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## Today isn't "Harmony Day", it's the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Racial and economic justice organisation, **Democracy in Colour**, is calling for **Harmony Day to be scrapped** and instead called what it is all over the globe, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On the 21st of March, 1960, police shot at and killed 69 people at a peaceful anti-apartheid demonstration in Sharpsville, South Africa. Six years later, the United Nations General Assembly declared March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and challenged the international community to do better in stamping out racism.

Founding Director, Tim Lo Surdo, says, "Today we're calling for Harmony Day to be restored to its original name, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

"Australia re-named the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as "Harmony Day" under the Howard Government. It was, and remains, a deliberate smokescreen that depoliticises the day by intentionally hiding the problem of racism in this country.

"Implicit in the day is the idea that we've already reached our post-race utopia - where, as the official Harmony Day website says, "everyone belongs." This just simply isn't true for First Nations people and people of colour and our experiences tell an entirely different story.

"Australia has always had a deep problem with racism. This is a country built on the genocide of Aboriginal people, and propped up by decades of assimilation policies, black deaths in custody, restrictions on immigration, brutal refugees policies, and an often racist political discourse. Last year, a white supremacist from Australia went to Christchurch and murdered 51 innocent Muslims in cold blood.

"Now, with the racialised narrative around COVID-19, the new, shiny punching bag of the month is people from Asian backgrounds.

"Turning an "anti-racism" day into a "harmony" day is part of this country's long history of denial when it comes to race matters. It's time to reclaim today and call it what it really is, The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," said Mr Lo Surdo.

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*Democracy in Colour has put together some tips and resources for people to use when reporting on race and the coronavirus [here](#).*