Participa City

A simulation game to learn about discrimination

Game material for the scenario “Theatre Club“



https://participa-city.eu

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario “Theatre Club”



General information for the trainer

You find in this file all necessary material for playing the scenario “Theatre Club”. Before you start playing please read the trainer manual carefully.

- The station overview is for your information and shows you the characters in the scenario and if additional material is needed (one page).
- The description of the scenario is for your information and describes the initial situation before playing and the perspectives that are established in the scenario (one page).
- You find then a plan of how to arrange the scenario in the room and a big sign to indicate where the scenario is played in the room (two pages).
- Depending on the number of tables needed for the scenario, you find the different table displays.
- The next page shows the name tags for the players in this scenario – cut them out.

The following pages show the material for the participants:

- “Welcome to Participa City” is handed out to all players, but only at the beginning of the game before the first scenario is played since it is a general introduction to the game and the city. You find this information copied according to the number of players. If “Theatre Club” is not the first scenario played, you can ignore these pages.
- Each player gets another two papers: one with the biography card, the second with information about the initial situation and the role that the player should play.
- Some players might get additional information. The person(s) concerned is/are indicated on the additional material and on the station overview.
- Depending on the size of your group, you will play two scenarios at the same time (parallel). Then, you can’t play the scenario “Theatre Club” at the same time as “Family Counselling Center” because some roles appear in both scenarios. It is important that each character in the game is played only by one player in all scenarios.
- If you play only one scenario at the same time and different scenarios subsequently, you can play any scenario without constraints. You have to keep in mind that there are role changes in this case.
- It might be useful to use carton paper for printing.

SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Theatre Club station overview



Characters

a. Mina Sharma

b. Sarah Anders

c. Amir Yilmaz

d. Lea Martin

e. Mr. Elias Astor

f. Additional material

i. News article about Cythia Erivo (Mina Sharma)

ii. News article about color-blind casting (Lea Martin)



MINA SHARMA



SARAH ANDERS



AMIR YILMAZ



LEA MARTIN



ELIAS ASTOR

SIMULATION GAME

Material for the trainer

PARTICIPA CITY – Description of the scenario



Initial situation

The theatre group holds its weekly theatre club meeting in the youth center. Mr. Astor the facilitator of the club had announced last week that the roles for the upcoming Romeo & Juliet play would be allocated today. Although a big part of the group cannot make it due to sickness, four youngsters have agreed to come. Mr. Astor has not yet had the time to think about who would fit in which role. He is willing to let the youngsters decide by themselves. He has prepared a circle with chairs to hold the meeting. The youngsters arrive and wait for him to take the floor and open the discussion.

Depending on your plan, members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) might join the scenario.

Perspectives established in the station

- **Mina:** Confident and passionate about acting Juliet, but feels hurt when her skills are dismissed due to her skin color.
- **Sarah:** Friendly group member uncomfortable with unfair advantage, hesitates to challenge friends due to her struggle with socializing.
- **Mr. Astor**: Strives for a quick solution, does not want to be authoritarian.
- **Amir:** Empathetically wants to defend Mina but fears backlash or being labeled as too “woke”
- **Lea:** Insists Juliet must look "traditional" (light skin, blonde hair), viewing herself as realistic despite reproducing underlying racial stereotypes.

Game procedure

- You hand out the indicated material to the participants.
- First, there is a reading phase (approx. 10 minutes.).
- Then, you give an acoustic signal, and the participants start playing the scenario (approx. 20 minutes).
- With the next acoustic signal, you end the conversation and ask the players to join the debriefing.

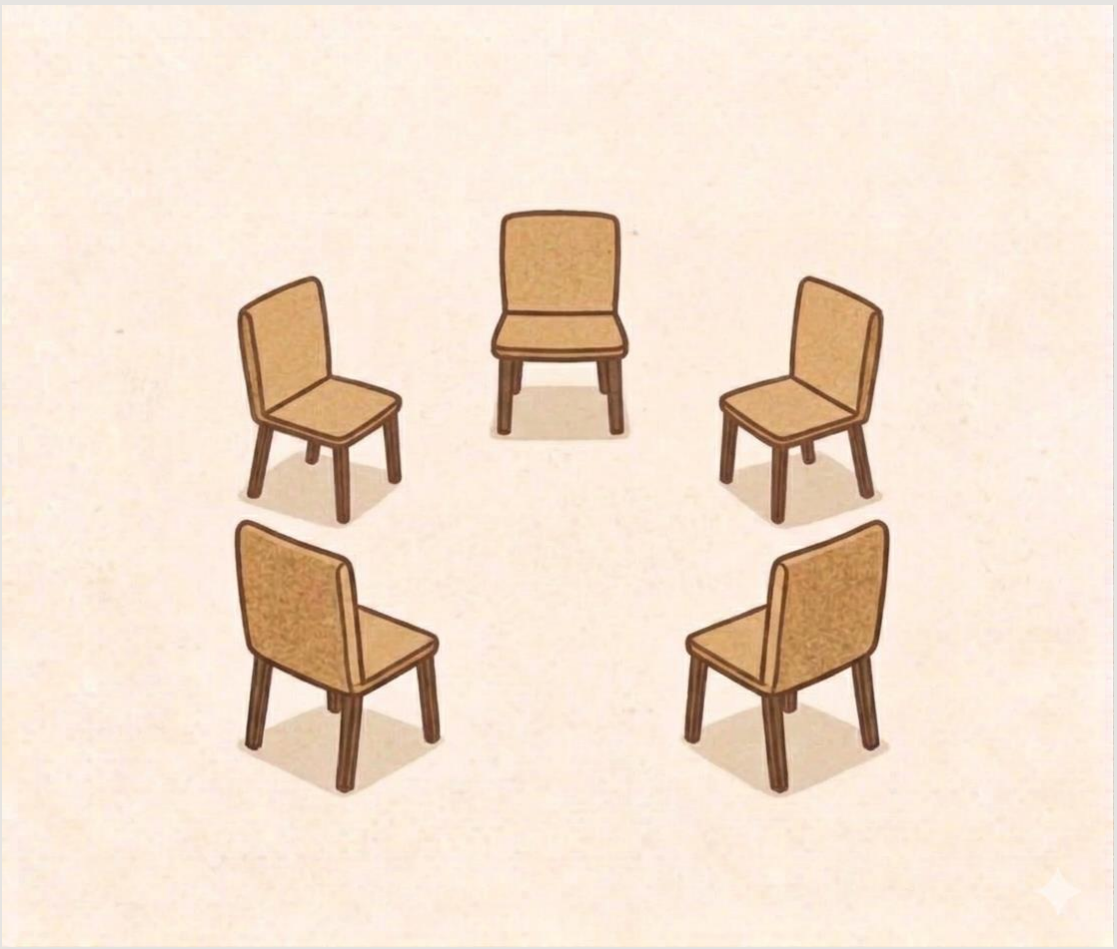
Material for the participants

- Mina Sharma: biography card + game instructions + additional material
- Sarah Anders: biography card + game instructions
- Elias Astor: biography card + game instructions
- Amir Yilmaz: biography card + game instructions
- Lea Martin: biography card + game instructions + additional material

PARTICIPA CITY – Exemplified station setup

Material for the trainer





5 chairs in a circle.

Additional chairs for ADB representatives might be necessary.

SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario Theatre Club



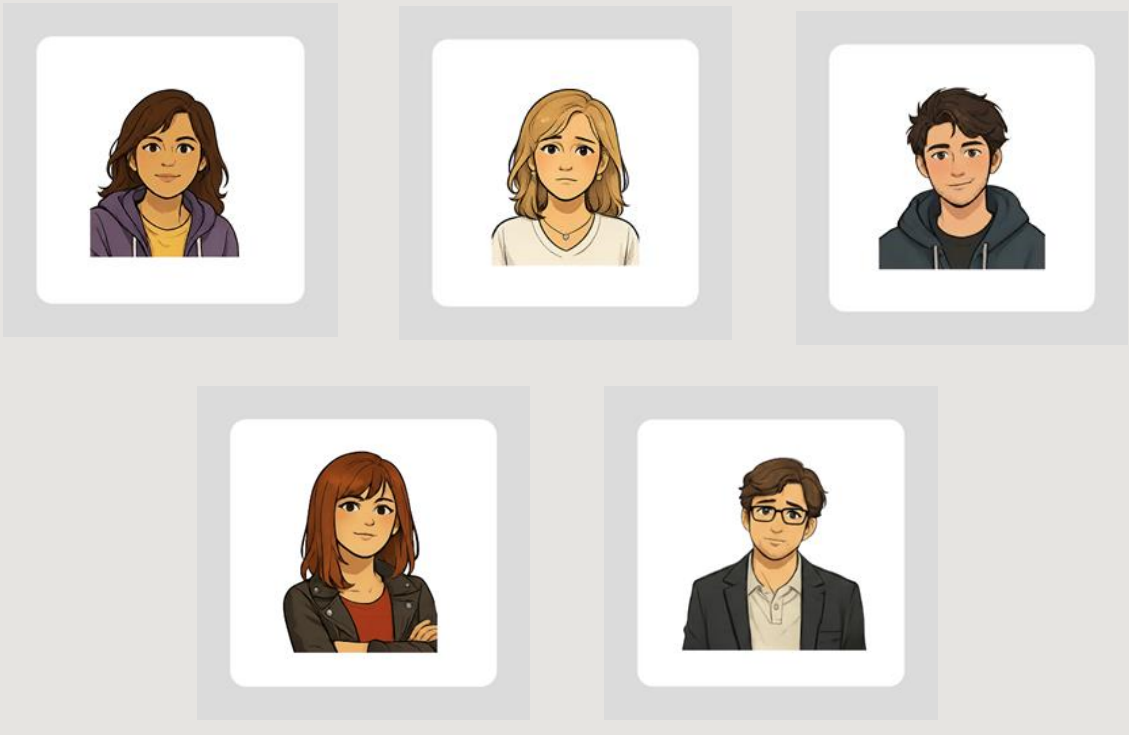
SIMULATION GAME



(fold here)

Theatre Club

Mina Sharma, Sarah Anders, Amir Yilmaz, Lea Martin, Elias Astor



All people involved are taking a seat in a circle waiting for the discussion to happen.

PARTICIPA CITY – Scenario Theatre Club – Name Tags



MINA SHARMA



SARAH ANDERS



AMIR YILMAZ



LEA MARTIN



ELIAS ASTOR

Material for participants

Welcome to PARTICIPA CITY

Introduction for all players

Participa City is a medium-sized town in Europe with approximately 100,000 residents. It is hardly different from other cities of this size. All types of schools are represented, as well as a University of Applied Sciences specializing in economics. The largest employer in the area is a metal processing company. Additionally, the town has ten sports clubs, a police headquarters, and two fire stations. There is also a neighbourhood considered a so-called “social hotspot”. This town district hosts institutions providing counselling services. Moreover, there are active **neo-Nazi structures**, whose members are primarily active in the surrounding areas but also occasionally make appearances in the city. For this reason, a round **table against right-wing tendencies** has been initiated and campaigns for more diversity are held regularly. According to studies conducted by the local University of Applied Sciences, approximately every second resident tends to hold prejudiced views against asylum seekers. And in 2019, an EU-wide Eurobarometer survey found that over half of Europeans believe racial or ethnic discrimination to be widespread in their country (Eurobarometer Discrimination in the EU 2019).

But something is different in this city:

After repeated attacks on local mosques, the situation escalated last year. Islamophobic slogans were repeatedly spray-painted on the walls of the city's largest Muslim place of worship. In response, the mosque's board decided to station a guard. Just a few days later, the guard was attacked and seriously injured. The perpetrators managed to escape and have been unsuccessfully sought ever since.

This incident sparked a broad debate on the issue of racism. The city council decided that the city should become **free of racism**. As a first symbolic step, the city was renamed Participa City. During the renaming ceremony, Mayor Calan stated: "Every person in this city should know that Participa City aspires to become a place free of discrimination!”. In Participa City, there are several political groups and initiatives. One of them gained significant attention by writing an open letter to the city council. In the letter, they called for a critical examination of the situation in Participa City regarding racism. At the following city council meeting, the issue was addressed as a top priority. The council members decided to establish an **Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB)**. Its members are selected randomly from among all residents. The board's findings are intended to help combat racism in the city.

We now want to visit places in the city where people from diverse backgrounds interact daily: for example, at schools, the employment agency, the train station, or sports and playgrounds. These encounters will allow us to identify the stumbling blocks on the path to a racism-free society. None of the participants should fear criticism of their behavior during the game: we are all here to learn how to recognize racism and discriminatory behavior in everyday life and develop strategies to counteract them. Unfortunately, in some instances, it will be necessary to reproduce racism to facilitate this learning process.

Have fun with the game!

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PARTICIPA CITY – Biography card



MINA SHARMA

You are **16 years old** and a committed member of the theatre club at the youth cultural center in Participa City. Acting is your **main interest**, and you feel confident on stage. You enjoy working with texts, developing characters, and taking responsibility in group projects. Others often notice your motivation and seriousness.

You live with your parents and a younger sibling in Participa City. Your parents both work and place a high value on **education and cultural interests**. They support your involvement in theatre, even though they are not familiar with extra-curricular activities for youngsters. You attend an **upper secondary school** and generally do well academically, especially in subjects related to languages and arts.

In group discussions, you usually speak up and contribute your ideas clearly. You are used to **expressing opinions** and defending them when necessary, although you prefer discussions to remain respectful and constructive. Diversity and equal participation are important to you, and you believe cultural spaces should be diversity-friendly and open to everyone. You have just read an article about this topic in an online magazine.



SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Theatre Club” for Mina Sharma

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here as well as with the additional material to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

Last week the facilitator of the theatre club Mr. Astor had announced that new rehearsals for the play of “Romeo and Juliet” would begin next week. You will join the meeting and wait for Mr. Astor to open it. In the discussion you will respectfully but strongly defend your ideas.

It is possible members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You love Shakespeare and especially this story. You've been working up the courage all week to apply for the lead role - Juliet. You are firmly decided to get this role. You think you fit very well into this role and you deserve to play this main character as you have worked hard to improve your performance skills. You are willing to accept any other allocation of roles as long as you can play the Juliet.

You think that the arts world in general needs to get more diversity-conscious. You loved Cynthia Erivo in “Wicked”. As you had recently read that she would play the Jesus in Jesus Christ Superstar you liked the idea a lot that a Queer Black Woman would play this role.

You generally think that positive representation of minority groups in media and arts and color-conscious casting are very important. You get angry if you think of how much whitewashing is happening in the media and arts world. You want to fight for the idea of more representation of diversity in arts.







SARAH ANDERS

You are **16 years old** and have been part of the theatre club in the youth club in Participa City for a while. You enjoy acting, but even more you enjoy the feeling of belonging to a friendly group. You like rehearsals and **creative work**, but you rarely seek the spotlight on your own.

You live with both of your parents and an older brother **in a quiet neighbourhood of Participa City**. Your parents are supportive and encouraging but tend to value stability and harmony over standing out. You attend a general secondary school and achieve average to good grades. You like school, but you do **not see yourself as particularly ambitious.**

In group discussions, you usually wait and listen before speaking. You often agree with others rather than presenting a contrasting opinion. In conflicts, you tend to withdraw slightly and hope that someone else will resolve the situation. You consider yourself **tolerant and open-minded**, but you have never reflected deeply on issues such as discrimination or diversity unless they become very visible or personal.



PARTICIPA CITY Game instructions
“Theatre Club” for Sarah Anders

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You have arrived a little late for today’s theatre club meeting at the youth center, because you had a drawing class before that, which you really enjoy. The facilitator Mr. Astor will discuss today with you about the role allocation for the upcoming play “Romeo and Juliet”. You will wait until Mr. Astor opens the discussion.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You have not yet had the time to think about which role you would like to play. You hope that the others will already have a plan and that you are ready to volunteer then for any of the roles that no one else had volunteered for.

As you are struggling with making friends at school, you are happy that Lea from the theatre group likes you and spends time with you. You want to keep her as a friend, although she is sometimes a bit bossy. You are not very close with other people in the group.





PARTICIPA CITY – Biography card



AMIR YILMAZ

You are 15 years old and one of the **younger members** of the theatre club in the youth center. You joined because you enjoy **creative** activities and feel comfortable in diverse groups. You see the theatre club as a place where people should feel free to express themselves.

You live with your parents and an older sister in Participa City. Your parents encourage you to do well at school and value **respect and fairness**. You attend a secondary school and generally perform well, although you sometimes doubt yourself in new or challenging situations.

During discussions, you listen closely and think carefully before speaking. You often notice **unfairness or tension** early on, even if you do not immediately comment on it. In conflict situations, you feel conflicted: you want to support those who are treated unfairly, but you are cautious and worry about being misunderstood. You value diversity and believe it strengthens group work, but you are still learning how to voice these beliefs confidently.



SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Theatre Club” for Amir Yilmaz

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You are joining today's theatre club meeting at the youth club on time. You know that today the roles for the upcoming theatre play “Romeo and Juliet” will be distributed. You sit down together with the others and wait for Mr. Astor to open the meeting

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You don't have a specific role you want to play, so you are curious to see how the teacher, Mr. Astor, will distribute the roles. The closest person in the group to you is Mina, who told you before class that she wanted to play Juliet. You think she will be absolutely a good choice, but you already know that others might also volunteer for that role. As you are one of the few boys in the group you think Mr. Astor will ask you to play the Romeo. You are a little bit afraid that it would harm your friendship with Mina to play out a love story with her. At the same time you do not want to disappoint her wish to play the Juliet. You would rather be happy with another role or with someone else playing the Juliet (like Sarah who is neutral to you). You hope Mr. Astor will find a diplomatic solution.

You are generally afraid that someone will blame you to be too “woke” as you do not want to be an outsider. You have suffered from being bullied as the “foreigner” when you were younger. And you are glad that you are now more accepted and do not want to risk this standing in the group.





PARTICIPA CITY – Biography Card



LEA MARTIN

You are 17 years old and **one of the more experienced members** of the theatre club. Theatre is important to you, and you take rehearsals and performances seriously. You value structure, discipline, and clear decisions, and you often step into a **leadership role** without being asked.

You live with your mother and stepfather in Participa City. Both place a strong emphasis on **performance, reliability, and achievement**. You attend an academically oriented secondary school and perform well. You are used to competing for good results and recognition, both at school and in extracurricular activities.

In group discussions, you are direct and **confident** and expect others to argue their points clearly as well. In conflicts, you rely on what you consider rational arguments and established standards. You **see yourself as fair** and objective and are convinced that clear rules and traditions help groups function well. Diversity is not something you consciously oppose, but you tend to see it as secondary to artistic quality and established norms. You are not a fan of the idea of "positive representation" or "color-blind casting"**.**



SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Theatre Club” for Lea Martin

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here as well as with the additional material to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, the discussion begins (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You arrive at the theatre club on time to meet the others. Last week Mr. Astor announced that new rehearsals for the play of Romeo and Juliet will begin next week. You will join the meeting and wait until Mr. Astor will open the conversation. But you will not hesitate to express your opinion and fight for your ideas when you get the chance,

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You have already thought who would be a good candidate to play the Juliet. You think Juliet should be played by a pretty blond girl. You think Sarah would be the best choice to play the Juliet. She has blond hair and light skin, just the way you think a “Juliet” should look like. Sarah is maybe not the best actress in the group. But in this case you think that the way the main character looks is more decisive for allocating the role. You yourself would like to play the “nurse” who is the closest intimate of Juliet. You are afraid that Mina will also try to get the role of the Juliet. For some reason you do not sympathize with her. You also think that she would not fit into the role at all.





PARTICIPA CITY – Biography Card



MR. ELIAS ASTOR

You are in your **mid-50s**, born in Participa City. You have spent more than 25 years working in public social services, mainly in family support and community welfare. You hold a degree in **Social Work and a master's in Public Administration.**

You started as a social worker in a diverse urban environment and later moved into management, becoming **director** of the newly established Participa City Family Counselling Center five years ago. In your free time, you lead a local theatre club for children from the center. Drama therapy has always been your passion.

You are **practical** and used to working within limited staff and funding. You value order, efficiency, and realistic solutions. As retirement gets closer, you feel that **people expect more** and more from professionals, while clients are also becoming more demanding. You know the system can be unfair, but you have learned to accept that **you cannot fix everything**. This mindset helps you avoid burnout and stay emotionally distant when needed.



SIMULATION GAME

PARTICIPA CITY – Game instructions
“Theatre Club” for Mr. Elias Astor

Game procedure

- Identify yourself with the person from the biography card and these game instructions here to get familiar with the game situation.
- First, there is a reading phase to prepare yourself (approx. 10 minutes).
- After an acoustic signal, you open the discussion (approx. 20 minutes).
- After another acoustic signal, the conversation ends and the trainer will ask you to join the debriefing.

The initial situation

You arrive at the theatre club to meet the youngsters. Usually you are looking forward to these meetings as you like this work. But today you are not very well prepared as you were having a lot of stress with other things at your workplace. Also you know that a big part of the group is absent today due to sickness. The aim of the meeting today is to allocate the roles for the upcoming theatre play “Romeo and Juliet”. You did not have much time to think about your preferences for the allocation of roles. As your best players in the group could make it to the meeting, you would to fix at least the main characters today: Romeo, Juliet and the “nurse” (Juliet's closest intimate). You will open the meeting, explain that you aim to make a decision even if many are absent today and ask for volunteers.

It is possible that members of the Anti-Discrimination Advisory Board (ADB) will join you.

Your role in the situation

You hope that the youngsters already have a plan by themselves and that the role allocation will develop quick and easy. In addition you do not have a lot of time as your wife is waiting for you as you need to take care of the dog tonight. You have a tendency to push Amir to play the Romeo. As he is the most talented boy in the group. You will leave it up to the girls who wants to play the Juliet.

You hope you do not have to interfere, but a quick solution will come out. In general you do not want to risk your good relationship with the youngsters by being too authoritarian. That is why you will not make a decision, but leave the decision to the youngsters themselves.





ADDITIONAL MATERIAL THEATRE CLUB
MINA SHARMA



Adam Lambert Says 'Jesus Christ Superstar' Is Supposed to 'Provoke and Challenge,' Defends Cynthia Erivo's Casting: 'Encourage the Audience to Expand Their Minds'

Adam Lambert is standing up for his "Jesus Christ Superstar" co-lead Cynthia Erivo. In an interview with Billboard, Lambert, who plays Judas opposite Erivo's Jesus in the production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" at The Hollywood Bowl, said he is "excited" to present a depiction of Christ played by a "female, Black" actress. Erivo's casting has received some pushback from circles who think the holy titular role shouldn't be played by a queer woman of color.

"Cynthia's brilliant," Lambert said. "Her voice, presence, and simultaneous power and vulnerability absolutely blows my mind and working with her has been a dream. I'm excited by the challenge of presenting the audience with a production led by a female, Black 'Jesus' and encourage the audience to expand their minds a bit. Originally utilizing rock and roll, 'Jesus Christ Superstar' is supposed to provoke and challenge, that's the point. And shouldn't the teachings of Jesus transcend gender?"

During her own Billboard interview in June, Erivo laughed off the negativity surrounding her casting. "Why not?" Erivo said. "You can't please everyone."

Jack Dunn (2025) in: Variety
https://variety.com/2025/music/news/adam-lambert-jesus-christ-superstar-cynthia-erivo-casting-1236477235/



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Kathleen Hildebrandt in Süddeutsche Zeitung (2021): Can cinema be colour blind? In new historical films and series, non-white actors play white roles. But people of colour in particular doubt that this is a sign of progress.

It's debutante day. One aristocratic mother after another leads her dressed-up daughter, newly declared marriageable, into the palace. The young ladies curtsey before the throne where the Queen sits. Queen Charlotte eyes them sternly. She wears an opulent dress and an even more opulent white curly wig. Just as was customary in the late 18th century at the English court. So everything is normal, business as usual in the realm of historical schmaltz? Not quite. Because the Queen is black.

The new Netflix series Bridgerton is the latest example of a casting practice in film known as ‘colour-blind casting’, which, at least on the surface, is ‘colour-blind’. Non-white actors of all shades play roles that are white in the literary source material, or even historical figures who clearly had a different skin colour. Such as George Washington, for example. (...)

The concept is not entirely new. In 1965, Egyptian actor Omar Sharif played the Russian Doctor Zhivago. In 1976, African American actor Carl Anderson played Judas in Jesus Christ Superstar. And in 1997, there was a musical version of Cinderella in which Whitney Houston played the fairy godmother, singer Brandy played Cinderella, and Whoopi Goldberg played the queen. None of this was commented on as somehow strange in the film. The concept has been established on theatre stages for some time. (...)

These examples give us an idea of what to expect: of course, such a concept is never truly ‘colour-blind’. A black Cinderella is a statement. A black Judas opposite a white Jesus is also a statement, albeit a completely different one. Today, with the vehement discourse on identity politics, ‘colour-blind casting’ is not done blindly, but very consciously. With Bridgerton, it has arrived in the mainstream of historical kitsch.



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The reason why directors cast this way seems obvious at first glance: historical films are an incredibly white genre and, especially in the UK, central to the film industry. Anyone who traditionally doesn't fit in there because of their appearance has a hard time as an actor. That – and the concern for representation on screen – is already a very good reason to cast people of colour in period dramas. (...)

But originality and fairness are not the only reasons for 'colour-blind casting'. Recent research shows that it is also historically accurate. In her non-fiction book 'Black Tudors - The Untold Story', historian Miranda Kaufmann proves that there were black people living normal lives in England as early as the 16th century. Kaufmann found evidence of 360 African immigrants in Tudor and early Stuart Britain, and by the mid-18th century there were said to be more than 15,000. And no, they weren't all slaves. (...)

So is Hollywood on the right track because it is progressive and inclusive? Here, things get a little more complicated. The 'colour-blind' casting is not without controversy, and criticism of it comes from black intellectuals in particular. 'Hamilton', Lin-Manuel Miranda's hugely successful Broadway play, was one of the pioneers of this practice in 2015. All of the founding fathers of the American Constitution are black in it. Most people found this idea revolutionary, as it was intended to show that black people are part of American history. Nevertheless, many of them disagreed with Hamilton. Their criticism was that black Americans did not actually help write the Constitution, and that this is precisely the problem with the country, even today. They felt that simply rewriting history was of little help. (...)

At a time when audiences seem to have an insatiable appetite for ever more costume dramas, and cinemas and streaming services are constantly delivering, the practical truth probably lies somewhere in between. Gemma Chan, the lady-in-waiting from 'Mary Queen of Scots', said in an interview at the film's launch: "This is the England of yesteryear, portrayed by the England of today. I think it's about time."

Kathleen Hildebrandt (2021) in: Süddeutsche Zeitung: Kann das Kino farbenblind sein? https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/bridgerton-colourblind-casting-serie-film-1.5163241

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Project N°: 2024-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000255284

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Co-funded by the European Union

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