

Say NO to Racism!

Racial discrimination and what you can do to combat it

What is racism?

RACISM is the mistreatment of a group of people on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, place of origin or ancestry. The term racism may also denote a blind and unreasoning hatred, envy or prejudice.

Some expressions of racism are obvious, such as graffiti, intimidation or physical violence.

Racial and ethnic slurs or so-called “jokes” are other examples of obvious racial discrimination.

Unfortunately, they are often ignored because people do not know how to deal with them.

Other expressions of racism are more subtle, such as discrimination in hiring, apartment rentals and admission to clubs.

What is meant by discrimination? stereotype? prejudice?

DISCRIMINATION is the denial of equality based on personal characteristics, such as race and colour. Discrimination is usually based on prejudice and stereotypes.

STEREOTYPE means “set image.” The word comes from the process of making metal plates for printing. When applied to people, stereotyping refers to forming an instant or fixed picture of a group of people, usually based on false or incomplete information. Stereotypes are often negative.



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PREJUDICE literally means to “prejudge” based on preconceived ideas about others. No law can prevent prejudiced attitudes. However, the law can prohibit discriminatory practices and behaviours flowing from prejudice.

What are the effects of racial discrimination?

Racism poisons the atmosphere of trust we need in order to live in peace and harmony. Racist jokes and racial discrimination leave their victims feeling helpless and fearful. Racial discrimination also has a negative impact on workers’ productivity and economic performance. In contrast, a greater acceptance of our social diversity contributes to social harmony and economic well-being.

Do I have a responsibility to speak out against racism?

Yes, you do. Otherwise, your silence may be interpreted as tacit approval of discrimination. You have the right, as well as the responsibility, to speak out against racism.

What can I do to combat racial discrimination?

Some countries have legislations against racist acts. In New Brunswick, Canada for example, you can file a complaint with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. If another person files a complaint, you can support him or her by cooperating with the investigating officer.

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In addition, you can combat racism in the following ways:

A. Suggested activities for the community

- ▶ Take part in activities marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination every 21 March.
- ▶ Join organisations dealing with issues of racism and human rights.
- ▶ Suggest that your local newspaper publish a special section on the racial and cultural diversity of your community.
- ▶ Create a speakers' bureau of persons willing to speak about racism and human rights.
- ▶ Explore ways in which community organisations can work together to promote positive race relations.

- ▶ Suggest that your community develop a policy statement against all forms of racial discrimination.

B. In schools

- ▶ Object to racist jokes and insults.
- ▶ Organise an intercultural music or film festival.
- ▶ Invite guests to speak on racism and human rights.
- ▶ Organise a poster or essay contest.
- ▶ Show films on prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and racism.
- ▶ Examine the contents of television, film, radio and newspapers for stereotypes. Identify and discuss the stereotypes.
- ▶ Find out about human rights organisations in your area and what role they play.
- ▶ Suggest that your class or school

develop a policy statement against all forms of racial discrimination.

In the workplace

- ▶ Object to racist jokes and insults.
- ▶ Encourage dialogue on racism and human rights.
- ▶ Organise a lunch time film series.
- ▶ Encourage human rights awareness at union meetings through guest speakers, films or other presentations.
- ▶ Examine hiring practices to ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- ▶ Develop clear policy statements against all forms of racial discrimination and define ways to make them work through cooperation and consensus.

The Human Rights Act of New Brunswick (Canada) prohibits discrimination on many grounds, including race, colour, religion, national origin, place of origin and ancestry. The areas where discrimination is prohibited include:

- ▶ all aspects of employment;
- ▶ leasing and sale of premises;
- ▶ accommodation, services or facilities available to the public;
- ▶ membership in labour unions and professional, business or trade associations;
- ▶ signs.

Source: *A Primer from the Human Rights Commission of New Brunswick, Canada*, Website: <<http://www.gov.nb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/sayno.htm>>, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 1998.