



LIVING CITIES
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Interrupting Violence Resource



This resource has been adapted from Living Cities' internal use to share with other organizations and people who are seeking tools to deepen their racial equity analysis. This resource has been designed for Living Cities staff based on our internal needs; please feel free to adapt this resource for your own use.

Time	Activity
10 min	<p>Intro + Community Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remind folks of why you've created the space for this workshop. ● This is an act of our accountability to anti-racist practices. ● What we're going to do today might bring up strong emotions, feelings and may trigger some folks - a healing space is available to folks who need it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We have created this for staff at Living Cities during days when we have workshops such as this one. Consider creating something similar for folks to decompress if they need to. ● Credit and acknowledge the labor it takes to do this work and create space for workshops such as these. ● Ground in shared community agreements. <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community agreements on flipchart <p><i>Result: Participants understand the connection between past experiences with the Interrupting Violence curriculum and this session; feel aligned around community agreements; and know that they have a healing room as an outlet if they need space at any point</i></p>
15 min	<p>Check-in:</p> <p>Read Litany of Ordinary Violences by Torrin A Greathouse (she/her or they/them)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Left brain/right brain activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using your non-dominant hand journal: How does this poem make you feel in your body? (5 minutes) ○ Share out popcorn style(10 minutes) ● Explain these are the everyday violence that we want to make sure we interrupt <p><i>Result: Participants feel grounded in their bodies and in community, and ready to deepen their practice</i></p>
10 min	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Microaggressions as a form of violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Microaggression is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or

	<p>unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups” - Wikipedia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Day to day ● Calling in vs calling out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Both options are valid - how and why? <p><i>Result: Participants understand how microaggressions are a form of violence and how different uses of language address harm in different ways</i></p>
<p>20 min</p>	<p>Identifying and addressing microaggressions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ASK: Who has experience / practice interrupting violence at work, in life, etc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge that many participants likely already have tools and strategies to interrupt violence that they may know of. Your audience is full of knowledge, invite that expertise into the room. ● How to identify moments that need interruption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TOOL: Interrupting Microaggressions (print) ● Goal clarity when responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When you are the target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider the context ■ Take care of yourself ■ Don't be fooled by microaggressions packaged as opportunities ○ When you are the bystander <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consent is important ■ Speak for yourself ○ When you are the micro-aggressor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Try not to be defensive ■ Acknowledge the other person's hurt, apologize and reflect ■ Take responsibility for increasing your understanding of your own privileges and prejudices ● Some strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ De-escalation strategies <p><i>Result: Participants have greater clarity in how to identify microaggressions and what options exist for interrupting the</i></p>

	<i>violence that results from them</i>
20 min	<p>Role play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role play some of the de escalation and interruption strategies we just learned about! ● Introduce case studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We created our own case studies, we encourage you to draft your own to help your staff role play what it may look like to interrupt violence. ○ This website also has case study examples; you can use these or use them as an inspiration for your own. <p><i>Result: Participants have stronger skills in how to identify microaggressions and how to assess various options for interrupting the violence that results from them</i></p>
10 min	<p>Debrief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an open conversation for participants to share reactions/feedback on the workshop and how they felt going through it. ● Incorporate in the debrief - meditation to release <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sensing hope and experiencing fear (pg 12) <p><i>Result: Participants feel that their experiences of practicing the identification, naming, and interruption of violence are affirmed</i></p>
5 min	<p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 30 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We can continue our debrief, spend time in the healing room or you can use your time as you'd like! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It has been helpful to give staff options for how to use their time post-workshops. ● We will send out tools; it's important that we continue this practice. <p><i>Result: Participants understand how you will continue to support their practice of interrupting violence, and how the work they practiced today will be supported going forward</i></p>

Litany of Ordinary Violences

BY TORRIN A. GREATHOUSE

Today, green '96 Subaru, corner of Washington & Alden—six blocks from my house—a boy punches his car horn & screams wordless from the window as if to test my fight or flight & which side of that blade I'll topple from. I keep a list of details & locations in the back of my head. Red Honda Civic, twelve blocks. Black Grand Cherokee, half-mile. Yesterday, six drunks followed me into the subway shouting slurs. Tall blond with tribal tattoos—babyface almost-beautiful if not for the hunger—his voice the loudest, echoing against the damp cement & tile: What the fuck is that thing? Last week, a block away from Pride, a street preacher frothed at the jowls & stuffed my hands with pamphlets describing me hell-bound, a shirtless man masturbated across from me on the red line, a commuter in pinstripes & oxfords kicked my cane from beneath my feet while passing through the fare gates. Each time, I felt lucky. It could be worse. [I know the difference between assault & battery—one violence & another—is proximity to measurable harm. This law itself another kind of violence, weapon smelted from a certain bloodline's fear.] The week before, a stranger spat on my feet on my way to work, another stalked me through the station yelling Chick dick, chick dick, chick dick, repeating it almost as if it were a prayer. Today, I slide the dead bolt shut behind me—exhale a breath I don't remember holding. Tomorrow, who knows? Forgive me. I cannot find the poem in all of this, but I can't bear to let it go unspoken. I want to make this violence a stranger in my mouth. I want to make it something worth remembering.

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LEFT BRAIN/RIGHT BRAIN ACTIVITY

Using your non-dominant hand, journal: How does this poem make you feel in your body?

DEFINITIONS

Microaggressions are defined as "commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether unintentional or intentional which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults to people from marginalized groups." ([Sue, Derald Wing et al.](#)) Microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional, hateful or not-hateful, but they are always discriminatory. However, whether or not a micro-aggression was intentional may affect how you respond to the person, but it in no way mitigates the harm in the action itself.

Common Themes of Microaggressions

- Assuming normality of a dominant culture/ identity
- Assuming inferiority / pathology of a marginalized culture/ identity
- Myth of meritocracy
- Culture/Color blindness
- Ascription of intelligence
- Denying existing bias
- Assuming citizenship status/ heritage

Why does addressing microaggressions matter?

While a few microaggressions may seem insignificant when taken in isolation, the steady chorus of them that people in marginalized groups experience everyday forms an unmistakable patchwork of othering and marginalization.

DE-ESCALATING STRATEGIES

MICROAGGRESSION EXAMPLE AND THEME	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION EXAMPLE	COMMUNICATION APPROACH
<p>Alien in One's Own Land To a Latino American: "Where are you from?"</p> <p>Ascription of Intelligence To an Asian person, "You're all good in math, can you help me with this problem?"</p> <p>Color Blindness "I don't believe in race."</p>	<p>"I'm just curious. What makes you ask that?"</p> <p>"I heard you say that all Asians are good in math. What makes you believe that?"</p> <p>"So, what do you believe in? Can you elaborate?"</p>	<p>INQUIRE Ask the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where s/he is coming from, and may also help the speaker to become aware of what s/he is saying. KEY PHRASES: "Say more about that." "Can you elaborate on your point?" "It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Tell me why." "What is it about this that concerns you the most?"</p>
<p>Myth of Meritocracy "Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough."</p> <p>Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud/animated? Just calm down."</p>	<p>"So you feel that everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough. Can you give me some examples?"</p> <p>"It appears you were uncomfortable when ___ said that. I'm thinking that there are many styles to express ourselves. How we can honor all styles of expression—can we talk about that?"</p>	<p>PARAPHRASE/REFLECT Reflecting in one's own words the essence of what the speaker has said. Paraphrasing demonstrates understanding and reduces defensiveness of both you and the speaker. Restate briefly in your own words, rather than simply parroting the speaker. Reflect both content and feeling whenever possible. KEY PHRASES: "So, it sounds like you think..." "You're saying... You believe..."</p>
<p>Second-Class Citizen You notice that your female colleague is being frequently interrupted during a committee meeting.</p> <p>Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles To a woman of color: "I would have never guessed that you were a scientist."</p>	<p>Responder addressing the group: "___ brings up a good point. I didn't get a chance to hear all of it. Can ___ repeat it?"</p> <p>"I'm wondering what message this is sending her. Do you think you would have said this to a white male?"</p>	<p>REFRAME Create a different way to look at a situation. KEY PHRASES: "What would happen if..." "Could there be another way to look at this..." "Let's reframe this..." "How would you feel if this happened to your ___..."</p>
<p>Second-Class Citizen Saying "You people...."</p> <p>Use of Heterosexist Language Saying "That's so gay."</p>	<p>"I was so upset by that remark that I shut down and couldn't hear anything else."</p> <p>"When I hear that remark, I'm offended too, because I feel that it marginalizes an entire group of people that I work with."</p>	<p>USE IMPACT AND "I" STATEMENTS A clear, nonthreatening way to directly address these issues is to focus on oneself rather than on the person. It communicates the impact of a situation while avoiding blaming or accusing the other and reduces defensiveness. KEY PHRASES: "I felt ___ (feelings) when you said or did ___ (comment or behavior), and it ___ (describe the impact on you)."</p>
<p>Second-Class Citizen A woman who is talked over.</p> <p>Making a racist, sexist or homophobic joke.</p>	<p>She responds: "I would like to participate, but I need you to let me finish my thought."</p> <p>"I didn't think this was funny. I would like you to stop."</p>	<p>USE PREFERENCE STATEMENTS Clearly communicating one's preferences rather than stating them as demands or having others guess what is needed. KEY PHRASES: "What I'd like is..." "It would be helpful to me if..."</p>

Adapted from Kenney, G. (2014). *Interrupting Microaggressions*. College of the Holy Cross, Diversity Leadership & Education. Accessed on-line, October 2014. Kraybill, R. (2008). "Cooperation Skills," in Armster, M. and Amstutz, L., (Eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice Manual*, 5th Edition, pp. 116-117. LeBaron, M. (2008). "The Open Question," in Armster, M. and Amstutz, L., (Eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice Manual*, 5th Edition, pp. 123-124. Peavey, F. (2003). "Strategic Questions as a Tool for Rebellion," in Brady, M., (Ed.), *The Wisdom of Listening*, Boston: Wisdom Publ., pp. 168-189.

Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions

MICROAGGRESSION EXAMPLE AND THEME	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION EXAMPLE	COMMUNICATION APPROACH
<p>Color Blindness "When I look at you, I don't see color."</p> <p>Myth of Meritocracy "Of course he'll get tenure, even though he hasn't published much—he's Black!"</p>	<p>"So you don't see color. Tell me more about your perspective. I'd also like to invite others to weigh in."</p> <p>"So you believe that _____ will get tenure just because of his race. Let's open this up to see what others think."</p>	<p>RE-DIRECT Shift the focus to a different person or topic. (Particularly helpful when someone is asked to speak for his/her entire race, cultural group, etc.)</p> <p>KEY PHRASES: "Let's shift the conversation...." "Let's open up this question to others...."</p>
<p>Myth of Meritocracy In a committee meeting: "Gender plays no part in who we hire." "Of course she'll get tenure, even though she hasn't published much—she's Native American!"</p> <p>Second-Class Citizen In class, an instructor tends to call on male students more frequently than female ones.</p>	<p>"How might we examine our implicit bias to ensure that gender plays no part in this and we have a fair process? What do we need to be aware of?"</p> <p>"How does what you just said honor our colleague?"</p> <p>"What impact do you think this has on the class dynamics? What would you need to approach this situation differently next time?"</p>	<p>USE STRATEGIC QUESTIONS It is the skill of asking questions that will make a difference. A strategic question creates motion and options, avoids "why" and "yes or no" answers, is empowering to the receiver, and allows for difficult questions to be considered. Because of these qualities, a strategic question can lead to transformation. Useful in problem-solving, difficult situations, and change efforts.</p> <p>KEY PHRASES: "What would allow you..." "What could you do differently...." "What would happen if you considered the impact on..."</p>
<p>Traditional Gender Role Prejudicing and Stereotyping In the lab, an adviser asks a female student if she is planning to have children while in postdoctoral training.</p>	<p>To the adviser: "I wanted to go back to a question you asked _____ yesterday about her plans for a family. I'm wondering what made you ask that question and what message it might have sent to her."</p> <p>To the student: "I heard what your advisor said to you yesterday. I thought it was inappropriate and I just wanted to check in with you."</p>	<p>REVISIT Even if the moment of a microaggression has passed, go back and address it. Research indicates that an unaddressed microaggression can leave just as much of a negative impact as the microaggression itself.</p> <p>KEY PHRASES: "I want to go back to something that was brought up in our conversation/meeting/class" "Let's rewind ___ minutes..."</p>
<p>CONSIDERATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The communication approaches are most effective when used in combination with one another, e.g., using impact and preference statements, using inquiry and paraphrasing together, etc. • Separate the person from the action or behavior. Instead of saying "you're racist", try saying "that could be perceived as a racist remark." Being called a racist puts someone on the defensive and can be considered "fighting words." • Avoid starting questions with "Why"—it puts people on the defensive. Instead try "how" "what made you" • When addressing a microaggression, try to avoid using the pronoun "you" too often—it can leave people feeling defensive and blamed. Use "I" statements describing the impact on you instead or refer to the action indirectly, e.g., "when _____ was said..." or "when _____ happened..." • How you say it is as critical as what you say, e.g., tone of voice, body language, etc. The message has to be conveyed with respect for the other person, even if one is having a strong negative reaction to what's been said. So it is helpful to think about your intention when interrupting a microaggression—e.g., do you want that person to understand the impact of his/her action, or stop his/her behavior, or make the person feel guilty, etc. Your intention and the manner in which you execute your intention make a difference. • Sometimes humor can defuse a tense situation. 		

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How to confront microaggressions, whether you're a target, bystander or perpetrator

- When you are the target
 - Consider the context
 - Take care of yourself
 - Don't be fooled by microaggressions packaged as opportunities
- When you are the bystander
 - Consent is important
 - Speak for yourself
- When you are the micro-aggressor
 - Try not to be defensive
 - Acknowledge the other person's hurt, apologize and reflect
 - Take responsibility for increasing your understanding of your own privileges and prejudices

From: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/microaggressions>

DO'S AND DON'T'S FOR BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

This handout offers tips for how to intervene in public instances of racist, anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Trans, and other forms of oppressive interpersonal violence and harassment while considering the safety of all parties. Clearly, this is only a start. We hope it can be one tool on the way towards building strong communities that resist institutionalized racism and state violence.

DO:

Do keep both of you safe.

- Assess your surroundings - are there others nearby you can pull in to support? Working in a team is a good idea, if it is possible.
- Can you and the person being harassed move to a safer space/place?

Do make your presence as a witness known.

- If possible, make eye contact with the person being harassed and ask them if they want support.
- Move yourself near the person being harassed. If possible and you feel you can risk doing so, create distance or a barrier between the person being harassed and the attacker.
- If it's safe to do so, and the person being harassed consents—film or record the incident.

Do take cues from the individual being harassed.

- Is the person engaging with the harasser or not? You can make suggestions, "Would you like to walk with me over here? Move to another train car? For him to leave you alone?," and then follow their lead.
- Notice if the person being harassed is resisting in their own way, and honor that. (Especially white folks, don't police the tone of the person being harassed).
- Follow up with the individual being harassed after the incident is over, see if they need anything else.

DON'T:

Don't call the police.

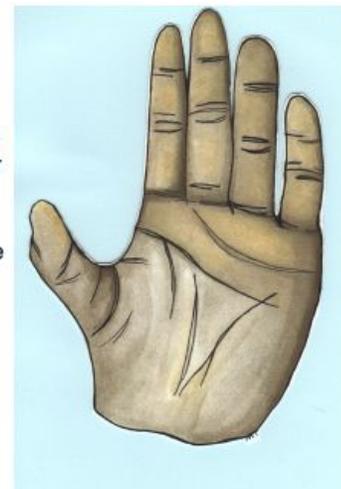
- For many communities experiencing harassment right now (including Arab and Muslim communities, Black people, queer and trans folks, and immigrants) the police can cause a greater danger for the person being harassed.

Don't escalate the situation.

- The goal is to get the person being harassed to safety, not to incite further violence from the attacker.

Don't do nothing.

- Silence is dangerous--it communicates approval and leaves the victim high and dry. If you find yourself too nervous or afraid to speak out, move closer to the person being harassed to communicate your support with your body.



FOUR D's OF DE-ESCALATION

Direct (respond directly to the aggressor, this works best when you're working from a known and trusted position, and it does not generally work well when drugs or alcohol are involved)

Distract (as in the stranger harassment club/train platform example above—distracting either person in the situation, really)

Delegate (bringing in another person or people to help get a person in trouble to safety, pulling one party to one side and the other to another and thus defusing the situation)

Delay (use a distraction technique—whether it be in-person or via text/another messaging service—to pull a person who appears to be in trouble to the side to ask if they're ok and they need any other assistance from you). You'll mix and match and alter these strategies as necessary.

Learn more: <https://watt.cashmusic.org/writing/deescalation>

—BODY CENTERED PRACTICE—

Take a moment to ground yourself in your own body. Notice the outline of your skin and the slight pressure of the air around it. Experience the firmer pressure of the chair, bed, or couch beneath you—or the ground or floor beneath your feet.

Can you sense hope in your body? Where? How does your body experience that hope? Is it a release or expansion? A tightening born of eagerness or anticipation?

What specific hopes accompany these sensations? The chance to heal? To be free of the burden of racialized trauma? To live a bigger, deeper life?

Do you experience any fear in your body? If so, where? How does it manifest? As tightness? As a painful radiance? As a dead, hard spot?

What worries accompany the fear? Are you afraid your life will be different in ways you can't predict? Are you afraid of facing clean pain? Are you worried you will choose dirty pain instead? Do you feel the raw, wordless fear—and, perhaps, excitement—that heralds change? What pictures appear in your mind as you experience that fear?

If your body feels both hopeful *and* afraid, congratulations. You're just where you need to be for what comes next.

From: [*My Grandmother's Hand : Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*](#)

TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- Interrupting Microaggressions:
http://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_InterruptH_O_2014_11_182v5.pdf
- A Guide to Calling In: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/guide-to-calling-in>
- 6 Ways to Respond to Sexist Microaggressions in Everyday Conversations:
<http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/01/responses-to-sexist-microaggressions/>
- Did you really just say that?: Here's advice on how to confront microaggressions, whether you're a target, bystander or perpetrator:
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/microaggressions.aspx>

Assessing your personal engagement:

- How do you handle conflict in your own life? Do you avoid it? Do you rush towards it?
- What are your emotional triggers?
- What is your block? What kind of actions do you know you would not take on because they might be too triggering, or you feel not ready?