

Social Themes In The Final Quarter

Racism

Adam Goodes grew up being bullied because of his appearance. As an Aboriginal person he was called an 'ape' and a 'monkey' because of his dark skin. When this continued to happen as an adult, he couldn't stand it anymore and felt the need to stand up for himself.

Many Australians didn't like being confronted with the fact that their behaviour towards people of different backgrounds wasn't appropriate. Many Australians, especially of Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, still think it's ok to joke about people who are different and they aren't aware of the impact of racism and discrimination on those who are affected by it, mostly because they aren't generally the target of racism.

The debate around racism in this film was a complex one, because many Australians don't really know what racist behaviour looks like. When characters in the film were confronted by Adam Goodes' cultural expression, this is an example of racism. They didn't understand and didn't seem to want to understand why he felt it important for him to express his cultural identity. Further, when Adam called out racism for what it was, people liked him less because it made them feel angry that they were made to look guilty for doing things they'd always said and done without criticism.

Think about the things that you don't know much about, when it comes to people who are from different backgrounds to you, such as cultural or religious dress or speaking in languages you can't understand. Do any of these things make you feel uncomfortable? What have you heard other people say about these things? Consider becoming more informed so you can make sure you're not have racist feelings without even realising it.

Belonging

Adam Goodes found a sense of belonging in his team, the Sydney Swans. He also belonged in his family, to his Aboriginal culture and heritage, and to Australia, especially when he was recognised as 'Australian of the Year'.

When Adam Goodes was booed for over 17 weeks, doing the thing he loved, he no longer felt he belonged - so he quit football.

A person's sense of belonging is largely dependent upon the people that make up that community or group. The way people are treated determines whether or not they feel like they belong.

In order to feel like you belong somewhere, generally there is something you feel you have in common with those people. When you have that thing in common, other differences don't seem to matter so much. However, for Adam Goodes, his difference (that of being Aboriginal) started to matter very much when the crowds were booing him and that sense of belonging to his team and sport wasn't strong enough anymore. He felt abandoned. Feeling abandoned is a very painful feeling.

Think about where you feel a sense of belonging, and what it feels like when you are the 'outsider'. What would it take for you to go from being an 'outsider' to being someone who belongs? How can you help other people feel like they belong?

Cultural Identity

Everyone who lives in Australia, except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have come to this country recently - meaning, in the last 230 years or so. Australia is now made up of people from diverse backgrounds who have come here from all over the world. In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of different areas each have their own unique cultural traditions, languages and beliefs. Australia has many diverse backgrounds that make it unique.

Adam Goodes grew up in Adelaide and didn't know a lot about his Aboriginal cultural identity when he was young, but he learned more and more as he got older. The more he learned, the more proud he became and wanted to express his cultural identity.

It is everyone's right to be able to express their cultural identity and traditions, and speak their own language. We recognise and celebrate many different cultural identities and celebrations in sports and festivals, such as the Indigenous Rounds in the AFL and the All Blacks performing the Haka before playing rugby.

Sometimes white Australians forget that they have a cultural identity because it just feels 'normal', but they do. The best way to learn about your own cultural identity is to connect with your ancestry (and cultural history) and to expose yourself to other cultures so you can see the uniqueness of your own culture, as well as theirs.

Think about what traditions your family has that are different to other families you know. What about these traditions make you feel special? Next time you have the opportunity to learn about another culture, see it as an opportunity to enrich your understanding of that culture as well as your own.

Reconciliation

In the film Adam Goodes talked about the need for constitutional recognition and stopping racism. What Adam really wants is for all Australians to recognise the diverse cultures we bring to modern Australian life. We should celebrate what makes us the same, and not let our differences divide us. He wants Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be more respected and valued for what they bring to our culture and no one to be excluded based on looks, culture or background.

Reconciliation is about mending the mistakes of the past and creating new relationships built on respect, and growing trust. We can't undo the past, but it is important for Australians to understand and acknowledge the hurt inflicted upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when Europeans took over this land and enforced their way of life upon them.

Think about some time you were treated poorly by someone else, and how you wanted to be treated. Did you want an apology or just to be listened to? Did you feel a need to make amends and repair the friendship? How did it feel when this was successful or unsuccessful?

The Power of Words

Words have the power to help or harm people. For Adam Goodes, being called an 'ape' and being compared to 'King Kong' was very offensive because of the history of being called a 'monkey' or 'ape' in his own life, and also for generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other people with dark skin. These words 'dehumanise' people by suggesting that they are not as 'good as' or as evolved as other humans. Obviously, we now know this to be entirely untrue and harmful. These words can make people feel very small and powerless, and are not ok.

On the flip side, when someone stands up for you, using their words for good, this can make you feel supported and strong. The 'I Stand With Adam' campaign was an example of words being used to empower Adam Goodes. Being given the title of 'Australian of the Year' was also important to Adam because it lifted his self-esteem and made him feel valued and important.

You can see in the headlines throughout this film that words are used to persuade, convince and evoke emotions in the readers or viewers. Look out for these and try to imagine the impact of these words on Adam Goodes and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples more generally.

The Power of Listening

In the film, there are moments where it is very clear that Adam Goodes has not been listened to, or was selectively listened to by some of the characters. This failure to listen to the full story of Adam's words led to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of his actions and character. By choosing to quote only part of what Adam Goodes said, some media representatives were able to influence a large number of people and inflame the bullying against him.

If the media and the public had properly listened to Adam Goodes, they would have understood his actions more and potentially responded differently. If they had listened to his reason for performing the 'war cry' they may have understood it better and not been so offended. If they had listened to his full interviews about the 13-year-old girl, they may have realised he was not wanting to punish her.

Consider how much you choose to listen in your own life before making judgements of others, and when you might jump to conclusions about what they mean instead of listening to what they're actually saying. Make sure you are fully informed before making public statements about others.