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# MICROAGGRESSIONS AND ALLYSHIP

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A DISCUSSION WITH FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

# AGENDA

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- Introduction
- Ground Rules
- Grounding In
- Defining Terms
- Faculty, Staff, and Student Panel
- Questions From the Audience

# GROUND RULES

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- Listen actively and respectfully.
- Criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Call in instead of calling out.
- Commit to learning and not debating; comment with the intent of sharing information, not to prove a point.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Be mindful of the time and space you take up while speaking.
- Avoid assumptions about any member of our campus community.
- Speak to your truth and experience.

# GROUNDING IN

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- Prepare to do the work of addressing difficult topics.
- Practice mindfulness, being present.
- Increase feelings of safety.
- Develop the skillsets needed to promote healing.
- **Ten Breaths.** Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of each breath to yourself as you exhale. Gradually, allow your breath to expand and fill every corner of your body.



# RESOURCES

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- *Derald Wing Sue, Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*
- *Kevin Nardal, “A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions”*
- *Guy Boyesen “Teacher and Student Perceptions of Microaggressions in College Classrooms”*
- *Anneliese Singh, The Racial Healing Handbook*
- **Feel free to suggest resources that have informed your understanding of this work. Place suggestions in the chat box.**

# UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS

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- **Microaggressions** are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative . . . slights and insults.”
- **Microinsults** are characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. [They] represent subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient.
- **Microinvalidations** are when a person's comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a certain group of people. An example of a microinvalidation would be a white person telling a black person that “racism does not exist in today's society.”
  - Microaggressions in Everyday Life

# UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS, CONT'D

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- Communicate a message to the recipient that something is wrong with them, they do not belong, or that their presence is a “problem.”
- Has very little to do with **intent**; the **impact** is harmful to the recipient.
- Deeply rooted in power relations and sociohistorical contexts: white supremacy, heteronormativity, classism, patriarchy and sexism, histories of colonization and exclusion.
- Must be aware of how power is at play on our campus and how it impacts our relationships.
- **Consequences of inaction:** “microaggressive stress,” target experiences depression, anxiety, evidence of trauma. College students will in some cases engage in coping behaviors that are harmful and destructive: excessive drinking, withdrawal from community, and/or other forms of self-harm.

# EXAMPLES

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- Microaggressions: Power, Privilege, and Everyday Life
  - <https://www.microaggressions.com>
- Examples of Verbal and Nonverbal Microaggressions
  - <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/officeofthemayor/2019/deepmicroaggressionsworksheetfilledin012619.pdf>
- “Where are you from?” “You speak English very well.”- You are a foreigner, an outsider.
- “When I look at you, I don’t see color.”- Denying a person’s cultural experience and existence. I ignore race because it is not real for me.
- References to “life choices” when speaking to someone from the LGBTQ community, dismissing a person’s pronouns-your relationships are not real, you do not know who you are, you don’t belong, I see you as I choose to see you.

# IBRAM KENDI ON MICROAGGRESSIONS...

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- “I do not use “microaggression” anymore. I detest the post-racial platform that supported its sudden popularity. I detest its component parts—“ micro” and “aggression.” A persistent daily low hum of racist abuse is not minor. I use the term “abuse” because aggression is not as exacting a term. Abuse accurately describes the action and its effects on people: distress, anger, worry, depression, anxiety, pain, fatigue, and suicide. What other people call racial microaggressions I call racist abuse. And I call the zero-tolerance policies preventing and punishing these abusers what they are: antiracist. Only racists shy away from the R-word—racism is steeped in denial.”

# ALLYSHIP IN PRACTICE

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- Allyship is demonstrated by an individual who uses the social power to which one has access to interrupt social injustice directed at targeted groups. Allyship means to be an agent of change rather than an agent of opposition.
- “Microresistance” (Intervene and Affirm)
- Develop four major areas within yourself:
  - Awareness, Skills, Knowledge/Education, Action

# WHAT DOES ALLYSHIP LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE

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- The core of allyship is action:
  - Ask clarifying questions.
  - Explain why an action or saying is problematic and hurtful.
  - Intervene in ways that show support for the target.
  - Request appropriate action be taken. Give others the opportunity to correct themselves.
  - Recognize that it is a privilege to teach and correct others.
  - Admit when you have committed a microaggression, acknowledge it, and apologize.
  - Prevent microaggression in the first place. Be mindful of the language we use and how it impacts others, especially those from minoritized populations. Be more specific in your communication.

# MICROAGGRESSIONS AND ALLYSHIP

**FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENT PANEL**