

CAMD Case Study – CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BELONGING:

Who's Laughing Now?

Migration Museum Adelaide, History SA



Using humour to explore belonging.

Does "I'm not racist" mean the same as "I'm not prejudiced"? How can we best manage the complexities and challenges of a rapidly changing multicultural society? And can all this be done whilst maintaining a sense of humour?

Over a number of years the Migration Museum in Adelaide has been using comedy and performance in its galleries to explore questions about difference and belonging. 'Who's Laughing Now?' was an interactive comedy workshop for teachers and high school students where comedy was used to navigate topical issues such as prejudice, racism, stereotyping and condescension.

Another comedy program/workshop, 'Who do you think you are?' was conceived to challenge racial stereotypes and confront racist attitudes. It was developed as a special event in the Migration Museum Education Program and was primarily aimed at young people. It was first presented as part of the 2008 Fringe Festival to both student and general public audiences. It was then invited to play before far larger audiences as part of the Come Out Festival for young people in 2009.

The program consisted of several comedians from different cultural backgrounds presenting 15 minutes of stand-up each on the theme of racism and racial stereotyping. After the performance the audience engaged in a serious discussion with the comedians about their experiences and current events related to cultural diversity or racism. At the Come Out festival these comedians were Simon Palomares (Spanish Australian), Sean Choolburra (Aboriginal Australian), Jason Chong (Chinese Australian) and Mujahid Ahmed (Sudanese Australian).

Both of these events were booked out and enthusiastically received by the school community. Many teachers reported attitudinal change in their students as a result of the program.

Subsequent programs have included a collaboration with Jason Chong who presented "Minority Retort" a stand-up show about the White Australia Policy and the experience of being Asian and Mujahid Ahmed presented "African Time". All of these workshops included interactions between the students, teachers, Education Manager and the comedians in question.

Due to requests from the education community, a collaboration with Jason Chong on a new education program about White Australia is being planned for 2012.