



A Community Response to Racist Violence (Phoebe)

A friend of mine in Melbourne who is a Black woman was walking along a crowded city street and got attacked by seven white men who verbally and racially abused her and threatened violence. She managed to leave that situation, but it was completely anonymous. She doesn't know who the people were.

During the attack, people were crossing the street to not engage with what was happening and she told us about it and then we decided to talk to her about responding as a community. The idea was to respond personally as friends but also to respond politically, as in that's what happened in our neighborhood kind of thing.

And so about fifteen people met up and talked about what had happened and decided to respond by going into that neighborhood. We found out that there was a white supremacy gig happening in the pub on that street that night and one of the women in the group was a printer so we made these stickers that said, "Racism is not welcome here," and went round and made this pamphlet that said speak out against racism.

There's these stickers that get put up in Australia that say, "Refugees are welcome here," and so it was kind of modeling off that saying. But we wanted it to be something where not just putting up the sticker in like a tokenistic way but actually trying to get people in that town to kind of engage with what was going on. And lots of people wouldn't put up the sticker. But, you know maybe a third of the people did. And we did some radio, some media about it. Not specifics about what had happened to her, but that there was an attack the same night that there was this white supremacy gig.

And so we went and spoke to like 300 shop owners along those two streets and said, "A woman from this neighborhood was attacked and people didn't respond, they just kind of ignored it and definitely walked away from her and so we want you to put up this sticker and by putting it up we want you to take responsibility for speaking out against racism in this space and in this neighborhood." And so we had lots of things about what that means to be taking responsibility and speaking out. Not just putting up a sticker. We spoke to about 300 shops and about maybe 100 of them put up this sticker and agreed to do it.

The stickers are still up on the street. With, like, maybe a year on which is, I don't know, they're kind of around so I guess it's a little bit out there and I think it was really important for this person to respond to her, not to just say, "Oh, that really sucks, honey, let me give you a hug," and you know to not actually care or whatever.

Nothing really happened without her saying, "Yes I do want that to happen." Like when we came up with the idea, she was like, "Yes, do that." And when we wrote the thing of Speak Out against Racism, she was like, "Yes, I support you doing that," and when we did media, "Yes, I support you doing that."

I don't really think we had an end point in mind, which means that we didn't plan for it to be an ongoing thing, which really, if you're trying to talk about shaping how a





community's going to respond to racist violence, which is obviously not a one incident thing, it's an ongoing culture and structure, trying to figure out ways to make it a sustainable thing rather than just a once off. I think it was really good that we responded and that's better than nothing, but I also think it signified that there's a lot of work that needs to be done and that could have been something that kept happening.

