



INTRODUCTION TO ANTIRACISM

UNDERSTANDING AND TAKING ACTION AGAINST
RACISM AND SYSTEMIC RACISM
Equality training



PARTICIPANT

Notebook

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WELCOME

OPENING REMARKS

The United Steelworkers Education Department and Executive are proud to welcome each and every one of you and would like to thank you for taking this additional step towards antiracist activism. A special thank you to Local 1976 for its Education Week initiative.

Recent years have been marked by media coverage of unfortunate crimes and events involving racism and hatred. A great deal has been written about the issue of systemic racism. Social discourse is becoming polarized, and demonstrations of intolerance and division are on the rise. From a Union perspective, this runs counter to our core values of equality and solidarity. It is our duty to promote equality and fight racism in all its forms. We can do this both as individuals and through our Union. We have always been – and continue to be – one of the most powerful agents for social change.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Master the vocabulary relating to cultural diversity and racism in order to improve communications and live more harmoniously together.
- Become familiar with the term “systemic racism” and recognize its underlying causes.
- Understand that various forms of discrimination have an impact on our life paths.
- Build greater solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are experiencing multiple forms of discrimination.
- Become aware of our perceptions and recognize manifestations of our cognitive biases so that we can initiate a process of inclusion.
- Understand what microaggressions are and learn to recognize them better.



1. INTRODUCTIONS

Round Table

Objective: Establish a respectful climate that is conducive to learning by introducing participants to participative teaching methods.

Instructions

- Please take a few minutes to fill in the information below.
- You will be asked individually to briefly introduce yourself and address each of the aspects below.

Me as a worker

1. Name: _____
2. Employer: _____
3. Type of activities carried out by the employer

4. Type of work? When did you start? _____

Me as a Union activist

5. The unit, lodge or subunit I represent (*its number, how many members, its particular characteristics?*):

6. My Union experience and duties? When did you first become active? _____



3. THE RIGHT WORDS

Workshop Activity

Objective: Master the vocabulary relating to cultural diversity and racism in order to improve communications and live more harmoniously together.

Contextualization

In order to establish positive relationships, it is helpful to communicate using appropriate vocabulary and attitudes. Using the right vocabulary takes practice. Often in intercultural exchanges, the efforts we make are noticed and appreciated and help establish a context that is conducive to positive exchanges, even if we occasionally get a bit tangled up.

Instructions (Part 1)

Explain the following concepts to the best of your ability in your own words, choosing Column 1 or Column 2:

- Column 1: The concepts you feel confident you can define;
- Column 2: The concepts that are less clear or new to you.

Words

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. DISCRIMINATION | 6. PREJUDICE |
| 2. INTERSECTIONALITY | 7. WHITE PRIVILEGE |
| 3. MICROAGGRESSION | 8. RACISM |
| 4. OPPRESSION | 9. SYSTEMIC RACISM |
| 5. RACIALIZED PERSON | 10. XENOPHOBIA |

Concepts I have mastered

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Concepts I haven't mastered

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Instructions

- Taking turns, pick one of the cards, read the word on it and define it in your own words.
 - If you don't feel you can define the word, you can put the card back in the pack and pick another one.
- Once you've given your own definition, turn the card over and read the definition written on it.
- Continue taking turns until all the cards have been read, or until no team member can explain the terms on the remaining cards.

Please identify the word(s) your team felt uncomfortable defining.

Analytical Questions

1. What do you think of the differences or similarities between your own definitions and the definitions on the cards?

2. What are your key takeaways from this exercise?



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT

General Concepts^{1,2}

Discrimination

Discrimination is the exclusion of people or groups on the basis of their ethnic origin, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical condition, social status, etc.

In general, discrimination is directed against individuals or groups who are characterized by traits that set them apart from the rest of society or the environment around them.

Prejudice (an attitude) and discrimination (a behaviour) are linked but remain distinct phenomena. A vicious circle is created in which prejudice often leads to discriminatory behaviour, while discrimination reinforces or creates social and economic inequalities that in turn reinforce prejudice.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an accumulation of various forms of domination or discrimination experienced by a person, based in particular on race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, social class or physical ability that leads to an increase in the prejudice they experience.

The roots of intersectionality go back to the post-slavery American context. Thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois, the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University, talked about the complexity of systems of domination using the example of African American life. The concept of “intersectionality” was first described by African American jurist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 to refer more specifically to the reality of black women suffering the effects of both sexism and racism in the workplace.

Intersectional analysis involves becoming aware of our own privileges, defined as undeserved advantages that result from our personal situation in relation to others. While this is not always easy, it’s important to name and understand our identities and privileges. For example, we can single out certain aspects of our identity.

¹ Inspired by the FTQ’s “Diversité culturelle en milieu de travail”[Cultural Diversity in the Workplace] training program.

² Inspired by definitions and texts from “The Canadian Encyclopedia”: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en>



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT (CONTINUED)

Microaggression

Actions or words, often seemingly banal, that may be perceived as hurtful or offensive, usually by a person belonging to a minority group. These actions or words often start from a good intention, curiosity, an oversight or misunderstanding and can take the form of jokes.

These assaults are called “micro” because they often go unnoticed or seem trivial. However, the people experiencing them suffer from their frequent occurrence and insensitivity.

Oppression³

The exercise of authority or power in a coercive, cruel or unjust manner.

Oppression exists on a societal scale, backed by social, political and economic power. This means that oppressions show up in institutions, structures, systems and processes. People also internalize oppression, and interpersonal relationships suffer as a result. Violence is both a feature of oppression and a means through which oppression is sustained. Oppressions include racism, patriarchy, ableism and poverty. Oppressions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Racialized person

Refers to people who are “non-white” or who have undergone a process of racialization.

It’s important to note that race is a social construct – and is therefore neither objective nor biological – but the term is employed to categorize and sometimes exclude “the other.” The use of the term “racialized” allows us to take seriously the social impact of the concept of race, which is very real, in order to better undo racial hierarchies.⁴

The terms **visible minorities** and racialized people are sometimes used interchangeably. Statistics Canada defines visible minorities as follows:

³ From the *Submission to the Commissioner on Systemic Racism* by the New Brunswick Women’s Council, August 2022.

⁴ PIERRE, Alexandra. “Mots choisis pour réfléchir au racisme et à l’antiracisme” [Words chosen to reflect on racism and antiracism], *Revue Droits et libertés*, vol. 35, no. 2, Fall 2016. Also available online in French at http://liguedesdroits.ca/?p=4119#_ftn4.

THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT (CONTINUED)

The *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.⁵

Not to be confused with *immigrant* which refers to people who have migrated from their country of origin to another country. For example, the term *people of immigrant background* is used to refer to immigrant people AND people whose families’ recent history includes immigration.

Finally, please avoid using the term “**people of colour**” which is not culturally appropriate in Canada.

Prejudice

The term “prejudice” refers to opinions we hold about a person, or a group of people, in the absence of sufficient information or practice. Prejudices are sometimes based on myths or beliefs or are the result of hasty generalizations.

The term “prejudice” refers to an unconfirmed initial judgment about people or groups that is usually (but not necessarily) negative, based on their ethnic identity, race or religion.

As the word implies, a prejudice is a judgment made in advance. In advance of what? In advance of examination, verification or a finding that would justify the judgment. To prejudge therefore means to take for granted something that is not objectively true, or to consider an assertion as true which in fact remains doubtful. This is why prejudice, by definition, seems to be illegitimate: it consists of a mental rush to judgment that may be made more or less in good faith, and it doesn’t matter whether the judgment is “favourable” or “unfavourable.”

⁵ STATISTICS CANADA. *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016, Visible Minority*, [Online], 2017. [https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/pop127-eng.cfm]



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT (CONTINUED)

White Privilege⁶

Invisible but systematic advantages enjoyed by so-called “white” people simply because they are “white.”

Whiteness allows us to unwittingly – even unconsciously – take advantage of the fact that other people are racialized and therefore discriminated against. “No matter how much we may deny or ignore it or how fervently antiracist we try to be, being white means inheriting a system of domination that provides benefits.”⁷

Privilege is defined as the enjoyment of freedoms, rights, advantages, access or opportunities enjoyed by certain people because of their membership in a given group or their social situation. When the social category to which we belong is dominant, we are granted privileges that are denied to members of other groups. This means that such privileges are generally taken for granted.

In order to create a fairer world, we need to acknowledge the privileges we inherited at birth and to realize that our personal success is not based solely on our personal abilities but on the advantages we have enjoyed in society.⁸ This awareness helps foster a greater understanding of the challenges our brothers and sisters have faced throughout their lives and helps combat the injustices that persist.

Racism

Racism “is an ideology that holds that humans can be divided into different racial groups with various inherited and immutable characteristics. Racism maintains that these differences explain societal inequalities.”

In fact, the term refers to the concept of race, which has been scientifically deconstructed and is not based on any significant biological differences that would allow us to separate humans into such categories.

Racism exists through people, behaviour and contemptuous attitudes, but what’s important to remember is that racism is not just a series of isolated or individual discriminatory gestures or behaviours, and that it’s a structural political problem for which collective solutions must therefore be found. In other words, racism has many faces: it’s not always a direct, targeted action, so it’s sometimes harder to detect and stop.

⁶ Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Glossary.

⁷ Diallo Rokhaya (2013). Le privilège blanc [White Privilege]. http://www.ministere-de-la-regularisation-de-tous-les-sans-papiers.net/joomla1.5/images/documents_pdfs/le_privilege_blanc.pdf

⁸ Projet accompagnement solidarité Colombie [Colombia Solidarity Support Project]. Notre solidarité : un territoire à décoloniser [Our Solidarity: A Territory to be Decolonized] (Toolbox).



Systemic racism

Systemic racism is the integration into our institutions, structures and organizations of mechanisms that produce or reproduce inequalities based on this system of oppression in various fields such as “work, health, justice, security, education, thereby significantly undermining people’s rights.”⁹

Systemic racism thus produces various forms of discrimination, often indirect. That said, we must remember that institutions are created by human beings and that we have the power to change them.

The notion of systemic racism should not be confused with that of systematic racism. While systematic racism implies that the people of Quebec are intrinsically racist or that all its citizens engage in discriminatory behaviour, systemic racism actually means that our institutions, structures and organizations still include certain mechanisms which – often indirectly – produce or reproduce inequalities that have the effect of discriminating against racialized people.

Xenophobia

Means “fear of what comes from outside.” In everyday language, xenophobia refers to the fear of foreigners, i.e., those who don’t share your nationality or ethnicity.

The word xenophobia is made up of the Greek roots “xeno,” meaning “that which comes from outside,” and “phobia,” meaning “fear.”

Discomfort and Social Dialogue

Not being racist isn’t enough. We need to take action – at work, in our Union and in society – against racism. Talking about racism is often uncomfortable, awkward, emotional – in short, it’s difficult. You may have felt similar emotions during the previous exercise. You need to realize that this discomfort is bigger than you individually – it’s a social malaise. Our good intentions, our concern not to hurt others, our desire to be inclusive and supportive can be hampered by our lack of knowledge, know-how or soft skills. Union activists seek to rectify injustices, one at a time, to the best of our ability. The recipe for becoming antiracist is pretty much the same.

⁹ LIGUE DES DROITS ET LIBERTÉS, *Le racisme systémique... Parlons-en!* [LEAGUE OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS, Systemic Racism...Let’s talk about it!], 2017, p. 9.



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT

Systemic Discrimination in Employment and the Justice System

Systemic discrimination stems from systemic racism and is applicable when people of a particular group experience institutionalized or widespread differential treatment.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate among immigrants is almost twice as high as the rate for native-born Quebecers. In addition, immigrants often take on more precarious jobs, or jobs for which they are overqualified. We rarely ask ourselves why, and sometimes even doubt their willingness to work.

Demystification

- A study carried out by the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse* [Human and Youth Rights Commission] shows that “for the same characteristics and skills, a candidate with a Quebec surname is at least 60% more likely to be invited to a job interview than someone with an African, Arab or Latin American-sounding name.”¹⁰
- When we dig deeper, we find that it is extremely difficult for newcomers to have their diplomas and qualifications acquired outside Quebec recognized.
- We’re told that this is inevitable, since the qualifications acquired elsewhere, especially but not exclusively in the countries of the Global South, are not equivalent to those acquired in the West. And yet, what we find is that “in Quebec, an immigrant with a degree from a ‘developed country’ is 60% more likely to find a first job than an immigrant with a degree from a ‘less developed country.’¹¹ In British Columbia, however, this advantage is only 36%, while in Ontario, it’s the immigrant with a non-Western university degree who has the lowest advantage, i.e., around 7%.” As a result, the value of foreign qualifications varies greatly from province to province, which suggests that the criteria used to judge them are subjective and open to revision.”

These obstacles which appear at every stage of employability for immigrants are in themselves a hindrance to their integration into the job market. This is an example of a policy that appears neutral at first glance but which in fact has a discriminatory impact on a particular segment of the population that will subsequently find itself overrepresented in Quebec’s unemployment rate.

¹⁰ CDPDJ. *Des droits pour tous et toutes* [Rights for All] – Fiche n° 6 : *L’intégration et la discrimination* [Fact Sheet No. 6: Integration and Discrimination], 2013.

¹¹ IRIS. *Integration of Immigrants in Quebec. Economic Rating*. November 2012.



Incarceration

There is also an overrepresentation of certain racialized groups in the Quebec and Canadian prison systems. This reality often tends to give rise to prejudice and discriminatory comments about the supposed dishonesty of certain ethnocultural groups, whereas when we take a closer look, we see that the system itself reproduces this reality independently of the personal characteristics of the individuals targeted.

Demystification:

- In the Barreau du Québec’s Brief on racial profiling, we read that “[racialized] groups, particularly Blacks and Aboriginals, are subject to differential treatment at all stages of the criminal justice process by the various stakeholders: police, Crown prosecutors, courts and correctional services.”¹²
- The courts are also addressing the problem, with Supreme Court decisions stating that “[the unbalanced ratio of imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders arises also from bias against Aboriginal people and from an unfortunate institutional approach that is more inclined to refuse bail and to impose more and longer prison terms for Aboriginal offenders.”¹³
- The same is true for Black people, who are overrepresented in the prison system mainly because “Black youth are more subject to observation by police and security guards than white youth.”¹⁴ This is what is commonly known as racial profiling. In addition, racialized people are more likely to be subject to a probation with conditions that tend to be stricter to comply with.

In short, the overrepresentation of racialized people and Aboriginals in the prison system could at first glance be wrongly assumed to be a cultural reality that is intrinsic to the various target groups. And yet, when we look more closely, we see that the legal and prison system itself, and the institutions that flow from it, contribute significantly to this overrepresentation. This institutional contribution to the problem is what we call systemic racism.

¹² BARREAU DU QUÉBEC. *Mémoire en réponse à la consultation sur le profilage racial de la Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse* [A Brief in response to the consultation on racial profiling by the Human and Youth Rights Commission], 2010, p. 11, [Online] [www.barreau.qc.ca/pdf/medias/positions/2010/20100610-profilage-racial.pdf] (Accessed February 27, 2018)

¹³ SUPREME COURT OF CANADA, *R. v. Gladue*, [1999] 1 S.C.R. 688, at para. 65.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, BARREAU DU QUÉBEC, p. 15.



5. THE PRIVILEGE WALK

Interactive Activity

Objective: *Understand that various forms of discrimination have an impact on our life course. Build greater solidarity with our sisters and brothers who experience multiple forms of discrimination.*

Instructions:

- Please stand in a line against a wall.
- Trainers will read statements aloud. When the statement is true and applies to your life: Take a step forward.
- Given the personal nature of the statements, you're under no obligation to take a step forward if you don't feel comfortable doing so.

THE PRIVILEGE WALK

Please briefly share what you thought of this experience?

(E.g.: Are you surprised by your position? How did you feel when others could move forward and you couldn't?)

What conclusions can we draw?

(E.g.: How our experience influences the way we see the world and our Union involvement, our personal ability to act and change the situations described, etc.)

How is your workplace experience similar to those of immigrant or racialized members?



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT

“I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group.”

- Peggy McIntosh -

We can't change the colour of our skin or our place of birth, but when these things empower us, we can use our power to help others. Acknowledging undeserved privilege doesn't have to be accompanied by guilt or shame. People who are resistant to this concept often have the mistaken perception that to acknowledge white privilege is to acknowledge that you are responsible for something bad. Acknowledging your privileges doesn't mean you've had it easy. You may have struggled and endured difficult life circumstances; you may have had tons of pitfalls and obstacles and still have operated in a system that favours white people.

If we want to work as allies with diverse and Indigenous members, we need to understand how the world currently works:

- If we want to make the world a better place, we have to understand the problems.
- We shouldn't blame people for not getting ahead in life if they've been faced with the many undeserved disadvantages that are often inherent in systemic racism.
- Some of my privileges (undeserved advantages) have come at the expense of others.

Daily Effects of White Privilege¹⁵

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbours in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

¹⁵ From PSAC: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (<https://psac-ncr.com/white-privilege-unpacking-invisible-knapsack/>)



6. When I am told about our national heritage or about civilization, I am shown that people of my colour made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. I can go into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
9. Whether I use cheques, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin colour not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
10. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
11. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
12. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
13. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of racialized people, who constitute the world's majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
14. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behaviour without being seen as a cultural outsider.
15. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
16. If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the tax authorities audit my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
17. I can easily buy posters, post cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
18. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
19. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.



20. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.

21. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in “flesh” colour that more or less match my skin.



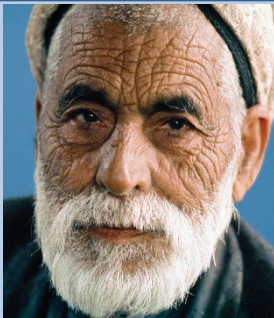
6. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Plenary Quiz

Objective: Become aware of our perceptions and recognize manifestations of our cognitive biases in order to initiate a process of inclusion.

Instructions:

Individually, answer the following question for each illustration: **What do you see?**



- a) Professor
- b) Refugee
- c) Fundamentalist
- d) A grandfather



- a) Economist
- b) Trafficking victim
- c) Immigrant
- d) A granddaughter



- a) Doctor
- b) Taxi driver
- c) Human rights activist
- d) A husband



- a) Beautician
- b) Indigenous person
- c) Teacher
- d) An aunt

THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT

Making Attributions about People is Normal, But...

You've probably already heard that the brain abhors a vacuum, but did you know that it prefers to operate in accordance with the law of least effort? In the context of intercultural relations, this is a dangerous combination.

Whether you're aware of it or not, your brain is trying to make sense of what's around you and what you're experiencing: it's filling the void. To do this, it relies on your knowledge and experience, i.e., on everything you've accumulated in your life up to now. In social psychology, we talk about making attributions.

Attribution is the process of inferring the causes of events or behaviours. In real life, attribution is something we all do, every day and usually without any awareness of the underlying processes and biases that lead to our inferences.

For example, in the course of a typical day, you probably make numerous attributions about your own behaviour and the behaviour of the people around you.

As a worker, you may blame the foreperson for failing to properly explain an assigned task, totally ignoring your level of understanding of what was said, the state of your knowledge or skills, your attitude to requests for adaptation, and so on. If one of your colleagues achieves a good result on the same task, you may attribute their good performance to luck, overlooking the fact that this person asked several clarifying questions or requested the collaboration of other workers when they were uncertain.

The attributions you make every day have an important influence on how you feel, think and interact with others. These attributions can be useful when analyzing your environment to recognize dangerous situations, for example.

On the other hand, since your brain devotes a large part of its energy to ensuring your vital and social functions, it goes for simplicity when analyzing new or unfamiliar situations. This can easily lead to stereotyping and prejudice. We refer to this as unconscious bias.

Becoming aware of this involuntary functioning and initiating an internal discourse to validate or correct our attributions is akin to "stepping on the gas" of our brain to help us understand and analyze situations better. This is often enough to avoid the slippery slope that can lead to discrimination.

THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT (CONTINUED)

Recognizing Our Unconscious Biases¹⁷

An unconscious or implicit bias is a social stereotype that is unconsciously formed in relation to certain groups of people, based on easily observable characteristics such as age, weight, skin colour or gender. Unconscious bias is much more widespread than conscious bias.

Thus, a person who values diversity and antiracism might have unconscious negative biases towards racialized people. One of the reasons for this is that we have been socialized and conditioned throughout our lives with stereotyped images of certain groups.

Our brains often make shortcuts, and sometimes these are harmful to racialized people.

Being able to recognize that no one is perfect and that we all have unconscious biases towards certain groups will enable us to be more vigilant when dealing with racialized people.

By continuing to educate ourselves and exposing ourselves to positive, nuanced role models of racialized people, we can reduce our biases. Furthermore, by discovering the history, art and culture of racialized populations, we can counterbalance the negative images that have been transmitted in the media and which we have unconsciously integrated.

¹⁷ Guide pour un syndicalisme antiraciste sans compromis de *la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)* 2022 [FTQ Guide to Uncompromising Antiracist Unionism]



7. MICROAGGRESSIONS

Individual Questionnaire

Objective: Understand what a microaggression is and be better able to recognize a microaggression when you witness it.

Instructions:

- Individually, please identify how often you have witnessed or been a victim of any of the statements listed below.
- Once completed, use one of the markers provided and use a check mark for all the statements for which you have identified that you have “often” been a witness or victim.

I have witnessed or been a victim of...	Never	Sometimes	Often
1. A racialized person is asked: “Where are you really from?”			
2. A racialized person is told: “I know someone from your country” or “I’ve already been to ...” and names another country.			
3. A white person says to a racialized person: “I’m not racist; we’re all the same race.” This expression may or may not be followed by “I have a friend ...”			
4. A person touches the hair or traditional attire of a racialized person and says it’s beautiful.			
5. A racialized person is told: “You speak really well and don’t have an accent!”			
6. A person changes sidewalks, repositions their bag or waits for the next elevator to avoid dealing with a racialized person.			
7. A racialized woman is told: “You’re really beautiful for a... [mention of the person’s “race” or ethnic group]”.			
8. A woman tells a racialized person that, as a person from an equity-seeking group, “I know what it’s like...”			
9. An Asian person is told: “You must be good at math.”			
10. A person tells a joke based on race or ethnic or cultural origin and says to a racialized person who is present: “I told it because I know you know I’m not a racist and you’d think it was funny!”			



THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT

What is a microaggression?¹⁸

Many gestures, remarks or questions can be considered microaggressions, even if they start from good intentions, curiosity, an oversight or lack of awareness.

These assaults are called “micro” because they often go unnoticed or seem trivial. However, those who experience them suffer from their frequent occurrence and insensitivity.

How to recognize a microaggression?

It’s not always easy to recognize microaggressions, but there are certain clues to look out for, such as when a person:

- Has a forced or uncomfortable laugh
- Looks down or away
- Changes the subject
- Withdraws or leaves
- Sighs or shrugs
- Shows any other sign of discomfort, embarrassment, anger or distress

The best way to find out is to talk to the person concerned, ask them how they feel and listen without judgment.

What to do in case of microaggression?

If you realize that you have unintentionally committed a microaggression:

- Don’t become defensive or justify yourself; instead, listen to the other person.
- Apologize and don’t repeat the gesture or remark.
- Ask the person what to say or do in the future.

If you are the victim of a microaggression:

- You can gently tell the person that their actions or words are hurtful or inappropriate.
- Of course, you are under no obligation to react, explain or denounce. You can do so only if you want to.

¹⁸QUEBEC CITY: *Micro-aggressions*: <https://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/citoyens/vivre-ensemble/aide-memoire/micro-agressions.aspx>

THEORETICAL COMPLEMENT (*CONTINUED*)

If you witness a microaggression:

Five Tips for Dealing with Microaggressions and Discrimination¹⁹

Do you freeze when you **see or hear** a microaggression or discrimination? The following points will help you take care of the victim without sacrificing your own safety. This is the “5D” approach.

1. DIRECTLY: Intervene directly in the situation by pointing out what is wrong.

This shows that you’re paying attention to what’s going on around you and that, in the scene you’re witnessing, the aggressor is the one who’s in the wrong. This is not about denouncing – or even educating – the harasser. It’s all about putting the person being harassed first. For example, we might say to a colleague, “I don’t agree with the way you talk to X and I’d like you to stop now.”

2. DISTRACT: Create a diversion to defuse the situation.

If you think that direct intervention might make the situation worse, distraction may be a better approach. For example, you could start a conversation with the victim by saying, “Would you like to come in for a coffee? Hey, I just wanted to talk to you about something!” This allows you to divert attention from the aggressor, while also ignoring them. The idea here is to build a safe space while preventing the aggressor from getting the attention they’re seeking.

3. DELEGATE: Find someone else to help you.

Ask for help if you think action is required. Try to point out the conflict to the people around you. If possible, notify an external person, such as our shop steward, social delegate or someone in a position of authority, and make sure that resolving the conflict is a priority.

4. DELAY: Check with the person being harassed.

Sometimes the situation occurs too quickly to intervene at the time it’s happening, or there may be other reasons why no one is in a position to intervene immediately and safely. So, you do so after the fact. You can show the victim that you’re there and offer them support if they need it.

5. DOCUMENT: Create documentation and give it to the person being harassed.

Documentation is powerful, whether you’re using your cell phone camera, pen and paper or recording screenshots and hyperlinks. This gives power back to the person being harassed and helps reassure them that what happened was wrong, while also giving them the concrete evidence they’ll need if they decide to report it.

¹⁹ Adapted from *I’ve Got Your Back*, by Jorge Arteaga and Emily May, Abrams Image, 2022, and from the witness intervention and antiracism in the workplace of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW). (2020).





L'ÉDUCATION

AU SERVICE DE NOS MEMBRES