

RACISM



**A TALKING POINTS LESSON
FOR READING AND SPEAKING**

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Introduction

What is racism?

Does racism exist in your country?

Have you ever been the victim of racism?

Why Me?

Read Peter's account below.

I arrived in America when I was just a kid.

I grew up here and spoke the language, and went to school here. I regard myself as American.

I am American.

But I was born in Vietnam.

To some people, they might think that I don't look American — whatever that means.

There is usually no problem when I am hanging out with my friends, or in college or talking to most people. My friends don't think of me as being anything else but American.

They might ask questions about Vietnam and Vietnamese culture, but to me, that is just polite curiosity. And I am happy to talk about it.

But some people see me and it just sets off a trigger inside them.

For example, one time I was in the supermarket and this woman was staring at me. It wasn't just a casual look. I could see

by the expression on her face that she was very upset about something.

I thought maybe I had bumped into her in the supermarket aisle. And as I was thinking about why she was looking at me with an angry look, she started shouting at me.

I could not believe what she was saying.

She said things like “What are you doing in my country?” and “Get the hell out of here! Go back to China!”

At first, I stood there with my mouth open. I was unable to speak.

But then I tried to defend myself.

So I said: *I’m not from China, I’m from —*

But before I had a chance to tell her where I’m from or where I was born, she started screaming at me.

“I don’t care where you’re from,” she said. “You’re not American, so get out of here!”

I was so shocked by what she said that I walked out of the supermarket.

I walked out of there and kept on walking until I got back home. Two of my friends were there, and I told them what had happened.

They were more angry than I was. At first, I was shocked, but as I processed it, I kind of thought nothing of it. Just some crazy woman in a supermarket.

It doesn't happen every day and I would probably never see her again.

My friends were livid though.

They said I should make a full report to the police. But I disagreed.

If I made a report with the cops, what would it achieve? Even if they catch her, it's her word against mine.

Another time, I had some trouble on a Friday night. Of course, it's the evening and people have been drinking, so that's when trouble can flare up.

But this guy wanted to fight me based on the fact that I looked different.

Luckily for me, I had some friends with me and they helped calm the situation down. The guy walked away in the end, but if I had been alone, it could have been much worse.

I think I just have to accept that some people are ignorant.

Reading Comprehension Questions

When did Peter come to America?

Does Peter think he is American or Vietnamese?

How is Peter regarded at his university or in his circle of friends?

Are people curious about Peter's ethnicity?

How does Peter feel about this?

In your own words, describe what happened to Peter when he was in the supermarket.

Which country did the woman think Peter was from?

How did Peter respond?

What did he do finally?

Did he tell his friends what happened? What did they think about it?

Did Peter tell the police? Why/why not?

What was the second incident that Peter talked about?

According to Peter, what often happens on a Friday night?

How was the situation resolved?

Essential Vocabulary

just a kid	I regard myself	Vietnam
hanging out	culture	curiosity
sets off a trigger	staring	casual look
expression	upset	to bump into someone
aisle	get the hell out	defend myself
shocked	processed	livid
a full report	achieve	her word against mine
flare up	based on the fact	calm the situation
ignorant		

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Culture — *the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.*

“I have lived in Japan for many years but I am still coming to terms with the culture here.”

Discussion Questions

What do you think of Peter's story?

Has anything like this happened to you?

Do you think the woman in the story has a problem with Peter?

Or with people from Vietnam? Or Asian people in general?

If you were Peter in this situation, what would you have said or done?

If Peter was born in Vietnam, but raised in America, what is his nationality? Is he Vietnamese or American? Explain your reasons.

Why do you think Peter's friends seemed more angry than him? What reasons do they have do you think?

What does Peter mean about not calling the police? Does he think it's a waste of time?

Is there racism in your country?

If so, what kind of people are racist? And who do they direct their racism to?

Are people racist towards people from your country?

Why? What are the reasons?

Have you ever been the victim of racism?

Has anyone shouted out something to you? A racist remark for example?

If you have any experience of this, try to tell the class your story.

Have you ever witnessed racism towards another person? How did you react?

Can you define the word racism? What does it mean?

Are there any campaigns in your country to get rid of racism?

What do these groups do?

Why do you think people are racist? What makes them this way?

Do you sometimes have any racist thoughts or feelings to other people? What makes you feel this way?

Do you think we can live in a world without racism? Is it possible?

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in this role play.

- **A** – this person is the victim of racism
- **B** – this person objects to person A

The Situation

Person A is walking in a shopping mall. They are minding their own business and just shopping.

Then Person B sees Person A and decides that they do not belong in the shopping mall.

Person B says things like ‘Get out of here!’ and ‘Go back to your own country!’.

- How does Person A respond?
- Do they just walk away?
- Or stand their own ground and tell Person B to mind their own business?

Prepare your role play in pairs. Then when you are ready, you can show the class.

Debate

This is a debate activity.

Divide the class into two teams of equal number. Then choose one person to act as chairperson.

The chairperson will ensure there is order during the debate and allow every person to speak.

Team A

You believe there is no racism in your country. Everyone gets along with each other. And the people of your country treat all foreign visitors with respect.

Team B

You believe that there is racism in your country.

People from your country look down on certain foreigners.

While praising other foreigners.

You think this is unacceptable!

Get together with your team and think of things to say. Then

when you are ready begin the debate.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Imagine you have been the victim of racism. Maybe something similar to Peter in the story happened to you.

Try to write a short story of your experience and what took place.

When you have finished your writing, read the story out in class.

Credits

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