



Written Comprehension Text

GRADE 10

Racial Inequalities and Racism

(Adapted)

1. Data from the HSRC's South African Social Attitudes Survey (Sasas) series showed that while there are signs of improving race relations, feelings of inter-racial dislike and mistrust persist at consistently high levels.
2. We need to come to terms with the fact that "race" is a fiction. We now know this scientifically. There is no such thing as a black gene, a white, Indian or coloured gene. "Race" was invented to justify the subjection of people with darker skins. In South Africa, through apartheid, we institutionalised this fiction.
3. This is called racism. We used "race" to determine superiority and inferiority. It provided our justified oppression and exploitation of each other. Also, we used it to declare who was in or who was out and to pit ourselves against one another. We normalised the idea that our "looks" - our "race" - mattered. We have done the same with gender. Gender and "race" are related.
4. We need to understand how "race" is still being used to serve exclusionary and oppressive interests. We need to confront the reality of how disrespectfully African people have been treated around the world.
5. In confronting this reality, we must address two things: our political, social, and economic systems, and our personal behavior. The first requires investing in our legal and social fabric with the full intent of our unconditional equality as human beings. The second requires that we live the spirit of the principle of our unconditional equality.
6. This requires tough self-reflection that challenges the way we use the colour of our skins to make inferences about our characters, intelligence, or our capacities. We all need to find a way of saying that I am not my outward appearance.
7. We come from a history of discrimination. The fight against racism starts with an awareness of how it is insidiously inserted into our daily lives. It is not simply political correctness that we want. It is not just about being civil to each other.



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8. The anti-racism of South Africa requires a commitment to the idea that all human beings have the capacity to surpass the cages of their histories. Personally, it may help us realise that our dignity is unconditional. It does not depend on the racial identities imposed on us. We are human without qualification. At a group level, it could show us how problematic the idea is that we owe greater loyalty to those who look like us simply because they look like us.
9. This way of thinking about "race" could be liberating. It could free us from the conceits of superiority and the anxieties of inferiority. It could tell us in no uncertain terms that we no longer need to think with our skins.

This article forms part of a series of racism dialogues aimed at addressing racial inequalities and racism in South Africa, hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council.