



BLAC Liberal Democrats

13-Point Guide to Racial Microaggressions.

In a Party where explicit racism is frowned upon, many minority members report experiencing implicit biases from members in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle harmful comments, more than just insults, insensitive comments, or generalized foolish behavior. They're the kinds of remarks, questions, or actions that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership in a group discriminated against or subject to stereotypes. A crucial part of what makes them so problematic is that they happen so casually.

Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or harmful messages to target persons based solely upon their minority group membership.

BLAC Lib Dems have produced a 13-point member's guide to the type of racial microaggressions Black and other ethnic minority members typically experience, and we hope allies will call them out.

Microaggression 1. When African, Arab, Asian or Caribbean British people are assumed to be foreign-born;

"This is our new Indian/African/Asian Party member," "Where are you from?" "You speak good English," "How would you say that in your native language?"

By making any of these statements, what the person is saying is;

"You are a foreigner," "You are not one of us," "You don't belong."

Microaggressions 2. Colour Blindness Statements. These are statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race.

"When I look at you, I don't see color," "London is a melting pot," "There is only one race, the human race," "All lives matter" (*in the context of Black Lives Matter*).

The above statements deny Black and other ethnic minorities' racial/ethnic experiences. They are demanding that Black and other ethnic minorities assimilate and acculturate to the dominant White British culture and deny the individual as a racial/cultural being.

Microaggression 3. Ascription of Intelligence. When someone assigns or minimizes intelligence to a Black or other ethnic minority person based on their race.

"You are a credit to your race," "You are so articulate," "They lowered the bar on approvals /selection so they [*graduate ethnic minority person*] could get through," "They couldn't have written that," "They just don't understand our way," "How they write is an embarrassment."

For many first-generation immigrants, English is a second, third, or even fourth language. By making any of the above statements, the member implies that Black and other ethnic minorities are generally not as intelligent as Whites, or that it is unusual for someone of that race to be competent.

Microaggressions 4. Distrust and the assumption of a volatile or emotional nature. This microaggression is where Black and other ethnic minorities are presumed to be aggressive, overly sensitive, or deviant based on their race. It is displayed when

- A White member checks their words and makes meaningful eye contact with another White colleague (yes, it does get noticed).
- A White member follows a Black or ethnic minority member to the bathroom to "see what they are up to."
- Before or after a meeting, a White member waits for other White people to avoid being left alone with a Black or other ethnic minority member.
- A White member claims a Black or other ethnic minority member exaggerates the challenges they face or is "playing the race card."

Microaggression 5. Denial of individual racism. We all hold biases; it's impossible not to be impacted by the prejudices and racial stereotypes we grew up surrounded by. Microaggressions occur when a White member denies racial bias,

"I'm not a racist. I have several Black friends," "I'm not a racist. I have dated Black and other ethnic minorities." "As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority." "Your racial oppression is no different from my gender/disability/LGBTQ/socio-economic oppression; therefore, I can't be a racist. I'm like you", "I don't believe racism is the problem; it is all wrapped up with class and economic inequality."

Microaggression 6. The myth of meritocracy. This very common Party myth refers to statements that assert that race does not play a role in life successes.

"I believe the most qualified person should get the job." "Everyone can succeed in this Party if they're good enough." or "Black and other ethnic minorities are given extra unfair advantages because of their race." And (again) "They lowered the bar on approvals /selection so they

(*ethnic minority*) could get through." "Black people aren't prepared to put in the work." "Chinese people are so hardworking."

Liberals believe meritocracy is the ideal in any social system; however, we must also acknowledge that achieving this ideal first requires recognizing that social, economic, and political conditions currently exist that make it impossible. Before we can achieve a true meritocracy, such conditions must be corrected. It's also worth noting that what personal attributes, abilities, and efforts are considered to merit worthiness will vary between cultures, faiths, and individual personal experiences.

Microaggression 7. Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles. The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant / White British culture are the ideal

Examples of this include comments about a Black person's volume: "Why do they have to be so loud?" or saying to an Asian woman, "Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal."

Microaggression 8. Dismissing an individual who starts a conversation about race or racism in the Party, or complaining about those who highlight potential racial bias, or expecting Black or other ethnic minority members to "leave cultural baggage outside" and suggesting "they're playing the race card" and should assimilate into the dominant White culture of the Party.

Microaggression 9. Second-class citizen. This relegation occurs when White members are frequently referred to over Black or other ethnic minorities, for example, when

- Black and other ethnic minorities are ignored in meetings as the Chair repeatedly indicates White members' to speak.
- a committee member is consistently harsher in their response to an ethnic minority member than to White members
- requests and emails from Black and other ethnic minorities are repeatedly ignored.

It also includes failing to consult with other members of a particular ethnic group over issues that directly impact them, such as dealing with racism complaints or holding a meeting about diversity but failing to invite a representative of each of the relevant, Lib Dem diverse groups.

Microaggression 10. Using stereotypes about people or places, or assuming stereotypes are accurate, including;

- any statement that begins with "You people ..." (can dance/have rhythm/are good at math's...');
- describing male members of African, Asian, or Arab heritage who have a difference of opinion with a female member as 'misogynistic'; and
- falsely claiming, "We can't contact them about Lib Dem stuff because they're working/visiting Africa/Asian/Latin America" (believe it or not, the internet is a global phenomenon).

Microaggression 11. Imitating accents or dialects

Microaggression 12. Putting a Black or other ethnic minority Lib Dem candidate in a pigeon-hole to limited their pathways, such as;

"A candidate should be representative of the community and (*local Black person*) just isn't." or "they (*Black person*) should stand for an election where there are more people like them."

Then there are the desperate closet bigots favorites;

"The electorate doesn't like it when we impose a candidate of colour just to meet some diversity target." or "We just can't find a Black candidate who is good enough."

Microaggression 13. Assuming one ethnic minority member speaks for all ethnic minorities. This microaggression frequently occurs when a committee has one person of African, Arab, Asian, or Caribbean heritage, and the committee feels they have diversity covered.

"We have consulted a BME member of our committee, and they agreed." "This decision can't be racially biased because our BME committee member approved it."

Ethnic minority people are not one homogenous group; individual members have different opinions. People from other ethnic groups will also have absorbed popular stereotypes, and therefore, it's essential always to attempt to consult with a range of ethnicities. Do not expect one Black or other ethnic minority to rubber-stamp your decision and expect it to go unchallenged by other Black and other ethnic minority members. It is particularly important to consult with people from both the same racial and social-economic groups when the Party is dealing with racism complaints.

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