these issues include:

- Challenges to cultural gender roles and intimate partner violence (Dagistanli et al 2020; Fisher 2013; Chung et al 2018);
- Difficulties navigating the social welfare, medical and legal systems;
- Culturally inappropriate or inaccessible support for people with disabilities (Spivakovsky et al 2020);
- Lack of affordable childcare;
- Pressures to financially support kin abroad (Baak 2015).

Ikafa et al (2022), in their research into the stress-coping strategies of African migrants in Australia, have identified faith as a crucial factor in negotiating

settlement pressures. Churches, in particular diasporic church communities, identify and respond to the everyday needs of their congregations, such as offering business network opportunities, knowledge sharing about support services and visa concerns, and meeting the physical needs required of those most at risk (such as food hampers, clothes and temporary places to stay).

As much as churches can be spaces of great support, they can also turn a blind eye to, or even encourage, harmful social norms or those incompatible with Australian society. In particular, some churches may hold conservative views concerning the role of women in communities and domestic spheres; not adequately address intimate partner violence among their congregants; and reject LGBTQIA+ members of their congregations. Given church leaders have significant positions of power in African communities (in some instances with little accountability) their positions hold much sway on how such circumstances are addressed in the community – sometimes causing harm. For migrants who may be vulnerable by virtue that they are physically disconnected from kin, this situation can be particularly pernicious. For migrants who attend multicultural mainstream denominational churches or Pentecostal churches (like the homegrown 'Aussie' church Hillsong), the culture shock can extend to spaces of faith for instance in approaches to more casual dress, alcohol consumption and approaches to gender and sexuality (Rocha et al 2021).

5. GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA

Parenting children who were born in or came to Australia at a young age can be challenging. This is especially true given the generational mismatches between the norms and expectations of Australian society versus that of parents. Parents and children must navigate:

- Competing ideas of what constitutes struggle and hardship;
- Issues concerning culturally-informed ideas about parenting roles and parental surveillance, gender roles, domestic and community responsibilities and children's obedience.

It can therefore be frustrating for parents when their children actively reject their efforts to uphold what they consider to be important cultural and moral practices.

Moreover, these conflicting understandings can have consequences beyond that of the home. Ramsay (2017), in her research with refugee women resettled from Africa who have had their children forcibly removed from them, writes of the benevolent cruelty of the child protection system in Australia. Ramsay (2017) posits that the process of offering protection to refugees is conditional on them conforming to the expectations of white-Anglo caregiving. Indeed, this is a concern that was raised at the UN WGEPAD's 2022 visit where they noted that issues of violation to parental rights are manifested through the criminalisation of African parenting styles and the temporary or permanent separation of children from their parents traumatising and fracturing families and communities (WGEPAD 2022).

Growing up with African heritage in Australia is difficult. Much like their parents, children are negotiating various issues:

- Settlement challenges;
- Normal childhood & adolescence trials and vulnerabilities;
- Two cultural worlds – that of their parents and that of Australia;
- Negative labelling.

In African Christian communities, church plays a central role in raising children because they offer:

- An important agent of socialisation into cultural and Christian identities;
- Parental respite, informal childcare & support;
- Assistance navigating the schooling system (homework classes) and encouraging scholastic achievements (Wilkinson et al 2017);
- Addressing adolescent focused issues (such as peer pressure, romantic relationships, substance use) via youth programs and church participation.

Whilst some churches (particularly trendy Pentecostal churches) are thriving among African youth due to their 'Cool Christianity' approach (Rocha 2021; Rocha et al 2021), some diasporic churches and traditional denominations are struggling to engage the children and youth of their congregations. With 40% of the Australian population stating they have no religion in the last census (ABS 2022), African heritage youth face a unique circumstance in which they are being raised in a society that is considerably less religious than their heritage culture. This poses a distinctive set of challenges.

Awuku-Gyampoh (2021: 5–7) found an array of issues that affect youth attendance in African diasporic churches in Australia: hypercritical congregation members, poor youth activities, competing and busy schedules, a lack of representation within church management and settlement issues. Indeed, some young people may fail to see the relevance of their parents' church to their lives in Australia, or feel their church reinforces social conservatism, or believe they do not always speak directly to their struggles of young African heritage people, or simply do not sufficiently cater to how they wish to worship. Moreover, some of our focus group participants note how African youth in Australia may interpret Christianity as a weapon of European colonisation in Africa.

> **Mary:** Something that I hear a lot, especially younger people of African descent [...] 'Oh, why do you even believe in this God?' [...] 'White people used religion to take that away – to destroy their kingdom [pre-colonial African kingdoms].'

A common narrative amongst adult church members for the decline in religiosity amongst African heritage youth concerns the relative material comfort experienced in Australia in comparison to their parents and kin when in Africa. The perception is that this leads to religious complacency.

> **James**: ... the fact is that some of the Australian kids are very relaxed, because they've got everything. And for us, when we came, it [faith] was kind of hope that we held onto, that got us through life challenges.

6. GROWING OLD IN AUSTRALIA

Aging as a person of African heritage in Australia can be a challenging process. For the elderly, social isolation is a common issue and can be exacerbated by a lack of language competency and (digital) literacy, and the inability to drive. Communities are concerned about how elderly people will be cared for given this role is traditionally performed by the family. Yet in Australia this care can create much pressure given fractured kin ties and the competing responsibilities of everyday life. In addition, it is taboo to place the elderly in residential care. What facilities are available are not culturally appropriate or do not have staff able to communicate in the resident's language. This is particularly problematic for those who need close care (such as those with dementia), leaving them emotionally and physically vulnerable.

Churches in Australia play a vital role as spaces of social solace and care for the elderly. This is often where communal care takes place. Churches can be spaces where the elderly are able to communicate in their own language, be respected as knowledgeable elders and have a social outlet that may not be as accessible to them in Australian society. Churches are also knowledge sharing spaces where the elderly and their families are told of the social services available to them. Because church offers elderly people of African heritage so much by way of supports, it can actually inhibit their integration given they are able to rely of their church communities.

7. BELONGING AS A LGBTIQA+ CHRISTIAN OF AFRICAN HERITAGE IN AUSTRALIA

Being a LGBTIQA+ person of African heritage and Christian can be isolating. LGBTIQA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual) people are often ostracised from their diasporic and church communities that tend to consider genders and sexualities beyond the cisgendered/heterosexual binaries as 'un-African' and not biblical. Moreover, racism in LGBTIQA+ spaces, much like the rest of Australia, is pervasive. In many parts of Africa and amongst its diasporas, gender and sexuality diversity may be considered a colonial import. Ironically, in many of the 33 African countries that criminalise homosexuality, these laws are remnants of colonialism. Scholars such as Dlamini (2006) have argued that gender and sexuality diversity is consistent with African cultural practices and cosmologies.

Certainly, being of African heritage, LGBTIQA+ and Christian are not incompatible with each other but can make negotiating social spaces very difficult, and sometimes physically dangerous. Without sufficient culturally appropriate supports available to them, LGBTIQA+ Africans run the risk of poor wellbeing and mental health.

Whilst research taking place on the continent is beginning to draw attention to progressive Christian discourses that support LGBTIQA+ (Epprecht 2013; Van Klinken & Chitando 2021), this is rarely the case in Australian based churches that serve African heritage congregants. In fact, our research shows that many African majority and diaspora churches raised concerns about the implications that the passing of Australia's

Marriage Act, 2017 – which for the first time made same-sex marriages legal – would have on their right to practice conservative Christian values. Some even blamed the COVID-19 pandemic on God's displeasure at the acceptance of homosexuality in Australia specifically and broadly in the West. Certainly, the complexity of life as a LGBTIQA+ Christian of African heritage is under-researched in Australia and requires further scholarly attention.

8. NEGOTIATING RACISM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SPACES OF FAITH

Many of our respondents had been on the receiving end of acts of racism in Australia, including in their places of worship. As Weng et al (2022) point out, Australian faith communities are a powerful resource for supporting those who are experiencing systemic racism but can also be implicated in perpetrating it (either overtly or through cultural incompetency). For African heritage Christians attending local denominational churches that may have historically had a majority white-Anglo Australian congregation or even global 'Aussie' Pentecostal churches, negotiating issues of racism and racial illiteracy can be challenging. Respondents have noted how in some instances they experience direct racism such as fellow congregants refusing to sit beside them at services, as well as Africans not being represented in leadership roles.

In one instance, we were told of an Anglican pastor who serves his Sydney South Sudanese community being repeatedly moved on from the local (white majority) churches they join because they used the church facilities but were not financially able to give much in the way of offerings. Indeed, the entanglement between Christianity and charity on the continent and among African migrants in Australia can perpetuate the commonplace deficit narrative concerning African people in church congregations. Local level responses to congregation diversity can be slow with African congregants having to educate their congregations on racially/culturally inappropriate language and social framings. For some, their racialised experiences of living in Australia are not understood and/or are ignored by their faith leaders. It is a complicated process that requires efforts and understanding from both African congregants and church leadership and community.

> **Anashe:** So, I'm a cradle Anglican, cradle Anglican. I still identify as a Christian. I still think I do have the Christian beliefs and I do live my life as a Christian, I just don't go to churches anymore. And I literally do not go to churches because of exactly what you were talking about [racism]. Because I just got to a point where, especially when I came to Sydney, it was so hard. They were so elitist, and they were so racist. And they don't know it and you can't talk to them about it because they're also very well-meaning.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Governments and NGOs explicitly recognise churches as important sites for settlement support

As this report highlights, churches are central hubs in the social worlds of African Christians in Australia. They fulfill many roles in their community, especially addressing the multifarious and complex concerns of settlement. For African Christians, churches are sites of trust and key nodes in support and knowledge sharing networks. By actively consulting with religious organisations around the needs and access to resources of African communities in Australia, governments and NGOs can better understand, reach and support these communities. With many churches providing culturally and linguistically appropriate care in their communities, they are important agents for building trust between their African congregants and government services.

Recommendation 2: All settlement support agencies are cognisant of the strong spiritual component in the lives of African Australians to better serve them

Christianity is lived daily by African Christians in Australia. It provides its faithful with instruments (e.g., prayers, the bible, and deliverance services but also moral values) to address life issues in and out of church. This is especially the case for Africans facing settlement challenges in Australia. All settlement support agencies (including those addressing health and wellbeing) can better support these communities if they are aware of how their services can complement and respond to their clients' spiritual approaches to life management. We recommend a joined-up approach that integrates secular settlement support agencies with churches and FBOs to provide more localised and culturally appropriate ecosystem of service provision. To this extent, they will be more welcoming of African Christians and their ways of being in the world.

Recommendation 3: Youth Services should collaborate with churches to respond to the complex needs of African Australian Youth

Churches are well placed to address the specific needs of African youth given the embeddedness of the whole family unit in church communities and the regularity of contact. Many churches are not only religious but social and cultural communities. They organise specific youth meeting groups, services and events. They also place youth in positions of leadership for this cohort thus contributing to building their confidence and wellbeing. Thus, church partnerships with local schools and youth support services would provide a joined-up approach to assist youth who are experiencing challenges and aid in capturing at-risk young people.

For this to be feasible, churches must also continuously assess, in dialogue with their youth congregation, how to best serve *them* and how they wish to engage with their faith so as to not alienate them. Churches must also consider ways they can more mindfully navigate the possible differences of values between church communities and Australian society at large, as well as the frustrations of being a young negatively racialised person of African heritage growing up in Australia. In that way, they can also guide parents on how to support their children who live between the 'two worlds' of African and Australian values.

Recommendation 4: Religious leaders are trained in mental health first aid and on how to access social services

Religious leaders are valued as trusted and knowledgeable members of African communities, and they are very often the first (and only) ports of call for congregants experiencing difficulties. Religious leaders are well placed to undertake mental health first aid training and be provided with information about how to support their congregations in accessing social and mental health services. This knowledge will serve to assist church leaders to identify vulnerable congregants and complement the pastoral, practical and spiritual supports and advice they already provide in their communities.

Recommendation 5: Churches are sites to facilitate public education sessions

Given that churches are the social centres of most African heritage communities in Australia, they are prime locations to target those who may otherwise miss out on vital public service information. Churches are well placed to facilitate education sessions (also in languages other than English) to provide information on issues facing congregants such as poor mental health, public health campaigns, intimate partner violence, and how to navigate social services.

Recommendation 6: Government prioritises the needs of aging African Australians

The lack of culturally appropriate support for the African-Australian aging population is of concern for these communities. It is not uncommon for elderly African-Australians to return to their countries in Africa because families are not able to care for them in Australia. This results in families being split and exacerbates mental health issues in the community. Retirement villages built in Australia for this population should follow a similar pattern as those built for older waves of migrants such as the Vietnamese and Chinese. The ability to easily access food and music from their homelands, converse with carers in their own languages, and engage meaningfully with their religions and cultures is vital for the wellbeing of those in aged care.

Given churches play such an important role in the lives of this demographic, oftentimes addressing not only their spiritual but also their social needs, they are good places to start the consultation process to understand the specific needs of aging African Australians.

We recommend:

- The Department of Health and Aged Care prioritise the lack of culturally-appropriate services;
- Funding for African-focused and -led retirement villages;
- More research on the role of churches in caring for aged African Australians.

Recommendation 7: More research is required to understand the experiences of LGBTIQA+ African Christians in Australia

LGBTIQA+ African Christians in Australia are a vulnerable cohort given how complicated it is for them to navigate Christian and (LGBTIQA+) Australian social spaces that can be unwelcoming. This is in addition to insufficient access to culturally appropriate supports for African LGBTIQA+ people. This too is a cohort who has been overlooked in Australian scholarly research. Given the especially challenging nature of their circumstances, research into the experience of LGBTIQA+ African Christians should be a government funding priority.

Recommendation 8: Churches address issues of racism and cultural literacy

White-majority churches, in particular, must address issues of residual racism among their congregation and leadership. They should all become more culturally literate about the nuances of race within their activities and what their congregants from minority ethnic backgrounds experience in Australian society more broadly. This can be facilitated through open dialogue and redress among African and other ethnic-minority congregants, church leadership and their wider faith communities.

References

Aboagye, K. (2018) Australian Blackness, the African Diaspora and Afro/Indigenous Connections in the Global South. *Transition,* 126: 72-85.

ABS. (2021) *Religious affiliation in Australia.* ABS Website, accessed 10 January 2023, https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/religious-affiliation-australia#key-findings

Akec, K. (2022) *Hopeless Kingdom.* Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing.

Addo, G. (2021) Join the Holy Spirit on Zoom: African Pentecostal churches and their liturgical practices during COVID-19. *Approaching Religion,* 11(2): 45–61.

Anyieth, A. (2022) *Unknown : A Refugee's Story.* Melbourne, VIC: Text Publishing.

Awuku-Gyampoh, R. K. (2021) Youth Ministry and its Challenges Among African Migrant Parishioners in Australia. *Academia Letters,* Article 3514.

Baak, M. (2015) Transnational families, remittances, cieng and obligations for Dinka women in Australia. *Emotion, Space and Society,* 16:123-129.

Baak, M. (2019) Racism and Othering for South Sudanese heritage students in Australian schools: is inclusion possible?, *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 23(2): 125-141.

Beneba Clarke, M., Yussef, A. & Magan, M. (2019) *Growing up African in Australia.* Carlton, VIC: Black Inc.

Benier, K., Wickes, R., & Moran, C. (2021) 'African gangs' in Australia: Perceptions of race and crime in urban neighbourhoods. *Journal of Criminology,* 54(2):220-238.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1963) *The social construction of reality.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Bouma, G., & Halafoff, A. (2017) Australia's Changing Religious Profile—Rising Nones and Pentecostals, Declining British Protestants in Superdiversity: Views from the 2016 Census. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 30 (2): 129-143.

Bouma, G., Halafoff, A., & Barton, G. (2022) Worldview complexity: The challenge of intersecting diversities for conceptualising diversity. *Social Compass,* 69(2): 186–204.

Bryson, J. R., Andres, L., & Davies, A. (2020) Covid-19, Virtual Church Services and a New Temporary Geography of Home. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie,* 111 (3): 360-372.

Burgess, R. (2009) African Pentecostal spirituality and civic engagement: the case of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain. *Journal of Beliefs & Values,* 30(3): 255-273.

Castles, S., M. Kalantzis, B. Cope, and M. Morrissey (1990) *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia.* Sydney: Pluto.

Chung, D., Fisher, C., Zufferey, C., & Thiara., R. (2018) *Young Women from African Backgrounds and Sexual Violence Report,* accessed 3rd May 2021, <https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/07-1213-FinalReport.pdf>.

Dagistanli, S., Umutoni Wa Shema, N., Townley, C., Robinson, K., Bansel, P., Huppatz, K., Thomas, M., Musoni, E., Abega, J. P., Bizimana, L., & Mufumbiro, K. (2020) *Understandings and responses to domestic violence in the African Great Lakes communities of Western Sydney*; Western Sydney University, GLAPD.

Dei, G. J. S. (2018) 'Black Like Me': Reframing Blackness for Decolonial Politics, *Educational Studies,* 54(2): 117-142.

Dennis, D. (2017) *Travelling With the Spirit: Pentecostal Migration Religiosity Between Ghana and Australia,* PhD thesis. Victoria University of Wellington.

Department of Education and Employment (2020) *International students in Australia up to 2019 Research Snapshot,* accessed 3 May 2021, <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/Documents/RS_Total%20student%20counts%20to%202019.pdf>.

Dlamini, B. (2006) Homosexuality in the African context. *Agenda,* 20(67): 128-136.

Earnest, J., Mansi, R., Bayati, S., Earnest, J. A., & Thompson, S. C. (2015) Resettlement experiences and resilience in refugee youth in Perth, Western Australia. *BMC Research Notes,* 8 (236): 1-10.

Eby, J., Iverson, E., Smyers, J., & Kekic, E. (2011) The Faith Community's Role in Refugee Resettlement in the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 24 (3): 586-605.

Epprecht, M. (2013) *Sexuality and social justice in Africa: rethinking homophobia and forging resistance.* London and New York: Zed Books.

Fauk, N. K., Ziersch, A., Gesesew, H., Ward, P. R., & Mwanri, L. (2022) Strategies to improve access to mental health services: Perspectives of African migrants and service providers in South Australia, *SSM-Mental Health,* 2: 100058.

Fisher, C. (2013) Changed and Changing Gender and Family Roles and Domestic Violence in African Refugee Background Communities Post-Settlement in Perth, Australia, *Violence Against Women,* 19(7): 833–847.

Forrest, J. Johnston, R. and Poulsen, M. (2013) Middle-class diaspora: recent immigration to Australia from South Africa and Zimbabwe, *South African Geographical Journal* 95(1): 50–69.

Fozdar, F., Quicke, S. P., & Mickler, D. (2022) Are Africans in Australia a Diaspora?, *Diaspora Studies,* 15(1): 87-117.

Freston, P. (2010) Reverse Mission: A Discourse in Search of Reality? *PentecoStudies,* 9(2): 153–174.

Gatwiri, K. (2019) Growing Up African in Australia: racism, resilience and the right to belong, *The Conversation,* 4 April, viewed 3 May 2021 < https://theconversation.com/growing-up-african-in-australia-racism-resilience-and-the-right-to-belong-113121>.

Gatwiri, K. (2021) Racial Microaggressions at Work: Reflections from Black African Professionals in Australia. *British Journal of Social Work,* 51(2): 655–672.

Gatwiri, K., & Anderson, L. (2021a) Boundaries of Belonging: Theorizing Black African Migrant Experiences in Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 18(38): 1–13.

Gatwiri, K., & Anderson, L. (2021b) Black children in White spaces: Skilled African migrants reflect on their parenting experiences in Australia. *Child & Family Social Work,* 26(1): 153–162.

Gatwiri, K., & Anderson, L. (2022) *Afrodiasporic Identities in Australia: Articulations of Blackness and Africanness: Articulations of Blackness and Africanness.* Singapore: Springer.

Gatwiri, K. & Moran, C. (2022) Reclaiming racial dignity: An ethnographic study of how African youth in Australia use social media to visibilise anti-Black racism. *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 00: 1–21.

Gordon, L. R. (2020) Shifting the Geography of Reason in Black and Africana Studies, *The Black Scholar,* 50(3): 42-47.

Govender, S. (2022) *(Re)creating 'home', (re)defining identity: transnational migration of South Africans of Indian descent to Australia.* PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Hage, G. (1998) *White nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society.* Pluto: Sydney.

Hancock, P. (2009). Recent African Refugees to Australia: Analysis of Current Refugee Services, a Case Study from Western Australia. *International Journal of Psychological Studies,* 1(2): 10-17.

Hebbani, A., & Colic-Peisker, V. (2012) Communicating One's Way to Employment: A Case Study of African Settlers in Brisbane, Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* 33(5): 529-547.

Hiruy, K., & Hutton, R. A. (2020) Towards a Re-imagination of the New African Diaspora in Australia. *African Diaspora,* 12(1-2): 153-179.

Hopkins, T. (2020a) Litigating racial profiling: examining the evidence for institutional racial profiling by police against African-Australians in Flemington, Victoria, *Australian Journal of Human Rights,* 26(2): 209-226

Hopkins, T. (2020b). Racial profiling in contemporary Australian policing. *Precedent,* (161): 4–9.

Horyniak D., Higgs P., Cogger, S., Dietze P., & Bofu, T. (2014) Experiences of and Attitudes Toward Injecting Drug Use Among Marginalized African Migrant and Refugee Youth in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse,* 13(4): 405-429.

Horyniak, D., Higgs, P., Cogger, S., Dietze, P., & Bofu, T. (2016) Heavy alcohol consumption among marginalised African refugee young people in Melbourne, Australia: motivations for drinking, experiences of alcohol-related problems and strategies for managing drinking. *Ethnicity & Health,* 21(3): 284-99.

Hugo, G. (2009) *Migration between Africa and Australia: A demographic perspective,* viewed 3rd May 2021, https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/african- australians-project-migration-between-africa-and-australia- demographic.

Ikafa, I., Hack-Polay, D., Walker J., & Mahmoud, A. B. (2022) African Migrants and Stress Coping Strategies in Australia: Implications for Social Work. *International Social Work,* 65(6): 1166-1183.

Jakubowicz, A. (2010) *Australia's migration policies: African dimensions Background paper for African Australians: A review of human rights and social inclusion issues.* Australian Human Rights Commission. viewed 3rd May 2021, <http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/1912/1/africanaus_paper_jakubowicz.pdf>.

Kalemba, J. (2021) Global South to Global North youth migration: a decolonial exploration of Black African youth experiences of migrating to and being in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies,* 25(5): 564–579.

King, S., & Owens, L. (2019) The schooling experiences of African youth from refugee backgrounds in South Australia: Key findings and implications for educational practice. In Information Resources Management Association USA (Ed.), *Early childhood development: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications* (pp. 1479-1505). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Kirby, B., Taru, J., & Chimbidzikai, T. (2020) Pentecostals and the spiritual war against coronavirus in Africa. *The Conversation,* 1 May, https://theconversation.com/pentecostals-and-the-spiritual-war-against-coronavirus-in-africa-137424

Lejukole, J. W. L. (2009) *'We Will Do it Our Own Ways': A Perspective of Southern Sudanese Refugees Resettlement Experiences in Australian Society,* PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide.

Lindegaard Moensted, M. (2020) Nearness and distance: the double- sided nature of belonging for young refugees in Australia. *Social Identities,* 26(2): 270-285.

Majavu, M. (2020) The 'African gangs' narrative: associating Blackness with criminality and other anti-Black racist tropes in Australia. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal,* 13(1): 27-39.

Mapedzahama, V. & Kwansah-Aidoo, K. (2017) Blackness as Burden? The Lived Experience of Black Africans in Australia. *SAGE Open,* 7 (3): 1- 13,

Mayblin, L., & James, P. (2019) Asylum and refugee support in the UK: civil society filling the gaps?. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 45 (3): 375-394.

McCann, T. V., Mugavin, J., Renzaho, A., & Lubman, D. I. (2016) Sub-Saharan African migrant youths' help-seeking barriers and facilitators for mental health and substance use problems: a qualitative study. *BMC Psychiatry,* 16(1): 275-284.

Meyer, B. (2004) Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 33: 447-474.

Mhandu, J., & Ojong, V. (2021) Covid-19 and the South African Pentecostal Landscape: Historic Shift from Offline Liturgical Practice to Online Platforms. *Journal for the Study of Religion,* 34(2): 1-25.

Molla, T. (2020) African Refugees in Australia: Social Position and Educational Outcomes. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies,* 19(4): 331-348.

Molla, T. (2021) Racial moral panic and African youth in Australia, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 84(2021): 95-106.

Moran, C., & Gatwiri, K. (2022) #BlackLivesMatter: Exploring the digital practises of African Australian youth on social media. *Media. Culture & Society,* 44(7): 1330–1353.

Moran, C. & Mapedzahama, V. (2022) Black bodies, Black queens, and the Black sisterhood on social media: perspectives from young African women in Australia, *Journal of Youth Studies,* ahead of print: 1-28.

Mude, W. W., Fisher, C. M., Le Gautier, R., Wallace, J., & Richmond, J. A. (2020) South Sudanese Perceptions of Health and Illness in South Australia. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care,* 16(4): 469-479.

Mwanri L., Anderson L., & Gatwiri K (2021) Telling Our Stories: Resilience during Resettlement for African Skilled Migrants in Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 18(8): 3954

Mwanri, L., & Mude, W. (2021) Alcohol, Other Drugs Use and Mental Health among African Migrant Youths in South Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 18(4): 1534-1546.

n/a (2021) Police issue $35,000 in COVID-19 fines after illegal gathering at Sydney church. *ABC News,* 23 August, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-23/blacktown-churchgoers-fined-for-large-gathering-covid-breach/100398402

Ndhlovu, F. (2013) 'Too Tall, Too Dark' to be Australian: Racial Perceptions of Post-refugee Africans. *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies,* 9(2): 1-17.

Okai, B. (2001) West Africa. In J. Jupp (Ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins.* Cambridge; New York; Oakleigh, Vic.: Cambridge University Press (p. 745).

Openshaw, K. (2020) Spiritual Flows and Obstructions: Local Deliverance in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. In G. Giordan & A. Possamai (Eds.), *The Social Scientific Study of Exorcism* (pp. 159-174). Switzerland: Springer.

Openshaw, K., Vokes, R., & Rocha, C. (2021) *Can the Holy Spirit Be Livestreamed?. Sapiens.* https://www.sapiens.org/culture/worshipping-online-covid-19/

Osei-Tutu, A., Affram, A. A., Mensah-Sarbah, C., Dzokoto, V., & Adams, G. (2021) The Impact of COVID-19 and Religious Restrictions on the Well-Being of Ghanaian Christians: The Perspectives of Religious Leaders. *Journal of Religion and Health,* 60(4): 2232–2249.

Pew Research Centre (2022) *Key Findings from the Global Religious Futures Project,* 21 December, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/12/21/key-findings-from-the-global-religious-futures-project/

Phillips, M. (2011) Convenient labels, inaccurate representations : turning Southern Sudanese refugees into 'African-Australians'. *Australasian Review of African Studies,* 32(2): 57-79.

Pittaway, T. & Dantas, J. A. R. (2021) African Youth Gangs: The Marginalization of South Sudanese Young People in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies,* 1-17.

Pybus, C. (2006) Race relations and early Australian settlement. *The Sydney Papers,* 18(3-4): 38-48.

Ramsay, G. (2017) Central African Refugee Women Resettled in Australia: Colonial Legacies and the Civilising Process. *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* 38(2): 170-188.

Ramsay, G. (2018) *Impossible Refuge: The Control and Constraint of Refugee Futures.* Oxon: Routledge

Riordan, T., & Claudio, F. (2022) Personal and community agency: factors associated with increased wellbeing amongst African refugee youth in Brisbane, Australia, *Journal of Youth Studies,* 25(8): 1034-1051.

Rocha, C. (2021) Cool Christianity: The Fashion-Celebrity-Megachurch Industrial Complex. *Material Religion,* 17(5): 580-602.

Rocha, C., Openshaw, K., & Vokes, R. (2021) 'Middle-class' Africans in Australia: Choosing Hillsong as a Global Home. *Culture and Religion,* 22 (1): 25-45.

Run, P. (2013). Unnecessary encounters: South Sudanese refugees' experiences of racial profiling in Melbourne. *Social Alternatives,* 32(3): 20-25.

Shepherd S. M., Newton D., Farquharson K. (2018) Pathways to offending for young Sudanese Australians. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology,* 51(4): 481–501.

Shepherd, S. M., & Spivak, B. L. (2020) Estimating the extent and nature of offending by Sudanese-born individuals in Victoria. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology,* 53(3): 352–368.

Spivakovsky, C., Onsando, G., Johns, D., & Vaughan, C. (2020) *African Australians with disability and the NDIS: Exploring support and service needs.* Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne Disability Institute, University of Melbourne.

Steyn M. E. (2005) White talk: White South Africans and the management of diasporic whiteness. In A. J. López (Ed.), *Postcolonial whiteness: A critical reader on race and empire* (pp. 119–136). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Udah, H., & Singh, P. (2018) 'It still matters': The role of skin colour in the everyday life and realities of black African migrants and refugees in Australia. *The Australasian Review of African Studies,* 39(2): 19-47.

Udah, H., Singh, P. & Chamberlain, S. (2019) Settlement and Employment Outcomes of Black African Immigrants in Southeast Queensland, Australia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal,* 28(1): 53–74.

Ukah, A. (2020) Prosperity, Prophecy and the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Healing Economy of African Pentecostalism. *Pneuma,* 42(3-4): 430-459.

Van Klinken, A., & Chitando, E. (2021) *Reimagining Christianity and Sexual Diversity in Africa.* NY: Oxford University Press.

Vertovec, S. (2007) Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 30 (6): 1024–1054.

Wamwayi, M. O., Cope, V., & Murray, M. (2019) Service gaps related to culturally appropriate mental health care for African immigrants. *International Journal Mental Health Nursing,* 28(5): 1113-1121.

Weber, L. J Blaustein, K Benier, R Wickes, D Johns (2021) *Place, Race and Politics: The Anatomy of a Law and Order Crisis.* Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Weng, E., & Mansouri, F. (2021) 'Swamped by Muslims' and facing an 'African gang' problem: racialized and religious media representations in Australia. *Continuum,* 35(3): 468-486.

Weng, E., Halafoff, A., Campbell, D., Abur, W., Bouma, G., & Barton, G. (2022) Whiteness, Religious Diversity and Relational Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for African Migrants in Australia. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion,* 34(3), 289–313.

WGEPAD (2022) *End of mission statement by the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to Australia (12-20 December 2022) containing its preliminary findings and recommendations.* 20 Dec. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/racism/wgeapd/2022-12-20/2022-12-20-EOM-WGEPAD-Australia.pdf.

White, P. (2022) Pentecostal spirituality in the context of faith and hope gospel (prosperity preaching): African Pentecostal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Dialog,* 61(2): 148-155.

Wild-Wood, E. & Chow, A. (2020) COVID-19 and Christianity. *The Round Table,* 109(4): 474-475.

Wilkinson, J., Santoro, N., & Major, J. (2017) Sudanese refugee youth and educational success: The role of church and youth group in supporting cultural and academic adjustment and schooling achievement, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 60: 210-219.

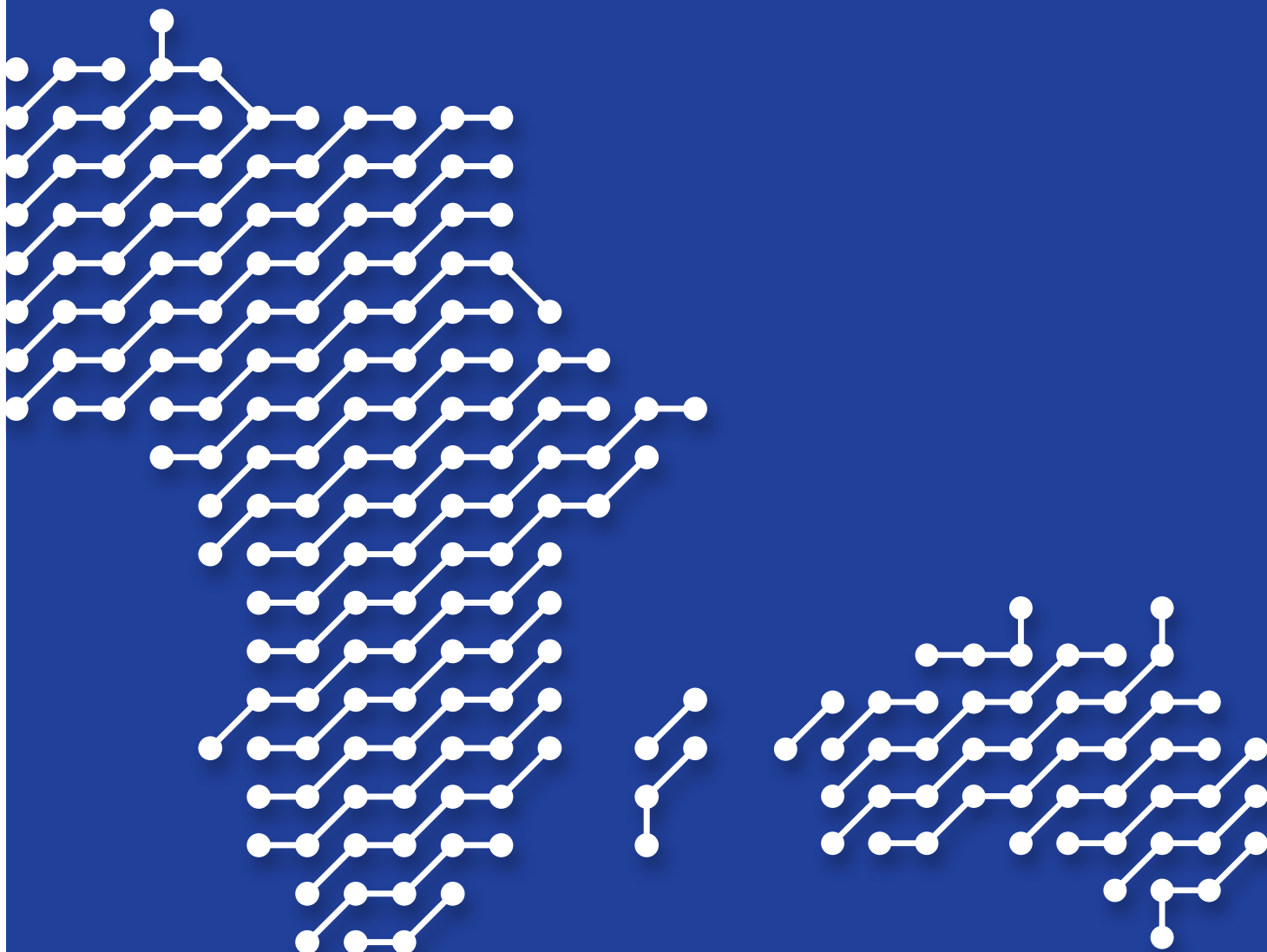Wilson, E. (2011) Much to be Proud of, Much to be Done: Faith-based Organizations and the Politics of Asylum in Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 24(3): 548-564.