

All equal – all different

*“All human beings are universally equal and specifically different. Universal equality and specific differences must be respected” **

THEMES



DISCRIMINATION



GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS



GLOBALISATION

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 2

GROUP SIZE



6-60

TIME



40 MINUTES

Themes	Discrimination and Xenophobia, General human rights, Globalisation
Complexity	Level 2
Group size	6 – 60
Time	40 minutes
Overview	This is a sort of quiz - short and provocative enough to be interesting in itself but also the basis for a great group discussion!
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equality in dignity ▪ The right to rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, religion, etc. ▪ The right to a nationality
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To address the universality of human rights ▪ To make participants aware of ethnocentrism and prejudice in themselves and others ▪ To develop the ability to read information critically and independently
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Handout ▪ Large sheet of paper (A3) or flipchart paper and markers (optional)
Preparation	Copy the handout, one per participant. Alternatively, write it on a blackboard or use an overhead projector (make sure everyone can see it).

Instructions

1. Tell the participants that the following activity is a sort of quiz, but that the purpose is not to see who has got it right and who has got it wrong; it is just a starting point.
2. Hand out or display the two quotations. Allow five minutes for the participants to read them.
3. Then ask them individually to decide:
 - a) the source of the first text; which book or document is it an extract from?
 - b) which country/region of the world the author of the second text comes from.
4. When everyone is ready, ask participants to get into small groups of about three people. Give them 20 minutes to discuss and analyse their individual choices. They should think about the following questions and if possible come up with a collective answer:
 - Why did they choose one answer in preference to others?
 - What do the texts say about the authors?
 - What do they think about the texts?
5. When the groups have finished, come into plenary and do a round collecting the answers to question a) from each group. Invite the groups to state the reasons that led them to their choices. Then repeat the round collecting answers to question b).

6. Reveal the author, Said al-Andalusi from Spain, and proceed to the debriefing and evaluation.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a brief review of the activity and then, if you feel the group is ready for it, go on to introduce the notions of prejudice and ethnocentrism. Address the following questions (either in plenary or you can have smaller groups if needed):

- Were participants surprised by the solution?
- How did people make their original individual choices? Were they based on guesswork? Intuition? Or real knowledge?
- Did people change their minds about their choices during the discussions in small groups? What made them change their minds? Peer pressure? Good arguments?
- How did people defend their choices in the small group discussions? Did they stick to their choices tentatively or strongly?
- Why did the author describe people from the North the way he did?
- What clues does the second text give us about the author, about his looks and about his culture?
- To what extent is the author's view the result of his own ethnocentric viewpoint and prejudice? Or is it fair to say that at that time the cultures in northern Europe were less "civilised" than his culture?
- Can participants think of examples when they heard of or read about other people being addressed in similar ways? How would it feel to be considered as some kind of inferior people?
- When people are not valued for what they are, what consequences often occur? Can they think of examples from history? And from the present?
- What should we do to counter the effects of prejudice? Are there people or groups in the participants' areas or countries that are also the subject of prejudice? Which ones?

Tips for facilitators

The extracts were taken from a book by a famous scholar from Cordoba, Andalusia (in what is now Spain) who was born in 1029 AD / 420 AH. Said al-Andalusi was a scholar well known for his wisdom and knowledge. For him, civilisation and science were very close to knowing the Holy Koran. He was not only learned in religion, but he also excelled in Arabic literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and other sciences.

It should be remembered that at this time, the Mediterranean basin, and especially the Arab Kingdoms around it, constituted the centre of 'civilisation'. Knowledge was not nearly as advanced in "the North", as Said calls northern Europe, as it was in the Arab world, Persia, China and India.

Be aware that, depending on the group, you may need to give participants insights into how to read texts more critically. You may have to point out that the second text actually reveals a lot about the author, his appearance and his culture, for example, that he must have had curly hair and dark skin. Critical reading involves not only understanding the content of the text, but also thinking about the context, who the author is and why s/he writes what s/he does. Realising this is an important step to understanding how to read all messages (history, news, poems, song texts, etc) and to be aware of the values that they transmit.

Key dates

21 June
World Peace and
Prayer Day

One way of introducing the issue of ethnocentrism is to point out to participants that the author - used to people with dark skin and curly hair - provides a very good definition a “contrario” of what he considers “normal”. It is also important that, through the discussion, you help participants understand that cultural differences do not make people “better” or “worse” than others. You should point out that it is hard not to judge others without prejudice because we take our own cultural perspective as being “the norm”. To appreciate this - our own ethnocentrism - is an essential step towards recognising it in others, and to being able to communicate successfully with people of other cultures.

Leave extra time at the end of the activity so you have the flexibility to discuss further the issues and ideas which were raised. For example, you may wish to go into an analysis of, or discussion about, history teaching and how much (or how little) we in Europe actually learn about other cultures.

Note: the excerpts are taken from the “Book of the Categories of Nations – Science in the Medieval World”, by Said al-Andalusi, translated by Sema’an I. Salem and Alok Kumar, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1991.

Suggestions for follow-up

If you wish to go further with ideas about the universality of human rights, you could use the activity “Act it out”, on page 86, which involves creativity and drama.

HANDOUT
All equal – all different quiz

1. What is the source of the following text? What book or document is it an extract from?

“All people on earth from the East to the West, from the North and from the South, constitute a single group; (they) differ in three distinct traits: behaviour, physical appearance and language.”

Choose one of the following answers:

- The UNESCO declaration on racism, 1958 Herodotus “History”, 440 BC The Vedas, India, c.a. 1.000 BC
 Report of the “All different - all equal” youth campaign, Council of Europe, 1996 Said Al-Andalusi, 1029 AD / 420 AH
 None of the above

2. Which country/region of the world does the author of this text comes from?

“Those who live in the extreme North (of Europe...) have suffered from being too far from the sun. Their air is cold and their skies are cloudy. As a result, their temperament is cool and their behaviour is rude. Consequently, their bodies have become enormous, their colour turned white, and their hair drooped down. They have lost keenness of understanding and sharpness of perception. They have been overcome by ignorance and laziness, and infested by fatigue and stupidity.”

Choose one of the following answers:

- China Europe India Africa Persia None of the above

* Article 1 of the Declaration of Rights and Duties of Human Beings as Proposed by Young People. The declaration was created by 500 young people from 80 different nationalities at the Palace of Europe in Strasbourg, under the initiative of Les Humains Associés and the Association for the Declaration of 26 August 1989 (AD 89). www.humains-associes.org