

Microaggressions

You just look like you've got a tan.

Do you have hair under your hijab?

Do people eat insects in your country?

I just don't see colour.

I don't think of you as black.

Call it racism.

#callitracism



What is a microaggression?

A microaggression is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group.'

Professor Chester. M. Pierce

"Apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognised by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be 'different'."

Mary Rowe

Micro-incivilities

'The kinds of daily commonplace behaviours or aspects of an environment which signal, wittingly or unwittingly, to members of out-groups that they do not belong and are not welcome'

Pearn Kandola 'Racism at Work'

Call it Racism

MICROAGGRESSION	WHY IT CAN BE OFFENSIVE
You're Asian so you must be an IT expert, right?	Stereotypes of Asian people as being only good at IT.
You're a good westernised Muslim though	The labelling of Muslims as Westernised (progressive) and the unsaid is that there are the other 'backward' .. so you belong to the best version of the backward group of Muslims.
You're not like other Asians, immigrants (insert any group), you're like us Related to 'you're not like them' below	I have gotten to know you as a person so I see beyond the stereotype. However everyone else in your demographic are definitely part of that stereotype.
You're pretty progressive for a Middle Eastern woman	The premise is that Middle Eastern women are backwards, so you are an exception.
Do women in your country go to university?	Women in non-Western states are backwards, illiterate.
Your accent, where are you originally from?	The native versus the non-native speaker (you are a foreigner= not British)= xenophobia.
Did your parents meet before they got married?	Indirect allusion to Gendered-Islamophobia tropes (forced marriages re South Asian communities).
Do you have hair under your hijab?	Alienation of hijab.
Do you sleep in your hijab?	Alienation of hijab.
I have no problems with you, it's your religion I don't respect.	You belong to contemptuous religion (demonising Islam).
You don't look Indian	You are an upgraded version of Indians (in dress style, cultural outlook, ...etc).
You could pass for European	You are upgraded and can blend .
I don't think of you as black	Despite your phenotypical difference, you are one of us - you've assimilated.
I just don't see colour	White privilege / colour-blind myth.
I just think you're unorthodox	You're not really part of the out-group; you're just odd (and so really part of the outgroup).
You just look like you've got a tan	Don't worry, you are not too dark.
But you're not like 'them'	The us and them – xenophobic behaviour, but this is because you have assimilated.
I'm not racist but...	What is said next should not be framed as racist (although it certainly is!).
If they don't like it, they should go home	Minorities have to accept crumbs from the 'majority' table, even when and if this includes racism. Otherwise, even if they are British, they should find themselves another place.
Your eyes are pretty wide for a Chinese person	Chinses eyes are not beautiful.
Do people eat insects in your country?	The sentiment here is that said person comes from a country where people aren't civilised- they eat bugs like savages (or animals that are considered cute, e.g. cats and dogs).
No, you're English is better than my (insert language they don't know a word of)	Disparaging

MICROAGGRESSION	WHY IT CAN BE OFFENSIVE
Can I touch your hair?	Having their hair touched is just one of the ways Black women are often denied agency in society by White women crossing personal space and boundaries to touch their hair at the same time as asking permission without consent being given.
You have nappy hair	The term is one that has been used as a negative description of very tightly coiled, kinky black hair. In its derogatory form, nappy is a negative way to refer to the dry, coarse, tangled characteristics of Afro-textured hair.
Gosh, you're really black	This is an added discrimination against dark-skinned people in favour of those with lighter skin from the same race.
I didn't see you there	Being ignored in a meeting with white colleagues as attention is given to them, highlighting their worth is more than yours, and that you don't belong in that 'space'. Another example is when you are shopping and ready to pay at the counter, and attention is given to the white customer.
Nearly every game, I'm called a monkey or a n***** or a whatever	People of African descent are perceived as not human and lower than whites in race and status. This quote is from a sportsperson, where racial slurs are thrown to show the person their place, which is not as a member of the team or game.
I heard 'ooh ooh ooh' (monkey noises)	Mimicking monkey noises illustrates that you are not seen to belong to that space.
You're so articulate' or 'You don't sound black	You don't belong / You won't succeed here despite sounding White, you are not White. There is only so far you can go. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.
Do you sleep in your turban?	Lack of knowledge of other faiths such as the Sikh faith.
I'm so scruffy just now, I must look like such a tink	The word 'tink' is not alone however, another word is 'minky', this is commonly used to describe something or someone who is dirty or disgusting. The word is thought to derive from the word 'minceir' which was historically used as a word for Irish Travellers.
I'm not racist. I have a black friend	I am immune to races and accusations of discriminatory behaviour because I have friends of colour.
Religious stereotypes	Someone makes a joke about Jewish people being cheap, or having big noses, or hiding their wealth. Another common form of microaggression is subtle Jewish references and comparisons used for non-Jewish things. When someone refer to themselves as "looking like a Holocaust victim" or comparing a politician or leader to Hitler. Even when not intended to be offensive, these references can be painful. They diminish the suffering that occurred only decades ago by millions of people.

Challenge Racist Behaviour

MICROAGGRESSION	WHY THIS IS OFFENSIVE
“Well, in this country we believe this...”	Minorities have to accept crumbs from the ‘majority’ table/uncritical groupthink, as though this person represent the views of other people from the same group.
I’ve been excluded from group work for the whole course	I don’t know why for sure, but it could be because I am an international student and English is not my first language.
I’ve tried to join in the discussion but have been completely ignored	The person is made to feel ‘invisible’ and their contribution is not worth either an acknowledgement or response.
Cutting in front of me in queues like I don’t exist	Xenophobia. This is a clear indication that people do not see you. That you are a second class citizen; normative behaviour (politeness and manners) does not apply to you. However, if your behaviour betrays these norms you are called out as ignorant.
Taxis have opted to pick up someone else when I’ve hailed them first	Xenophobia. This is a clear indication that people do not see you. That you are a second class citizen; normative behaviour (politeness and manners) does not apply to you.
Being forgotten about at a bar/restaurant while others were served all around me	Xenophobia. This is a clear indication that people do not see you. That you are a second class citizen; normative behaviour (politeness and manners) does not apply to you.
People invading my space and being disrespectful to my belongings	Xenophobia. This is a clear indication that people do not see you. That you are a second class citizen; normative behaviour (politeness and manners) does not apply to you. However, if your behaviour betrays these norms you are called out as ignorant.
Being the only one asked to produce ID in a group of white people	Xenophobia gives the majority the right to discriminate.
Routinely harassed/interrogated/quizzed at airports because of my race	State Xenophobia (through regulations) gives the majority the right to discriminate.
Encountering confrontational staff at customs despite having valid ID and travel documents	State Xenophobia (through regulations) gives the majority the right to discriminate.
Being separated from your children who may be mixed race or have a different surname at customs	State Xenophobia (through regulations) gives the majority the right to discriminate.
I was asked to leave a popular white night club for an unjustified/made-up reason	Management creating a ‘reasonable’ offense so they can exclude you.

Challenge Racist Structures

MICROAGGRESSION	WHY THIS IS OFFENSIVE
Being made to move departments after ‘annoying’ a white colleague	White privilege. The BAME individual having to move out of the presence of a white colleague enforces racial hierarchy.
Marginalising the impact of anti-Muslim bias at universities	Turning the blind eye to Islamophobia. The message sent is: unless it happens to the majority/dominant culture it is not significant enough to take action.
Not believing that the impact of racism against certain groups would be a worthy PhD topic	Due to the myth of post-racial societies AND racism does not exist any more
Questioning the purpose of Black History Month	Indicates that colonialism and slavery are history but not impacting our daily lives. Does not recognise that Black people are already underrepresented and historically not credited for achievements.
Downplaying the importance of funding BAME related projects	Under claims that we should not support positive discrimination- they should be treated equally, as if merit and only merit, and not white favouritism is prevalent.
White teaching staff belittling the impact of institutional racism	Because they are privileged in the current situation. This is also linked to white fragility. Acknowledging the impact means they may be complicit. White Guilt and fear of a new order (black planet).
Not acknowledging race in a grievance between a BAME and a white colleague. Instead the problem is seen as a personality clash.	If the problem is seen as a personality issue the organisation has little responsibility in the grievance itself. The complainant may then become victimised for mentioning race.

Offensive questions, stereotypes and ‘jokes’ have a lasting impact on individuals, affecting their mental health, career progression and overall welfare at college or university.

It’s time to stop sweeping these microaggressions under the rug.
Call racism out for what it is and challenge unacceptable behaviour.

It’s time to take a stand.

#callitracism

Call it racism | Challenge racist behaviour | Change racist structures