



# MICROAGGRESSIONS

*In the Workplace*

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# Objectives

## Microaggressions

- Why pay attention to them?
- What do they look like?
- When should we respond?
- How should we respond?



# Why is it important to recognize them?

## It's important to:

- recognize and acknowledge them if someone says they were offended by something you said.
- People from underrepresented and marginalized groups experience microaggressions on a daily basis and after a while, it understandably will wear on a person.

“It's like death by a  
thousand papercuts.”

## What Are Microaggressions?

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral (nonverbal), and/or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of underrepresented communities and/or or people perceived to hold less power.”

(Pierce, 1970; Sue 2010)



Microaggressions: What is your experience?

# Types Of Microaggression

Microassault

Microinsults

Microinvalidation

# Microassault

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Explicit derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack to hurt the intended target through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.







## Example

*Clutching a handbag in the presence of certain individuals.*



## Example

*“Looks like  
management just  
added a queer-do to  
the team.”*



# Microinsults

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Communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's identity.





## Example

*“You have a mental disability? You seem perfectly normal to me.”*



## Example

*“You speak English so well.”*

# Microinvalidation

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Communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thought, feelings, or experiential realities of people who experience micro-aggressions.





## Example

*“All lives matter.”*



## Example

*“Your name is too hard to pronounce. How about I just call you Libby?”*



# Themes of Microaggression

## **Alien on own land**

*When Asian and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign born.*

## **Acceptance of intelligence**

*Assigning intelligence to a person based on race.*

## **Color Blindness**

*Statements that a white person does not want to acknowledge race.*

## **Criminality**

*Assumption of criminal status  
- A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal or deviant based on their race.*

# Examples of Microaggressions

**Where are you from? Where were you born?**

**Message:** *You're not American, you're a foreigner.*

**You're a credit to your race. You are so articulate.**

**Message:** *People of color are not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.*

**When I look at you, I don't see color. There is only one race, the human race.**

**Message:** *Denying a person's racial/ethnic experience.*

**A White man or woman clutching their purse or wallet as a Black or Latino approaches.**

**Message:** *You're going to steal/you are poor/you do not belong here.*



# Handling Microaggressions When They Occur

Taken from *Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts. Sunshower Learning (2007)*

- 1. Explain Good Intent and Explain Impact.**  
*“I know you mean well, but that hurts.”*
- 2. Ask a Question.**  
*“What do you mean?”*
- 3. Interrupt and Redirect.**  
*“Let’s not go there.”*



# Handling Microaggressions When They Occur

Taken from *Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts. Sunshower Learning (2007)*

## 4. Broaden to Universal Human Behavior.

*"I think that applies to everyone."*

## 5. Make it Individual.

*"Are you speaking of someone in particular?"*

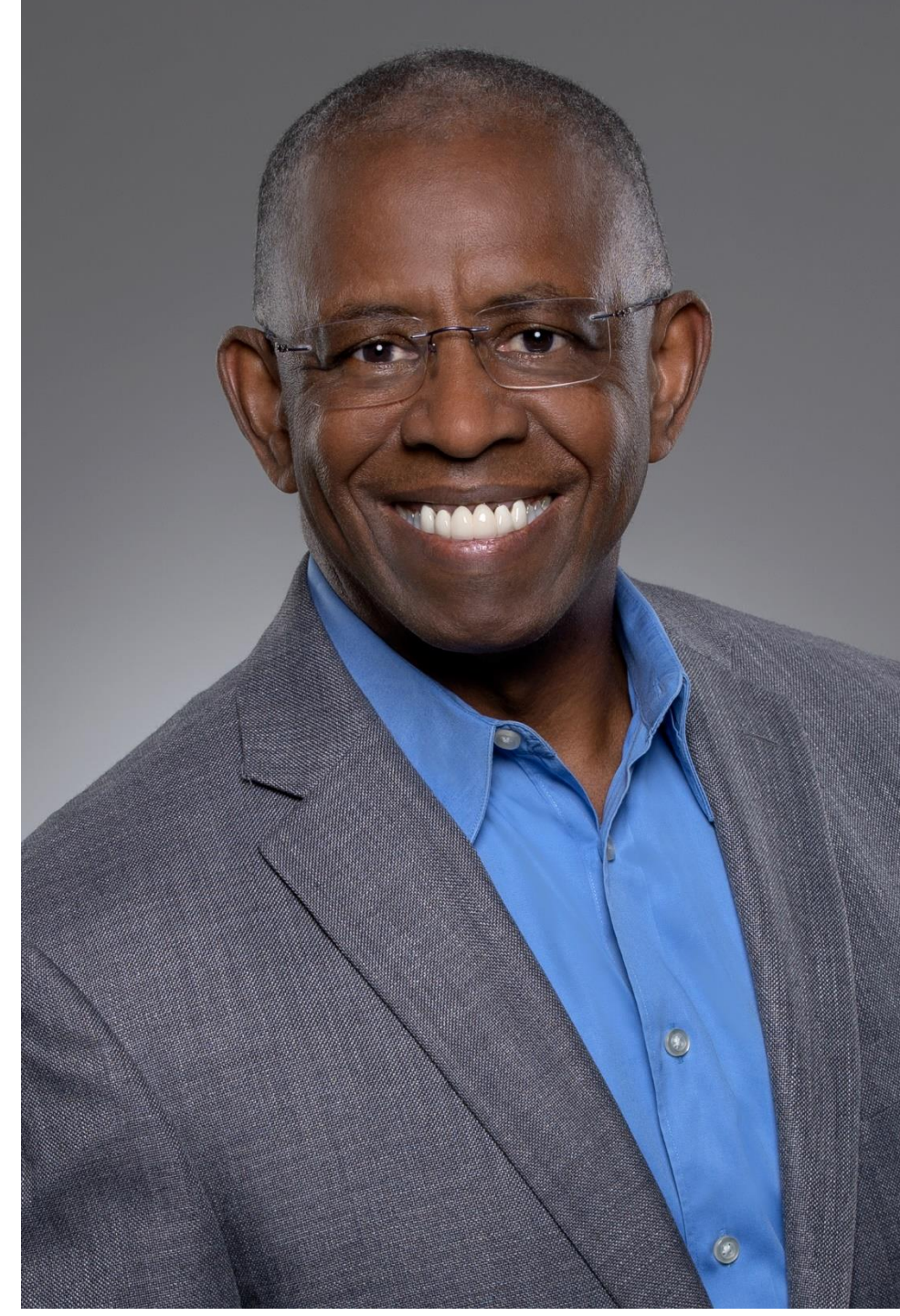
## 6. Say Ouch.

*"OUCH!"*



# Some Considerations

- Separate the person from the action or behavior. Instead of saying, “you’re racist,” try saying, that could be perceived as a racist comment.
- Avoid starting questions with why. It puts people on the defensive. Instead say “how or what made you?”
- When addressing microaggressions avoid using the pronoun “you.” Use I statements to describe the impact it had on you.
- How you say it is as critical as what you say, e.g., tone of voice, body language, etc.
- Sometimes humor can defuse a tense situation.



# QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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