Anti Blackness and COVID19

**Pauline**

You're currently tuned in to Anti Blackness, and COVID-19. Later in the program, we'll hear from Jody Barney and South East Mutual Aid on the effects of the Victorian government's response to COVID-19 on disabled members of their communities. But first, 3CR Diaspora Blue's producer, Ayan Shirwa caught up with Mo Noor, an advocate for fellow residents of North Melbourne's public housing towers.

**Pauline**

It was in early July 2020, when the Victorian Government deployed hundreds of police officers to detain thousands of residents in their flats in the name of COVID-19 outbreak containment. In the lead up to this, Mo was one of many community organisers warning of the dangers of COVID-19, to residents of under resourced public housing. Mo has been vocal about the impact the government's action and inaction has had on fellow disabled and sick members of his community.

**Ayan**

So for our listeners who don't know who you are, tell us a bit about yourself.

**Mo**

I'm a [inaudible] designer, I work as a service designer now, but my community work is mostly focused around public housing policy and advocacy around health and access to affordable housing.

**Ayan**

And how did you get into this? How did you get into community work?

**Mo**

It kind of was more than a necessity to be honest. I grew up in the flats, public housing when I was a kid. When I was younger, I'd look around and see kind of a lot of the issues and difficulties that residents and people, my mum's friends would have. When I got older, and I'm 15, 16, I'd look around hoping that there'd be people there advocating and kind of taking up the mantle to find change, and instead looked around there wasn't really that many other people.

**Mo**

So me and other peers, other African, lots of young community organizers, we started to kind of do the work side to kind of advocate for residents start to translate things, started to try to understand a lot about housing policy. I spent a good year or so for, at the Victoria archives kind of trying to understand the creation of public housing, just to understand how we got to this situation.

**Mo**

I've worked for a few different organizations. It's something that I think I've continuously done more out of necessity. The goal is, I hope that I can help enable change that people like me no longer need to exist, in the sense that you know, a lot of issues would be resolved through policy, through grants, through government. Rather than the need for that kind of action. So that's, I guess, my idealistic approach.

**Mo**

But since then, it's just been always kind of assess and always help out and stuff. What I do for a job and what I do for community is similar, the only difference is who the clients are, and their expectations.

**Mo**

So for me, respect and kind of, understanding is paramount regardless of your ability to clearly communicate, regardless of your background, regardless of your religion or gender. The need to continuously advocate for reform was kind of important, something that I still stay true to.

**Ayan**

How do you think the stigma around public housing influenced the hard lockdown?

**Mo**

Firstly, I think there has to be some classifications I think people need to understand. You know, as a person who grew up here and left and kind of came back, not out of the need for myself, but because I have sick mother, and you know, my grandmother had passed before, that I had kind of cared for. There are others similar to myself that had not come back because of this wanting need, but I guess out of necessity to help our families. We were doing okay, but we didn't have the financial income to gain the support of our families that were requiring care or saw our jobs and stuff.

**Mo**

So a lot of the tower that I live in now, I know a number of friends that I went to uni with, that are in similar boats. They've come back to help out with their parents, they've come out to help out their siblings. They've taken reductions in hours, they've taken reductions in work to deal with the reality of just how it survives, the battles of access to NDIS, the battle to services, etc.

**Mo**

That's compounded by culturally, linguistically limitations and compounded by lack of access, etc. Firstly, I think there has to be a clarification that this idea where it's these uneducated individuals that reside here have no work ethic and have no ability and are living off the government dollar, it's a false narrative, I think. Yes, there are some that live here.

**Mo**

Yes, there are situations, but to say that that is the majority is a falsehood of what it really means to live in not just public housing but social housing broadly. Yeah? I think people were shocked when they found out about the lockdown. Now to go back to, I guess your question about, do you think that impeded the result of the government? It shocked me to be honest. When it first resulted. I knew there were always difficulties. That was the reason people like me, were back here.

**Mo**

We were concerned that our parents were sick. We were concerned about COVID, we were concerned about pandemics. We had seen what it had done to families in our communities overseas, we were concerned with far more than the average Victorian, Melbournian had been. People like me had been tracking COVID since November last year. We have friends and contacts who work in infectious diseases around the world, it was not something that we took very lightly and understanding the risks that imposed.

**Mo**

So there were conversations in the community and people who had advocated to the department earlier on in the start of the year, the need for access to hand sanitisers, the need for appropriate information, the need for situation.

**Mo**

Nothing was done. It was just kind of alluding to, and we had hoped that we have somehow with the community action that was done earlier on, that we would somehow escape this because we knew when it came, it was going to hit us and it was gonna hit us hard. The thing that shocked me the most, I guess, was the connotation and assertion by the government for three things. Three things that till now I've yet to find or get clarification on and others.

**Mo**

We have had many conversations in this. But the first was the lack of actual computation and access to testing earlier on. So to give you some context, I reside in one of the North northern towers with my mother. The closest testing site that was offered to us here was the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Which is a 15 - 20 minute tram ride from where I am. That's assuming that you're able bodied and have the ability, or a 10 minute car ride, assuming you have a car and abilities to go to it. Yeah? We have a tower that's solely dedicated to old people, [inaudible] street, and that is made up of people who are 50 years or older.

**Mo**

And that is made up of people who are 50 years older. Around impairments, have walkers and stuff like that. You basically rule them out. For people who have disabilities or impairments, you rule them out. So there's connotation that the community had no access, that there was no guidance. That on that whim for the I quote, the "most vulnerable people in our society", to make uphanded statements, based on no real data, based on no real understanding, and then think that it was appropriate to bring the police in. As if the stigma and the perception of poverty associated with criminality, you know... boggles the mind.

**Ayan**

Absolutely. I guess listening to you speak Mo, I get the feeling. And I guess, I also know this because I have friends who live in the same building. But one thing that people kept hammering in, was that the assumption that the people in the flats were guilty. That this was a response because they were doing the wrong thing. Can you tell me more about that?

**Mo**

I think the best example of that will be the best few days. So when the lockdown got occurred in the middle of the day, with no real information or clarification. There was people like me that started the first few channels, to try to communicate to people, to family, to friends, what exactly what's happening. Ironically, it was a day that I was somehow here, and not visiting family or another project or work or whatever.

**Mo**

So I was fortunate enough to basically be here, when I started to get calls and messages. On one hand, the government stated, this is for the most vulnerable people, you know, these are for whatever [inaudible]. You know, all these kind of positions, yeah? All these kind of connotations that they're doing it on our behalf. And on the other hand.

**Mo**

When people like me start to communicate with the police that was stationed downstairs, no one had answers. They were looking for us to provide context to community. People were scared, and all you saw were police. There was no translators, there was no translated information, other than what we were able to translate on the fly. There was no access to, when testing would occur. There wasn't access to even if there were cases in the tower.

**Mo**

So it was a shock to me to find out when I'm in lockdown that there's all these cases and no one really knew about it. It was a shock to us that they don't even bother to tell us that. I live with my elderly mother. She has a disability. What did you think was going to, what do you think we were going to do? You know, did you think my mother was gonna accost a policeman? People were begging for information.

**Mo**

People are asking for medication for their children. People were asking for medication for their mental illnesses. Because it was a Saturday, people were trying to get kids that had been left with relatives here because they had gone to work. People were visiting friends. And what rational position did you think that the need of 500 police were needed? What riot, did you think?

**Mo**

What kind of weaponry did you think that people like us resided and had? I'm known for being very firm and very kind of opinionated in providing kind of context for my community and advocating. But beyond writing a fairly hardly worded email, I'm struggling to kind of comprehend what I'm meant to do, and respond or think about when you send the police to people who you know are vulnerable, that are scared.

**Mo**

That are wanting information, that have little access, as a first measure to get information, and then as the day's progress and as the connotations such as the letter that we received, that stated - and I quote - he gave us five positions, it said, "you're going to be locked down, etc". He gave you these five points, "you'll be given access to appropriate medical leave, you'll be given access to appropriate medical care, etc". And at the bottom it stated "if you refuse to get testing, you will not only have to do the 14 days" - which is standard - but they would penalise you an extra 10 days or a few things that had no medical basis. And yet still to this day, have not seen it applied to anyone else.

**Mo**

Now, to give you some context, we have people here that are nurses that were refused, let allowed out, that had been tested weekly. Because of where they work in hospitals. We have people that were in you know, self quarantined, because they had come from overseas and had been locked in their homes for two weeks that were confused. What was going on?

**Mo**

We had people that you know, had worked with certain agencies and so forth that, you know, were also self aware of the situation. The majority of us had undertaken COVID test prior even with the difficulties ensued. Given the situations that we live at home, given the populations that we care for - the elderly, the disabled, and the need to maintain a certain level of safety or bubble. So in response to all this, what we were left with was madness. It was chaos. What happened here was we were left to ourselves.

**Mo**

And I don't say this, to basically be flippant. I don't say this to provide a false sense of reality. I and many others were the fortunate few that took the lead to try to communicate and advocate for people. So in the first few days, I had people begged me for input. I spent five days trying to get my mother her medicine.

**Mo**

I had people call me from other apartments to provide me access to basic medical care. We had lists, trying to figure out where certain medications were, you know, if people had insulin, how much they had so we could communicate. I had people plead with me for food. Answer basic questions for neighbors that had kids who were autistic, for people who had panic disorders, for people who needed to get medical care. They were refused.

**Mo**

There was that mechanism. So when we requested fresh air, I remember I battled this day in day out. On calls with the number. Yeah? And told "no, it's not going to happen. No, he can't get it". Then to plead on behalf of not people like myself, who are fortunate and young still. So to plead, on behalf of people my mother's age, people with disabilities to be given 10 minutes of fresh air. Because I think people's understanding of what it is to live in the tower is not I guess, fully understood.

**Ayan**

Yeah. Can you describe -

**Mo**

You want me to give a perspective of like the apartment I guess, all the inside stuff, yeah?

**Ayan**

Yeah if you could give us uh, like I guess a measurement of apartments and so on.

**Mo**

Yeah, I can do that. An average room is about the average size of a normal room. So I'd say it's about three metres by two metres. Apologies for my measurement. The thing that's unique about these apartments is there are two windows in each. The thing is, one of the windows has no opening. So it's a solid window.

**Mo**

The second window is a french window. French style kind of hinge, which means the hinges out about maybe four or five inches. That's all you got. So think about this. You're in a generally concrete building, because it's concrete walls, with concrete ceilings and concrete floors. In apartments that may have, depending on the makeup of people, because some are overcrowded, but have a number of people, with windows that open about six inches.

**Mo**

But you can't get fresh air because the way the window shifts means that air comes in from one of the sides of the window. Then in front of that is a mesh screen. That's it, yeah? So that's your space. The windows that open up and open outwards, open to the corridor, which we were told are infectious. So all those were closed. The way that people would naturally get ventilation in these apartments was through opening the main door and letting the screen door open to the corridor.

**Mo**

Again, a big social area. So they were told 'closed'. We had cops walking back and forth. So you have six inches, five, six inches of open window. That opens on an angle. So what people started to do for the first few days was literally stick their hand out of the window in the six inches to feel the fresh air.

**Ayan**

It's pretty incredible.

**Mo**

It was ironically, like something that a few of us had discovered, as we were trying to find how to get air. Because, you know, for the first few days, you start to lose it to be honest.

**Ayan**

How did it effect your mental being, Mo?

Look, I have tended calls from residents, and people and others in the towers as one of the coordinators in some of the towers. Where people have begged me for medicines I do not have access to. Where I have gone to battle to try to get people who are on dialysis to go to the appointments and been refused. To hear stories in other towers opposite us where we had one case where it was a young woman, I think nineteen, twenty and she had cancer.

**Mo**

And we were refused to get her to go to oncology appointments. You know, I've had people plead with me, begged me, and I had nothing to offer them. It's hard to comprehend to be honest. People like me threw ourselves into our advocacy and our organizations to somewhat stay sane, but none of us slept.

**Mo**

We appreciated all the volunteers, we appreciated the, you know, the strong support from the organisation that was happening with AMSSA, we appreciate volunteers that had come to sacrifice time in the command center to advocate for medicine.

**Mo**

Because without them, we'd be lost. I have only grace and courage for people who are residents themselves, risking your all to basically door knock and provide food to residents, because none was provided. I don't think without the I guess, faction of those individuals, those residents inside the towers, those who were coordinating and sacrificed, or outside Victoria that gave and provided food for those to help clean and pack. Without them, we would have nothing.

**Ayan**

It seemed like the community were the only ones that they could depend on. And just to compare your experience with mine, because I live in one of the towers, but not the towers that went under had lockdown. So the tower that I'm in, we do have hand sanitizers and so on. But what's changed now is that we have extra security who sit outside of the lift. So when you walk out of the lift, the first thing you're met with is security. And then a little desk with flyers and so on.

**Mo**

Yes, the co-health consierge.

**Ayan**

And then I had a chat with them. I was like, "hey, you know, it's good to see that, you know, you're being proactive and so on. But when do you think this will end?: And they were like, "we don't know". And I said, "so. You know, no one's told you the end date. There's no so you can't tell us?"

**Mo**

No.

**Ayan**

And they were like "no".

**Mo**

I'll even shock you a bit more. So the building that you live in now, yeah? The building, not just in the nine towers that we live in. It was after five days of advocacy. I'm not saying this in the sense of like hyperbolic-ness or stuff like that, this is documented. It was only until the 23rd of July, a week after I had left lockdown, almost nine days on top of that.

**Mo**

That the Department of Human Services realised that the machines that were installed not only in the nine towers but across, all the towers were not functional, and were empty. Beyond the ones in the corridor downstairs. And we're currently being replaced.

**Mo**

It shouldn't shock you that a majority of the kids who live in these towers don't have access to the internet. It shouldn't shock you that we have a abundancy of disabled people that did not have access as a supported entity. It should not shock you that we had a lot of people that were parents and hit by the lockdown and had now lost their jobs. I think in one hand, it highlighted the realities that will always present, it forced people to see it. In that sense, I think it was a needed, not - I think it was something small to shine a light on the reality of the situation.

**Mo**

But in terms of my perspective on things, and the wider I guess, situation. You can't come back from this. Like, I need people to understand. And I gloss over it because these are haunting memories for people like me. You know, I think you need to understand that being locked in an apartment where your only fresh air is six inches. I'd like people to understand that we had friends and people who are volunteers who were inside, whose entire families were COVID positive and they were negative.

**Mo**

We spent days trying to get them hotel quaratine. And we're told that they need to stop isolate. Imagine. In an apartment that only has one window that opens six inches in every single like, in three of the rooms. If that's claustrophobic enough. On top of that you may be in a household where the majority of your family have COVID. You're the only COVID safe person. You have no masks, even though you've requested it. You can't leave and you are stuck in a single room that's not bigger than a small/average room that's less than three by two meters.

**Mo**

After 14 days, and the thing is, I think people misunderstand. Instead of just 14 days it happened, for some people it went through their families. Some people didn't leave lockdown until August the 1st.

**Mo**

And they had to walk through their entire families, watching one, each of them become close contact and test positive and so forth like that. You know, combine the situation and then say after that, you return to the outside world. You know, for me, the thing that broke me the most, was I used to stare out the window. I remember this. When I first had returned and I was helping. You know my grandmother many years before she passed here.

**Ayan**

Wow.

**Mo**

We used to stare out the window and like point at things and reflect on, you know, how things have changed. The new buildings that were here, the grass, the green. So during lockdown, I tried to continue that tradition. For me, I could not continue it. Because I would stare outside my window and I would watch people walking their dog, going for a walk, exercising on the stage three. And inside, I am in an apartment, unable to get help for my mother, unable to help fellow residents beyond advocating for stuff. Unable to get traction. Hearing in the media that it is our fault.

**Mo**

And understand this, yeah? My mother was, had a test prior to the lockdown, she was COVID negative. I had a test prior to the lockdown. We're talking only just a week or so, COVID negative. My mother was in hospital. She had another test. She was COVID negative. I'd been having one once a week. We were COVID negative. Due to lockdown, we had the test initially, we're COVID negative.

**Mo**

During the end of the lockdown. We again had a test we were COVID negative. Until now. Neither me or my mother have had COVID. We have you had like about four or five tests between us. And yet the only situation that deems my mother's, I guess imprisonment, the deemed imprisonment of my fellow residents and situation, was because they resided in public housing. To see the words of "the most vulnerable people" thrown on my face.

**Mo**

When after my exit, it was left up to people like me and others, to not only deal with the trauma, but basically go to war with the department to try to get hand sanitiser, not only for ourselves, not only for the nine towers but for the wider housing estates, to basically argue til now, to understand cleaning schedules. So it's not repeated. To advocate with government and others to not repeat this lesson. Hence it was not, because it wasn't successful. At the end of all this, nothing.

**Ayan**

And how are you dealing with the trauma, Mo? What's been your source of strength? How are you, you know, getting by each day?

**Mo**

I think I can only speak for the following coordinators, and myself. So we're weird yeah? We're residents, we were the ones running around and arguing so we saw not only the impact on our families, but we saw the impact of others. Then we advocated afterwards and stuff like that. But we're a weirdly crazy bunch, yeah? With a few of them getting COVID themselves, unfortunately.

**Mo**

And for myself? I don't know, man, I really don't know. I think you try to transition back into the world. Yeah, you try to not let it kind of like define you, and stuff. But then you are haunted by it. You know, every time I hear a siren, because our apartments are next to a main road, we all wake up. And everyone starts calling each other. I fear the place. And I don't think people understand what that means.

**Mo**

I mean, I've literally fear the police now. I am so scared. Every time I walk past a police car. Every time I see a police officer, every time I see the lights. It's hard to comprehend to me to people to understand how much the community has sacrificed, after the case. How much advocacy and kind of, was done in the community to continue supporting people. How much was, has been lost.

**Mo**

This was done as people were coming to realisations of losing their jobs, or battling to provide to continue education for their kids, to provide care for the elderly and disabled family members and partners. The realities of forcing themselves to return to work because they had no leave. And they were in desperate need of finances. And on top of all of that, on top of the trauma, on top of all that situation. We then took the mantle to try to advocate for our community.

**Mo**

And we were met with silence. The last day that I had kind of gone, I'd read the statement that was written by a number of residents. It was based around the idea of some accountability, and it was requests for basic information. And I read it out to the DHHS representative, the person who is in charge of this meeting and are surrounded by co-health and VicPol, that I'm entirely scared off, yeah?

**Mo**

So imagine me who has apparent fear, who literally throws up before going to these meeting, completely fearful of cops. Surrounded at the command centre, by cops. So I make my peace and walk into this building and read the statement. This is after the death of an elderly gentleman in our building. And I was ignored.

**Mo**

And it was a basic request for information. It was a basic request to understand what were the strategies to prevent COVID from spreading? It was a basic request to understand what were the measures and the decisions that were made to open up common areas? Because I had pleaded and brought parents and brought mothers in, to plead with them, to explain to them, their fear of using the laundry. That they are not fortunate to have laundries as some others. But they have young kids and are fearful of leaving their apartment, for the sheer reality to provide us some modicum of trust or accountability.

**Mo**

So I can kind of translate that, provide that, to those who are more in desperate need than myself. And we were ignored. I was classified like many others as not speaking for the community, not being truthful. All that was sacrificed, all of it, and for what? Like nothing to be honest. All the trauma that has occurred, all the destroyed lives. I hope it was worth it to someone. So yeah. So to me it's... I'm still trying to understand what happened to be honest. As many others do. I think I'll be haunted by it for years to come.

**Pauline**

I had the opportunity earlier to chat with deaf disability rights advocate Jodi Bonnie over email. Her responses here are voiced by a 3CR volunteer.

**Jody Barney**

Hi, I'm Jody Barney, I'm a proud Birri-Gubba + Urangan woman from South East Queensland. from Queensland. Before I go any further, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which I'm yarning on, the lands of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge all First Nations mob listening in today.

**Pauline**

What were your first thoughts? When you found out about the Victorian government's public housing towers shut down?

**Jody Barney**

Well, I found out about the towers shut down by a very frantic mother who resides with her children in the public housing tower. My thoughts were, how will this mother cope? Also, the many others 12 families altogether will cope, with the restrictions and limited access to supplies, understanding of the restrictions, and importantly the safety of the mall?

**Pauline**

You said to media at the time, that 12 First Nations families with disabilities were caught inside Flemington public housing towers. How did you come to know and make contact with them?

**Jody Barney**

I've known that 12 families for many years, had been working with them in various projects in supporting their access to schools, employment, and importantly, the NDIS. I've been lucky enough to be invited into their homes and lives in providing culturally appropriate access to services and advocacy.

**Pauline**

What were the main concerns and fears of these First Nations families with disabilities? And what did they need?

**Jody Barney**

The family's needs varied but common concerns was the impact of restrictions on family members with disabilities not having PPE gear and not enough money to feed everyone at home. There were safety concerns with family members not understanding the rules and leaving the house and be arrested.

**Pauline**

How did you assist them and other residents with disabilities?

**Jody Barney**

I assisted in many ways. Some families needed just social interactions and would yarn with them on FaceTime, messenger chat, etc. I also assisted in providing food, making sign language videos to many who are nonverbal, doing sessions on mob with disabilities and coronavirus. However, cooking over 800 meals between March and November was the highlight for me. Using my skills to provide a good home cooked feed for community in need was important to me.

**Pauline**

Finally, in your view, what should happen to prevent this ever happening again, and to ensure disabled people have what they need in emergencies?

**Jody Barney**

Prevention is always better than cure. These times have been difficult for millions of people worldwide. We as global citizens see the impact of the coronavirus as a shared community as it does not discriminate. I would like to see a stronger representation of First Nations people with disabilities and advocates to inform the government of our needs during pandemics and statewide emergency management. This will need to be a paid advisory committee that is chaired by a First Nations person with all First Nations people and diversity being fully included in the process.

**Pauline**

Southeast Mutual Aid are an informal group of volunteers, who have been sourcing and distributing resources to multiply marginalised members of communities in the Southeastern suburbs, predominately African, many of whom are disabled or immunocompromised. I asked if they could share two things that the pandemic revealed about the situation for disabled people in the Southeast and what things would improve their material wellbeing if instituted tomorrow.

**SEMA Speaker 1**

Two things that the pandemic has revealed about the situation for disabled people in the southeast include; 1) those from refugee backgrounds that are mostly marginalized really don't exist. In other words, the lower you are on the racial hierarchy, the more deliberately invisible-ised you are, and the abandonment is not just by the state, but also by their own communities who often resent them, who see the DSP pennies as some sort of advantage or privilege, not understanding our complex cares. But also folk not knowing or having the means to know what their diagnosis is, makes it even harder to access the right services or care, meaning they're not able to even get their needs met.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

And also, another thing is, there is a dire need for educating people in the southeast, about their rights and what those rights are, and to also like, really ingrain into people that they're deserving of life and care and to be treated like decent human beings, irrespective of them being Africans, or having other marginalized identities or disabilities and etc. Materially deprived, poor Africans from refugee backgrounds, very often, do not advocate for themselves.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

And even when one offers to advocate for themselves, and this is something that we've seen with all this mutual aid is that, they oftentimes fear that there will be repercussions from them trying to like advocate for themselves and these repercussions can be things along the lines of like, you know, being deported or abandoned and losing the very bare minimum that they've got.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

So because of that fear, it prohibits them and hinders them from thinking that they do have the right to fight, or the right to question, or the right to disagree with whatever decision that Centrelink has taken or NDIS has taken or Employment Services has taken and even like, the kind of care that they're getting.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

Which often times is really, really not sufficient. And because of the fear that they have, and also like, because of them not being able to even know like, what rights that they have not being able to know that they are places that can hold people like Centrelink accountable, or that if one job agency is not meeting their needs, that they're able to seek another one, because of lack of education around those things, they don't often try to question things or try to like allow themselves to feel like anger and the feelings that one will feel if they're being neglected or injustice is being done upon them.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

And I think also due to things like barriers in language, and also like a complicated relationship with authority, especially about home and things like that. All these things play into the factors, that they often times don't try to like negotiate, or they don't try to disagree with whatever decision that has been made. There has been like hundreds of people who get jobseeker payment instead of DSP. And that is because they don't actually know that that payment exists and is for them.

**SEMA Speaker 1**

Two changes we feel that would improve material well being for folks with disability, if instituted tomorrow for us, would include: 1) not questioning their disability, and not demanding them to have to continually prove their disability, especially because some of them have disabilities that they do, because of medical malpractice from doctors and hospitals, that they no longer have access to. And if you're born overseas, or in refugee camps, then you don't have the ability to materially prove your disability because the papers don't exist. Who gets to decide what is a disability versus a medical condition to a disabled person?

**SEMA Speaker 2**

Also I think another thing will be translation and just like language. But really conscious, deliberate and engaging, meaningful translations. Especially it's really important for the translators, I get contacted by state services often to like, go through some sort of training where they're being put in a situation or in a position to really examine their classism and their ableism and their phobias that they have, because oftentimes, like translators are the main cause of friction, they cause more harm than good. They don't like... often refuse to act as a bridge between the services and the people.

**SEMA Speaker 2**

And often because of their investment in classism, and ableism and both, they oftentimes see these disabled marginalised Africans as being undeserving of care and unworthy. So they don't really engage meaningfully with them. So because of that, a lot of people in community there has been situations where they've been charged for things like being asked to pay back money to Centrelink or being penalised for something to do with them not providing the right information. This is because it was not communicated to them. It was not deliberately communicated to them because the people that get engaged are harmful to them.

**Pauline**

You've been listening to Anti Blackness and COVID-19. Stay tuned for more disability day programming.