
HANDLING MICROAGGRESSIONS AS WOMEN OF COLOR

California Minority Counsel Program 2023
Women of Color Conference - Session 1A

Conference Name: **2023 Women of Color Conference**

Session Name: **Session 1A: Handling Microaggressions as a Woman of Color**

Date & Time: **Thursday, April 27, 2023, 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm**

CA MCLE Credit: **Recognition & Elimination of Bias, 1.25 hr**

PANELISTS:

- **Elizabeth Morrison**, Chief DEI Officer, Levi Strauss & Co.
- **Alka Ramchandani-Raj**, Shareholder, Littler Mendelson P.C.
- **Vida Thomas**, Managing Partner, Oppenheimer Investigations Group

MODERATOR:

- **Anna Gehriger**, General Counsel, Banister Advisors

Topics

1. Defining Microaggressions

a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority) *Merriam Webster*

2. Experiences and Types of Microaggressions Encountered by Women of Color

- a. *Panel:* what are examples of microaggressions you have experienced? How are microaggressions different based on race, age, position?
- b. *Further Reading:*
 - i. Return to Office? Some Women of Color Aren't Ready, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/23/us/return-to-office-anxiety.html>
 - ii. Why Many Women of Color Don't Want to Return to the Office, Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2022/05/why-many-women-of-color-dont-want-to-return-to-the-office>

3. Knowing the Right Response to a Microaggression

- a. *Panel*: which microaggressions call for immediate response, taking someone aside, formal complaint or escalation, ignoring?
- b. *Further Reading*:
 - i. Dear anti-racist allies: Here's how to respond to microaggressions, CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html>
 - ii. A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions, Grainger College of Engineering, <https://wie.engineering.illinois.edu/a-guide-to-responding-to-microaggressions/>
 - iii. Marguerite Ward, *The Checklist Black Women and Their Office Managers Can Use to Find Mentors Who Will Advocate for Them*, Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/black-women-less-likely-to-have-sponsors-how-to-fix-2020-1> (Jul. 16, 2020)

4. Personal Impact of Microaggressions

- a. *Panel*: how do you manage the personal impact of microaggressions?
- b. *Further Reading*:
 - i. Understanding Racial Microaggression and Its Effect on Mental Health, Pfizer, https://www.pfizer.com/news/articles/understanding_racial_microaggression_and_its_effect_on_mental_health
 - ii. Gina Torino, How Racism and Microaggressions Lead to Worse Health, Center for Health Journalism, <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/2017/11/08/how-racism-and-microaggressions-lead-worse-health>
 - iii. The Impact of Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color, Journal of Counseling & Development, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>
 - iv. Parker, B.A., Diba Mohtasham, and Leah Donnella. "Real Self-Care Takes Real Systemic Change." NPR. NPR, April 19, 2023. <https://www.npr.org/2023/04/14/1170063872/self-care-laid-bare>.

5. Hypotheticals

- a. The Women's Committee at work expresses the need for more visibility for issues affecting women, but as planning develops you see no women of color are involved in planning or as speakers. When you spotlight this, it's suggested that

you form a separate workshop for "diverse" women. **Poll: How do you address it? Answers: (a) silent refusal; (b) call it out on the spot; (c) put on the next meeting's agenda to discuss how projects are developed.**

- b. A female colleague jokes, "If anyone has a problem with the decision send them to Tina, everyone's afraid of her, ha ha." Tina, who isn't present, is a black woman. **Poll: Do you (a) stay quiet, (b) joke back about not stereotyping people; or (c) call it out as a stereotype of angry black women?**
- c. In a meeting people repeatedly assume that your white colleague (who remained silent) is the leader though you are more experienced and driving the project. **Poll: Do you (a) power through without acknowledging the error, (b) take your white colleague aside and ask why she doesn't correct this assumption; or (c) pause the meeting to clarify roles explicitly?**

6. Systemic Approaches to Preventing Microaggressions

- a. *Panel:* What can organizations do to reduce microaggressions against women of color? What systemic changes could make a difference? Does implicit bias training help?
- b. *Further Reading:*
 - i. Combating Microaggressions in the Workplace as a Woman of Color, Idealist, <https://www.idealists.org/en/careers/combating-microaggression-in-the-workplace>
 - ii. Rosalind Chow, *Don't Just Mentor Women and People of Color. Sponsor Them.*, Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2021/06/dont-just-mentor-women-and-people-of-color-sponsor-them> (June 30, 2021)
 - iii. *The Key Role of Sponsorship for Diverse Talent*, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, https://inclusion.slac.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/The_Key_Role_of_a_Sponsorship_for_Diverse_Talent.pdf

7. Additional Reading

- a. *A Call to Action: Building a Culture that Works for All of Us*, N.Y. Times, <https://www.nytc.com/company/diversity-and-inclusion/a-call-to-action/>
- b. *Mentoring Matters: The Importance of Female Mentorship*, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/committeeof200/2021/10/26/mentoring-matters-the-importance-of-female-mentorship/?sh=26400080ccaa> (Oct. 26, 2021)