**How racism starts (/Racialization) - video**

Hi, I’m Satu.

Hi I’m Salla.

You’re participating in the Together Without Racism training.

Do you remember what racism is?

Racism is a system that considers a certain group of people to be inferior to another group of people because of the colour of their skin, their culture, or their language. It involves a position of power that some groups of people benefit from, while others don’t. The group of people that holds power benefits from the fact that the groups of people that are considered inferior do not have the same opportunities in life.

So how does racism come about? This process is known as racialization.
That’s when we think that we can know something about a person based on how they look. We might make certain assumptions about people based on their skin colour, for example.

Even though we’re all people, it’s normal to group people by how they look.

Perhaps you could be grouped by the colour of your hair into those with light hair and those with dark hair. Whether you have dark or light hair doesn’t affect your personality, behaviour, how good you are at school, or how friendly you are, right?

During the course of history, people began to baselessly associate assumptions like these with how people look.

For example, when Europeans wanted to conquer other countries, they justified this by saying that the others were less advanced and less intelligent than they were. Even though that wasn’t true. At the same time, taking people from Africa to America as slaves was justified. In Finland, the Sámi peoples’ land was taken from them and justified in the same way. By saying that Sámi people were less advanced and less intelligent than Finns. Even though that wasn’t true, either.

White Europeans and Americans therefore benefitted from considering people who look different to be inferior.

When certain characteristics are associated with groups that are formed based on appearance, this is known as **racialization**.

This is still done today, and it goes back to those historic times when white Europeans began to consider non-whites to be inferior.
And when this was repeated over and over, a strong belief developed that these characteristics are immutable and permanent.

We are not aware of the majority of racism, because as children we learn to repeat certain racist actions and thoughts. Normal people do this, and not just some people who are commonly thought of as racist.

Through racialization, white people also systematically receive and take more power. Power is when they can make decisions on their own and others’ behalf, and make rules in our environment. Everything is easier for those who hold power.

So racialization means that, for example, when we think about African Finns or African Americans, who are often black, negative ideas are often associated with them, such as that they are “scary”, “difficult”, “loud”, “violent”.
That all black people would be like that!

Or think about Russian speakers, they are thought of as “difficult”, that they have the “wrong kind of culture” and “aren’t Finnish”.

Whiteness is also seen as the opposite of these.
Positive things are associated with white people, such as “smart”, “advanced”, “rich” and “normal”.

When we think this way, white people benefit, and others suffer.

We have to move away from this kind of thinking! No group of people is more valuable than any other. We have to challenge ideas like “all Romanis are like that”, or “all Sámis are like that”, or “all Muslims are like that”, or “all Somalis are like that”.

Unfortunately, our whole society systematically does this, and that’s why life is harder for non-whites than for whites.

We can however break this system by not assume things based on superficial characteristics and not generalizing entire groups of people!

**Microaggressions video**

A good friend tries to treat everyone fairly.

Sometimes, however, you might do something racist and unfair without noticing it. Or you might think you mean well, but you upset another person.

Let’s look at a few examples:

”So what country are you from?”

”Espoo….”

”No, I mean, what country are you really from?”

The person asking this question may think that they are just being curious. But this child has to hear that question over and over again. They have to experience that they are foreign.

The same applies here:

”You speak such good Finnish!”
”Hey, it was a compliment!”

And here:
”Is that your real hair, what does it feel like?”

These gestures indicate that the other person does not belong to the group. These gestures and questions are called microaggressions. “Micro” means small, and “aggression” is an action that is harmful to another person. Microaggressions are like mosquito bites: One mosquito bite is annoying, but you can probably tolerate it. But if you get lots of them all the time, you get really angry!

 “You’re pretty for someone with such dark skin!”
”You’re my friend because you’re not like other Muslims.”
“Tell me what the weather is like in Africa today!”
”You’re really good at school even though you’re an immigrant!”
”Racist jokes are funny. Where’s your sense of humour?”
”You’re so exotic!”

If you’re not white, you probably get these mosquito bites every day in Finland. You can choose not to be like a mosquito.