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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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## **WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?**

In a report published in late 2017, Finland was found to be among the most racially discriminatory countries in Europe. Especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East experience a lot of discrimination. Although discrimination is experienced widely, few Finns consider themselves racist or prejudiced. If this was the case, the research results would, however, look very different.

The Am I Racist? campaign challenges the public to identify and acknowledge their biases, and to change their actions. Through this campaign, we wish to encourage open discourse on attitudes and mitigate polarisation. The campaign ambassadors Elisabeth Rehn, Nasima Razmyar, Iikka Kivi, Risto E.J. Penttilä and Tuomas Enbuske have opened the conversation by discussing their own biases.

## **WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE MONEY?**

The donations are used in the Finnish Refugee Council's work in Finland and abroad. We defuse prejudice by increasing the public's knowledge on refugees and migration, facilitating dialogue on prejudice and biases, and mediating conflicts with ethnic aspects. We also develop new concepts and models to reduce racism (i.e. the training circle for racism, used by the Finnish Red Cross, was developed by the FRC). By working to prevent prejudice in areas of conflict and developing countries we also prevent new armed conflicts.

## **IS THIS A CONSTRUCTIVE WAY OF DISCUSSING RACISM?**

The aim with the campaign is for it to be a pragmatic opening in the debate. We are worried about the increasing polarization in society and hope that we can identify and change biases by discussing them. We do not believe that blaming and accusing each other for racism moves the discussion forward.

## **DOESN'T THE CAMPAIGN NORMALIZE RACISM?**

We want to emphasize the difference between having biases and actually acting biased or discriminating. Our message is that having biases is human and that no one is immune to them. That's why it is so important to identify our biases. Acting on them - whether done knowingly or subconsciously - is not acceptable. In order to reduce biases we do, however, need to be aware of them.

## **WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER TO GIVE A VOICE TO THOSE WHO ARE DISCRIMINATED?**

Giving a voice to victims of discrimination is extremely important, we need to support and listen to the experiences of those who are discriminated. As one of the main reasons for discrimination is biases, we do, however, see that there is a need for a discussion about them as well. In order to reduce structural racism we need to acknowledge the biases we have. We hope that our ambassadors, who are known for their work for equality, can encourage others to really analyze their own thoughts and behavior. We all have biases - what matters is identifying them and choosing not to act on them.

## **RACISM AND BIASES ARE NOT THE SAME. WHY ARE YOU MIXING THEM UP?**

It is true that racism and prejudices are two different things. The campaign does not want to mix these up but rather show the connection that there is between the two. Biases born of ignorance or unconscious thoughts can easily lead to discrimination, racism and xenophobia. It is hard to define when biases turn into racism, even small things that seem insignificant can become discrimination and racism when the victim encounters this behavior every day.

## **WHY DOESN'T THE CAMPAIGN ADDRESS PREJUDICE AMONGST MINORITIES?**

The majority's discrimination of minorities is a proportionally larger problem in our society. As the large part of those who live in Finland are part of the majority, the biases are more present and have a greater impact on minorities' every day life. In addition, minorities do not have the same possibilities to affect and change the behavior of the majority.

## **WHY ARE THERE COMPANIES SUPPORTING THE CAMPAIGN?**

We are really happy that the public attitudes and equality are seen as important in the business world. Our jobs are a big part of our lives. Employment and the workplace climate have a great impact on our well-being. That's why it's so important that workplaces are free from discrimination and biases. In addition, companies have a large influence on society at large which means they can lead the way for a more open, equal and inclusive society.