

**Instructions:** Read the following article about racism in Colombia. Then, complete the exercises below and choose the right answer.

Let's talk about racism in Colombia  
BY Pablo Medina Uribe 07.31.2014

A classified advertisement appeared in a Colombian newspaper. It read,

**A female surgeon doctor with college degree Internship in Clinic Inscription. 25-30 years old, of white skin. Needed, a personal interview Dr. Guarín, next July, 22nd, 10 A.m.**

The keywords are: “of white skin.” Soon every news outlet in the country, as well as social media ([including El País, the newspaper which originally published the ad](#)) got wind of it. It was universally, and rightfully, condemned.

As with everything else in Colombia, our racism is also a problem of elitism. Black and native voices are often dismissed because they tend to come from the periphery. Freed black slaves in the middle of the 19th Century settled in their own neighborhoods or their own towns, away from their previous oppressors, while the native groups that preserved their cultures managed to do so, mainly, by staying away from the European settlers. People who belong to any of these two groups, then, tend to come from remote and depressed areas, forgotten by the government, where basic needs are unmet, public services are lacking and education is of low quality. Therefore, from the “center”, from the main cities of the country where things are sometimes better, these people are seen as “inferiors.” For example, it is a common assumption among some Colombians that dark skinned people are poor, while fair skinned people are rich, or at least well off.

It is telling that this ad was published in Cali, the third most populated city in the country and, among the top three (which includes Bogotá and Medellín), by far the one with the biggest black population. Cali is just a few hours drive from the country's Pacific Coast, where most freed slaves decided to settle, and where most of Colombia's black population is concentrated. It is the first choice for many young black people who want to get a college education, or a chance of a better job. This is somewhere in Colombia where the “mixed country” interacts daily with those people who have an “ethnicity”, where the phrase “white skin” makes some sense, where it means “not black”.

Also telling are the arguments used by Dr. Guarín for his defense. “I am not a racist”, he said, “I asked for those requirements because that is what my partners from Bogotá asked me to do”. We are supposed to disregard the fact that this doctor published a racist ad because people in Bogotá—where there is very little presence of both black and native people—told him to do it, and they don't understand these things, you see?

He went on to say: “I even have friends who are ‘morenos’.” Not “black”, but “morenos.” It literally means “dark-skinned.” It is not a race or an ethnicity, but just a state of being. When you get tanned, for instance, you become a bit more “moreno.” Sure, you can call black people “morenos,” as they have dark skin, but calling black people by that name, devoids

them of their racial identity, it places them in the “mixed country,” where racism is meaningless.

**Activity 1:** Answer the following questions

1. What is the article about?
  - a. A racist classified advertisement
  - b. A racist doctor
  - c. Racism in Colombia
2. What does the article denounce?
  - a. A racist classified advertisement
  - b. The racist attitude of a doctor
  - c. The hidden forms of racism
3. What was the public reaction towards the Ad?
  - a. Popularizing
  - b. Criticizing
  - c. Commenting
4. What is elitism in Colombia according to the article?
  - a. Assuming indigenous and black communities are poor
  - b. Dismissing social groups from the periphery
  - c. Seeing ethnic groups as inferiors
5. Why do indigenous groups and black people settle in remote areas?
  - a. Because they are poor, lack public service, and receive poor quality education
  - b. Because Europeans located them in these places
  - c. Because they settled away from big towns to protect themselves

**Activity 2:** Complete the sentence

1. The article was first published \_\_\_\_\_
2. Cali has bigger black population than \_\_\_\_\_
3. Free slaves settle in \_\_\_\_\_
4. The expression “white skin” only has a meaning in Cali because \_\_\_\_\_
5. Racism is meaningless in Colombia because \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3:** Choose the sentence that best illustrates the relation between racism and elitism in the text.