

### **Claudia's Story**

I am a 24-year old African woman who has been living in Australia for nearly 16 years. I grew up in the northern suburbs, live in the eastern suburbs and now work as a youth worker for the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. My role is to assist migrant and refugee young people to access the Springers Leisure Centre. It shocked and hurt me to read the damning, negative, racist comments made by Peter Brown (Letters 9/1) aimed at all Africans.

It's evident to me that the actions of a few members of the African communities are being used to judge an entire race. This is unfair as it is not representative of the majority of young Africans (whether born here or migrants) who are working hard and trying to better themselves. There seem to be a lot of misconceptions about Africans, the way we think, our way of life, the laws and conditions in our countries.

These ill-informed comments ignore any efforts that my friends, family and I are making to integrate and establish ourselves in the community as successful and proud African Australians.

People often refer to me as "Äussie" despite having dark skin and another culture to embrace and be proud of. That's because, like most Aussies, I've completed primary, secondary and tertiary education – which I believe to be a great achievement. I've held a few part-time jobs, voted, been part of sporting teams/clubs, have an AFL team I barrack for and I appreciate and accept Australian Laws and Value. I also respect the values of my cultural background.

I was able to achieve this much so far, through the understanding, support and assistance offered and given to me by a range of different educational institutions, community groups and businesses. This is what is needed by all Africans and newly arrived migrants.

Don't judge or put us down without trying to understand us. I encourage you instead to take a step back and make an effort to get to know someone who is of a black African background.

**Claudia Abakah, Surrey Hills**