

Racism is in the air we breathe

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First, he insulted her, and then, dissatisfied, he pulled her and slapped her in the face. This was not the usual quarrel between two drivers, because one failed to give way, and it did not involve two adults.

The people involved were a man and a thirteen-year-old girl. The fault of the girl was that she had not moved out of the way quickly enough to let an SUV through. This incident took place outside a junior school. Not content with beating the girl, the assailant hurled abuse at her, full of racial hatred. "Dirty stinking nig... Go back to your own country, what are you doing here, stupid, idiot, piece of sh...?" The identity of the man is still unknown.

A similar episode had occurred in Varese, on a city bus, precisely three months ago. On that occasion, the people involved were an off-duty bus driver and a Brazilian girl.

We cannot just brush off this occurrences with a few details and a simple comment. We must consider them, and seriously. What is it happening to us? What is it that causes such behaviour in an adult, that makes him pick on a girl? What can this man teach his children? What does "Go back to your own country" mean? These are just a few of the questions we could ask.

But there are two aspects of the occurrence that are deeply disturbing. The first is the violence that the man used. Deplorable insults confirm that "there is racism in the air, like the dust we breathe." This phrase, taken from the last film by the Italian director Giovanni Veronesi, sums up perfectly what is happening in our communities. This does not mean that Varese is racist. But it is certain that, our province, too, is not free of the violent behaviour described above. It is important to be on the alert, and not to hide or to play down. Moreover, the victims were young people, who will be deeply affected by seeing an adult insulting and slapping a girl of their age.

The other aspect is the sense of time. We live in a hurry, we are exasperated and stressed to worrying extents. At the end of her mandate, a former councillor in charge of Education and Children's Services, said that her worst regret was having to extend the opening times of schools. At first glance, this position seems contradictory, because this is what had been requested by the families and students. But she explained that, by doing this, she had chosen the easiest, most direct route, failing to try to change the times of the town, or of our lives.

It is easy to talk and write, but some the slaps of the other day were the symptoms of a world that is moving too fast, not to mention the disdain for anyone that is different. Not everyone has the resources with which to live peacefully, with the speed of change around us. Then, the fear of losing something does the rest.

You only need a healthy bank account to buy an SUV. For everything else, a credit card will not be enough.

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redazione@varesenews.it