

Examples of racial microaggressions

The following real examples of micro-aggressions are shared to shine a light on some of the contexts (there are of course many others) in which painful and traumatic racial micro-aggressions can be experienced daily.

Customer / Client-facing situations

| Situation | Impact |
|--|---|
| <p>You are followed around in shops by staff and/ or security guards – regardless of your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attire • age (young person, middle aged or elderly e.g. an 87-year-old grandmother!) | <p>Feelings of pain, hurt, humiliation.</p> <p>It implies that Black people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thieves • not trustworthy. |
| <p>You experience a 'cold' manner being demonstrated towards you during client-facing interactions (e.g. shop staff, receptionists (GPs, schools, etc.), healthcare professionals, etc.) but in comparison, a noticeably 'warm' manner being demonstrated towards others</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your presence is a hindrance whereas for others, their presence is welcome. • you do not belong |
| <p>Shop staff or receptionists willingly offering support to other customers first - even though, you may have been waiting in the queue the longest.</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • others are more worthy and entitled than you. • you do not belong |
| <p>Queue-jumping by other customers, who position themselves ahead of you, despite it being obvious that you were queuing up longer than they were</p> | <p>It implies others deem themselves as being entitled; and more worthy or more important than you.</p> |
| <p>Being looked at with suspicion, and addressed in a curt manner when returning goods to a store – even with the receipt and within the store's specified time (adhering to the returns policy)</p> | <p>Feelings of discomfort and humiliation</p> <p>It implies that Black people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thieves • not trustworthy. |

In public / on public transport

| Situation | Impact |
|--|---|
| <p>Passengers on public transport (or pedestrians walking along the road) clutch their bags / rucksacks in response to your presence, regardless of your age, gender, or your attire</p> | <p>It implies that Black people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thieves • not trustworthy • not safe |
| <p>Others explicitly avoid you, cross over the road or tense-up when they see you approaching</p> | <p>It implies that Black people are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thieves • not trustworthy • not safe |

Higher Education

| Situation | Impact |
|--|--|
| <p>In your undergraduate studies, you notice that there is a harsher application of sanctions levied against your fellow Black university students by the academics and / or during their professional placements. As a result, some students are unable to proceed with their studies and / or be awarded with their professional qualifications.</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your academic capabilities as a Black person are usually considered to be less than your peers • others have low expectations of you • the margin for error is far smaller for Black people compared to their peers |

Professionally: Work and studies

| Situation | Impact |
|--|--|
| <p>During your appraisal meeting, without warning, your manager says to you: "I'm handing over the project [that you were leading] to your teammate as she'll do a damn good job at it!"</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are incompetent and incapable • your manager has low expectations of you |
| <p>When tasks are being distributed, by your manager, within your team, you and another Black colleague are assigned the tasks that are deemed by others to be less- sought-after. Whereas your White counterparts are assigned the tasks that are highly favourable</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are incompetent and incapable • your manager has low expectations of you • your manager has a high regard for your peers' capabilities and competence |
| <p>An unfamiliar colleague speaks over you or takes over a situation that you are leading.</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are incompetent and incapable. • you are not capable and competent to lead • others have low expectations of you • others view themselves as being more able /capable, competent, and entitled |
| <p>You are responsible for leading a statutory meeting in another establishment and your team's administrator is accompanying you to shadow the process.</p> <p>A senior leader of the establishment enters the room, shakes the hand of your colleague and proceeds to address her as if she were the person leading the process.</p> | <p>It implies you are not capable and competent to lead</p> |
| <p>As part of your academic studies, you attend a university symposium with discussions that are led by professors and PhD students who are unfamiliar to you. When you make significant contributions to the discussions, the academics look at you in a state of shock (which was perceived to be due to cognitive dissonance)</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your academic capabilities as a Black person are usually considered to be less than your peers • others have low expectations of you |
| <p>You are leading a training session and ask the delegates to conclude their group discussions to resume the whole-group training. A newly qualified professional, gives you eye-contact, and then turns her back to you, in a defiant manner, to resume her conversation with her "talk-partner"</p> | <p>It implies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • she is more entitled than you are despite her junior position / stage within her professional career • you are not worthy of the same degree of regard as any other professional / human being • you are less than |

At your child's school

| Situation | Impact |
|-----------|--------|
| | |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>At school, your child experiences being sanctioned harshly and / or is treated as if they are much older than their chronological age.</p> | <p>It implies that your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> child's sense of childhood is not worthy of preserving. child does not have the same feelings and developmental processes as other children of their same age the margin for error is far smaller for your child compared to their peers |
| <p>You attend your child's Year 10 French Exchange information evening. In an attempt to safeguard your own child, you ask the teacher if the parents will have some sort of DBS or vetting process. The teacher responds by asking: "why, do you have a conviction?"</p> | <p>It implies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black people are criminals. your concerns are not the same as other parents who are entrusting their children in the care of other families for whom they know nothing about |
| <p>You attend an ICT workshop for parents at your child's high school. The teacher facilitating asks parents to describe their own experiences at school. When you contribute to the discussions and state that you experienced a 'laissez-faire approach', all the parents (mainly white middle class parents in attendance) swivel around towards you a state of shock (which was perceived to be due to cognitive dissonance)</p> | <p>It implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> your linguistic capabilities as a Black person are usually considered to be less than your peers other's low expectations of you |

In your neighbourhood

| Situation | Impact |
|--|---|
| <p>At a residents' association meeting, you mention experiences of vandalism levied against you and a disabled family member. The Chair of the Residents' Association suggests that the culprit could be "the friends of your 20-year-old son who might have a vendetta against him" (despite there never having been any prior reasons for this suggestion)</p> | <p>It implies that Black people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are vandals and criminals are not trustworthy have relationships that are based on feuds and vendettas |

In times of emergency / need

| Situation | Impact |
|--|--|
| <p>When you call the ambulance in the middle of the night for a chronically and gravely sick family member, on most occasions, you are treated by paramedics who, when they enter your home, are 'cold', curt and talk down to you in a demeaning way</p> | <p>It implies that you and your sick family member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are a hindrance. you have no feelings. You are not worthy of the same degree of regard and empathy that others may experience during emotionally challenging times |
| <p>Whilst your gravely sick family member is in an A&E resuscitation room, experiencing dangerous cardiac difficulties, a consultant cardiologist talks down to you and your unwell family member in a demeaning way</p> | <p>It implies that you and your sick family member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are a hindrance. have no feelings. are not worthy of the same degree of empathy that others may experience during emotionally challenging times |
| <p>You call 999 when you notice an elderly White woman, who demonstrates observable signs of dementia and agitation, wandering outside her home, on a busy road, on a very cold and wintery day; and she refuses to re-enter her home when you ask. You wait outside with the elderly woman for the emergency services to arrive (whilst standing at a distance away from her, to avoid suspicion from passers-by). On arrival, the police respond to you in a very cold, curt, and dismissive manner when you present the chronology of events to them, upon their request.</p> | <p>It implies that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> you are not worthy of the same degree of regard as any other citizen you do not belong |

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