

The issue of racism in
"born a crime" by
trevor noah



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One of the themes of Born a Crime by Trevor Noah is that racism can be challenged by the unification of language. In chapter four, Noah is walking down the street one some Zulu men come up behind him and start speaking in Zulu. Noah, understanding Zulu, realizes that they are planning to mug him because of his lighter complexion. He swiftly turns around and starts speaking to them in Zulu. They pause and then start laughing. They apologize to him for believing him to be white. " That, and so many other smaller incidents in life, made me realize that language, even more than color, defines who you are to people. I became a chameleon. My color didn't change, but I could change your perception of my color".

Noah would use language to help himself get out of bad situations, to help others understand each other, and to get himself better opportunities. When he would speak in English or Afrikaans, people would accept him as white or colored. He could also turn around and speak in an African language and be accepted as black. People would hate him because of his skin color, but we would be able to change their mind just by speaking to them in their native tongue. They thought that if he spoke like them, that he must be just like them. He would defy the main values of racism by fitting in with everyone.

Trevor Noah revealed that because he knew so many languages, he would use them to his advantage to hide how he was different. At eleven years old, Noah transferred schools and ended up in a mostly white class. He got along with his classmates because he spoke their language. When it came time for recess he saw many black children on one side of the playground, and the white children on the other side. Because he was mixed, he was alone in the middle, unsure of where to go. One student, once learning that Noah spoke

African languages, brought him over to the black kids to show him off. " In South Africa back then, it wasn't, to find a white person or a colored person who spoke African languages; during apartheid white people were always taught that those languages were beneath them. So the fact that I did speak African languages immediately endeared me to the black kids." Knowing that Noah would use language to help himself bounce around from group to group, lets the reader understand the theme a little better. It helps the reader understand that racism is easily breakable. Noah using language to befriend everyone shows how knowing a language he could join any group. The white and colored children would accept him because he could speak English and Afrikaans. The black children would accept him because he could speak Zulu, Xhosa, and other African languages.