

# HOW TO BE AN ANTI-RACISM ALLY

SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL WAYS WE CAN  
CHALLENGE RACISM TOGETHER

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA**



**THANK YOU**

**FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE RACISM.**

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**This guide presents simple and practical advice to help us on our journey, as we strive to recognise and address racism.**

We don't claim to have all the answers. But we do have a starting point — the desire to do better and the belief that we can all be a positive force for change.

Racism can be a confronting topic. We see its impact on individuals and communities all around us. It can also challenge us, in terms of how we see ourselves and our own unconscious biases.

Our aim for this guide, and the range of resources we have available for you, is to provide support as you seek to challenge racism, defend equality and celebrate diversity.

## ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

**Like you, we believe everyone has equal rights to justice, freedom and equality. And, when these rights are violated, it's up to all of us to take a stand and act in solidarity, as allies.**

We are a movement made up of people who feel just like you do. Defending human rights is what brings us together, from all walks of life and from all over the world.

Working together with you, we can challenge injustice by raising our voices for a better world, where human rights are enjoyed by all.

# HOW TO BE AN ANTI-RACISM ALLY

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**INDIGENOUS RIGHTS  
ARE HUMAN RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



Nolan Hunter. © AI/Pablo Barnes

“  
**IT IS IMPORTANT  
TO UNDERSTAND,  
HEALING CAN ONLY  
COME WITH TRUTH.**”

“I watched my grandmother always put her head down whenever she talked to a white person. Years later, I understood that she was made to feel inferior. When I saw the effect it had on my grandmother I became so angry. It wasn’t enough that they had taken our children, our land, control over our lives and everything from us as a people — they tried to take our dignity as well.

I don’t know that as an Aboriginal person, I can ever forget what was said, or done to me and my family and my people, but I know there are good, decent, caring people in Australia who can make a difference, and this changes the way I feel.

**It is sometimes difficult to be confronted with what people may not want to hear, but we cannot deal with a problem if we don’t acknowledge it in truth.”**

### **NOLAN HUNTER**

Proud Bardi Jawi man and Amnesty International Indigenous Rights Campaign Lead

# WHY IS YOUR ACTION IMPORTANT?

**You're likely reading this because you recognise racism is a problem. Well, you're not alone — as many as 8 out of 10 Australians feel the same way.**

Accepting there is a problem is just the first step, but it's such an important one.

Remember, the problem isn't just obvious racism — we also need to acknowledge the less visible, more subtle forms of racism.

We might start by recognising our own negative attitudes, which form from ingrained racial stereotypes and prejudices. And we can also look to identify structural inequality and systemic discrimination.

**Like us, you believe no one should ever be held back, targeted or disadvantaged in any way because of the colour of their skin or where they came from.**

It would benefit everyone to see power imbalances gone. Australia would be a truly just and inclusive society, valuing equality for all.

It's encouraging to hear that 3 out of 4 Australians would do something if they saw an act of racism. But although great progress has been made and many

forms of overt and institutionalised racism are no longer tolerated, there's still much to be done. Racist incidents remain too regular an experience for many.

**But no one is born racist.**

We don't enter the world with inbuilt prejudices. Rather they are something we learn from the society in which we live.

**The responsibility sits with all of us to do something to change the mindset of our community. Everyone has a part to play.**

Importantly, it's not just about doing 'something'. It's about knowing how to do the **best** thing — how to challenge racism in a considered way.

That's why Amnesty is connecting people. So that people who want to take a stand can listen to and learn from people with experience of racism.

Statistics: Challenging Racism Project 2015–16 National Survey, Western Sydney University.

# WHAT IS AN ALLY?

**Like you, we here at Amnesty strive to be the best versions of ourselves. And, like you, we are always learning.**

Being an ally is not an identity or status you can achieve.

It's a commitment to a way of living, something we always have to strive for. A lifelong process of learning, listening and self-reflection. And no one is going to be perfect at it.

The injustices and discrimination people face are ever-evolving. And we have to keep changing to challenge them.

This means developing critical thinking skills and recognising prejudices and discriminatory speech — challenging what we might have previously ignored or even accepted.

**We won't always get it right**, but we can be unwavering in our efforts to learn and to not repeat mistakes or perpetuate systems that are unjust.

**Allies are not saviours. We amplify the voice of the people we are supporting, knowing they can raise themselves up.**

As allies, we advocate within our community, challenging ignorance and mobilising more allies.

As allies, we understand we are there in a support role. We turn up when needed and know when to step back — never taking the spotlight, respecting boundaries, and supporting the community to be empowered in their need to act alone.

“

**IF YOU HAVE COME HERE TO HELP ME, YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME. BUT IF YOU HAVE COME BECAUSE YOUR LIBERATION IS BOUND UP WITH MINE, THEN LET US WORK TOGETHER.**

Aboriginal Activist Group (QLD 1970s)



“  
**WE NEED PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO UNDERSTAND THE PAST SO THESE FAMILIES HAVE GOT A SAFER FUTURE.**



Rodney Dillon. © AI/Wayne Quilliam

“It’s important for us as an organisation to be that bridge between two groups of people. It gives those two groups a bit of reconciliation and exposure to what the problems are.

Non-Indigenous people’s support and influence can be really, really important to make change. These are the people we need on our side. We need people who are willing to understand the past so these families have got a safer future.

**Being an ally makes families who understand it richer. I can understand why there are people who put the walls up, but the people who pull it down, they’re the ones we need.”**

### **RODNEY DILLON**

Proud Palawa Elder and Amnesty International Indigenous Rights Advisor



**“  
MAKE THE  
PRACTICE OF  
LEARNING AND  
CHANGING  
BEHAVIOURS  
A PART OF YOUR  
EVERYDAY LIFE.**



# 6 STEPS TO BEING A GOOD ALLY

**Whatever your circumstances, whatever your experience with racism, by requesting this guide you've shown you understand it's not enough to simply not be racist.**

You know that we must be actively anti-racist — allies to those who experience racism.

As you walk with others and learn about their experiences, you'll also discover more about yourself.

**At Amnesty, we know the best way to learn is to listen to people with lived experience.**

On the following pages — and in the extra resources we'll direct you to — you'll hear from people

with a wide range of stories, insights and advice to share.

As you'll discover, there isn't any one way to be an ally. Every community and every individual is different. Every relationship you build needs a different approach. But the following 6 steps will help you get started.

Thank you for wanting change. And for valuing kindness, equality and justice.

“It is not up to those who have experienced racism to explain what it is. Be prepared to go on this journey with an open mind and a willingness to learn and reflect on your own behaviour and how it may contribute to the problem.

Racism is a reality for many people in their everyday lives and can take a heavy toll on their emotional wellbeing.

There is no silver bullet to fighting racism. We are talking about centuries of systemic oppression, discrimination and pain.

**Be honest with yourself and with others. We are all in this together. We need a supportive community to build a fair and inclusive society. It takes all of us to discover ourselves and make a difference.”**

**KYINZOM DHONGDUE**

Amnesty International Strategic Campaigns Associate



Maneesha Todd. © Dom Fernandez

“

**I KNOW I WILL MAKE MISTAKES. BUT I TRY TO HOLD MYSELF ACCOUNTABLE TO MY VALUES, TO LISTEN, REFLECT, AND GROW.**

**MANEESHA TODD**

Amnesty International Fundraising Assistant

## **1 ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM**

**Racism exists. It's not made up or exaggerated. Racism has shaped human history for thousands of years and it's shaping the world we live in now. It exists in different ways, embedded in our culture, our communities, and ourselves.**

The reality is, racism affects how we experience everyday life. It affects our experience with employers, transport officers, even just walking down the street. I personally never worry when passing by police, while other people deal with it constantly. This is a privilege I have.

Racism also means unequal access to health services and education, different experiences of arrest and imprisonment — to name just a few. The daily experience of racism turns into systemic discrimination and social inequality.

For many people, learning about race can challenge our sense of who we are. But racism isn't something we can ignore. It requires action from all of us as allies. And that starts with acknowledging the problem.

Contributor: Maneesha Todd

**[CLICK TO READ MORE >](#)**

“Understanding racism involves becoming aware of how race and racism affect the lived experience of people of colour and Indigenous people, as well as becoming aware of how we participate, often unknowingly, in racism.”

Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2019

**WE CAN'T  
HELP WHAT  
WE'VE ALREADY  
LEARNED.  
BUT WE CAN  
LEARN TO DO  
BETTER.**

**FRANCES LEE**

Amnesty International Fundraising Coordinator



Frances Lee. © AI/Frances Lee

## **2** FACE THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

**Chances are you or someone you know has had an experience of racism.**

Most of us would never deliberately hurt someone. We all believe no one should ever be held back, targeted or disadvantaged because of the colour of their skin or where they came from.

The truth is you can believe that and still say or do things that are racist, without even realising it. We all have unconscious biases absorbed from media, entertainment, and maybe even loved ones.

This means accepting that we

might have to change our own behaviours. If someone points this out to you, start by taking the time to reflect and respond thoughtfully.

Don't be alarmed if it gets confronting and uncomfortable as you discover more. Use it as motivation to learn. Celebrate that this is a new starting point. And remember, by standing together and challenging the injustice of racism, we can make Australia a country where fairness and equality are at the heart of everything we do.

Contributor: Frances Lee

**CLICK TO READ MORE >**



**WE ALL HAVE A  
STORY OF OUR  
EXPERIENCE  
THAT CAN HELP  
YOU RESPOND  
AS AN ALLY.**

**SHANKAR KASYNATHAN**

Amnesty International Human Rights Campaigner and former refugee

Shankar Kasynathan. © AI/Pablo Barnes

### **3 LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE RACISM**

**Each of us needs to seek out opportunities to hear from a range of different voices, because racism touches all differently. Each story and each experience can inform our understanding as bystanders.**

As new arrivals to Australia, we recognise that First Nations people have been experiencing racism for hundreds of years before our communities found refuge and protection in this place. Their experience today would be different to ours. Each has a different lesson to prepare you for becoming an ally.

My mother's experience of being assaulted on a Melbourne tram on the way home is her story and shares a unique insight into what it was like to be alone on a crowded tram. If you were there, what would you have done?

My older sister's experience of being told that she is stealing people's jobs as she was doing an after school job is uniquely her story. If you were on the street that day, what would you have done?

Those of us who have been directly impacted by racism, we all have a story of our experience that can help you respond as an

ally, to what can often be unforeseen attacks, comments and even body language.

Amplifying the truth of our individual and collective experience is the only way the people, who stood silently on that tram when my mother got assaulted, might learn to do better next time.

Amplifying the truth of my story might have better informed teachers in my school who thought they were helping when they told a seven-year-old me, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me'.






Racism does hurt. It leaves scars. It erodes confidence in ourselves and one another. We can and must do better.

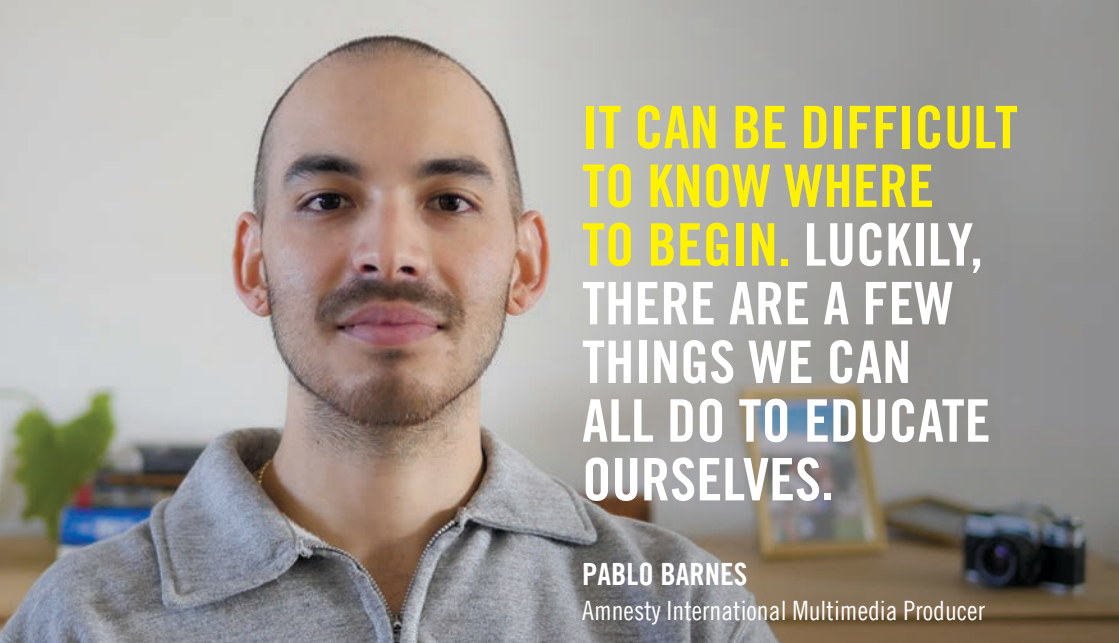
Deeply listen to as many stories as you can and reflect on what you would have done in each situation. Share those truths, so that your friends, neighbours and community can recognise that we do live in a world where these things can happen when you least expect them to. What would you do when it does?

Contributor: Shankar Kasynathan

[CLICK TO READ MORE >](#)

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN SOMEONE SHARES THEIR EXPERIENCE OF RACISM

<b>LISTEN</b>	Remember that this moment is not about you and your feelings.	
<b>DON'T COMPARE</b>	Making comparisons to your own experiences can feel invalidating to the person who is sharing.	
<b>DON'T DISMISS</b>	A response like, 'I'm sure they didn't mean it' can feel to the person sharing like you're minimising or brushing off their experience.	
<b>ACKNOWLEDGE</b>	Statements like, 'I'm sorry you experienced that' or, 'No one should have to go through that' help the person sharing feel heard and validated.	
<b>SUPPORT</b>	It can mean so much for someone to hear a simple statement like, 'I'm here for you.'	



**IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. LUCKILY, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS WE CAN ALL DO TO EDUCATE OURSELVES.**

**PABLO BARNES**

Amnesty International Multimedia Producer

Pablo Barnes. © AI/Pablo Barnes

## **4 EDUCATE YOURSELF**

**We are all at different stages of learning, and even unlearning.**

This learning is vital, but we're each responsible for our own education. You cannot expect people of colour to do it for you. It's important to remember that for those who experience racism directly, sharing their experiences requires a lot of effort and takes an emotional toll.

It can be tempting to ask people with lived experience to explain things to us. While this is well-intentioned, it can be triggering and emotionally exhausting for them.

There are many things you can do to learn and equip yourself with the knowledge and skills to reflect, speak up and take action.

You can make it part of your day-to-day life by actively seeking out different media sources and perspectives, following diverse people on social media, consuming music, books, podcasts, TV shows, films and other content created by people with lived experience of racism.

Contributor: Pablo Barnes

**CLICK TO READ MORE >**

## TRY STARTING WITH THESE ...

### READ



***Growing Up Asian in Australia*** — Personal accounts, essays, short stories and poetry, edited by Alice Pung.

***Dark Emu*** — Bruce Pascoe re-examines colonial accounts of Aboriginal Australians.

***The Hate U Give*** — A young adult novel by Angie Thomas, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.

### WATCH



***The Merger*** — Sports comedy film set against the political backdrop of Australia's refugee policy.

***In My Blood It Runs*** — Documentary film following 10-year-old Arrernte Aboriginal boy Dujuan.

***13th*** — Documentary exploring the history of racism in the US justice system.

CONTENT WARNING: Discussion of racism, violence and killings, police brutality and other trauma.

## CLICK TO FIND MORE >

### LISTEN



**SBS NITV Radio** — News, events and issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

***Frontier War Stories*** — Podcast dedicated to truth-telling about a side of Australian history left out of the history books.

***Temporary*** — Podcast sharing stories from those seeking asylum in Australia.

### FOLLOW



**@shankabout** on Twitter. Shankar Kasynathan is a human rights campaigner.

**welcoming.org.au** Welcoming Australia works to advance an Australia where all people can belong, contribute and thrive.

**@sar.ra\_\_** on Instagram. Rachael Sarra is a contemporary Aboriginal artist from Goreng Goreng Country.

“IT'S TIME FOR US  
ALL TO **EDUCATE**  
**OURSELVES, SHOW**  
**UP AND SPEAK OUT**  
AGAINST RACISM  
IN ALL ITS FORMS.”

Maggie Munn. © M6 Chan



“It's our duty as global citizens to make sure we are upholding and uplifting the human rights of everyone in our communities, and everybody has the right to live a life free from racism and discrimination.”

### MAGGIE MUNN

Proud Gunggari person and Amnesty International Indigenous Rights Associate Campaigner

## 5 ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS

**As someone who experienced racism during their childhood, I can tell you firsthand how important it is to speak up and challenge racism when you see it.**

The approach to tackling this with a stranger will be very different to the approach you might take with friends or loved ones.

Conversations can help to raise awareness, address misconceptions and help people to realise that their words are causing harm.

It's about having a conversation in a way that enables someone to hear you, rather than closing off to what you're saying. It's about supporting people to do better.

Your voice is powerful. Even if your words make a difference to just one person who has experienced racism, to that one person your words could make **all** the difference.

Contributor: Aleysha Shafique

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### SOME CONVERSATION STARTERS

**Offer advice:** 'I'm sure it's not your intention, but \_\_\_\_\_ can actually come across as a racist stereotype.'

**Share your feelings:** 'When you said \_\_\_\_\_ it made me feel \_\_\_\_\_.'

**Flag inaccuracies:** 'I'm not sure if you're aware \_\_\_\_\_ is a common misconception about \_\_\_\_\_.'

**Let them know they are causing harm:** 'That would be hurtful to someone.'



“  
**WE NEED TO BE BRAVE  
AND TELL OTHERS  
WHEN THEY'RE  
CAUSING HARM.**

**ALEYSHA SHAFIQUE**

Amnesty International Supporter  
Acquisition Lead



“

**IT'S JUST FINDING THE TIME AND MAKING THE EFFORT. THAT TIME AND EFFORT IS NEVER WASTED.**

**JAN CHESSELL**

Amnesty International Media Campaigner



Jan Chessell. © Al/Jen Wells-Scherrer

## 6 TAKE ACTION

**There are many different ways we can all take real and meaningful action in our daily lives.**

The most important thing we can

do is to keep taking action. Making it part of our way of life, not just something we do when an issue is in the news.

### SOME ACTIONS YOU COULD TAKE

#### RAISE AWARENESS



Listen to people with lived experience of racism and oppression and amplify their voices.

#### FOLLOW ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITY



Keep informed through social media campaigns and commentators.

#### OFFER YOUR SUPPORT



Be there to listen and support people in your life who are directly affected by racism.

#### CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCATE



Demand action on racism by writing to your representatives and by signing petitions.

#### FUND THE CAUSE



Support the push for change and donate to organisations working to address racism.

#### SPREAD THE WORD



Share your actions with your friends and family and encourage them to join you!

Contributor: Jan Chessell

**CLICK FOR TIPS ON HOW TO TAKE ACTION >**



Amnesty International Australia staff and activists. © Al/Jen Wells-Scherrer

## YOU'RE ALREADY MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**Remember, being an ally is not an achievement, status or endpoint, it's continued action and resolve.**

If you've read this guide and you feel a little overwhelmed, don't worry — take a breath and take some time to reflect.

Consider the things you've learnt already and how you might put them into action.

Being an anti-racism ally will feel easier as it becomes part of who you are and how you interact with the world.

Continue to learn and reflect as you explore additional resources and you'll soon discover what **you** can best do to be an ally to people experiencing racism.

And please share this guide with others, too. You can help build a movement of people demanding dignity, freedom, and equality for all.



Amanda. © AI/Amanda Chong



I stand up for human rights because I believe humanity is at its best when we match our compassion and empathy with meaningful action.

**AMANDA CHONG**

Amnesty International  
Volunteer and Admin Associate



Frédérique. © AI/Jen Wells-Scherrer



I am passionate about human rights. We must strive to create a more just society and recognise all people's rights, dignity and worth.

**FRÉDÉRIQUE BLANC**

Amnesty International  
Governance Coordinator



Sarah. © AI/Frances Lee



I won't stay silent in the face of injustice. I stand up for human rights because I care.

**SARAH ENDERBY**

Amnesty International  
Fundraising Coordinator



Chamira. © AI/Suchitra Kaushik



I fight for the rights of those around the world because everyone deserves the chance to live a meaningful and fulfilling life.

**CHAMIRA GAMAGE**

Amnesty International  
Philanthropy Specialist



## From all of us at Amnesty, thank you so much for taking the time to read our stories.

We've loved sharing them with you and we are so excited to be part of your journey as an anti-racism ally. Thank you for showing that you care about equality and justice, not just for some, but for all.

Just like you, we are always learning and reflecting on our allyship and we've created a space to share that with you.

We suggest you bookmark the link below — that's where we'll add all the latest information and opportunities for action, as well as books, movies, podcasts, events and more. We're always adding to it, so we'll be sure to let you know when updates are available.

**CLICK TO VISIT**

**[amnesty.org.au/ally](https://amnesty.org.au/ally)**

**Now that you've got to know us, we'd like to hear from you as well.** If you'd like to share any feedback on this guide, or tips and stories of your own, please get in touch with us at [supporter@amnesty.org.au](mailto:supporter@amnesty.org.au).

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**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA**

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DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

**CHALLENGE  
INJUSTICE.**