

TRANS-TASMAN CONFERENCE

Following the Christchurch terror attacks on March 15, 2019, Shakti took the lead in hosting a Trans-Tasman Conference at the Mt Eden War Memorial on June 14th 2019. Partners to this initiative were the Auckland Peace Action Trust, Khadija Leadership Foundation and a few other activist agencies.

The aim of this conference was to create a safe platform and enable a dialogue between people of New Zealand and Australia on the issue of racism. The objectives were multi-fold: To be able to collaborate with communities within New Zealand and across the Tasman, and develop the key messages to drive a long-term campaign; To reduce racism, discrimination, micro-aggression and radicalization so that we can prevent such tragedies from reoccurring and learn to rise above what has already been experienced; To reduce Prejudice and Discrimination projected through various Media platforms; Identify and deal with all forms Xenophobia and Racism.

There were about 300 attendees at this conference. The conference guests included representatives from New Zealand and Australian parliament, city councils, law enforcement agencies, media, government, not profit organisations and general public including highly motivated activists. This included Australian Senator, Dr. Mehreen Faruqi and Victorian Green Party leader & MLC Dr. Samantha Ratnam

During the conference five parallel panel discussions were held. The themes of the panel discussions were:

1. My Human Rights
2. Migrant and Refugee women's leadership in promoting Integration & Racial Equity in Australia/ New Zealand
3. The need for a Trans-Tasman collaboration for Racial Equity
4. The role of Media in promoting Racial Harmony
5. Extremism and Radicalisation: The impact on communities and countries

Former Shakti chairperson Amokura Panoho opened the Conference. The keynote speaker of the conference was Lianne Dalziel the Mayor of Christchurch. Lianne emphasised the importance of holding a trans-Tasman event and working across borders. Lianne touched upon an important issue and stated, that she had "been invisible to racism until the terror attacks....that a man will never experience misogyny the same way Pakeha will never experience racism".

Australian Senator Dr. Mehreen Faruqi spoke about discrimination that takes place in Australia against indigenous Australians. She highlighted the importance of calling out racism and speaking of it as we experience it and added that it was important to listen and open our hearts and minds of those who have faced this abuse.

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Victorian Green Party Leader and MLC Dr. Samantha Ratnam called to prevent the rising tide of racism in New Zealand and Australia and asked for everyone to commit to insisting that our voices are heard and to be vigilant.

Minister for Ethnic Communities Jenny Salesa thanked the conference partners, staff and volunteers of Shakti for bringing together the Conference. She also acknowledged all the dignitaries and the leadership Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had shown the nation, since the Christchurch attacks. She said Muslim communities have raised several concerns regarding their safety and that various Government groups were currently working towards ensuring safety and ongoing support. The Government has committed to make sure all communities feel safe and are respected, she added.

Undersecretary for Family and Sexual Violence, Jan Logie acknowledged Shakti for their work and their important role in society. She said it was important to recognise the role of women's organisations in the community. Struggles of women cannot be separated from struggles of white supremacy, she said.

New Zealand MP Marama Davidson said that its only people with lived similar experiences who could understand that "they are us" is full of holes. She spoke about Maori being colonised in their own land and being made to feel like refugees on their own land.

EEO Commissioner Saunoamaali'i Karanina Sumeo said that while we have laws that counter racial discriminations and the Treaty, we also have the reality. The challenges are on how we make these two come together in a way that it makes sense. "Our aspiration is not in line with our reality," she said.





During My Human Rights panel, Golriz Ghahraman spoke of the right to live and to be free without being silenced and marginalised, and having our representation noticed. Camille Nakhid touched upon how as a society we prefer not to talk about, colonisation, white supremacy, and that we have to talk about it. She stated what happened in Christchurch started with colonisation and we have a way of ignoring indigenous people. This panel discussed that sharing power means sharing decisions; that we should be on the decision making table and the system should make space for different ethnicities. The system needs to change so that people are able to stand without feeling threatened.

During the panel on Migrant and Refugee women's leadership in promoting integration and racial equity in Australia and New Zealand, MP Parmjeet Parmar stated that while there is leadership amongst our women in the not for profit sector, this needs to be taken to the next level. Rafiqah Sulaiman highlighted that women of colour struggles are very different to Pakeha women and heterosexual women's struggles are different to a queer women's experience. She stated that is important for all women to work together to bring harmonious aspects to society and that women from all backgrounds should represent issues that are not represented.

During the panel on the need for a Trans-Tasman collaboration for racial equity, Farida Sultana touched upon how immigrants are often undocumented in the media unless they have done something wrong. She emphasised that all we need is people to support and to stand beside one another and allow us to take charge of our next generation. Valerie Morse from Auckland Peace Action, pointed out that the conversations about Christchurch tragedy will remain incomplete unless we address the issues around the discourse of White Supremacy and military invasion. She also warned about the growing trend of fake news being spread about migrants and urged the intelligence agencies to be more vigilant when making such assessments.

In the role of the media in promoting racial harmony panel, Chloe Hubbard of Stuff New Zealand stated that she will not have the same experiences as an ethnic women and that is an important consideration to be aware of. Journalist-Author Nicky Hager stated we need to be cautious about the hate speech issue as we do not want the people in power to paint themselves as the victims. He insisted that the news media unfairly gets to decide whose point of view gets heard. Katie Bradford of TV1 advised the importance of listening to people and learning from the past. Melissa Chan- Green of TV3 stated that the slogan "They are us", which was introduced after the terror attacks is ignorant on behalf of people who have never been subjected to racism. She pointed out that the right approach to dealing with hate speech is not ignoring it and to investigate these stories.

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In the extremism and radicalisation panel discussion, Sina Brown Davis expressed that self-interest drives racism. She observed that the intensity of racism was increasing and we cannot wait for Pakeha to solve these issues for us. Bilal Naiser reflected on the impact 9/11 had on his childhood, where he had to explain every day to people how he was different and not part ISIS. He also observed that there was a difference in generational approach to addressing racism; the previous generations' natural reaction was to steer away because it had very real consequences for them. Tayyaba Khan of Khadija Leadership Network stated it was vital to teach NZ history in schools and make Maori and racism workshops compulsory across the board in order to get comfortable about getting uncomfortable.





LET'S DEAL WITH IT!

A TRANS-TASMAN
CONFERENCE
TOWARDS RACIAL EQUITY

14 June

8 AM - 5PM

LET'S TALK ABOUT:

RACISM
XENOPHOBIA
ISLAMOPHOBIA
WHITE SUPREMACY
DISCRIMINATION

MT EDEN WAR MEMORIAL
FREE ADMISSION

REGISTER AT

 [FACEBOOK.COM/SHAKTINZ](https://www.facebook.com/shaktinz)



Shakti Community Council is a not-for-profit organisation providing specialised services to migrant and refugee women and families of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origins.

This conference wouldn't be possible without the commitment and support of many organisations, community groups, businesses and people engaged in promoting positive change in our communities.



We are Different



**Don't let Xenophobia divide us | Say
Reject Racism and Discrimination**

Our Strength is in our Diversity.



SHAKTI



t, but We are ONE



**y NO to Hate and Faith-based Violence
ion | Promote Peace & Kindness**

Celebrate Unity amidst Diversity

In memory of those who lost their lives in Christchurch, March 15, 2019

SHAKTI YOUTH UNIT

The Shakti Youth Unit continues to work with young people from migrant and refugee communities with the vision of building a future without violence and discrimination. The youth unit consists of a National and regional youth coordinators and youth caseworkers in the various Shakti centres around New Zealand who work alongside their teams of highly motivated volunteers.

The youth unit organises events, carries out advocacy and prevention work to create awareness about family violence within communities and schools. In 2018, we reached out to more schools across New Zealand where we have been carrying out prevention work with our student led Shakti groups. Creating such awareness in schools and in the community has proven to be effective as we have witnessed an increase in young people reaching out to Shakti for support and the communities being more aware of culturally sanctioned forms of abuse within migrant and refugee communities. The youth victims of family violence have been supported by our youth caseworkers through Shakti's holistic wraparound service.

During youth week 2018, students from our SYNC leadership programme planned and organised a youth march to end rape culture and forced marriage in central Auckland which involved hundreds of youth from across Auckland. We had a range of young speakers voicing their perspectives around gender-based violence and the need for it end. The march resulted in more young people wanting to join Shakti Youth Unit as volunteers to spread the word.





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During Youth Week 2018 we also held a #YouthToo panel which addressed the issues of consent, culture, identity and feminism through the experiences of migrant and refugee youth. The event included dance and music performances along with spoken word from local youth. The event was made possible thanks to generous funding from Ara Taihoi. The guest speakers of this event included Green Party MP Jan Logie and Labour MP Louisa Wall.

Shakti Youth also organised annual SYNC training which aims to empower migrant and refugee youth to become future leaders in social change. To facilitate this programme our regional coordinators work closely with school counsellors to run student led groups. The outcome of the group sessions leads to planning events and assembly talks and ensure a smooth running of the programmes during Youth Week, Women's Day and Refugee appeal month. This year 20 young women from the different schools participated in the SYNC workshops. The three-day workshop consisted of a range of speakers who conducted practical and creative workshops.

Shakti Youth Unit launched a Pledge against forced marriage on International Women's Day. With the realisation that forced and under-age marriage also happens in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Shakti has dealt with an estimated number of over 70 forced marriage youth cases. However, we understand that many forced and under-marriages go also un-reported. This year, after several years of advocacy, Shakti's work on forced and under-aged marriage was recognised and the Amendment Bill to prevent forced and under-aged marriage has been passed. The bill aims to prevent marriages of mostly girls, aged 16 and 17 and considered minors by the state, by changing the requirement of consent from parents to a Family Court judge. The change also applies to civil unions and de facto relationships.

Our National Youth coordinator also attended the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva, in 2018. CEDAW is an international treaty which was ratified by New Zealand in 1985. Our Coordinator highlighted institutional and intersectional discrimination in response to violence. Our coordinator also raised concerns of forced and underage marriage while the bill was in reading stage. This event allowed the opportunity in international networking with organisations such as Karma Nirvana, Papatya and Shakti London.

