

RACIAL ABUSE AND TRANSPHOBIA

Statement

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [6.29 pm]: I rise tonight in support of the statement that Hon Pierre Yang shared this evening. It provoked me to share an experience I had as a teenager. I do not know whether members recall the old Lumiere Cinema at the Entertainment Centre; it used to play some interesting films. I used to imagine myself as being a little quirky and interesting, so I often attended those films by myself. Often they were not very well attended.

I remember once leaving one of those films. There was only a couple of us walking across the car park in the evening. There was me, a car leaving and a young—forgive me for the very generic term, but I am not sure of her specific ethnicity—Asian woman. I could not make out her features, only very generally, but she was also walking back to her vehicle. The car that was leaving was filled with a bunch of young white men who chose that moment to start screaming racist abuse at the young woman, who was physically cowering and scurrying back to her car in obvious terror. The young men hung out of the car windows and trailed her as she walked towards her car. I will not repeat the words they used; members all know the kind of horrible language that is directed at people whom other people do not necessarily see when they look in the mirror and do not understand and choose not to understand, and by people who choose fear over compassion and understanding.

I can remember that, as a young woman, I was too scared to walk towards that woman and walk her to her car. I was only a teenager myself. To this day I still remember that, and I still feel such immense shame that I did not have the courage to walk over to that woman and that, as a bystander, I was scared of these young men. I cannot possibly begin to imagine the fear that that young woman would have felt. I do not imagine that that woman would now be watching this, but from the bottom of my heart, I apologise for not having had the courage and strength to walk beside her and offer some sort of comfort and support. It is something I reflect on very often and it is a deep shame that will never leave me for not having the courage at that time to support her. It has also made me very resolute in always wanting to stand up when I see people being treated unfairly or when I see people being judged or hated because they are different.

That is why I feel compelled to comment on the behaviour we saw in the protest yesterday. It was driven by hate, fear and intolerance of anything that is different and that people do not see in the mirror when they look at themselves. There is no place for that in this place, there is no place for that in this state, and there is no place for that in our country. We are very blessed to live in this place, and we should look at others and seek first to understand and to show compassion and love.

Yesterday was a terrible example of when people choose fear and hate, and I felt the same sense of fear. I would feel the same sense of shame in myself if I did not stand up and comment and mention some statistics. Transgender people aged 14 to 25 are 15 times more likely to have attempted suicide than the general population. Every time there are protests and behaviour like that and every time we do not stand up and support those people and say, “We see you, we care about you, we value you and we accept you for what you are”, we are adding to that cruel, horrible and intolerant statistic. It leads to awful mental health consequences. We must all collectively come together to extend a loving hand and a hand of tolerance and peace to say, “We see you; we accept you for who you are. We value you, we love you, and we don’t support that kind of behaviour. We don’t support making queer people in our work environment feel unsafe.”

For my part, and from this side of the chamber, I am so deeply sorry.