

## Task sheets for theme group: Prejudice and racism

### 1. Getting started: Everyday racism



- a. Discuss what this real life situation reveals about the speaker's mindset. Share examples of everyday racism that you have experienced or witnessed and discuss what options you have to react to overtly racist remarks or jokes.

"The less secure a man is, the more likely he is to have extreme prejudice."

"People have lost their sense of humor. In former times, we constantly made jokes about different races."

- b. In your group discuss the meaning and validity of Clint Eastwood's above remarks on racism.

### 2. Watching the movie: Walt Kowalski's racism

- a. Racism is about more than words. Take notes to describe how Walt Kowalski expresses his racism.

#### LANGUAGE

What he says and how he says it:

#### BEHAVIOR/ACTIONS

How he behaves towards the Hmong:

- b. Examine if Walt's racism undergoes a development in the course of the movie. Visualize your findings graphically or in a drawing. Compare your findings in your group and agree on one visualization.
- c. Discuss if Walt is a through and through racist, a racist at heart, or if his racism is only a manly façade.

### 3. Watching closely: Roots of racism

- a. After rescuing Sue from the black gang, Walt talks to her for the first time in his truck. Closely watch chapter 10 again (DVD 00:34:48 – 00:38:33/YouTube: *Gran Torino* (clip 6 – part 2) “Where the hell is Humong, I mean Hmong, anyway?”). Analyze what Walt thinks about the Hmong and how Sue reacts.

Walt's preconception about the Hmong	Sue's reactions

- b. “Racism is rooted in ignorance”. Discuss this statement in reference to the scene. Find other reasons for Walt's racism.
- c. At the beginning of the scene, Sue is the victim who is rescued by Walt. In the course of the conversation, however, Sue proves that she can easily keep up with Walt. Analyze the cinematic techniques that are used to emphasize that Walt and Sue are on the same level.

Camera angle	Field size

- Although Walt is clearly taller and physically stronger than Sue, the way the camera presents them emphasizes that...

#### 4. Exploring further: Eastwood accused of racism

- a. *Gran Torino* has definitely raised people's awareness for the history and culture of the Hmong minority in the US, but there are also many critical voices. Read the text, highlight the accusations against Eastwood and come up with counter-arguments.

Though many of the people who have seen the film may have gotten a sense of satisfaction and joy from seeing that Walt overcame his racism, the people who acted as the Hmong members in the movie did not. They were offended by the traces of racism that were included in the movie and that they experienced themselves on set.

- 5 Vang, who played Thao in the film, said he and the other Hmong actors were treated unfairly. Eastwood would not allow them to tweak their lines (even though he claimed that he did allow them to when asked in interviews following the release of the movie) [...].

The actors felt degraded when they were told to "make noise" by rambling words in their language. The Hmong actors were also left out by their fellow cast members who were white.

- 10 The cast members excluded them from cast events because they immediately assumed that Hmong actors were exactly like their character counterparts—unable to speak English clearly or to understand anything "American."

- Vang also mentioned that he was upset by the way the Hmong were portrayed in the film. He did not want the Hmong community—his own community—to be seen in a negative light by the audience. He pointed out that tea ceremonies were not performed correctly, that some of their important political lines in the script were not subtitled into English, and that these inaccuracies led to misconceptions of the community. [...]

The movie itself contained many racial slurs about Asians that the speakers found insulting.

- 15 In the scene in which Walt takes Thao to his friend's barber shop, Thao is called names such as "pussy kid," "dick smoking Guk head" and "chink." These degrading words imply that Asians are feminine and homosexual.

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- b. In your group act out a round table with Clint Eastwood, Nick Schenk (screenplay writer), Bee Vang (Thao Van Lor) and Ahney Her (Sue Lor). Take roles. Discuss whether *Gran Torino* is a movie about racism or a racist movie.

#### Notes