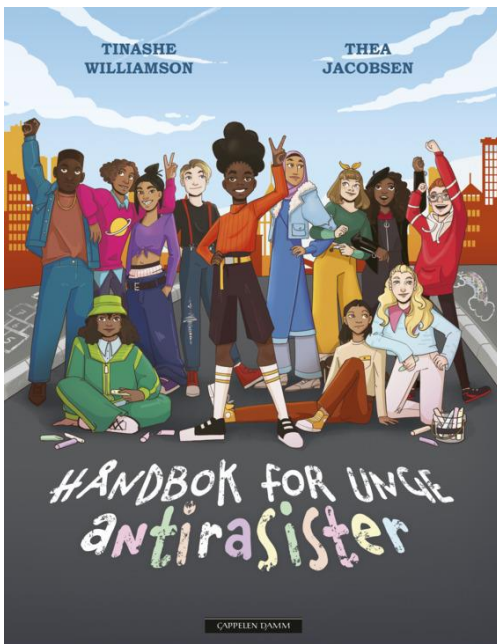


Cappelen Damm Agency *Fall 2021*



Handbook for Young Anti-Racists

Handbook for young antiracists by Tinashe Williamson put the spotlight on the important topic of racism. Through ten chapters and ten fictional characters Williamson answers questions about what racism really is, why representation is important and what you can do if someone is discriminated against because of the colour of their skin.

Racism is a complicated topic for grown-ups to navigate, and many find it hard to talk to their children about it. For what can you say? Where do you begin?

This engaging, including and thorough book is written in the form of a diary, with tasks and conversations that the children can easily bring up at home or with their friends or classmates. The goal is to pass on the knowledge to the generation that is growing up now, to give them the feeling that they have the power to change the world. Together we are stronger, and by just acknowledging the problem we can do something about it.

This is the perfect book on the topic for children 9 years and up, and it works just as well at home as in a teaching situation.

Tinashe Williamson has written a book that is easy to understand and utterly engaging. The book obviously has great potential to start important conversations between people from different generations.

DAGBLADET

We talk to our kids about sexual abuse and violence because we need our children to know how to tell us if something where to happen. Still, we find talking about racism with our children hard. I wanted to give kids a language to tell us about the experience. For kids who have experienced racism, but more importantly for those who have not. Why is it so important that we are allies in the fight against racism? What is skin colour? What can we do if someone we love and trust say something that is racist? I wanted to give kids the language and confidence to make a change.

TINASHE WILLIAMSON

foreignrights@cappelendamm.no
www.cappelendammagency.no

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Tinashe Williamson/Thea Jacobsen (ill.)

Tinashe Williamson (b.1985) is a socially committed actress, model and activist. She also works freelance in PR. Tinashe was voted role model of the year 2020/2021 during the Norwegian Vixen Awards (an award show for influencers.) She was also nominated "name of the year" in Norway's largest newspaper, VG. Her fight for justice and equal rights for all inspired her to write the book "Handbook for Young Anti-Racists"

Thea Jacobsen (b.1997) holds a Bachelor's degree in animation from the University of Greenwich in the UK.

Handbook for Young Antiracists is the first book that she has illustrated.



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Sample translation by Matt Bagguley

Handbook for Young Anti-Racists (Håndbok for unge antirasister)
by Tinashe Williamson

“You must not tolerate so easily the injustice that does not affect yourself.”

ARNULF ØVERLAND

Tinashe. 36 years old. Norwegian with Zimbabwean roots. Lives with her husband, Odd Magnus, and their two daughters, India and Ziggy.

"I like being with my friends, cooking and listening to music!"

As a child, I always found racism difficult to talk about. Whenever I told someone that I had experienced it, I felt like I was reminding them that I was different. I was terrified that the people I told would look at me in the same way as the people I was talking about; that they too would see me as inferior because of my skin colour. I noticed that the adults found racism difficult to talk about too, and I felt some kind of shame whenever I mentioned it. So for many years I stayed quiet, biting my tongue every time I heard a racist comment. I accepted people saying things like “I didn’t mean any harm,” “can't you take a joke?” and “don't get so offended.” But whenever I bit my tongue, it did something to me. I began to feel smaller and smaller.

If you think of a racist comment as a raindrop – one won’t make you wet. But ten thousand raindrops will leave you soaked. Often these “little” comments, these instances of everyday racism, feel like little drops, but I know that there are many people out there who have been feeling very wet, for a very long time.

With this handbook, I want to make it a little easier to talk about racism. Both for those who experience racism, and those who don’t. I want to show how we can make a

difference by being anti-racists and by fighting racism together. I believe that dialogue is the way we humans can become closer, understand each other better and make the world a kinder and more tolerant place to live.

I find writing a book quite scary. But I am doing it anyway, for my children, and for all those who will follow me. And because you children are the future, I have brought some kids with me who are the same age as you, to take us through the different topics.

Thandie. 12 years old. Zimbabwean roots. Has lived in Norway all her life.

“I love dancing and playing basketball! At school, my favorite subjects are English and science, but I'm not that fond of math. I live with my mom, dad and little sister.”

Vegard. 12 years old. Norwegian roots. Lives with mom, dad and has two siblings.

“If it was up to me, I would play ice hockey every single day! My favorite subject at school is gym, and my favourite food is pizza. I live with my dad, bonus mom and my two brothers.”

Vaishali. 13 years old. Indian roots. Has lived in Norway all her life.

“I play the violin on Tuesdays, and football on Wednesdays and Saturdays. I like all the subjects at school, but especially social studies, history and math. I live with my mom, dad and my big brother.”

Linda. 12 years old. Swedish roots. Moved to Norway with her mother and sister when she was five.

“I do freestyle dancing and would eat tacos every single day if I could. At school I like food and health, and history. But what I like best is just being with my friends.”

Jasmine. 13 years old. Vietnamese roots. Moved to Norway with her mother five years ago.

“I love playing the piano and skating. I go skating every day when the weather is good. Skating's also how I broke my arm! My favourite food is pizza without meat, because I'm a vegetarian.”

Sammy. 12 years old. Gambian and Norwegian roots. Has lived in Norway all his life.

“I love skiing and playing the guitar. My dream is to become an astronaut and to one day walk on Mars. I love math, but hate gym class because I'm not very good at sports. I live with my mom, dad and my two sisters.”

Zack. 13 years old. Adopted from Colombia. Came to Norway as a one-year-old.

“I play tennis and love going running. At school I really like English and chemistry. I'm

also really interested in fashion, and want to be a hairdresser when I grow up. I live with my mom, mother and sister, who are also adopted.”

Fatima. 12 years. Yemeni roots. Has lived in Norway all her life.

“I think school is great fun and I want to be a doctor or a researcher when I grow up! I live with my mom, dad, and my five brothers and sisters.”

“I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Racism and anti-racism – what exactly is it?

It is hard to provide a simple answer to what racism is, but most people agree that it is when some people are treated worse because of who they are, for no good reason. Racism is the idea and belief that people should be divided into groups, and that some groups are better than others. The idea of so-called “race,” based on skin colour for example, has been a much discussed topic. Today, the term racism is also used when we talk about discrimination based on religion, nationality and culture.

Racism is when a person is treated worse than others because they have a different skin colour than the majority; or because they follow a different religion than the predominant one, Christianity for example. So simple, yet so difficult. There are people out there who believe that some people are inferior to others just because of how they look or because they have a dark skin tone. So they will judge the person before they have said or done anything at all; before they have talked about what they like doing in their free time, or what they think about the climate crisis; before they have said what they think about a TikTok dance, or which football team they support. Before they even opened their mouths and said anything, some people will have judged them already at first glance. “That can’t be true,” you might be thinking, but unfortunately it is. That is racism.

Some people think and believe that a person’s value can be determined by their skin colour. They have a preconceived idea of how people with a certain skin colour behave, how they think and what they think, and judge everyone with that skin colour accordingly. And we cannot accept that! But what should we do about it? What can you and I do to make the world a kinder and more tolerant place to live? A place where our actions and

opinions and thoughts are what matter, not our skin colour? This is a fight that takes a long time, and has to be fought using anti-racism. Being anti-racist means that you work actively against racism. In previous generations, we anti-racists have tried to do something about racism in society. We have tried to assert that all people are equally valuable. And we have come a long way. But unfortunately we are not at the finish line yet. So we are now passing the baton to you youngsters!

Tinashe: I have experienced a lot of racism in my life, especially when I was your age. But my most difficult encounters with racism have been the conversations I've needed to have with my children. As a mother I've had to tell them about how there are people out there who will not like or accept them, and people who will think that they are inferior. Simply because of their skin colour.

As a mother, this is a difficult conversation to have. We have reached the point where simply not being racist isn't enough. We all need to be anti-racists and actively fight racism. Because we cannot change anything without acknowledging that it happens; and it is now more important than ever to use our voices and stand up for what we believe is right. Only then will we be able to do something about it, together. We must all contribute. Now you are the future, and I'm sure you'll do this job better than those of us who did it before you.

You can do it!

But first, a few facts!

The word racism has roots that go back many years, all the way back to 1859, when the English biologist Charles Darwin wrote the book *The Origin of Species*. Darwin had long researched the development of animals and plants, and in his book described how the plants and animals that had developed to be most suited to the environment in which they lived, had the best chances of having young and passing on their characteristics. He called this the theory of evolution. Darwin's theory only applied to plants and animals, but a few decades later it was being used to distinguish between different "human races," and to define which of them were best adapted. Since many of the scientists lived in Europe at that time, they assumed that white people were the strongest and most intelligent. This was contrary to what Darwin had intended the theory to be used for!

Since the 20th century, scientists have agreed that all the humans now living on earth belong to the same race. But even now the idea of race is being kept alive, by far too

many people. Classic racism is when something you have inherited from your parents, such as skin colour, eye colour or your hair (that is, something you can do nothing about), is used to evaluate what you are worth. According to this line of thinking, it's possible to tell how intelligent, kind or good a person is by merely seeing which "race" the person belongs to. And that is totally wrong.

Often these perceptions of "race" became mixed with cultural or religious prejudices, for example: that people with an African background are more stupid than white people (which isn't true), or that Jews or Muslims are part of a big and evil plan to take over Europe (which isn't true either). Racist thoughts and opinions like these have led to the oppression and deaths of tens of thousands of people throughout history, through both slavery and the genocide carried out by the Nazis.

An example of racism here in Norway is how the Sami couldn't speak their language in public, even though they were in their own country. Sami school-children were actually punished if they spoke Sami at school. Fortunately this is no longer the case, but even now many Sami experience what we call everyday racism. This might be in the form of cruel jokes, name calling, or nasty comments on the internet related to the fact that you are Sami, speak Sami, or perhaps wear Sami clothes.

Exercise

Interview an adult about slavery and the Nazi genocide. How much did you know already?

Did you learn anything new?

Now, you're probably wondering what any of that has do with you. You might think racism is something that only happens in the USA, where news stories about police violence and demonstrations, school shootings and discrimination are quite common. You might think that we have never kept slaves here in Norway, and that we have never been involved in genocide. But it's a bit too easy to think that this kind of thing can't happen in Norway. There are, unfortunately, several examples of it here too.

We now know that the Vikings had their own slave trade – and that their slaves were terribly mistreated. And although many Norwegians fought the Nazis during World War

II, there were also those who believed that the Nazis were right. So the idea that one group of people is better than another is nothing new. And in recent times we find examples of people losing their lives due to racism in Norway.

But where did the idea for slavery actually come from?

What exactly is slavery?

Slaves have actually been kept by many civilisations, since antiquity. There were slaves in ancient Babylon, in Greece and throughout the Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages, there were slave trades in Europe, Africa and Asia. But the most well-known slave trade took place between the 1500s and the 1800s.

Back then there were no proper maps, and it was common for people, especially Europeans, to venture out in large ships to “discover” the world. When the Europeans came to Africa and America, they believed they had discovered something totally new, and that it was okay to consider this new continent theirs, despite the fact that people had been living there for a very long time already! These new lands which the Europeans “conquered” were called colonies. Eventually, the whole American continent was colonised, in other words conquered, by Portugal, Spain and Great Britain. Large parts of Africa were conquered by several other European countries, including Denmark. And this colonisation became the start of the slave trade.

Because the European colonists needed people to work on their cotton and sugar plantations in the USA, they began shipping Africans from West Africa to America. The African slaves were considered less valuable, and considered the property of the plantation owner. They were forced to work, without pay, and often in poor conditions. The slave trade in the USA began in the 16th century and continued until it was banned during Abraham Lincoln’s presidency in 1865. Nevertheless, to this day African Americans continue to experience discrimination and violence. Some white Americans still believe that the country is for whites only.

Common to all the stories about the slave trade is the fact that those who own land have the power. The power to decide who gets something and who doesn't. And that is still the case, that white people have more power than non-whites.

Structural racism

foreignrights@cappelendamm.no
www.cappelendammagency.no

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What African Americans experience nowadays is what's called structural racism. And it is not limited to the USA, it is found everywhere, including Norway. But what does it actually mean?

Structural racism can be

- That you struggle more at school than the other students because you don't get help with your homework at home.
- That you're more likely to end up in a criminal environment because there are no good leisure activities in your local community.
- That you find it harder to get a job because you have a foreign-sounding name.

The word structural comes from the word structure, which refers to how something is built up. When a structure is made for a certain type of people, it is difficult for others to use it.

A structure can be a climbing frame, for example. The person who built the climbing frame may have designed it based on the needs of the majority, and built it so that it best suits these people, while those who are different will find it impossible to climb. Perhaps the builder is very tall, while those wanting to use the climbing frame are quite short. So even if they try, they won't get anywhere because – although it's open to all and everyone is allowed to use it – the climbing frame isn't made for them. And it's the same with much larger and more complicated structures, like school or health systems. In Norway, which until the 1960s didn't have many immigrants, most things are constructed for white people.

Talk among yourselves

Have you or has anyone you know experienced structural racism?

This is pretty complicated stuff. Perhaps an example will make things easier

Three years ago, a boy from Somalia came to Norway as a refugee with his family. He is now 14 years old, goes to school and has learned Norwegian very quickly. But his parents still struggle to speak Norwegian, so they cannot help him with his homework and assignments. The boy is actually quite academic, but because he has three younger siblings and also has to help in father's shop, he never manages to do his homework and assignments in peace. As a result, his grades slide. After junior high he starts attending a school in a district where many of the students have similar backgrounds to him. Most of

them have parents who can't speak Norwegian, and their grade point averages are low. Lacking any sense of accomplishment at school, the boy starts participating in criminal activities, and is eventually caught by the police.

His case is reported in the media like this: "Boy with immigrant background charged with shoplifting," and the people reading about it might say: "Typical. So many children from immigrant families become criminals or do badly at school."

The system is constructed in a way that makes it far more difficult for this boy, and others like him, to find their way through the education system than it is for other children. The boy was academic, yet because he was unable to get help at home and didn't have a quiet place to work, he was unable to keep his grade point average up.

Many people believe that the rules and laws are the same for everyone. And in a way that's true. The problem, however, is that the starting point is different for anyone with a different background, so having the same rules doesn't help. The climbing frame may well be the same for everyone, but that doesn't mean everyone is able to climb it.

White privilege

There are no bad intentions behind the fact that some people have an easier climb up the climbing frame than others. It is simply because the structure has been designed for the majority who are often unaware that it excludes other people. Those who make the decisions often don't realise when something doesn't work for everyone. We often call this "white privilege." As a white person, you perhaps never considered these things, because you never had to. It's like playing computer games at various difficulty levels, where the white player will play on a low setting, and might think it's the only difficulty level in the game, and the player with darker skin will play on the high setting. The dark-skinned player might still do well, and perhaps even beat the white player, but it will be much harder for them. So white people have a kind of advantage in life, compared with those who aren't white. That's why talking about structural racism with everyone you know, no matter what skin colour they have, is so important. By simply understanding that the climbing frame is made for a specific group of people, one can start to think innovatively and create structures that everyone can use. Those who cannot use the climbing frame are aware of it themselves. But those who can might not always be aware that it excludes others in this way.

Here's another example

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Per and Hazan have had the same education and received equally good grades. Both of them have applied for the same jobs. But while Per is called in for 20 interviews Hazan is only called in for one, because he has a foreign name. Since Per is going for 20 interviews, there is a much greater chance of Per getting a job than Hazan. This in turn makes it easier for Per to get a good, well-paid job, buy an apartment and get on the property ladder. They have the same education and both have student loans, but Hazan doesn't get a well-paid job because he rarely gets an interview and may eventually have to accept one with a far lower salary.

The climbing frame may well be for everyone to use. But do you see how Per nevertheless benefits the most from using it? This is precisely what's scary about white privilege and structural racism: that the differences you experience early in life can follow you into adulthood. What might seem like a trivial detail can have major consequences and even move on from one generation to the next. That is why it's so important for us to fight structural racism!

Fatima: My brother Erfan worked as an assistant in a nursing home and often met elderly people who didn't want him looking after them because he is a Muslim. They would often call him "not Norwegian," and it eventually became such a problem that he was given fewer and fewer shifts. In the end he had to quit.

Zack: But didn't anyone say anything to the elderly people? And why did the nursing home stop calling Erfan?

Fatima: I don't think the staff had the willpower to tackle the issue. It was easier for them to just call Petter or Lise.

Tinashe: Petter and Lise are assistants at the same nursing home. They don't realise that they are always prioritised before Fatima's brother when the shifts are being handed out, and as a result it's easier for them to earn and save money. This is an example of privilege. By being aware of your privileges, you can also be part of the solution!

What would you have done?

- If you were Petter or Lise, and were now aware of your privileges, what would you have done?
- Would you have spoken to Erfan and told him that you think the way things are is unfair, and ask if he would like to perhaps do some shifts instead of you if you're unable to do them yourself?

- Would you have told the nursing home management that the shifts ought to be distributed equally between the assistants?

Would you have asked for a meeting with the management to discuss the racism Erfan is experiencing at work and demanded that concrete measures are taken to make his workplace safe and free of racism?

Did you know that the word “racism” comes from the word “race” which we use when talking about animals? Biologically, there are in fact no different human races. We are just one big race, all of us. So it’s actually a bit wrong to use that word.

Okay, let's say someone decides that people with blonde hair suck and people with brown hair are cool. And then your mom and dad both have blond hair, and you happen to have been born like that too, which means you get treated inferior to others. It makes no sense of course! When we know that we’re the same on the inside, why is it that some people are treated worse than others, for something they can do nothing about? For something that says nothing about their personality?

Exercise

Looking back at your roots is exciting! Draw a family tree and see how far back you get. Where in the country or world do your ancestors come from? Maybe they lived somewhere other than Norway? Interview your parents and grandparents to find out more!

Linda: I'm not quite following you. I think it's hard to understand what racism is and how it is experienced.

Thandie: What shocks me the most is that people have known since the 1900s that we are the same inside, and yet I still experience racism today.

Linda: Have you experienced racism?

Thandie: My whole family has experienced racism, and my other dark-skinned friends too. I could give you plenty of examples, but what I remember most is the time we were on the bus and a lady told my mom that we should go back to where we came from, because she thought Norway was for Norwegians and not for “darkies” like us.

My mom tried to say that this wasn't a nice way to talk to people, but the lady just kept going. She asked if we could even speak Norwegian, and said she hoped my mom didn't have more children because she didn't want more people like us in the world. My mom started welling up, and she looked away. So did everyone else. Literally no one on the crowded bus said or did anything. My dad is an electrician, and he has been told several times to leave the houses he is supposed to be working in. The customers don't want him inside because he is black. He has been called the n-word (nigger) many times. And I often hear comments about how good my Norwegian is, or people will ask me where I come from, and when I say Oslo, they will ask me again: "But where are you *really* from?" I am constantly reminded that I am different. That I am not Norwegian enough because I am not white enough.

Tinashe: The n-word is a word I get tired of hearing or reading. It's an ugly word that some use to describe people with melanin-rich skin. That is why we instead say "the n-word" when we talk about that word. Eventually I hope people will stop saying that word altogether, and we'll no-longer have to say "the n-word"!

Linda: Oh! But ... Isn't it okay to ask people where they come from originally? Because I'm really interested in geography and countries and all that. I'm not asking to be mean – I'm just curious ... And the thing about your Norwegian is just a compliment, isn't it? It doesn't have anything to do with skin colour or racism, does it?

Thandie: Be curious is totally fine. It just depends how you ask the question. "Where do you *really* come from?" makes me feel like I don't belong here, that I'm not Norwegian enough. "Where are your roots from?" makes me feel Norwegian and special, in a cool way. It's the same question asked in completely different ways. Can you see the difference? What about you – how many times has someone commented on how well you speak Norwegian? Or asked where you *really* come from?

Linda: It's never happened to me. You've lived your whole life here so in a way you're more Norwegian than me, and you still get questions that I've never been asked ... I'm almost embarrassed about how it never happens to me and yet it happens to you...

Thandie: Why do you think that is? Talk to an adult about why Thandie and Linda have such different experiences.

What would you have done?

What would you have done if you'd been on the bus with Thandie and her mother that day?

- Would you have stood up and told the lady on the bus that this isn't how we talk to each other! Informed her that what she said is racist and not acceptable in Norway?
- Would you have notified the bus driver at the next stop?
- Would you have asked Thandie and her mother if they were alright and if there was anything you could do to help them?
- If you would have done just one of these things, that's great! You'd get extra points for doing all three. But what matters most is that you did SOMETHING.

"There comes a time when silence is betrayal."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Self-esteem is part of how you perceive yourself. Along with self-confidence and self-respect, it is an indicator of what you feel about and think about yourself.

Tinashe: After living through many years of racism during my childhood, my self-esteem and self-confidence was very low. I struggled to accept myself, and felt like I was worthless. I was reminded, on a daily basis, that there I was somehow different and that this difference was wrong. Racism can be extremely damaging for anyone who experiences it. It can make you feel like that you're being punished for something you can't help, and that no one can do anything about, namely the skin colour you were born with. Racism is painful, and in the worst case it can be life threatening.

For those who haven't experienced racism in real life, it's not always easy to identify or understand how problematic it actually is. I often hear people say: "I didn't know there was racism in Norway" or: "I know it isn't nice, but isn't it better to just ignore it?" and: "But is racism in Norway really that bad?"

Racially motivated killings in Norway

Benjamin Hermansen was murdered in a racially-motivated stabbing in Holmlia, an area just outside Oslo, on January 26, 2001. Fifteen-year-old Benjamin, who had a Norwegian mother and a Ghanaian father, was talking to a friend outside a convenience store when two young men got out of a car and ran towards them. Benjamin and his friend tried to escape but Benjamin was stabbed and killed. Ole Nicolai Kvisler and his girlfriend were arrested and charged with murder the same night, while Joe Erling Jahr was arrested in Denmark on 1 February. All three belonged to a racist and neo-Nazi group called Boot Boys. Their reason for killing Benjamin was his skin colour. Jahr was sentenced to 18 years in prison, Kvisler to 17 years, and his 17-year-old girlfriend sentenced to 3 years.

Johanne Ihle Hansen, who was adopted from China, was shot and killed on August 10, 2019 by her stepbrother Philip Manshaus, because her skin colour wasn't white. Later that day, Manshaus carried out a terrorist attack at a mosque in a town called Bærum, but was however overpowered by the worshippers in the mosque at the time. The attack was intended to frighten Muslims. Philip Manshaus was convicted of both murdering his step-sister and the terrorist attack on the mosque. Manshaus was sentenced to 21 years in prison with a minimum term of 14 years.

On 22 July 2011, the terrorist attacks on the island of Utøya and the headquarters of the Norwegian government claimed the lives of 77 people. The victims were young people attending a Labour party youth camp, as well as the employees and visitors in the government buildings. Anders Behring Breivik, a right-wing extremist, was responsible for the attacks. He targeted the youth camp because he opposed Muslim immigrants and believed that the Labour Party had allowed too many of them into Norway. Breivik was sentenced to 21 years in prison for the terrorist attacks he carried out.

Talk with each other

These are just a few examples of how dangerous racism can be. Philip Manshaus' mother has stated that she wishes they had reported Manshaus' racist views earlier, and believes that doing so could have prevented the murder of her daughter.

What do we do if we hear about someone with dangerous views? On the website for PST (Norway's Police Security Service) you can leave an anonymous tip if you encounter someone who has worrying attitudes that you think might be a danger to our security.

“You’re afraid of people with veils, I can say I feel for you.

I fear people wearing Polo, scarves and all that.

And everybody watches, but no one dares to speak. That's how the world has gotten, you have to take some shit, who said it was easy.

I have VISA, passport and skis, but they want to see the receipt.”

AMANDA DELARA, “GUNERIUS”

Did you know that racism is illegal? In 2005 criminal legislation came into force prohibiting hateful and discriminatory statements directed at a person's ethnicity, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, outlook on life or disability. This means that it's not "only" very stupid to be a racist, you can also get a hefty fine or be sent to prison for up to 3 years!

The killings of Benjamin and Johanne, and the July 22 terrorist attacks, were the consequences of racism, xenophobia and hatred.

Racist views aren't just nasty, they can be deadly. Lives are at stake if we allow these kinds of attitudes to flourish. So we can save lives by being anti-racists!

Skin colour – What actually is it?

Human skin colour is determined primarily by the amount and type of melanin pigment the skin contains; and it varies, from pale pink to almost black. Dark-skinned people don't have more pigment cells than white people, but their pigment cells do contain more melanin.

Did you know that people with melanin-rich skin need six times more sun to get enough vitamin D than white people do? So people with melanin-rich skin, who live in places where there is very little sun, are advised to take vitamin D supplements!

The more melanin you have in your skin, the darker you are. You can refer nicely to people with a lot of melanin in their skin by saying that they have melanin-rich skin. Other people prefer to refer to themselves as coloured, dark or black.

Skin colour is also connected to geography, and will vary according to how sunny it is where you are. There is a lot of strong sunlight around the equator throughout the year, so those who originate from that region will often have darker skin. People from predominantly snowy areas (the Arctic regions) also have darker skin, traditionally, because

the sun's rays are reflected by the white snow. It is a form of protection against the strong UV rays, just like sunscreen – basically the skin protecting itself.

Research shows that the first humans (which we call *homo sapiens sapiens*) evolved in Africa. Human fossils (the remains or traces of life), dating back almost 200,000 years, have been discovered in the African countries of Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. It wasn't until 100,000 years ago, in other words 100,000 years later, that these people began migrating north. And during this migration, human skin changed too. When humans reached Northern Europe, they didn't need the same protection from the sun's rays because, well, there isn't much sun here. Over the course of many generations, their skin colour became lighter and lighter, to make it better at absorbing vitamin D from the available sunlight.

Thandie: I remember the first time I thought my skin colour was "wrong." I was at kindergarten, and everyone in my group was sat around a table drawing pictures of themselves. And the crayon everyone said was "skin colour" was the same crayon they used to draw themselves. At kindergarten, everyone was concerned with peeing and pooping, and the crayon they used to draw poop was the colour I used to draw myself. Because there was a colour called "skin coloured," and it didn't look like mine, I thought my skin colour had to be wrong. It was the first time I remember feeling bad about how I look.

Tinashe: Imagine there was a colour called skin colour, but it didn't resemble the colour of your skin. What would that say about your skin colour?

We have to stop referring to crayons, tights, plasters and other things as skin coloured, because skin colours come in so many different shades. When we refer to a particular colour as being skin coloured, we are saying that other colours are not accepted skin colours. We have to do something about that! If you need to describe something that is a similar colour to your skin, you can instead say "the colour of my skin tone."

This is what skin-coloured pencil-crayons look like

Tinashe: Many people think it's exciting that skin colours can be different shades and will want to touch your skin. And although these situations can feel invasive and disgusting for those affected, they are often borne of curiosity rather than malicious intent. I'd like to tell you a story about the time I started in a totally new school class. I had been attending a large school in Oslo, and my class had over 30 students of all nationalities and skin colours in it.

I then moved to a little village called Vormsund where there were 14 of us in the class, and not one person in the entire school looked like me. I think we were all shocked when I appeared in the doorway of my new classroom. There I stood, the only dark-skinned person at the school, looking at my white class. I remember the first playtime especially well. I was standing in the schoolyard when a girl came over to me, smiled and asked what my name was. Then something really strange happened: She reached out, right up to my face, and stopped at my cheek. Then she rubbed her hand hard against my skin a couple of times before looking at her hand and saying: "Oh, the colour doesn't rub off onto my fingers."

I remember thinking: "Oh boy, this is going to be interesting!" before the bell rang for us to go back inside. The girl wasn't trying to be unkind, but it left me feeling like a circus animal. I should say however that this happened in the mid-90s, and a lot has changed since then.

How can we talk about being different in a positive way?

Remember skin colour says nothing about who you are as a person!

Tinashe: Do you remember how we talked about structural racism? The point about something only being made for one specific group of people, applies when we talk about skin colour too. There are many different skin colours, but it took a long time before products that were supposed to be "skin coloured" (plasters, tights, crayons or makeup) became available in different tones and not just tailored for people with white skin. Have you ever considered how a beige-coloured plaster, like those you find in all the stores, is highly visible on darker skin? The whole point of a plaster's colour is for it to be invisible.

So skin colour can have different shades, and how dark someone is depends on how much melanin that person has in the skin. Traditionally, people with darker skin come from equatorial and Arctic regions. The skin's melanin is there to protect against strong sunlight, like a form of natural sunscreen. This means dark-skinned people are particularly well adapted to strong UV-rays. But nowadays people with every type of skin tone live all over the world, which means you can't tell where someone comes from by their skin colour. And if you look way back in time, we actually all come from the same regions anyway. Imagine, just 100,000 years ago – which in a historical sense isn't so very long ago – everyone had dark skin.

Linda: Mom always gets really brown during the summer when she sunbathes a lot. Does that mean we have roots somewhere other than Sweden?

Tinashe: Not necessarily. If you spend a lot of time in the sun, the UV-rays eventually start to burn your innermost layer of skin. Your body responds to this by producing the pigment melanin. This pigment makes the skin darker. So your skin will become browner than it was before your body started producing the pigment. People often ask if I can get sunburned, and yes, I can. Darker skin is more resistant to the sun, but we can all get sunburned so it's important for us all to use sunscreen – everyone!

Linda: I've noticed that no matter your skin colour, everyone has pale skin on their palms and under their feet. Why is that?

Tinashe: It's because there are no pigments there. Remember, no matter how much you sunbathe and go brown during the summer, you are still just as pale as you are in those places.

Exercise

Go into the kitchen and find two glasses – and two eggs, one white and one brown. Break the white egg into one of the glasses and the brown one into the other glass. What's the difference?

You now have two eggs, and since it's not good to waste food you can make yourself an omelette instead! So as well as the eggs, you need this:

2 tablespoons whole milk

1/4 tsp salt

1 tablespoon butter

2 slices of ham, coarsely chopped

1 dl grated cheese

What you do:

Whisk the eggs, milk and salt together.

Melt the butter in the frying pan until it sizzles. Pour in the egg mixture.

Fry the omelette by pushing the solidified mass into the middle so that any that's still runny comes into direct contact with the pan.

- Add the ham and cheese when the omelette is almost finished. Fold it over and transfer it to a plate. *Bon appétit!*

Prejudices

A prejudice is an attitude towards or an idea about a group of people that is not based on reality. Prejudices are most-often negative, and can be due to someone not knowing much about those people or the group.

An example of a prejudice might be when an airport security guard checks dark-skinned people extra thoroughly, because he believes that dark-skinned people steal more often.

Prejudice is nearly always wrong.

Stereotypes

A stereotype is the idea that all those belonging to a particular group are the same. These beliefs often concern nationality, ethnicity, gender or skin colour. Typical stereotypes are how Asians are good at maths, or that melanin-rich people are good at dancing, or that boys only like playing with cars and that girls only like playing with dolls.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia means being afraid of or having an aversion to anything that is foreign. Many people with xenophobia are afraid of other cultures and people with a different skin colour to their own, and like to stay away from them. Xenophobia often stems from not knowing much about the foreign person or culture, and can change when you become more familiar with whatever it is you're afraid of. An example of xenophobia could be someone saying: "These foreigners are coming here and taking all our jobs!"

The difference between stereotypes and prejudices is that while stereotypes can change, prejudices are more difficult to change. So prejudice has a negative association. And we can easily say that all prejudices are stereotypes, but not all stereotypes are prejudices.

Vaishali: I can understand that having prejudices is stupid, but I don't see the problem with saying that someone is probably good at maths or probably good at dancing. Is there something I'm misunderstanding?

Tinashe: I understand that these examples of stereotypes might seem harmless, but when you categorise people according to their skin colour or where they come from, you're saying something about a person based solely on how they look – and that can be very unhealthy and harmful. What if you have roots from Asia, but find maths difficult. Or if you're like me, with melanin-rich skin, and can't dance. Stereotypes are often negative – prejudices are especially so – but I don't want to repeat examples of them here. Because the truth is that we cannot say something about a person based simply on how that person looks. Where these prejudices come from is often related to the environment a person is in.

About Prejudice

The word prejudice is derived from two words: “pre” (as in, before) and “judge.” A prejudice is when you judge someone without knowing anything about them. And if you don't know anything about the person, or have never talked to them, then you can't judge him or her based on anything more than their appearance. Prejudices are not always racist. They can apply to other things as well. Imagine that you see someone on the subway and they're wearing tatty old clothes and smell a bit strange. What would you have thought? That the person is no doubt quite poor, and probably has nowhere to live? If you thought that, then you are prejudiced. Prejudice can also be about someone's ability to function. Maybe you have seen a man in a wheelchair on the tram, and thought about how he perhaps can't be involved in sport? That is also being prejudiced. You have drawn conclusions about who the person is based on nothing but the person's appearance.

It is important to point out that prejudice can also be a defence mechanism. If a girl goes out alone at night and is extra careful when she notices that a man is following her, she is protecting herself. But in other situations, prejudice can be discriminatory, hurtful and harmful to the other person.

There is a nice expression, about giving someone “the benefit of the doubt.” This means that you choose to believe the most positive thing about a person if you are in doubt. So, if you are ever in a situation where you meet someone who looks a particular way, and you assume that he or she belongs to a certain group, ask yourself: Can I really know this for sure, just from the way this person looks? If not, try to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Probably one of our new countrymen

Talk among yourselves

Have you had prejudices against anyone?

Why was this, and where do you think they come from?

Representation and diversity - why is it so important?

Cultural diversity means that you include or feature people from several different cultures who have a variety of different skin colours – in books, on TV or in a weekly magazine for example.

Tinashe: Now I'm an adult, I've thought a lot about why I spent so much of my childhood wanting long blonde hair, blue eyes and a narrow nose. I hated my big lips and my curly hair. And I felt like my nose was far too wide. But why did I feel like that? When I was growing up I never saw anyone like me on TV or in magazines. The only dolls I ever had were white, because that was all you could get. The characters in my school textbooks had names like Lise and Magnus. The things that were presented as beauty ideals didn't resemble me at all.

Diversity is important. Not just because it enables children with different skin colours to see themselves represented "out there." It also exposes white children to a variety of skin tones and helps them understand that it's as natural to use a melanin-rich person for the leading role in a film, or as the main character in a book, as it is to use a white person.

The next time you watch a film, TV-series, or read a book or magazine, think about it: How diverse is it? What skin colour does the main character have? What about the other characters?

Diversity and representation isn't just important on TV, in books and magazines, or in social media, it's also important in real life. How much diversity is there among your circle of friends, your parents' circle of friends, in the street where you live, and among those working in the shops you normally visit? Diversity is important because it gives everyone a chance to see themselves represented in all aspects of life, so that we have a diverse society.

Diversity isn't just about skin colour, it also includes gender, religion, sexual orientation, a person's ability to function, and language. We are all different, but there is still room for everyone! Diversity enriches our society in so many ways. Imagine how boring it would be if we were all exactly the same!

Be alert, make a difference! Next time you are thinking of buying your little brother or little sister a gift from the toy store, check how many dolls with non-white skin colours are out on the shelves, or how many books there are where diversity is represented. If the store seems to be lacking in this respect, you can actually make a difference. Ask at the checkout if they can start stocking a more diverse range of books and dolls. If we all do this, as customers, the stores will have to listen to us. By doing so, we can get all skin tones represented.

In what ways do YOU think diversity has enriched our society?

Linda: I have two moms, and it would have been nice to see a family that looked like mine on TV. Every time I watch films or TV, it's always a dad and a mom, or a single mom or single dad. But there's hardly ever a family with two moms or two dads.

Jasmine: I never actually thought about that! I live with a mom and dad and see families similar to mine on TV all the time. But it's also important to see other types of families of course!

Linda: I can understand how you've not thought about it, and it doesn't have to be because you think it's wrong or because you're mean. The fact that you don't think about it is probably just a form of privilege. But I do think I would feel more included, and less alone, if I saw more families like mine on TV, or in magazines and films. And other types of families too, of course! It's really important that we are concerned with diversity and being represented, so that everyone can feel at home – literally!

Some people live in areas where there are very few others that have roots in other countries or a different cultural background. In those cases you have to try even harder to see the diversity in Norway. Because it's there!

Here is a Bingo game that you can play with a friend while watching TV. Can you get four in a row?

is trans

speaks more than two languages

has more than three siblings

is adopted

uses a wheelchair

is a vegetarian

is older than 70

has parents that are the same sex

is overweight

is a Muslim

is gay, lesbian or bisexual

has an intellectual disability

wears glasses

speaks sign language

has red hair

is Sami

Linda: At school once we were told to write down all the non-Norwegian dishes we ate in one week. It then dawned on me just how important diversity is. Think, without immigration and diversity there would be no pizza or taco Friday!

Exercise

Interview everyone in your family, or some of your classmates. What is their favourite dish, and where does that dish come from?

"Be the change you want to see in the world."

MAHATMA GANDHI

When we talk about racism, we often focus mainly on our differences. But it's actually much nicer to talk about the similarities between us. Look at the illustration and find things that the people in the picture have in common.

Talk among yourselves

What does representation and diversity mean to you?

Allies – step forward!

Being allied with someone means joining forces with them to achieve a common goal. What's the best way for you to be an ally in the fight against racism?

Sammy: I usually accompany my friends to and from school. One day on our way home, we passed a group of boys from middle school. They stopped us and asked why there was such a strong smell of spices. We didn't understand what they meant, so we just shrugged and said we didn't know. Then, in a really loud voice, one of the middle-school boys said, "It's probably because you're hanging out with a paki," and then looked at me. The other middle-school boys started laughing while they stared at me, and they carried on like that for a few seconds, before turning round again. I just looked down at the ground.

My best friend looked away, my other friend looked at his phone, while my third friend asked if we should go to the football pitch and play football later.

None of my friends said anything, not to the middle-school boys, or to me. I'd never felt that alone before.

Vegard: I often find it hard to say anything during conversations about racism, because I don't really feel like I've got anything to say. I would like to help or contribute, and at least speak out when I see someone being exposed to racism, but I feel like it would be awkward. It's somehow not "my fight," and even though I'd like to say something, I don't feel like I can.

Sammy: The worst thing for me was how my friends didn't say anything. I understand them not saying anything directly to those boys, because they were actually quite scary, but they didn't say anything to me either. I know that my friends do actually support me, but I just felt really stupid and alone and let down by them. They could have asked if I was alright, or if we should go somewhere else.

Vegard: When it comes to defending your friends: I actually don't think they knew what to do, and when that happens it's easy to do nothing at all. I've been in that situation myself. If I'd been standing there with you that day, what could I have done?

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends”

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Tinashe: An ally is someone who gives their support even if the topic doesn't concern them directly. Racism, prejudice and xenophobia aren't just a problem for melanin-rich people. They are everyone's problem, and we can do nothing about them unless EVERYONE is involved.

Here are six suggestions about how to be a good ally. PS: Ally is a slang for an ally.
Join in, everyone should be an ally!

1. Read about racism and its history (read more about this on page 11). Look for books, articles and films on the subject. You don't know where you are going until you know where you have been!
2. Listen to people who have felt the physical impact of racism. Listen to their stories and try to learn from them. Don't respond to their stories with comments like, "I didn't mean any harm" or "don't be so sensitive." Stories about racism are hard to tell, so consider it an indication of trust that they want to share their story with you.
3. Pay close attention to your social circle and surroundings. What kind of attitudes are there? Speak out emphatically, when you encounter bad attitudes. Even when people with darker skin than you aren't there.
4. Don't be afraid to be in an uncomfortable situation. It's not always easy to call out someone who is being racist or who has a racist attitude, but it is important. Don't be afraid of creating a bad atmosphere. Saying no is an important part of being a vocal anti-racist!
5. Learn from your mistakes. No one is perfect, and we all make mistakes from time to time. The most important thing is to learn from your mistakes and not repeat them.
6. Get involved! Whether it's in a demonstration, social media campaign, petition or a torchlight procession. Make it clear what attitudes YOU stand for!

Talk among yourselves

Have you been in a situation where you either needed an ally or were an ally yourself?

If you have suffered racism or witnessed a racist incident, you can report it to The Norwegian Centre against Racism on their website antirasistisk.no

When you experience racism, it's important to react!

Demonstrating and getting involved – does it really matter?

A demonstration is when several people collectively show their standpoint on an issue, and will often take place in front of an important building such as Parliament or the Royal Palace.

Vaishali: A couple of years ago I took part in a demonstration for the environment that had been arranged in connection with Greta Thunberg's school strike. It felt important at the time, although it didn't feel like that much happened afterwards. I don't think it helped or changed anything. Plus our absence from school was considered unauthorised. Why is it so important to demonstrate anyway?

Tinashe: It is now twenty years since Benjamin Hermansen's murder. But without exaggerating: I remember that day as if it were yesterday. I remember how it made me feel inside. I was literally terrified. For many days afterwards, I hid my face in the hood of my jacket and kept my hands in my pockets as I walked to and from the school bus stop, to prevent anyone in the passing cars seeing that I was dark-skinned. I was also really worried about my brothers. If it could happen to Benjamin, it could happen to us too. We were even the same age when it happened, me and Benjamin: fifteen years old. I walked around like that for several days. Terrified.

Then something happened! On February 1, a torchlight procession against racism was held in Oslo, and over forty thousand people took part. I'm so happy to have been among them because it gave me some of the most powerful and touching experiences of my entire life. The whole of Norway came out, and showed all the frightened girls and boys around our country that it's safe for them to show their faces on their way to and from school; that we don't accept that sort of thing, and that we are united in the fight against racism. I went round with my hood down after that.

Although we didn't put an end to racism that day, the procession sent a clear signal to those who feel the physical effects of racism: You are not alone, we don't accept racism, and we are united against it. You may sometimes wonder if there's any point in demonstrating, if what you're doing gets through to the politicians, or whether you can change Norway by going on a demonstration, or by signing and sharing a petition on social media – the most important thing is what you are signalling. It is about collectively stating what kind of world we want to live in and what we absolutely cannot tolerate!

No two cases are alike, and there are different ways of demonstrating! Let's take a look at some of them.

Political demonstration

Demonstrating politically is when several people come together and display their opinions in public. Political demonstrations are often about voicing your opinion, as part of a public

debate. They can be used to show that you agree with an issue, and also to show that you disagree. The success of a demonstration is often measured by how many people took part.

An example of a political demonstration: On 20 June 2020, thousands of demonstrators gathered outside the Norwegian parliament building in Oslo to protest against police violence and racism. The demonstration was one of many in several countries, following the killing of George Floyd by police in the United States. The demonstrations in both Norway and the USA sent a clear signal that this type of police violence and racism is not something we can accept, and important changes were set in motion.

Torchlight Processions

These are peaceful events where you walk in a procession, often carrying torches and candles. In Norway, torchlight processions are often held in memory of someone who has passed away, but they are also used to commemorate a specific event.

Example of a torchlight procession: After the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, torchlight processions were held all over Norway to express public disgust at the murder and the racist views that led to it. The support was particularly high in Oslo, where 40,000 people took part in the procession held there on 1 February 2001.

Social Media

Social media is a nice and effective way to get together and communicate a viewpoint or raise an issue. By using the hashtag symbol (#) for an issue on social media, you can demonstrate about an issue without having to show up physically, and it is easy to see how many people are supporting the issue digitally.

Example of a demonstration on social media: On June 2, 2020, to draw attention to racism in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, over 20 million people worldwide posted a black square on Instagram and tagged it with #blackouttuesday. The black square signified peoples' disgust at police violence and racism – and since black squares were almost the only things visible when you scrolled through Instagram that day, it meant the demonstration had a significant impact.

Petitions

These are campaigns where you try to gather as many signatures as possible to support a cause. The signatures collected are often shown to politicians to show the degree of public engagement for a cause in order to bring about change.

Example of a petition: 18-year-old Mustafa Hasan came to Norway as a six-year-old and lives in Asker. In 2019, the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) decided that he should be deported from Norway because his mother had not given the correct information about where they came from when the family arrived in the country as refugees. So Mustafa had lived nearly all his life in Norway, but now risked being thrown out of the country due to a mistake his mother made in 2008. Amnesty called for a petition – to let Mustafa stay in the country – that they could show to the authorities. The high level of public engagement led to Mustafa’s deportation being postponed, and the UNE’s decision was later annulled.

Boycotts

Boycotting is the act of protesting against a country, an organisation, or a person, by ceasing to cooperate with them, or trading with them or supporting them. Put simply: “I’m not supporting you until you start behaving yourself!”

Example of a boycott: In South Africa, from 1948, there was something called apartheid. This meant that people in South Africa were separated according to their race, so that whites and blacks couldn’t sit on the same benches, attend the same schools or eat at the same restaurants. Fortunately, the UN found this unacceptable, so in 1975 they called on their member states to boycott South Africa. Many countries refused to buy South African goods, and the country was banned from taking part in many activities. The UN did this to pressure South Africa to end apartheid, and in the end, although it took a while, it was successful. In 1994, South Africa finally made apartheid illegal.

Tinashe: It’s strange to think about, but my grandfather lived in South Africa during this period and experienced living under apartheid. He wasn’t allowed to use the same toilets as white people or enter any stores. Signs on the park benches and at the bus stops said “whites only,” which meant he could not use them. It’s crazy to think that it only became illegal in 1994. When I was 9 years old.

Exercise

The convenience store near your home refuses to hire someone who has a different cultural background than Norwegian or with a different skin colour than white, and you want to tell them that it's not okay. What is the best way for you to demonstrate?

Many of the parents at your school think you are not being taught enough about inclusion and diversity, and they want to show the school directors that there are many others who feel the same way. What is the best way for them to demonstrate?

A girl in Germany has been punched and dragged by her hijab on her way to school. It has sparked a global campaign called "I wear what I want," and you would like to show your support. How can you best demonstrate here in Norway?

Did you know that going against the flow can pay off? Rosa Parks protested against racism by sitting down.

Rosa Parks

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks got on a bus in Alabama and sat in an empty seat. Then a passenger came along and told Rosa she had to move because the seat she was sitting in was reserved for whites. Rosa refused to move, and was arrested and fined. Imagine that! She was arrested simply because she sat down and refused to move. It was her protest against discrimination and racism. This silent protest attracted international attention, and motivated other people to act like her. Rosa Parks' protest is considered an important part of the development of the American civil rights movement. Using your voice – or in this case, sitting down – can make a difference!

Another example is the NFL player Colin Kaepernick. On September 1, 2016, Kaepernick started going down on one knee during the American national anthem, instead of standing up which is what you normally do when the national anthem is played. By going down on one knee, he wanted to protest against the racism and abuse of power by the police. Some people felt that he was being disrespectful towards his country, but he also received a lot of support.

Tinashe: From 1955-1968, there was an important movement in the United States: The civil rights movement, as it's now known, strived to give the black population of the United States the same rights as white Americans. They fought for the right to vote in elections and to end racial discrimination. On March 28, 1963, they held a very important demonstration,

called “The March On Washington.” This was a protest in which around 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington to demand equal rights for all. It was also the place where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech.

Talk among yourselves

What do your parents know about the civil rights movement?

There has been racial segregation in both the USA and South Africa. The segregation in South Africa, which was called apartheid, lasted until 1994. Here are some of the things melanin-rich people were not allowed to do:

- go to the same school as white people
- use the same toilets as white people
- vote
- marry people who had a different skin colour
- live in houses/areas that were for white people only
- play football and other sports with white people
- use the same hospital as white people
- sit on a park bench that was for white people only
- lie on the same beaches as white people
- have jobs that were for white people only

Did you know

In Norway you can demonstrate in public places, but you are required to notify the police in advance. Have you ever seen a demonstration, or taken part in one?

Inspiring people

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

One of the leaders of the civil rights movement in the USA, and the man who gave the famous “I have a dream” speech. He was shot and killed in 1968.

Ruby Bridges

The first African-American to attend the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana. Bridges was confronted by several white protesters who did not want her to go to school with white students. It became so bad that she had to have police protection at school. All but one teacher refused to teach her, but she completed school nevertheless. Today she is an active anti-racist.

Nelson Mandela

South Africa's first black president, and a major opponent of apartheid in South Africa. Mandela was in prison for 27 years before he was released and elected president. In 1993 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Rosa Parks

African-American civil rights activist who refused to give up her bus seat for a white person, something which was illegal at the time. Several others before her had used this form of protest, but Rosa is the most famous. Her protest was the start of "The Montgomery bus boycott."

Kamala Harris

The first female, black and asian vice president of the USA. She leads the country with President Joe Biden. She has roots from India and Jamaica, and is a trained lawyer.

Amanda Gorman

A young poet who became known for her poem “The Hill We Climb,” written for Joe Biden's presidential inauguration in 2021. The poem is a reaction to the riots that took place before Biden was elected.

Malala Yousafzai

A Pakistani girl who was shot by Taliban soldiers while on her way to school. Under the Taliban regime, it is forbidden for girls to get an education. Malala survived, and in 2014 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Today she campaigns for the educational rights of girls all over the world.

Shut up, Uncle Kåre!

Standing up to racism from someone you don't know can be hard enough; whether it's speaking out when someone makes a racist comment in the store, or sticking up for your friend when you play an away game with the football team, or participating in an online discussion where you'll perhaps never see those you've stood up to again. But it is even harder to say something to friends and family. Those we love and trust, who are perhaps much older than us too, or adults. So what should we do if grandma uses the n-word to describe someone? Or if mom or dad says: "If they don't like it here, they can go back to where they came from." Can and should we say something?

The answer is of course YES!!

Linda: At Christmas two years ago, we were sitting around the dinner table on Christmas Eve. The whole family was present, and my mother told me she'd had a conversation with the neighbours about how cold it had been the last few days.

"Which neighbours?" asked my Uncle Kåre.

"The ones living over the road," Mom replied.

"Ah yes, the [n-word] *niggers*, I bet they're feeling pretty cold right now."

Everyone seemed quite uncomfortable, but nobody said a thing. Throughout that conversation, he said the n-word three times, and I didn't know what to do. I was brought up to trust adults, and to automatically think that as an adult he should know best. But I also knew that it was an unacceptable thing to say. Nevertheless, when none of the other adults said anything either, I became even more insecure – so I let it pass.

Vegard: My grandmother is 78 years old, and we visit her almost every Sunday. She is very kind and always gives us money or candy when we visit. She also has the world's cutest cat, called Snaffles because he's always trying to steal your food.

But when we visited Grandma the other day she told me that she had been to the doctor to taken a blood sample, and she said: “A darkie took my blood sample, and I can't stand them. I don't understand a word they say, either. I want to see a Norwegian when I'm at the doctors.”

It made my stomach hurt, I couldn't understand how my kind grandmother could talk about people like that. But I didn't say anything. Nor did my dad.

Sammy: Once I went on winter vacation with my cousin, and my aunt was surprised that I could ski, since I hadn't been born *with skis on my feet*, as they say here in Norway. She then asked me if my dad was disappointed that I liked skiing but didn't do athletics, “because ‘people like you’ are really good at running,” she said. I didn't say anything, because it's my aunt, and I'll meet her again at birthdays and so on. I just couldn't do it.

Linda: I feel like I've learned a lot from you all, but when I listen to your stories it sounds like there are so many people who still don't understand, even adults. It feels quite demoralising ... As though one person, like me, can't make a difference anyway.

Tinashe: Do you remember how we talked about allies? This is precisely why we need everyone to contribute. Imagine if you just planted a little seed in your uncle, your grandmother, your aunt, and it made them think about what they say, and about what kind of opinions have led them to word things the way they do. If we all do this together, it can make a real difference!

What would you have done?

Let's all take a look at the situations Linda, Vegard and Sammy have experienced with their families, and at how we can solve similar situations:

Linda's Christmas dinner

- 1: During the dinner, say that using the n-word is unacceptable.
- 2: Take Uncle Kåre to one side after dinner and tell him that you're upset about something he said. Ask him if you can talk about it together.
- 3: If you find it difficult to talk to Uncle Kåre yourself, you can tell another adult, and they can talk to Uncle Kåre for you.
- 4: Send a message or write a letter to your uncle explaining how you felt and why you were upset.

Which alternative would you have gone for?

At Vegard's grandmother's house

- 1: Tell your grandmother that we shouldn't talk about other people like that.
- 2: Talk to your mom and dad about what happened so they can talk to Grandma.
- 3: Ask Grandma why she talks about people like that, and tell her it made you feel sad and upset.

Which alternative would you have gone for?

Sammy's winter vacation

- 1: Tell your aunt that when she says those kinds of things, you don't feel Norwegian enough.

2: Tell your aunt that when she says “people like you” she is stereotyping you and being offensive.

3: Tell your parents, so that they can talk to your aunt.

Which alternative would you have gone for?

“They’re from another era, it was okay to say those things back then.” This excuse doesn’t hold up any more, and when elderly people express bad and outdated attitudes it is quite right for you to say so.

None of these alternatives are like saying: "Shut up, Uncle Kåre!" It might be tempting to do so, but it might not be very constructive. As much as it’s extra difficult to tell those we love, it is also extra important. We adults need to open our eyes and be aware of the views other people around us have. And since you are following us in this life, it's only fair that you tell us what kind of world you want to live in.

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

NELSON MANDELA

Melanin rich, proud and Norwegian

Sometimes I hear people say how they don’t see colour. But although I understand this may be well-meaning, it is still wrong, and I'll tell you why. When you see me, you see my skin colour too. Because if you don’t see my skin colour, you don’t see the racism I experience, and I need you to see it. To be good allies, it is important to keep our eyes open and act accordingly.

When I was a child, I never felt Norwegian enough, because I wasn’t white enough. I introduced myself as Tina instead of Tinashe because it made me sound more Norwegian.

I straightened my hair so that it would be hang down smoothly instead of sticking up in an afro like it really does. I felt like I had to be a good, well-behaved girl, because I wasn't just represented myself, I was representing everyone with a minority background. And that isn't fair. I should only have to represent myself of course, just as ethnic Norwegians only represent themselves and not the everyone in Norway. Nevertheless, I have found, through my friends who have roots from other countries, that when you do something good, you are Norwegian. But as soon as you do something wrong or something that people don't like, your roots are suddenly relevant. And it shouldn't be like that. I want both my good and bad actions to be attributed to Norwegian Tinashé. When I was young, I inherited a lot of clothes and head-wraps from Zimbabwe, and I put it in the back of the closet because I didn't want to stand out any more than I already did. And I expect that's something many people can identify with. So I want to tell you – you Norwegians who also have roots elsewhere – that you are Norwegian enough. No one should tell you anything else. Throughout my childhood, my mother tried to teach me that I could be Norwegian and proud of my roots at the same time.

Talk among yourselves

Have you been in a situation where someone has said something that upset you? Were you able to speak out? Why/why not?

That there was nothing contradictory about wearing a head-wrap one day and a *bunad* (Norwegian national costume) the next. But even though she constantly said these things, I still couldn't shake off the feeling that I wasn't Norwegian enough. I heard it all the time without saying anything. It ate me up, and I was eventually filled with a sad truth; and who listens to their mother at the age of twelve anyway? But now I understand: We humans are not just one thing. We are complex, and it is this combination of different things that makes us who we are. What I've been trying to tell you is that who you are has nothing to do with your skin colour. That being said, I am melanin-rich, I am proud, and I am Norwegian!

Tinashé: I wish I could say that I have always been good at speaking out, standing up for myself and being an active anti-racist. But the truth is, for many years I was afraid to. I lacked the language I needed to stand up for what I felt in my heart was right. I hope you now have some of that language, and that you are going out into the world and using your voice. I look forward to seeing all the wonderful things you will achieve.

And one last thing for you, reader: Keep your back straight, your head raised, and smile.
The world is yours! <3

Thank you!

Dear mom, thank you so much for always trying to teach me to be proud of my roots – those in Norway and those in Zimbabwe. I figured it out in the end, and now wear both with pride!

Many thanks to Linda Tinuke Strandmyr at Agenda X (Anti-racist center)

Many thanks to Antonia Lilie (my form teacher at the Rudolf Steiner school in Oslo)

Many thanks to my family and friends <3.