



Debating

face off

Each week, our two teenagers will debate a hot topic. **This week ...**



Is Hong Kong racist?

Angela Hsieh, 18, Centennial College

Racism has been a part of Hong Kong for a long time. For example, it is not uncommon to see mainlanders being discriminated against by Hongkongers in many ways. Some Hongkongers make fun of the visitors all the time. This can often be in the form of silly jokes which might seem harmless, but they are still acts of racism.

The Erwiana case is another, more serious example of racism. Erwiana Sulistyarningsih, 23, was an Indonesian maid in Hong Kong.

She allegedly suffered months of terrible abuse at the hands of her employer. Erwiana claimed that she was beaten lots of times and burned so badly with an iron by her employer that she ended up in hospital last year.

It is hard to ignore the fact that the woman might have treated Erwiana badly because of her race. It seems like she thought Erwiana was not as important as Hongkongers. That is exactly what we call "racism".

But just because you don't physically abuse someone doesn't mean that you are not racist. Treating people differently because of their skin colour or culture is racist.

As well as domestic helpers and mainlanders, ethnic minorities who live in Hong Kong are being treated unfairly. For example, Hongkongers tend to label the Indian population as "Ah-cha", which is an offensive term.

This sort of racial discrimination happens almost daily in our city.

All this shows that most of Hong Kong's citizens are racists who treat foreigners differently.

Hong Kong might be a civilised city. But it is not as perfect as people would like to believe. Racism is a big problem. We need to realise that people from different cultures and backgrounds, and from different countries, are our equals.

We, as Hong Kong citizens, must do more to stop racism and build a fairer and more pleasant society.



Rai Arlin L, 17, St Margaret's Girls' College

Before saying whether Hong Kong is racist or not, I think it is important to remember that no country or city is ever completely free from racism.

There will be individuals who are racist everywhere. There will be those who treat people differently because of the colour of their skin or because of their ethnicity.

But the key point to note is whether these people make up the majority or the minority of residents of a city. In my opinion, the racist people in Hong Kong are in the minority.

Racism comes from a lack of understanding. People often believe racial stereotypes because of the way that race is portrayed in society. They believe what they see in movies or on TV rather than having opinions based on the people of different races they meet themselves.

But because Hong Kong is such an international city, there are so many different people from different backgrounds and countries. People from all over the world live and work happily together in our city.

This means the public in Hong Kong are quite open-minded and have a lot of contact with different cultures. This lowers the likelihood of citizens being racist.

Another point to note is that, in most cases, we learn to reject racial stereotypes from a young age.

In Hong Kong, it is not uncommon to see schools holding multi-cultural days or charities organising activities celebrating different cultures to enhance people's awareness and acceptance of those cultures. This helps the younger generation to learn about the importance of social integration, making them less likely to be racist.

Despite all this good work, there will still be some people who are racist, though. But we cannot say Hong Kong is racist simply because of a small group of people who are biased against "foreigners".

As the saying goes, "A rotten apple doesn't make the whole barrel bad".

