

## DON'T BE A BYSTANDER

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### Source

This activity was developed by Oana Nestian Sandu.

### Themes

- ▶ Social and political context
- ▶ Stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination
- ▶ Intercultural communication and dialogue

Other topics addressed: social justice, human rights violations, bystanders/upstanders

### Competences addressed

- ▶ Attitudes: respect for oneself and others; a sense of social justice and responsibility; openness and curiosity towards diversity
- ▶ Knowledge of human rights
- ▶ Skills: empathy; solidarity

**Complexity** : Level 4

**Group size** : 12 to 20 people

**Time** : 90 minutes

### Objectives

- ▶ To raise awareness about everyday injustices and discrimination
- ▶ To reflect upon the consequences of choosing to be a bystander or an “upstander” in situations of discrimination, racism and injustice
- ▶ To analyse various ways in which people can react when someone else is treated unfairly because of their perceived cultural belonging.

### Materials

A space that can be used as a “stage” where participants act out the scenario.

### Preparation

This activity can be preceded by the activity “From exclusion to integration”. In this flow, participants move from analysing the relationships between different groups in society, to taking action to redress social injustices.

Check the scenarios indicated in the handout and choose one which is more relevant for your group.

### Instructions

1. Ask for volunteers to act out one of the scenarios presented below. Give them about 10 minutes to prepare for playing the scenario. Inform them that they will need to play the scene several times in the same way.
2. After the first scene has been acted out in its entirety, tell the other participants that the scene will be played again and they can stop it at any time to intervene and change the situation in order to address the discrimination and redress the injustice. The intervention can be made either by replacing a character or by adding a new character to the play. One character can be replaced at a time.
3. When participants want to intervene in the play, they must signal to the facilitator that they want to intervene and say which character they want to replace or add. Then the scene proceeds from that point on. Any character can be replaced, but when replacing a character people should stay true to the original personality of the character. The behaviours can be adjusted slightly but the characters’ views cannot be turned into completely opposing views.

4. After the first intervention, more interventions can be made until the play comes to a satisfactory ending, no one else wants to intervene or the facilitator decides it is time to stop.
5. A debriefing discussion follows.

## Debriefing and evaluation

Hold a short “de-roling” activity, where participants are asked to return to themselves and step out of the character they played, for example by shouting out their name or literally shaking off their role.

Reflect with participants on the following aspects.

- ▶ What do you think about the scene that was acted out? Was it realistic?
- ▶ How was it for the “actors” playing these roles?
- ▶ Was it easy to come up with ideas to change the ending of the scene? Did the new characters display realistic behaviours?
- ▶ What did you think of the alternatives proposed? Are they possible ways of redressing discrimination?
- ▶ Are there similar situations of discrimination in your context? What solutions could redress discrimination in these examples?
- ▶ What can motivate people to stand up and act against discrimination?
- ▶ What could you do to be an upstander in cases of discrimination?

## Tips for facilitators

When describing to participants how they can get involved in the scene to change it, explain that when they choose to replace a character they must stick to the original personality of the character. They can alter the behaviour slightly, but cannot completely transform a character’s views to ones reflecting an opposite stand-point. This would not be realistic.

This method is based on Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre. Familiarising yourself more with the method can help you be prepared to handle various situations.

## Variations

Instead of using the scenarios below, the group of young people can prepare a few scenarios in a preliminary session to this activity.

### Scenario 1:

Two friends are sitting in a café discussing ordinary subjects. At one point a Roma woman enters the café and the waiter tells her she should leave because she is not welcome there. The Roma woman says she only wants to have a coffee and is supposed to meet a friend and she does not want to cause any trouble. The waiter insists she should leave.

One of the two friends sitting at the table tells the other that maybe they should do or say something since it is not right that the Roma woman be thrown out of the café. The other one says it is none of their business, that they do not care anyway and that probably the Roma woman is there to steal. The other friend says that this is not fair and that they would like to do something, but eventually gives up and the waiter succeeds in making the Roma woman leave the café.

### Scenario 2:

At a recruiting company, two recruiters are talking about a candidate they interviewed recently who proved to be competent for the open position, but is a Muslim and they have clear instructions not to hire Muslims.

Two other people who were hired recently as recruiters are standing in the hallway, waiting to meet their boss and overhear the conversation. One of them is shocked by what they hear and tells their colleague that something like this is unacceptable and they should address it. The colleague says they might get in trouble if they get involved. The first makes an attempt to confront the two recruiters and tells them what they had heard, but the pair just say it is a complex matter and new employees should stay out of it. The first recruiter does not really know what to say or do so gives up. The other colleague does not say anything.

**Scenario 3:**

Four students are discussing a new co-student who is black. Two of them are planning to bully her online, to create a fake account and to make fun of her and tell her to go back to her country. The third one is initially on their side, mainly because they want to be part of their group, but at some point starts to say that this is wrong and it might have negative psychological effects on the new colleague. The fourth student listens to the whole conversation but does not say anything.

The first two start laughing and are surprised that their friend cares about a black person. They tell the third student that if they are so worried about her psychological status then they should no longer hang out with them and become friends with the new black student. Regardless, they have every intention of going ahead with their plan. The third student opens their mouth to say something, but eventually gives up, not knowing what to do, or whether they should actually do something about this.