



# Research methodology for Creatives of Colour

**T**he first phase of the Creatives of Colour project involved the creation of an online platform featuring creative people of colour on [CreativesofColour.com](https://CreativesofColour.com), commissioned by Diversity Arts Australia. This website was launched in October 2019.

Following this, Rani P Collaborations received a Creative Victoria grant to conduct extensive research, to gather evidence regarding the problems experienced by creative people of colour, in navigating the predominantly White arts sector.

With the support of in-kind office space from Multicultural Arts Victoria, followed by a subsidized studio space at Collingwood Yards, from September 2019 – March 2020, Rani Pramesti and Komang Rosie Clynes conducted 60 interviews with creative people of colour\*.

(\*We are using the term 'people of colour' as a term of solidarity to include a spectrum of racialised identities and lived experiences, including people of African, Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, Pasifika descent as well as First Peoples. However, we do not wish to erase the unique struggle for sovereignty by First Peoples. Creatives of Colour will always align ourselves with the struggles of First Peoples. We also want to acknowledge the distinct lived experiences of Black people.)

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# Interview questions

The interview questions were based on the lean startup customer validation process, which Rani Pramesti was introduced to, through the Foundry658 startup accelerator program.

Interviewees were initially asked questions about their demographic and migration histories in order to contextualize their experiences.

Interviewees were then asked the following questions, to pinpoint the main challenges they experienced in engaging with the arts:

1. How are you engaged in the arts?  
(roles, positions, artistic disciplines)
2. What is the hardest part about that 'role' or that way of engaging, in your experience?
3. Can you tell me about the last time that happened?
4. Why was this difficult for you?
5. What solutions have you been trying to solve that problem?
6. What don't you love about the solutions you have tried?  
(as in, what challenges, if any, have come up from this?)
7. What support do you need or would like to have for your work in the future?
8. What are you looking forward to in your creative career?

## Areas for further research

Our research methodology involved interviewing the vast majority of people by phone. At the end of each interview, we asked the person to recommend other people to contact.

Furthermore, given our research was funded by Creative Victoria, combined with the networks of our interviewees, this

**What solutions have you been trying to solve that problem?**

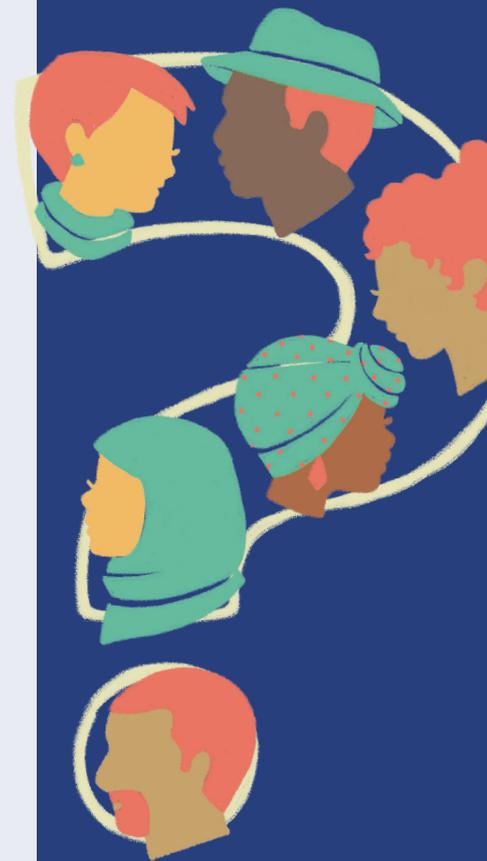
resulted in the vast majority of our final interviewees being people located in metropolitan Melbourne.

Finally, when we analyzed the final demographic data, some demographics were more present than others. Given the sheer diversity of demographics and lived experiences present in so-called 'Australia' and our creative communities, there are endless demographics of people we could engage in future research for Creatives of Colour.

That being said, to complement our existing data, we would recommend targeting the following demographics in future research:

- ◇ People who live outside of metropolitan Melbourne
- ◇ People aged 35 and over
- ◇ Male-identifying people
- ◇ People who use he/him pronouns
- ◇ People who use they/them pronouns
- ◇ People who are of Latinx, Middle Eastern, Central Asian, Caribbean, African and Pasifika heritage
- ◇ People who have recently arrived (within the past 5 years) to 'Australia'

A note about First Nations/Torres Strait Islander people: Out of respect for the distinct lived experiences of Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people, we do not feel that it is appropriate for Creatives of Colour to lead a research process focusing on ATSI people, unless the process had appropriate people and cultural protocols in place.





**Total People  
Interviewed**

# Demographics of the 60 interviewees

## Personal Background



First Nations Australian/  
Torres Strait Islander: **3**

Identify as POC: **59**

LGBTQIA+/Queer: **32**

Living with Disability: **18**

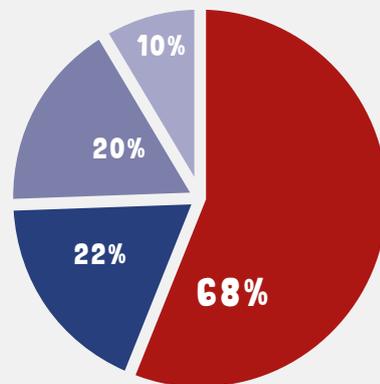
## Pronouns:

Including She/Her: **68%**

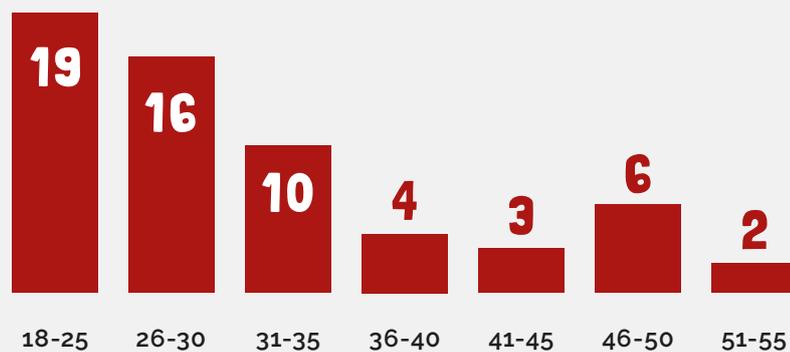
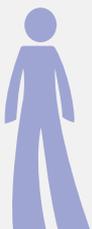
Including They/Them: **22%**

Including He/Him: **20%**

No preference/  
Unsure/Other: **10%**



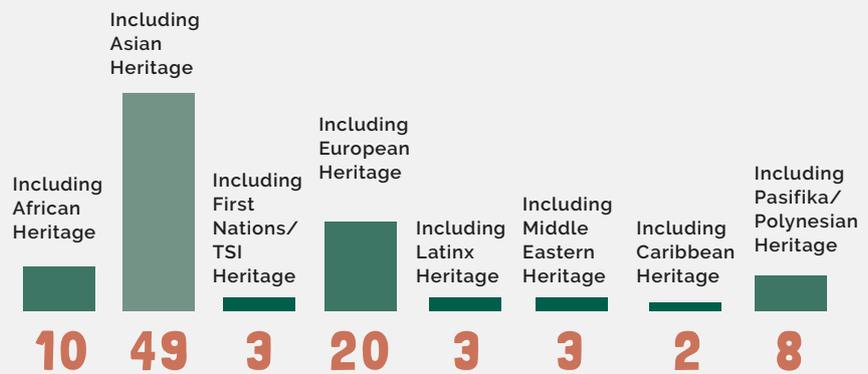
## Age Range:



# 60 Total People Interviewed

## Demographics of the 60 interviewees

### Cultural Background:



### Migration histories



**19**

Born overseas, moved to Australia as a **child**



**18**

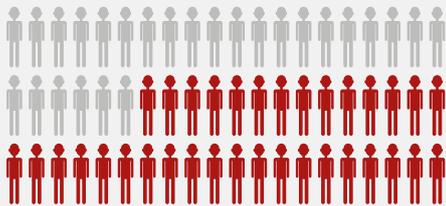
Born overseas, moved to Australia as an **adult**



# Problems identified

## TOP 12 Problems Identified

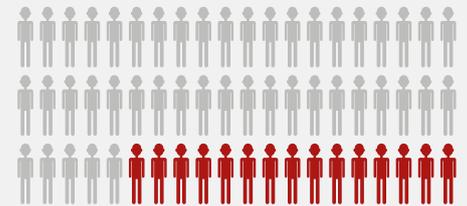
**34**  
**60** The White lens and how it tokenizes and exoticifies people of colour



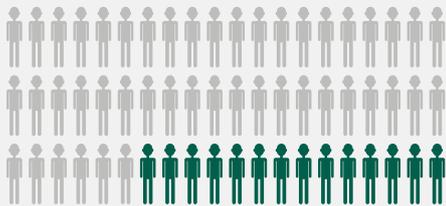
**19**  
**60** Struggling with money and unpaid labour - financial exploitation, financial insecurity, financial barriers, classism.



**15**  
**60** Mental health and emotional impacts: Feeling "exhausted", "drained", "anxious" and "broken"



**14**  
**60** The grant / funding system is inaccessible.



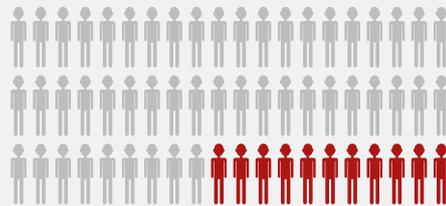
**14**  
**60** Lack of our own safe, accessible, affordable spaces.



**12**  
**60** Harm that POC do to one another when living and creating within capitalist, colonial, White supremacist, patriarchal, able-ist society.



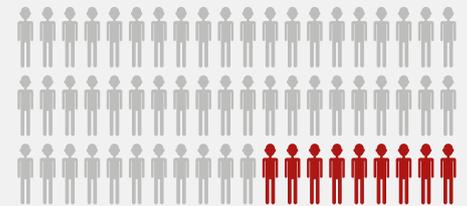
**11**  
**60** Self-doubt, self-worth and Imposter Syndrome, made worse by isolation from other creatives of colour.



**09**  
**60** Additional labour as a cultural advisor representing whole communities or groups of people and / or additional labour to ensure diversity of communities are engaged.



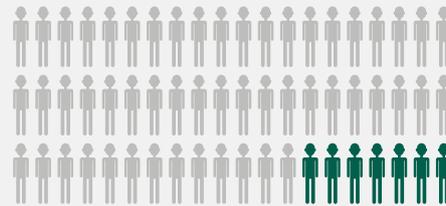
**09**  
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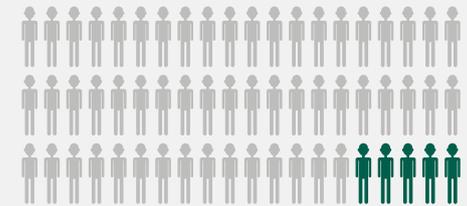
**08**  
**60** The White Ceiling in arts organisations: Racial hierarchy and power dynamics that make the workplace unsafe for people of colour.



**07**  
**60** Our families / communities discouraging people of colour from being in the arts.



**05**  
**60** For people who are recently arrived and / or are on temporary visas: Not able to apply for support or opportunities.



# Quotes to illustrate the problems

01

The White lens and how it tokenizes and exoticizes people of colour

02

Struggling with money and unpaid labour - financial exploitation, financial insecurity, financial barriers, classism.

03

Mental health and emotional impacts: Feeling "exhausted", "drained", "anxious" and "broken"

04

The grant / funding system is inaccessible.

05

Lack of our own safe, accessible, affordable spaces.

06

Harm that POC do to one another when living and creating within capitalist, colonial, White supremacist, patriarchal, able-ist society.

07

Self-doubt, self-worth and Imposter Syndrome, made worse by isolation from other creatives of colour.

08

Additional labour as a cultural advisor representing whole communities or groups of people and / or additional labour to ensure diversity of communities are engaged.

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Whiteness in Disability and Queer communities.

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The White Ceiling in arts organisations: Racial hierarchy and power dynamics that make the workplace unsafe for people of colour.

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Our families / communities discouraging people of colour from being in the arts.

12

For people who are recently arrived and / or are on temporary visas: Not able to apply for support or opportunities.

## 01 **The White lens and how it tokenizes and exoticifies people of colour (34 out of 60)**

"Systematically, my tokenism is really challenging... Most recently was a particular arts festival that used my name to try and get funding... but hadn't spoken to me. So, they proposed that I was going to do this project, big public thing, then went on my website but I had not been consulted. I even got mockups using images from my website...I felt like a form of currency. There was no consideration, they hadn't looked into my practice, doesn't understand what it's about, didn't look at the breadth of my practice to understand that I would not do this. I don't make public work. I don't just make work to display in billboards. It's what really irked me the most. That I would do this just because I would get money." – Respondent working in visual arts

**Side effects:**  
**Forces poc to tick diversity boxes in to make their art**

"We can have as much funding as possible and that doesn't mean people will start viewing our work in a different lens... When programming diversity, gallery programmers have this concept in mind to other/exotify the person of colour still. This aim to say 'hey, we're diverse, because this super POC person making art about being 'different' is here'. My entire life I've known myself to be part of Australia. I don't consider myself something incredibly different to the ppl around me. It's frustrating knowing I have to market myself to be 'different' in order to be accepted at home." – Respondent working in visual arts

"Ppl talk about wanting diversity - but they don't know how to do inclusivity. There's gender shit, class differences, we won't just all get along. It's not just White ppl vs. diversity. Class stuff comes out. It's privilege." – Respondent working in theatre

"It felt like I had to promote my writing and lived experience in order to tick boxes or resonate with a particular trend in the diversity conversation." – Respondent working in theatre

**Side effects of tokenism:**  
**Walking on White fragility eggshells and White gaslighting**

"I was part of a campaign about diversity and inclusivity at work (name of company). I felt uncomfortable about the process, but (was) pressured to do it. I didn't feel like I supported the intention behind it. It lacked the inclusivity and diversity it was talking about. Behind the scenes people were all White. They didn't get my foundation colour right, I had to bring my own foundation in. Majority of people in campaign were White. No Indigenous ppl, a couple of Black people, few people of colour. I thought, I'm just going to let this slide. After the shoot ended, my own manager encouraged me to speak about it. But from previous experiences, when you call something out for White folks, they push it under the rug. I wrote a really nice letter because I knew if I was angry and upset (even if its valid) I would be seen as angry Black woman. I highlighted other campaigns that highlight inclusivity. I gave other examples. My letter was ignored." – Respondent working in fashion and beauty industry.

"When I am invited to a space and diversity is not represented and I'm fuming. I'm trying

to centre myself so that I can still be quite diplomatic and not come across ... as really negative because I don't think that necessarily works in these spaces when you come across as really angry and you're the only person of colour in that space. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't- the internal dialogue, constantly internally assessing, "What am I going to say? How am I going to do this?" I hate that I have to do that by myself. To have that internal dialogue on my own." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

"It's really hard to exchange your ideas and exchange your experience, because they make you feel like 'oh no it's not really happening... The fact that you really have to water yourself down or water down your arguments or views so people can swallow it is irritating – for example, I'm the one constantly having my feelings hurt, but when I try to explain it to you I have to worry about you having your feelings hurt? I want to express myself so we can build this bridge, but I feel like I still have to cater to you." Respondent working in visual art.

**Side effects of tokenism:  
Questioning why we got an  
opportunity – was it tokenism, was it  
quota, was it the actual value of my  
work?**

"Knowing that your worth is dependent on your racial identity, or your sexual identity, or those two things combined. It's hard knowing people will only appreciate you for being a certain type or colour. A lot of my recent work was very much centering around being a person of colour... but because it wasn't overtly so, lots of people found a disconnect...

There's a lot of interest in identity politics and sometimes I just don't want to focus on that because it takes a lot of emotional labour for me to be doing that. A lot of my practice is not necessarily linked to my identity. I just find it a bit frustrating that in order to be successful I need to brand myself on the POC side." – Respondent working in visual art.

"Am I selling this diversity thing? Am I selling myself?... I always have that Asian guilt - Did I get it because I'm (a specific cultural group)? But if my Caucasian friend got it, they probably wouldn't feel it. I never would consider, oh maybe it's just because I'm a good actor." – Respondent working in theatre.

## Objectification and exoticization of femme / women identifying people of colour

"People- especially older White men - can get really mean if you're a pretty girl spouting off about politics, inequality and social issues in your social media. A colleague told me I had to be careful about what I say on social media if I wanted to continue getting paid modelling work - and I don't even post that much activism or anything like that on my social media (at least not as much as other people). People will want to look at you, but they don't necessarily respect your full personhood." – Respondent working in modelling industry.



# Quotes to illustrate the problems

## 02 Struggling with money and unpaid labour – Financial exploitation, financial insecurity, financial barriers, classism. (19 out of 60)

“Most challenging thing: It's not secure. Not financially secure. But also just opportunity wise... Communities I work with come from low socio-economic backgrounds. It's not affordable to do an acting class or arts program.”- Respondent working in theatre.

“Everyone I've met through uni, who I meet who can easily access the equipment comes from quite a wealthy background. Everyone in the photography course I went to is White and comes from Brighton. I asked my brother why and he said 'cos you need to be rich' and laughed. Everyone who excelled from the get-go had their parents funding their equipment, studio hire, what they need as a backing to begin with, then they can make the creative part later. With a lot of the creative fields which I'm in, which just needs funds to get you started, can be really difficult for a lower socio-economic family. I find myself in creative conversations with other people who say they hate it when they blame their money on their success. 'It's not my money, it's my hard work'. Which I agree, but I still think there's a huge amount of privilege. Wealth and being a person of colour aren't directly correlated all the time.”- Respondent working in visual art.

“The last thing I did was working with (insert name of art institution). They asked me to be a panelist for an exhibition. They spoke as if they didn't know my background but decided

to employ me anyway. Then they were like 'wow this was amazing, thank you so much for that' and then got paid \$150 for 2 days of research. I guess this is good for networking but networking doesn't pay the bills. They tell you are so important and then they don't pay you.”- Respondent working in visual art.

“I guess the challenge now is that I'm doing that (Masters in a non-arts field) this year and... this year my two (music) projects are doing well, and it requires me to do more for it, but I can't because I'm time poor. It's a weird reciprocal thing. I'm fucking up my chances a little because I could be giving more to my creative projects, but I can't because I have to go to uni to long-term sustain my art. I have a Bachelor degree but it's in music, but I can't get a job.” - Respondent working in music.

“Melbourne art scene feels competitive, it feels like a rat race... The other challenge is instead of racist, it's kind of classist. There's a segregation of classes in Melbourne arts scene. For someone who wants to try and find a place to grow, it's very intimidating. There's a certain level of sacrifices which I need to make. Which is a hindrance - I need to splurge all this money for art exposure!” - Respondent working in literature.



## **03 Mental health and emotional impacts: Feeling "exhausted", "drained", "anxious" and "broken" (15 out of 60)**

"It's exhausting. It's this touch-work piecemeal solution - no one talks about this sort of stuff publicly. Why aren't other people doing this? Frustration at a lack of a top down facilitated solution. It would be nice to see it all more collectivised. The onus is put on us to collectivise - but the risk is that it may be continually unproductive - if we revolutionise but the systems continue to act the way they do and keep the power from us, what are we supposed to do? I got very burnt out this year. It's assumed that we'll keep doing this stuff and it will just suffice." - Respondent working in film.

"It's hard finding therapists and stuff who will understand that experience." Respondent working in theatre.

"All the anxiety that comes with it. For me, to create, you have to have some sort of thing in place where you feel comfortable to think. You make the time for it, but if you're coming into that creative time with so much on your mind it's stifling." - Respondent working in creative technology.

"I try to stay away from the politics. I'm not on social media much. I'm not in the loop with these conversations about race. It's so draining... I don't have the energy to explain to people. In the age of Google." - Respondent working in music and performing arts.

"They don't even realize that they're treating you that way. It blows my mind the lack of self-awareness. All these emotions to get the balls to even ask that question. You're playing out, what's going to happen when I ask this question. It wasn't just me. It was other women of colour. When they didn't like a question, they would just completely ignore it." - Respondent working in dance and food industry.



# Quotes to illustrate the problems

## 04 The grant / funding system is inaccessible. (14 out of 60)

"The specific grants that one of my colleagues had identified were for (name of funding body) who would never give people like us a grant, because of the process. We wanted to apply for grants specific for people with disabilities. Those grants were structurally designed are still biased towards people who because of their economic, racial background, still privileges people who have access in other ways- people who are White, people who acquired disabilities later in life and prior to that had time to build careers, people who got to go to high school. My highest level of education is secondary because of ableism and racism combined. I had dropped out of university courses because of those specifically. To apply for grants like that, I'm at a disadvantage. Various levels of disabilities, education. Even though they say we created these grants for people like you." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

"I've tried the grant thing... You have to either do the proper POC thing (use it tokenistically to your advantage) or have heaps of experience. From what I gather, a lot of people have to use grant writers to get anything. Some sort of grant support." – Respondent working in fashion.

"Recently applied for a similar grant - 5 out of 6 recipients were White. I was told my documentation wasn't complete enough. You can't talk about it to the panel cos they're all White too." – Respondent working in performing arts and creative technology.

"Putting myself out there and being assertive is difficult, coming from a culturally (specific) background where you're taught to be passive - especially with creatives, hustle culture." Respondent working in fashion.

"I would like a clearer avenue to funding bodies and funding people. I would like a more streamlined process for artists in general for funding. There's too many questions and too much certainty in the application process. Sometimes you just need a small amount of money." – Respondent working in theatre.



## 05 Lack of our own safe, accessible, affordable spaces (14 out of 60)

"We did (name of specific event) earlier this year at (White, upper class space) and we were rehearsing in a space. A security guard came to tell us off and tell us we shouldn't be here. In spaces where there is already a weird tension between security and police and Blak artists, we already have imposter syndrome thinking 'we don't belong here in this crazy White space' and for someone to then literally say you're not supposed to be here - not cool." – Respondent working in performing arts

"Space and funding. It comes at a cost, literally and figuratively. Amazing orgs and grassroots galleries that will provide opportunities for Aboriginal people and marginalised people but always at the confines of the space, which are usually managed by White people and settlers. For a couple of weeks, you have this space, but then you have to pack up shop and who knows when the next opportunity comes by. There should be more spaces for young people of colour to create work. Especially Traditional Owners of the land. We have to pay rent to be on our own country. We should have access." – Respondent working across art forms.

"Trying to find space, physical space, where you can activate, safe spaces for POC and cultural communities. That can be a challenge, particularly if you're thinking about making it accessible, affordable, location wise accessible to the communities you want to work and serve. That's a challenge. Particularly in relation to the Disabled. Physical space

is a really difficult one. Even with cultural communities... It's really hard to find spaces where people won't be harassed by police. Affordable space. Hard to find those spaces where you can gather who have a racialized experience, or lived experience of Disability or both." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

"People are so territorial here. Quite shocking. Where does it come from? Comes from White Colonialism? All these people are White. People here trying to make money from their art, a lot of people aren't willing to share information, even where they print. I'm the only person of colour that's quite present in the arts down here... These others are European, e.g. Italian. It's very White." – Respondent working in visual art.

"One of the things I'm constantly being accused of is 'reverse racism' when White women turn up to our spaces with their children and they want to be involved and when I tell them it's a culture specific for (specific cultural group of) women. "But we feel (like this specific cultural group). We've always been involved in (this specific) places." And I respond 'poker face' when I'm raging inside. 80% of the stuff programmed are for them (White women) and 80% of funding goes to them (White orgs). A few small programs to cater for our communities are constantly challenged." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.



# Quotes to illustrate the problems

## 06 Harm that POC do to one another when living and creating within capitalist, colonial, White supremacist, patriarchal, able-ist society (12 out of 60)

Not showing up for other POC: "Also what is sometimes problematic are communities of colour who do turn up and are 'yes people'. They're afraid to speak their truth. There's internal racism. They're all going, 'yes yes yes' at the table and then later are fuming. 'This should have happened.' Why didn't you say it? Why did I feel like I was a lone voice at the table? And you're constantly agreeing with everyone else? But now you're agreeing with me. Why did I feel like I was alone when there was 1-2 other POC at the table. Why was I the lone voice actually challenging. Because they're too scared to rock the boat because they're scared they won't be supported by these resources. They're getting side glanced by people. They're too fearful. The fear that we have as POC that if we challenge too much that we're going to be left off the table." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

Tall poppy syndrome: "among us, the competitive streak in Australia is crazy. Tall poppy syndrome is our biggest problem. In New York, you'd meet someone at a party... and you'd say you're a writer, and they'd immediately say 'oh, we need someone to cover a big event coming up'... here, there's this weird tit-for-tat vendetta - 'Don't steal my job!'" – Respondent working in literature

Ableism: "I was part of a (creative) group where we were all women of colour. They were all able-bodied and employed. I was pushed out of that space. They couldn't understand having a child with Disability. I'm always late, I'm not on time. I have to endorse the child first to next babysitter. Meetings were evenings. I should also be thankful to that group for pushing me out. I have a hearing problem... Those spaces were not very empathic. When everyone is able-bodied. Everyone just wants to mention their positive attributes and not acknowledge they have mental health issues." Respondent working in literature.

Competitiveness: "It's hard to do this when your culture is not the priority region, because art exists within a capitalist system. I'm afraid that it will induce lateral antagonism - when we are fighting for resources, we might blame each other rather than looking at the structures above us creating this divide." – Respondent working in theatre.

Judgment: "Even those places - we have a lot in the Black community - they put on an act which is Afro-centric... You have to dress a certain way to be seen as you're a part of that



crew or group. If you're not dressed in that way or look the way they want you to look, you're seen as not cool for them. I wish that even in those art spaces with lots of people of colour that people just accepted everyone for who they are. You see them wearing the West African clothing, hair in a fro, if you have your hair straight you are seen as a traitor. "I just assumed you'd be like those other Muslim girls who don't know anything about politics." "You speak so White" - what does that mean? "You don't dress how I would expect you to dress". Even in the beauty scene. I don't shave my arms because I'm too lazy. I don't shave my legs because I wear a hijab - why shave my legs? No political reason. "But you seem so proper." Respondent working in modelling.

## 07 Self-doubt, self-worth and Imposter Syndrome made worse by isolation from other creatives of colour. (11 out of 60)

"Yesterday for example, I was editing all day. First time I've worked with an older white male (outwardly) director. I was interrupted several times during the photography process - 'your shutter is too loud'. This has never happened to me before. He kept interrupting the flow. 'Can you stop walking so loudly around the place'. I knew I had to continue getting the job done so I tuned out a bit. He asked me 'have you done this for a long time?' I said yes, and he said "you need to move like a cat around the space, respect the space more" - that really sent me into a spiral of doubt, even though logically I knew I'd never gotten that feedback before - it makes you feel like oh no, is this the norm? Who do I speak to about this who does similar work to this?" - Respondent working in photography.

"Those kind of situations really contribute to imposter syndrome - only picked for identity politics, not work appreciated because of what it is. Imposter syndrome exacerbated when you feel different to everyone else. Also leaves me doubting my abilities and having to lean on my otherness in order to get the thing in applications. I do that anyway I think." - Respondent working in literature.

"I don't talk about (my struggles) enough. Maybe I'm not around people I can talk about it. It's me. Not having the network. The connections. Or even the representation of yes there are other people of colour, other women in production. Producers that are

doing the same thing as me. It's a confidence thing." – Respondent working in music and performing arts.

"What comes into play there comes my own sense of self-confidence or self-worth. It creates boundaries with how we can engage with each other - not only White upholders of that scheme but also community members too." – Respondent working in community engaged practice.

"I was operating under the belief that I wasn't booking work because I'm a person of colour - 'it's not my fault!' So I wasn't actually looking at developing my craft, getting better, until after graduating drama school. But now I'm like, shit, I can just work on me without having to think about it. But I feel like I lost time. And now, I'm meeting more actors of colour and seeing the success they got because they kept going - it was almost irritating because if I had have done that I might be further along now. I feel like I was apologetic for a lot of my career because of this conditioning. Maybe someone with higher self-worth would not have allowed this. It's been irritating to reflect on." – Respondent working in theatre, film and TV

"The challenges as well within protecting yourself when the microaggressions happen - you are seen as the angry Aboriginal woman, and that's what I struggle with - did I overreact? was I harsh on them? Isolated feeling afterwards." – Respondent working across art forms

## **08 Additional labour as a cultural advisor representing whole communities or groups of people and / or additional labour to ensure diversity of communities are engaged (9/60)**

"Sitting in a space with a whole bunch of arts institutions in Melbourne and being the only brown face there. And they keep looking at me, am I gonna say something? Getting uncomfortable. She kept looking at me. Started speaking on behalf of coloured people. Everybody was pretty uncomfortable about my silence. When I finally spoke up, they realised that I was actually quite articulate. Oh my gosh this woman is actually quite articulate. They start to make excuses for speaking on your behalf. Major institutions. The biggest challenge with a lot of these institutions, they talk about cultural diversity but there's no representation of that at the table. When they talk about diversity, they're talking about having European diversity and for them that's enough. All these European groups at the table. But there's no representation from African, Indigenous, Pacific, Asian. Not seeing that reflection of the diversity of Melbourne was really problematic and uncomfortable for me. But I'm so used to being in those uncomfortable spaces." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

"I do find rehearsal rooms challenging there aren't enough coloured people in the spaces, so you inevitably are a cultural advisor even though you are employed just as an actor for that week... I can't speak on the behalf

# Quotes to illustrate the problems

of hundreds of thousands of people. It's just my opinion and thought, not every person. Because one person speaking for a whole is not useful. If you invert it (White person speaking for every White person) it would be so ridiculous. Am I in the room because you want me as a token, a cultural advisor or as a performer." – Respondent working in theatre.

"There's been a push in the last few years for diversity and I'm trying to ensure that it's not just a White person talking about everything because of perceived authority. I'd ideally love for the playing field to be level and for that sort of stuff does not even matter - but until it is it's this really exhausting spreadsheeting of it. This is my activism." – Respondent working in film and literature.

"Talking to roomful of White practitioners, trying to get them understand. We don't come to you. You have to outreach. Make your stuff relatable so multicultural communities can identify. Translate your brochures into different languages for people to want to utilise your services. As a Trans person from multicultural background, I'm not going to come up, Trans Asian girls aren't going to come forward with their stories. Some don't choose to disclose their gender identity. That's someone's way of thinking. Not loud. Not abrupt. Not like Western counterparts. When they speak, they speak their minds. The White people were actually quite open. They were shocked... Getting tired of explaining. I don't mind educating. Sometimes it might pay you to google it. Do your research." – Respondent working in dance, community engaged art practice.

## **White institutions are not proactive in reaching out to diverse communities**

"Here's a number that you can call." Ugh. That expectation that we would call. It needs to be personal. You can't just assume that one thing fits everybody and if you've been traumatized by those in power from the past, they're not going to come forth with their stories." – Respondent working in dance, community engaged art practice.

"I think a lot of power brokers really do believe in merit, this free market idea that if you can't compete you don't get the gig - but I really do think in the arts that there is no deliberate exclusion - at least with the smaller orgs, not the bigger ones, I don't work with them - there is just no active inclusion or active upskilling... I know for a fact that the curatorial team at (insert name of festival) for example work tirelessly to program a very diverse range of (creative programming). But in terms of the engagement with audience there is no attempt to reach out to people who aren't inner city, middle class and White - there's this loop of 'why do we need to cater to them, they're not our audience'" – Respondent working in film.



## 09 Whiteness in Disability and Queer communities (9/60)

### Disability community still White-centred:

"People in the Disability community, which is still very White centred, they're resistant when it comes to learning about the cultural differences that people of colour have with mental illness. Westerners more informed and quicker to seek out help. Whereas in cultures like mine- this is why I was diagnosed as an adult." – Respondent working in literature.

"(At this event, it was) jam packed. Lots of women talking. One of the topics I had to raise was, "how about Carers of Colour?" No one in our culture wants to talk about Disability. 'Intersectionality' wasn't a mainstream word... #DisabilitySoWhite "We are here. We exist. Don't erase our narratives." Unfortunately, when you submit a piece on mental health, the first person they will get is a White woman, White Man. We are tokenised. If it's LGBTQI, it's a White woman as well. If it's a Disabled person- still White." – Respondent working in literature.

### Neurodiversity:

"I felt that the way the show was pitched, everyone seems to think this is the most progressive space that could ever exist... We have 1 person with a disability and a person of colour. But I had such a hard time talking about my access needs... They got mad, frustrated at me... You actually need to have these kinds of conversations in the space." – Respondent working in theatre.

### Racism in White Queer communities

"At (a club in Melbourne) recently... there's a show on Saturdays which is an all White drag crew - cis gay men performing to Lady Gaga's "Born this way" and an oriental show where they do a really bad praying pose and they think it's okay to do racialized jokes, "cos I'm a drag artist". Epitome of White gay(s) being like, "I'm a minority, I've been oppressed", "I'm not racist, cos I'm gay." – Respondent working in dance.

"I've disassociated from the Queer community. Race issues so prevalent within those communities. Queer-coming-out culture is very White, neo-liberalistic culture. Doesn't take into account cultural (considerations) for people of colour. "You're not being true to yourself." Hah! I go home with my partner and they make one bed." – Respondent working in visual art



**10 The White Ceiling in arts organisations: Racial hierarchy and power dynamics that make the workplace unsafe for people of colour (8 out of 60)**

"We already know how to lead. They don't think we know how to lead because we don't fit into their framework." – Respondent working in dance and arts administration.

"in (insert name of specific creative industry) it's very racist and eurocentric. Very small representation of Aboriginal people in that. With other arts practice, I have a lot more support and other mob to uplift each other. So it's like juggling different art mediums and navigating between different industries. Feeling like I don't really belong in the (specific creative industry) world. A lot of exclusion and experiences of microaggressions and racist experiences, that's the biggest challenge... Daily thing is - I get asked what my background is. And when I say I'm Aboriginal they either say something bigoted or 'you don't look it.. what percentage are you?' I hate going into it, it's so frustrating. Not the time to be talking about eugenics! It's something I can brush over because it comes with a certain privilege of not appearing to be Blak, but it's still super damaging.." – Respondent working across artform

"There is a racial divide between creating community-based knowledge based arts and contemporary intellectualised arts. There is a denial of Indigenous knowledge. I don't know if society knows how classist, inaccessible and racialized it is. You are forced into a role of an

individual who is resisting, which separates us and creates a sense of lateral violence or gatekeeping. There is no way of thriving and bringing the community up." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice.

"I've involved myself in those (community arts) settings because in many ways they're easier and more nourishing than institutions... Institutions have certain expectations about what art practice is, what credentials are, what artforms and outcomes are valued. Outcomes are defined in very specific ways. Whereas someone like me, outcomes don't look like artwork necessarily. Outcome can be wellbeing, mental health, healing, community connection. Things that can't be easily quantified." – Respondent working in community engaged art practice



# Quotes to illustrate the problems

## 11 **Family/ community discouraging POC from being in the arts (7 out of 60)**

"My mum is a teacher in an Islamic school. She's an art teacher (visual art). We were trying to do projects, I was working on interfaith projects. There was some backlash with the parents. My mum who has studied a degree in Islamic Arts... (The parents said) the arts is haram. Music and drama. Limited a lot of people in accessing the arts. Actually, the young Muslim youth, they love music, they love watching films, they want to be involved. Maybe their parents' mindset, a particular interpretation has limited (the access). There's not enough resources at the moment of Islamic artists, or so-called Muslim artists/ institutions. It kind of reinforces that it's not meant for us." – Respondent working in theatre and film.

"Making art is shaming my family, but I don't mind as long as I can express my family... I grew with all the aggressive things in (my country of birth). People were aggressive towards us as (racial minority) and as homosexuals. For me, aggressive doesn't work to fix the world. I have to be careful with myself to express my feelings. I want other people to feel sympathy, the feeling as they look at the work. I grew up in (a village), I grew up with a lot of aggressiveness... I want to show that the minority is beautiful."- Respondent working in visual art and performance art.

"Because of where I live. Arts isn't really a thing. A lot of people of colour are creatives but that is not a serious path... My mum was like, "You gotta share it so you can get a lot of

money." The only legitimate way to make art is to get paid for it. They think it's pretty. She just didn't know a lot about how to actually make money using creative technology. What she was alluding to was ads." – Respondent working in creative technology.

"There is still conservativeness from my (cultural) background in doing artsy stuff. So I want to see the community rise up and fight that conservatism and taboo." – Respondent working in theatre.

"I feel like having a really strict cultural upbringing and having creative outlet as a career. The challenging part is that I know what I'm doing is something bigger than myself and lots of people are doing the same thing - doing it for a greater understanding of how people express themselves and who they are. And a lot of people don't understand that, both in society and in my cultural community. They don't understand." - Respondent working in dance.



## 12 For people who are recently arrived and / or are on Temporary visas: Not able to apply for support or opportunities (5 out of 60)

"In terms of the visa situation, I've been lucky enough to find work. But when it came to finding an agency, a lot of them were reluctant to put me on because my visa was a dicey situation. If I want to do training overseas, I can't go for more than a month or two. I can't work more than a certain number of hours. Annoying because there were multiple programs I want to apply for. But what happens if my visa starts getting processed? I need to be in the country to supply info. So it's a long period of time where I can commit to improving my training. Also, in terms of local learning, let's say I want to get a masters, I couldn't get any access to HECS, I have to fund it fully myself. Which makes some sort of masters pretty much untouchable." – Respondent working in dance and theatre.

"I was looking for an agent. When we were communicating, they doubted. They saw me in the show. Maybe because of my accent and my limited English. They weren't sure." – Respondent working in theatre.

"Was on a bridging visa for way too long. You can't qualify for a lot of things. Can't apply for funding for practice or be employed for longer than short contracts. Even though I have Permanent Residency now, I am trying to make up for lost time (I was on bridging visa for 5 years, and then back in (country of birth) for 1 year. I have gone past the emerging artist phase and am aware of my age, but career-wise I still feel very emerging. I have

only just started to build profiles here. I just got my first ever grant this year and did my first ever full-length Fringe show. Emerging vs. mid career is a false binary for me. Bridging visa was like limbo. Also, I have enough of a profile online to be an interesting thinker and so on, but it just ends with compliments. No further opportunities." – Respondent working in performing arts and creative technology.

"I talk about it fairly openly. Sometimes I find it tricky to talk to other people of colour about it because the immigration process isn't something they understand. When you grow up in Australia, you don't exactly understand it vs. coming in as an adult migrant. There are just way less options here, vs. in the US where there are heaps more options for grants. My community doesn't necessarily share my demographic. It's mostly people who care about me, and who talk about these things, but it's all intersectional. Some mentors have been White and more helpful than other people of colour. So, it just depends. So just find the people who give a shit, whatever they look like." – Respondent working in performing arts and creative technology.

