

# Racism

The alarm clock blasted in his ear, and for once in his life Mohen didn't feel like throwing it violently out of the window! He had been awake for about an hour anyway and had the rare sensation of looking forward to going to school. The new football team list was going up today and he was pretty confident that he was going to be on it. He had only been at the school a short time, but he already knew that he was one of the best strikers in his year group and he had been team captain at his old school. Surely the PE teacher hadn't promised him a place, he wasn't allowed to do that, but he had hinted as much. Not that it was actually him picking the team anyway. The school had a system whereby a member of the sixth form was chosen to manage it. Mohen had met him, he seemed like a good bloke. He leapt out of bed and got ready for school. Within half an hour he was standing in front of the PE notice board, scanning it desperately for some sign of his name, but to his surprise and huge disappointment it wasn't there. He couldn't believe it, he hadn't even made it as a reserve, and without being big headed, he *knew* he was better than one or two of the others who had got in. Mohen was very confused. He played better than the others and turned up faithfully at practices. It couldn't be that Mike, the team manager, didn't know who he was, because he'd been at practices and talked to him. Mohen was absolutely gutted, he left the PE block and went to try and find his mates.

"Paul!" He yelled as he saw him across the playground, "Hang on."  
He ran to catch his friend up. "Have you seen the football team?"

"No I was going to look at it later, I know / won't be in it so I'm in no rush. Who's in, apart from you?"

"I'm not in."

"*What?!*"

"I said I'm not in. He's got Matt and James instead."

"You're joking! You're much better than them. Maybe he didn't see you at practice."

"He did, I even spoke to him. I just don't get it."

Mohen decided to try and find Mike during the day to ask him why he wasn't in the team, but Mike either wasn't in school, or their paths didn't cross, and he had to go home that evening without having spoken to him.

Mohen was watching TV later that evening when the phone rang, it was Paul.

"Hi, Mo, you'll never believe what I've just found out! We've got to do something about this. I was talking to Pete on the phone and I told him you weren't in the team and he said he wasn't surprised. I asked him what he meant, because everyone else I've spoken to has been shocked. Pete was in the changing room the other day, when Mike and Phil were in the PE office and he heard them talking about the team. Apparently Phil said that you were a good player and Mike said 'Yeh, he's OK, but I don't want any of *his sort* in the team.'"

At the other end of the phone Mo was silent, seething with rage. He was so fed up with meeting this kind of prejudice. 'His sort'. In other words they didn't want him in the team because he was a different colour. No matter that he had been born in England. No matter that his parents had both been born in England. No matter that he had never even *been* to India. The reason he was not in the football team was because of the colour of his skin.

"Mo, are you OK? Say something."

"Yeh, I'm fine. Wouldn't you be?"

"What can we do Mo? There must be something, I bet that's why Naz didn't get it either, he's not as good as you, but he should have made it at least as a reserve."

"What *can* we do Paul? Go running to the teachers and grass him up? I don't exactly think that'll help. He'll probably just get his mates round and beat us up."

"Well we've got to think of *something*. They shouldn't be able to put idiots like him in charge. Lets think about it tonight and see if we can come up with something."

"OK thanks mate," replied Mo in a depressed voice, "I'll see you tomorrow."

When Mo's alarm went off the following morning he threw it onto the floor, he was not in a good mood. He appreciated Paul's support and the fact that he wanted to try and help, but the reality was, there was nothing they could do. If Mike was racist enough to leave Mo off the team and risk losing matches because of it, he was not going to listen to reason. Besides, he was two faced, he had been nice enough to Mo, when he had met him.

When he arrived at school, Mo found Paul waiting for him.

"Mo! I've got an idea!"

"What?" asked Mo; sounding really depressed.

"Well, how do we know why you have been left off of the team? Because Pete heard Mike and Phil talking when they thought nobody was around. So how do we make sure Smithy knows what's going on, without actually grassing? We make sure he hears a 'private' conversation and wait and see what happens!"

Mo laughed, "That might just work," he said.

They had to wait ages for an opportunity to put their plan into action and Mo had to suffer the frustration of watching the team go off to the match without him, but if they were going to execute their plan, they had to make it look real. At last an opportunity came. Paul and Mo were sent into the PE cupboard to get some equipment during a lesson, which the student teacher was taking. They could hear Mr. Smith on the phone next door in his office.

"If we can hear him, he can hear us." whispered Paul. Mo nodded his head in agreement.

They waited for a short while until they heard Mr. Smith put the phone down. Then they started to chat, trying desperately not to sound unnaturally loud or false.

"It's a shame the team's not doing too well isn't it Paul?"

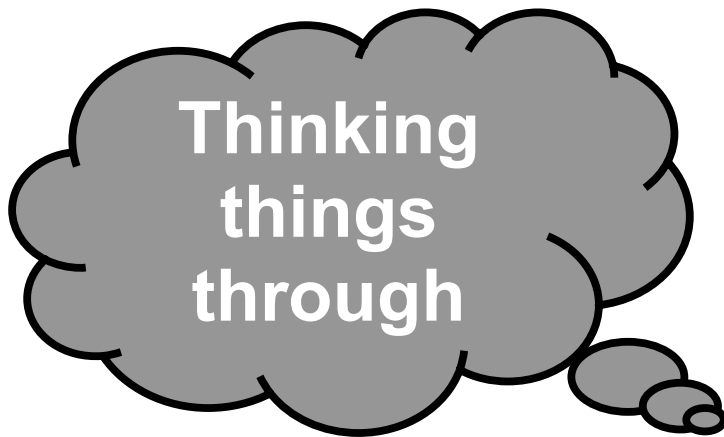
"Certainly is Mo, but we can't tell anyone what we heard about Mike, or his mates'll beat us up."

"I can't believe he left me out of the team just because of my colour. I'm black! It's not fair. But what can I do? I'm not a grass."

"Maybe if the team does really badly, Mike'll get the sack and we'll get a decent captain."

Paul motioned at Mo to end the conversation and get out; they didn't want to risk overkill.

Sitting in his office, a few things were becoming clear to Mr. Smith. He'd wondered why Mike had left Mo out of the team, but had decided not to interfere. The boys needed to learn from their mistakes. That was the point of putting a sixth former in charge in the first place. But this was different. He thought carefully, he wanted to talk to Mike without bringing Mo and Paul into it as the source of his information. He'd say he'd heard a couple of kids in the corridor talking about it as if it were common knowledge. He smiled to himself, those boys were terrible actors, but if what they said was true, it needed sorting out.



- 1) Why do people have different coloured skin?
- 2) Everyone has some kind of prejudice. Why do you think this is?
- 3) Imagine what it would be like to be either
  - a) The only white person/black person in your school or,
  - b) The only physically disabled person in your school or,
  - c) A new pupil arriving half way through year nine

Write about how you think it would feel to be different, especially if people were nasty to you because of it.

- 4) In the Second World War, six million Jews were killed by the Nazis.

More than fifty years later, in 1999, thousands of ethnic Albanians were tortured and killed by Serbs because of their race.

- a) Why do you think that human beings do not learn from the mistakes made throughout history?
- b) Give another example of this?
- c) Think of an example from your own life, where you have not learned from your mistakes?

In the news stories about racism are often stories of whites against blacks or vice versa, but this is not the only kind of racism that exists in our society. Racism is when a person of one race or nationality is prejudiced against another race or nationality. Prejudice is not always a colour issue. For example it may be that one race considers another race to be particularly stupid or not very generous. Many people do not realize that they are being prejudiced when they tell a

particular joke, or make a comment, but what they say may hurt or offend somebody.

5) In pairs discuss

a) Any examples of prejudice which you have encountered, that have not been an issue of skin colour.

b) An occasion when you have seen someone being abused because of prejudice and you have chosen to do nothing about it.

6) Racism can be found in many schools. What sort of problems can it lead to? What can be done to tackle this?

## A Christian Perspective on Racism

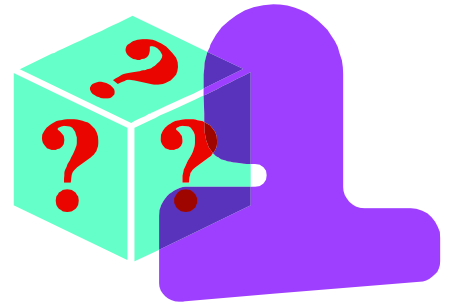
Christians believe that racism is wrong. They believe that all people are created in the image of God and therefore are equal in God's sight, so everyone deserves equal respect as human beings (Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them." Saint Paul sums this up in Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In John's gospel (John 4:1-26) there is a story about Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. In doing this he was breaking several 'rules'.

- He had not been formally introduced to the woman and they were alone, in those days this was seen as very immoral.
- The woman was a 'sinner'. She had been married several times and was now living with a man. Society had shunned her, which was why she was out fetching water in the middle of the day, when most people were having a nap!
- Perhaps most shockingly, the woman was a Samaritan. Jesus was Jewish and the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. They would avoid each other and would not ever share so much as a cup of water. Yet here was Jesus talking to the woman and trying to help her.

In this story, we see Jesus breaking several taboos. The example he gives us is one of compassion for a fellow human being, regardless of race or gender.

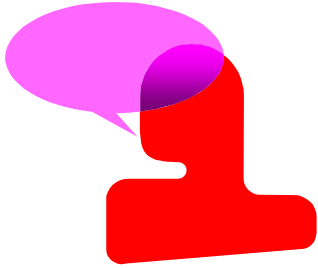
## Questions

- 1) Read the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, the man who had been attacked was a Jew. Jews and Samaritans did not get on with each other – there was racial hatred between them. Explain what you think must have been going through the injured man's mind when he realized that the person approaching was a Samaritan.
- 2) Martin Luther King was a famous Christian who fought for equal rights for black people in America in the 1960s. He had a dream that all people would get along together no matter what race, colour or religion, and that people would be judged by their character, not by their skin colour. Think of/research examples from the news which show (a) how this dream is coming true in the world, and (b) where there is still work to be done.
- 3) The majority of people in the UK think that racism is wrong. What would you say or do to challenge a friend who held racist attitudes?
- 4) If the majority, or leaders in a group of friends have racist attitudes, what advice would you give to someone in the group who is struggling to hold on to their own anti racist views?
- 5) Prejudice is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. It is generally accepted that everyone has some prejudices. Racial prejudice is one extreme view. Think about your opinions and identify areas of your life where you are prejudiced.



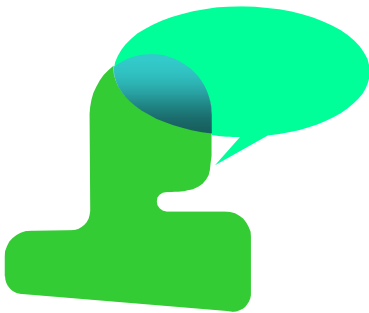
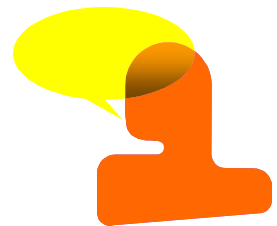


## Personal Perspectives on Racism



“All people are made in the image and likeness of God and so all people are of equal value and dignity. Nationality and culture didn't seem to matter that much to Jesus, he treated each individual as a person, not a label.”  
*Paul Cummins, RC Priest*

“I believe that all people are equal, no matter what their race.”  
*Dr Chrissie Vimlanthan GP*



“Racism for a Christian is always wrong.”  
*Rt Rev Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter*