

AMSTERDAM ENTREPRENEURSHIP CASES:

'You are more than the color of your skin'

The story of Ruben Brave

successful tech entrepreneur and iconic fighter of racial discrimination

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Racial discrimination seems to be an inescapable curse in our society, not only in the past but also still today, not only elsewhere but also in the Netherlands. The number of registrations and notifications of discrimination against people because of their origin grew in 2020 (Art. 1 (2021), p. 4).¹ However, still hardly anything is known about the racial discrimination of entrepreneurs specifically (here small business owners) in the Netherlands. This case shows the forms in which the racial discrimination of an entrepreneur takes place and its consequences, although the case does not pretend to reveal everything about the racial discrimination of entrepreneurs, as it is a single case study.

¹ The concept of discrimination because of origin that was used in the report by Art. 1 (2021), comes closest to the concept of racial discrimination that is used in this case, although obvious differences between the two concepts can be pointed out.

This is the story of Ruben Brave, a Dutch citizen from Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, with a Surinamese background, and a black skin. Ruben has been and is a successful entrepreneur, more specifically a successful tech entrepreneur, both as a corporate entrepreneur and a serial entrepreneur, and more recently is also playing a key role in the start-up scene and in denouncing racial discrimination. He has experienced many situations of racial discrimination himself, as a person in general but also specifically as an entrepreneur, though the two cannot really be separated from each other.

The ambition of this case in entrepreneurship is to contribute to the understanding by students in higher education of what racial discrimination of entrepreneurs entails: by giving background information on what racial discrimination is; by describing one entrepreneur's personal experience of racial discrimination; by indicating the personal effects of racial discrimination; and by showing how this entrepreneur fights racial discrimination.

This case is structured as follows. First, attention is paid to Ruben's personal life, from his birth to today. Then a side step is taken to Surinam, as the relationship between this former Dutch colony and the Netherlands is an important background for the racial discrimination dealt with in this case. The next subject in this case is the conceptualization of racial discrimination. This is followed by an account of Ruben's personal experience with racial discrimination, and attention is paid to the way Ruben personally deals with racial discrimination. Finally, a brief look is taken retrospectively, under the heading 'Reflection'. In the Appendices, the references that were used for this case and an overview of the dates of the interviews with Ruben can be found. There follows a set of ten questions about the case.

1. Personal life

Ruben's life can be divided into three periods: 1) his early years (from birth until the completion of his education); 2) his subsequent involvement with all kind of companies (first corporate ventures, later also his own ventures; 3) his current roles. Obviously, these periods cannot be separated from each other, but their distinction is still useful as they show Ruben in different roles.

1.1 Birth to study

Ruben was born on 21 July in 1974 in the famous Amsterdam hospital Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis (OLVG), according to Ruben the one real place for people from Amsterdam to be born. He was a so-called afterthought, though he has one younger sister; his youngest brother is 15 years older than him. Being an afterthought gave and gives him a special place in the family. He and his younger sister are the only persons in the whole family, including his parents, who were not born in Surinam.

From a young age, Ruben has been able to find his own way. Already as a young boy, at the age of 8 he went to the library with one of his sisters and read non-fiction books. He was very much inspired by this sister, whom the family respectfully called “the bookworm”. This sister also inspired Ruben to aim for the ‘gymnasium’, the Dutch high school, pre-university education, where the curriculum includes the classical languages of Greek and Latin (the Fons Vitae Lyceum in Amsterdam). Ruben was the only student at that school in the year of graduation (1992) who received the diploma for taking these two classical languages (the alternative would have been for him to attend the ‘atheneum’, the Dutch high school, pre-university education without classical languages). In the first instance, he was refused the ‘gymnasium’ diploma, but after intervention by one of his brothers he received the diploma that acknowledged the successful completion of the courses in the classical languages as well.

During his childhood he was already very creative: he really liked transformers and all kind of things that had to do with technology. He caused small explosions in the family house and frequently blew a fuse, filling the house with smoke. He even built his own robots, and he was awarded a prize on a robot day, by the former Dutch inventor Chriet Titulaer. Some people saw Ruben as a geek, but in his own opinion, looking back on his life, he was mainly an entrepreneurial type. In his younger years, he just did what he thought was interesting, and what he was capable of doing. He also learned a lot from the process of discovering what does not work at first and then trying an alternative way.

Basically, Ruben sees entrepreneurship as a quest. However, he is also aware that starting up activities also changes him too. To quote him from one of the interviews that was held for this case: “I just wanted to make new things, things that did not exist. Only later did I find out that there is name for that: entrepreneurship”.

During his high school period, he had considerable awareness of racial discrimination. During the ‘maatschappijleer’ course (best translated here as the ‘civics course’), his teacher told him that a black person would never become a member of the Dutch parliament, let alone a minister for the Netherlands, because of his/her origin. His teacher in history even almost laughed when he was talking about the Dutch history of slavery.² Ruben was furious about this latter incident and addressed his teacher for making this bad move. In retrospect, from that time he knew that ‘anger is something that as a black individual you will be charged with very quickly’. His physics teacher, on the other hand, was very inspirational for him, and encouraged him to be creative where possible.

After his high school graduation, he first wanted to pursue the academic subject of physics, but he was afraid that studying physics would involve too much sitting in front of a screen. So he decided to study economics at the University of Amsterdam, where he started in 1992. However, he did not complete his studies, although he was rather close to the finishing line. The main reason he did not complete his studies was that life had too many distractions for him, and he had too much interest in other things than just studying economics. However, there is at least one important lesson that he learned from the period of studying economics, and which he still applies today in his daily life: model-based thinking, which, according to him, is at the basis of his entrepreneurial success.

After his period at the University of Amsterdam, he continued to study commercial economics at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (in Dutch: Hogeschool van Amsterdam), but that

² It is estimated that the Dutch transported about 600,000 people from Africa to the Americas between the 15th and the 19th century, people who were captured in Africa and made slaves (source: www.canonvannederland.nl).

did not work out either, for the same reasons of life's distractions and his having a broader interest than only, there, commercial economics.

1.2 Tech entrepreneur

The 90s of the last century and the first decade of this century were very much characterized by the dynamic development of the Internet in the Netherlands (and elsewhere in the world, of course). This development triggered Ruben very much in those days (and still triggers him).

During his time at the University of Amsterdam, he was already involved with research about the Internet. With the results of this research he went to Planet Internet, one of the first Dutch companies that offered Internet services (access and content). Planet Internet was a subsidiary of KPN Telecom in those days. Ruben was instrumental in signing up the initial 50,000 subscribers of Planet Internet. This was the first corporate venture that he launched.

After Planet Internet, Ruben went to one of the largest Dutch daily newspapers De Volkskrant, with his idea to make it a digital newspaper, instead of only publishing the current paper version. The Editor-in-Chief of De Volkskrant remembered him from an Internet manual that he had compiled in the past. Ruben was given the opportunity to make a webshop for De Volkskrant, quite revolutionary back then, that became successful. He was spotted by PCM, the mother company of De Volkskrant, and other major newspapers in the Netherlands as well, and was appointed to make more digital newspapers (another corporate venture).

At PCM he also worked in the marketing department, where he did marketing research for the digital newspaper, among others things. He was given the opportunity to travel to the United States (US), then rather ahead of the Netherlands in a digital sense, where he discovered that there was a real future for digital newspapers (and e-books). In this period he became interested in starting his own Internet company. In the years that followed, Ruben was, according to himself, both very successful and very unsuccessful, and almost all variants in-between.

From 2007 to 2009 he was Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Hachette Filipacchi Media Netherlands (formerly known as Quotemedia). Here he had the final responsibility for structuring the exclusive joint venture with the Royal Dutch Soccer Association (KNVB); he launched Football Media, the organization responsible for the content and turnover of Voetbal.nl (the website for amateur football in the Netherlands) and OnsOranje.nl (the website for all Dutch national football teams).

In the new millennium he also switched to starting his own ventures, as a serial entrepreneur. A short and incomplete list is as follows. In 2007, he founded Catchy.net. The main activities of this company were: delivery of consultancy and open source products to achieve cost-savings on corporate Information Communication Technology (ICT) and ICT-related investments; interim consultancy for new product and/or business development concerning Intellectual Property Rights (IP)-based and ICT-based products and services. He sold this company successfully in 2013, after a number of internal hiccups. In 2007 he also co-founded Tastelink (an online business-to-consumer recommender service to match persons based on their profile with interesting places, persons and products, co-founded with Quote-media founder Maarten van den Biggelaar). In 2010 he was co-founder of Artillerie / Art for a better world (a creative agency using 'art as a weapon' to fight for a better world, co-founded with art director Boris Thorbecke).

1.3 His current activities

In 2004, Ruben co-founded Entelligence BV³, an academic business incubator that invests in spin-offs of universities and provides guidance to scholars who want to become entrepreneurs. Entelligence BV is called a virtual business incubator, that is it has no physical premises, with an emphasis on start-up assistance. Entelligence BV provides pre-seed funding, (valorization) mentoring and coaching for start-ups in the field of, for example, online media, ICT & automation, health, and life-long learning. A recent example of a start-up that is supported by Entelligence BV

³ BV is the abbreviation of 'besloten vennootschap', the Dutch term for private limited liability company.

is Sophia Medica, a spin-off from the University of Amsterdam, aimed at making the refresher courses for general practitioners more efficient and more evidence-based. Another example of Ruben's activities under the flag of Entelligence BV is its collaboration with the Center for Job Knowledge Research, an institute of the University of Amsterdam. With this center, Entelligence BV is developing the Hero's Journey Framework, a transformative coaching framework for entrepreneurial academics, start-up entrepreneurs and millennials. Through Entelligence BV, Ruben has been involved with more than 40 start-ups.

In 2017, he founded Make Media Great Again, an annotation platform based on blockchain. This company was recently acquired by Internet Society, that supports and promotes the development of the Internet as a global technical infrastructure, a resource to enrich people's lives, and a force for good in society. After the acquisition, Ruben became the Chairman of the Board of Internet Society Nederland.

In 2020, he became a Board member of the Dutch Startup Association that strives to cultivate an environment where founders and their teams can share knowledge with the greater startup community, thus building a network of support and expertise. Here he also started to think more about the societal side of entrepreneurship, as well as the technical side. It is also worth mentioning that he is a Board member of the Cultural Participation Fund of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and of the Dutch Review of Books Foundation.

Apart from all this, he is an advisor in the field of inclusiveness in startups for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate and for the Amsterdam Economic Board. Ruben is also continuously networking and talking to entrepreneurs with all kinds of backgrounds, in terms of ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. This also includes mentoring. And he also (co-)publishes his work: see Brave (2021) and Brave, Russo and Wagemans (2022).

Throughout his professional career, Ruben has taken mental breaks or transition periods, for reflection and also for resting. During one of these periods he started to become a sculptor. As an entrepreneur, he really learned from the process of sculpting: "Enterprising is a mental exercise indeed. It takes time before you know what you have. Bu when sculpting you make contact with your subconscious."

2. Surinam

As mentioned earlier, Ruben was born in Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands. His mother and father, and his sisters and brothers (except for his youngest sister), were all born in Surinam, a former Dutch colony in South America. Therefore it makes sense to pay attention to Surinam in this entrepreneurship case. In the official Dutch statistics, Ruben is seen as a second-generation immigrant (see below). Although the registration of Ruben as a second-generation immigrant could be disputed, the official Dutch statistics have done this.

The Netherlands can be seen as an immigration country. For centuries, people have migrated to the Netherlands (or more accurately: to the area of what is now the Netherlands). The history of what we call the Netherlands now began more or less in the 16th Century, when the Dutch fought the Spanish in an 80-years-long war (1568 – 1648). From the earliest days of this war, there was immigration to the Netherlands. Famous immigration flows in the 17th Century were those by the Portuguese and Spanish Jews and by the Protestant Huguenots from France.

At the end of 2021, 25% of the Dutch population had a migration background, defined as those people who were not born in the Netherlands (first generation) and those people with at least one parent who was an immigrant (second generation). 11% have a Western migration background and 14% a non-Western migration background (of whom Surinamese people). The latter form the third largest group of immigrants in the Netherlands, accounting for 2% of the Dutch population (slightly more than 350,000 people). The largest groups of immigrants in the Netherlands are the Turkish and the Moroccans.⁴

The authors of this case note that Surinam was part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands until 1975, which makes it questionable whether (all) people with a Surinamese background should

⁴ This paragraph is based on information provided by the Dutch Bureau of Statistics: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/dossier/dossier-asiel-migratie-en-integratie/hoeveel-mensen-met-een-migratieachtergrond-wonen-in-nederland->

be seen as immigrants. Apart from that, the use of the identification of second-generation immigrants is questionable. However, this case is not the right place to settle this discussion.

In 1975 Surinam gained its independence from the Netherlands, after having been a Dutch colony since the end of the 17th Century. Nowadays, the Republic of Surinam has slightly more than 600,000 inhabitants. Surinam is located in the North of South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean in the North, and on land bordered by Brazil, French Guiana and Guyana. The country covers 164,000 square kilometers. Surinam has a diverse population, the major ethnic groups are 2020 (estimated): Hindustani (their ancestors emigrated from India mainly in the latter part of the 19th century) with a share of 27%; Maroon (their African ancestors were brought to the country in the 17th and 18th centuries as slaves) with a share of 22%; Creole (mixed White and Black) 16%; Javanese 14%; mixed 14%; other 8%; unspecified 1%.⁵

Although migration from Surinam to the Netherlands has taken place for a long time, the peak of this migration flow took place shortly before and shortly after Surinam gained its independence in 1975. One of the reasons for this migration for many people was to maintain their Dutch citizenship. Nowadays, 48% of all people with a Surinamese background in the Netherlands were born in the Netherlands; it is expected that within three years the number of second-generation Surinamese people will exceed the number of first-generation Surinamese people in the Netherlands.⁶

3. Racial discrimination

The biggest challenge in writing this case was to come to a definition of racial discrimination. The main issue here is that the authors of this case do not accept racial discrimination nor anything that comes in its neighborhood. Nevertheless, they are aware that racial discrimination does take place.

⁵ This paragraph is based on information available at www.cia.gov.

⁶ <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2015/48/helpt-surinaamse-nederlanders-is-tweede-generatie>.

First, they consulted one of the world's most reliable sources of English words: the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. It defines discrimination as: "the practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others", and it gives as examples: "age/racial/gender/sex discrimination (= because of somebody's age, race or sex)". 'Race' is defined in a number of ways in the dictionary, the most relevant definition in the context of this case is: "one of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences, for example the color of their skin". About 'racial', the dictionary says: "happening or existing between people of different races".

Next, it is interesting to look at what the United Nations (UN) says about racial discrimination. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". It is obvious that this Article does not condone any form of racial discrimination. Racial discrimination is defined by the UN as: "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".⁷ Also worth mentioning in this context is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of the United Nations that commits its members to the elimination of racial discrimination. This case follows the UN definition of racial discrimination, although it is admitted that skin color is not the same as race, and neither are descent and national or ethnic origin the same as race. It should be added that this case is not about positive discrimination, i.e. the practice of favoring people on the basis of their characteristics.

The UN definition of racial discrimination clearly aligns with Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution that states: "All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted".⁸ This Article implies that racial discrimination

⁷ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/human-rights/equality-and-non-discrimination>.

⁸ <https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl>.

(including the encouragement of racial discrimination) is prosecutable in the Netherlands. Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution has been elaborated in a number of Dutch laws.

What does racial discrimination look like in practice? It is a very multifaceted phenomena for sure. Research on the Internet has brought us to, among other things, the very informative website of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. On their website it states that: “People can experience racial discrimination in a variety of different ways. In its most overt form, racial discrimination can occur as a result of stereotyping, prejudice and bias. Racial discrimination also occurs in large measure through subtle forms of differential treatment, which often can only be detected after examining all the circumstances. In employment, for example, it can take the form of failing to hire, train, mentor, or promote a racialized person.”⁹

Mouzon, Taylor, Nguyen, Ifatunji and Chatters (2019) mentioned the following forms of everyday discrimination (p. 1955): some people are treated with less courtesy than others; some are treated with less respect than others; people act like they are better than you; people act as if you are not smart; you receive poor service in stores/restaurants; you are followed around in stores; people act as if you are dishonest; people act as if they are afraid of you; you are called names or insulted; and you are threatened or harassed.

During one of the interviews, Ruben added to the definition of racial discrimination that it goes further than only (consciously) disadvantaging. According to him it is also about the importance of ‘to other’ or ‘othering’ individuals or groups of people on the basis of their race or ethnic origin or color of their skin. In his eyes, ‘to other’ is to perceive or to treat individuals or groups of people as intrinsically different from and alien to yourself, e.g. in terms of their reliability, intellect, and laziness.

Poblete (2018) focused on the differences between transnational entrepreneurs and conventional immigrant entrepreneurs. The authors of this case note that labelling the latter category as ‘conventional’ is quite strange. In this paper, ‘entrepreneurs’ are those respondents who indicated they were proprietors of firms or otherwise self-employed in response to

⁹ <https://ohrc.on.ca>.

questions about their occupation and place of employment. ‘Transnational entrepreneurs’ were defined as “individuals who migrate from one country to another, maintaining business-related linkages with their countries of origin and current host countries and communities to engage simultaneously in two or more institutional environments”, whereas ‘conventional immigrant entrepreneurs’ were referred to as “the ones with a domestic-focused business” (Poblete, 2018, p. 278 and p. 279). The author of this paper found that transnational entrepreneurs are more likely to have been discriminated against compared with conventional immigrant entrepreneurs. Texiera, Lo and Truelove (2007) found that that visible-minority entrepreneurs confronted more barriers in their business practice than non-visible-minority entrepreneurs, with access to financing being one persistent problem.

In the Dutch report by Broekroelofs and Visser (2019) attention was paid to the discrimination towards self-employed people without personnel. The major flaws of this report are its descriptive character and that the authors do not really isolate racial discrimination from other forms of discrimination, although their respondents all belong to ethnic minority groups. Nevertheless, they come up with five recommendations concerning how to deal with discrimination: accept the situation; run away from the situation; adjust to the situation; prove yourself; address and start the conversation with the discriminators; and take a position towards discrimination. In the State of the European Tech report 2021 it is mentioned that 56% of their ethnic minority respondents had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months while working in the European technology sector.¹⁰

4. Ruben’s personal experiences with racial discrimination

Ruben has made a long list of cases of racial discrimination that he has experienced himself in his life. He started drawing up this list in the summer of 2020, on the creation of Black Lives Matter (BLM), a political and social movement originating among African Americans, emphasizing basic human rights and racial equality for black people and campaigning against various forms of

¹⁰ <https://stateofeuropentech.com/chapter/better-ideas-better-companies/article/fuelling-better-more-diverse-ideas>.

racism (source: Wikipedia). The summer of 2020 is a crucial period, because of the death of George Floyd, who died after his mistreatment by a Minneapolis (US) police officer. Ruben was encouraged to make this list as he felt the traumas of racial discrimination in his life, both hard and clear cases, as hammer strokes, and indirect and subtle cases, likened to mosquito bites.

Ruben started to follow EMDR¹¹ therapy, in order to better understand what especially the mosquito bites did and have done to him. It appeared that he had experienced many unprocessed cases of racial discrimination in his life, consisting of some he was already aware of, but also some that he was not aware of at the time. Ruben thought back about the incidents of racial discrimination that he had experienced in his life, even going back to his high school period. Many of them he had pushed aside and many of them he had not always been aware of, but they came back in his mind. Writing down these incidents was very confronting for him. And, after writing about them and reviewing them, he identified four clusters of incidents in which he had been confronted with racial discrimination, relating to personal life, work, public space, and education. Although these four clusters cannot be separated from each other, we focus here on the cluster 'work', because this directly relates to the subject of this case, viz. the racial discrimination of entrepreneurs.

During the interviews, Ruben recounted, among others, three hard cases of racial discrimination in his entrepreneurial life. In the first case, the director of his client organization, told him that he hated Surinamese people, as an explanation for his previous comment that he was '1-0 behind from the beginning'. During the interviews, Ruben told that he felt that he had to be careful how to react, and that he had to take the blows. Even after Ruben had successfully launched the new products, and subsequently received many compliments, the director was of the opinion that Ruben had to scam. Ruben even explained to him that he is Dutch with a Surinamese background. As a result, he felt publicly humiliated by that man.¹²

¹¹ EMDR is the abbreviation of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, a form of psychotherapy that enables people to heal from the symptoms and emotional distress that are the result of disturbing life experiences (<https://www.emdr.com>).

¹² Ruben also talked publicly about this case, see: <https://www.intermediar.nl/emancipatie-en-diversiteit/racisme/ruben-brave-als-succesvol-ondernemer-kan-ik-iets-tegen-racisme-doen?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

The second hard case of racial discrimination that Ruben experienced is that one of his clients owed him a large amount of money for work that he had delivered according to the contract standards but that he was not paid for. He was told: 'We never pay amounts like this to people with your origin'. His response was to begin legal proceedings. After a court decision, he received his money.

The third hard case of racial discrimination that Ruben experienced was at another company, where Ruben was responsible for the realization of a new business model. Despite its success, he was told by the major shareholder to leave the building immediately because he did not like Ruben's skin color. Ruben saw this as complete humbug, and told him so, and also said he would send a management invoice every month, and that, as long as the invoices were paid, he would not go anywhere: 'It may have bothered him but we had a contract'.

As well as the above-mentioned three hard cases of racial discrimination, Ruben also experienced a number of racial incidents. The main difference between the incidents and the hard cases is that the latter are more embedded in Ruben's entrepreneurship, whereas the former are more random; this difference does not say anything about their seriousness or impact. Already as a student at high school he was confronted with racial discrimination: see the situations described earlier, in one case with his civics teacher, in another case with his history teacher. A long list of examples were given by Ruben, in which he showed that he was treated in a certain way, just because of his Surinamese background and his black skin. One example of a racial incident took place at the wedding of one of Ruben's Dutch friends: He was addressed by a guest in English, who said that he had some small deals in Africa and that he thought that perhaps someone, implying Ruben, would have come to the wedding for revenge or as a practical joke.

Apart from the hard cases and the incidents, Ruben also shared his thoughts of indirect racial discrimination: the situations in which people induced a feeling of inferiority in him because of his Surinamese background and his black skin, without being explicitly hard cases of racial discrimination or racial incidents. As Ruben said: "You feel it, you see it, although you cannot really lay your finger on it". These experiences might best be labeled as subtle forms of discrimination, but do not say anything about their seriousness nor impact.

5. Ruben's personal strategy towards racial discrimination

From the previous section it can be derived that Ruben has experienced many cases of racial discrimination. Throughout the years, he has developed a personal strategy for how to deal with racial discrimination in his personal life and in his entrepreneurial life.

The first instrument of this strategy for how to deal with racial discrimination is Zero Tolerance. He never accepts racial discrimination and always takes action when he is confronted with it, to start with by addressing the people concerned directly. To exercise Zero Tolerance with racial discrimination, Ruben states that you have to be really assertive, and then reflect on what is happening and how you feel about it. You are always within your rights, as racial discrimination is prosecutable in the Netherlands.

The second instrument is what he calls the Blue Ocean approach (inspired by the book of Chan Kim and Mauborgne, 2015). Pick your battles, you have limited time, and look for the situations in which you can create long-term and valuable effects. Do not get into background fights, without much perspective and which may cost a lot of efforts – that is more the Red Ocean approach.

The third instrument is something you should not do according to Ruben: do not organize yourselves along racial lines. In his opinion, it is important for entrepreneurs with a certain background to detach themselves from the group of people with the same background, and to manifest themselves in a broader context. This approach discourages racial discrimination, whereas the first two instruments fight racial discrimination.

6. Reflection

Ruben is an open-minded person, who has for a long time ignored the racial discrimination that he had undergone. Following the huge rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, he decided to no longer ignore racial discrimination and to become an activist, though he still does not see

himself as a self-pitying person – on the contrary. Being a successful entrepreneur gives him a special position in the fight against racial discrimination. He now plays a prominent role in a number of advisory situations, because of his experience as a successful entrepreneur. His persistence and his imperturbability contribute to his fight. He speaks openly about being racially discriminated against himself and what it has done to him. These consequences even place his success in a special light: despite being racially discriminated against, he has become a successful entrepreneur. It is food for thought to consider the word ‘despite’ in the previous sentence could perhaps be (partially) replaced by ‘due to’, as his experienced racial discrimination may have contributed to the further development of his entrepreneurial mentality. In fact, this can be seen as the fourth instrument for dealing with racial discrimination, added by the authors of this case, namely: to show the world how successful you are.

From this case it becomes clear that racial discrimination leads to three kinds of hurt for the discriminated person (apart from possible physical hurt): economic hurt, social hurt, and psychological hurt. The economic hurt comes from being paid lower financial compensation than other persons; one special aspect here is that, as a result of actual or feared racial discrimination, one may ask for a lower fee than other persons. The social hurt comes from being humiliated, with all the mental pain that it involves. The psychological hurt comes from mental confusion, especially when there is unprocessed suffering.

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Appendix 2. Interviews with Ruben Brave

3 January 2022 (with Enno Masurel)

1 December 2021 (with Enno Masurel)

25 June 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova and Enno Masurel)

5 July 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova)

26 July 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova and Enno Masurel)

16 August 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova and Enno Masurel)

30 August 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova and Enno Masurel)

17 September 2021 (with Enno Masurel)

20 September 2021 (with Marianna Akhbulatova and Enno Masurel)

29 September 2020 (with Maud van Merriënboer)¹³

As well as these interviews, a number of informal conversations took place about this case between these four people.

¹³ This interview was conducted for the upcoming PhD thesis by Maud Merriënboer. However, it appeared to be very helpful for the development of the present case. She was also the person who came up with the idea for the case about Ruben Brave.