

PSHCE Bulletin

Edition 6. What is racism and how do we challenge it?

The news last week shone a spotlight on racism in quite an intense way. First there was the incident in New York where a woman called the police on an innocent, black, male bird-watcher, claiming that he was threatening her life. He was not. The next day, elsewhere in America, George Floyd died in custody, becoming another victim of police brutality. Both incidents were caused by racism and started a global conversation about the different types of racism, our responsibility in addressing racism and why, in 2020, racism still hasn't been successfully tackled.

Community has always been at the heart of UCL Academy, and we are proud of the way students recognise the value of diversity and the importance of accepting difference. The last couple of weeks have reminded us how important it is for **everyone** to stand up against racism.

We hope that this edition of the PSHCE bulletin gives you some of the tools to show resilience and leadership in being anti-racist, which means actively challenging racism. We are also reflecting on what we can do to drive anti-racism as an academy, please let your tutor or Ms Davies know if you have any suggestions on how we can do this.

What is racism?

Racism is a system of advantages and disadvantages based on someone's race. Racism is caused by false beliefs that those members of different races or ethnicities have different characteristics that make some inferior (less good) and others superior (more good). The police officers involved in the death of George Floyd wrongly thought he was inferior because he was black. Racism is complicated and comes in different forms. Sometimes racism is obvious - like George Floyd's murder - other times people don't recognise it. Racism in any form is **unacceptable**.

Here is an incomplete list of some examples of different types of racism along with some suggestions of what can be done to challenge them:

Beauty standards

In many places in the world, people have absorbed the bias that lighter skin and European features are most desirable. White people are considered to be the standard for beauty. This is an idea reinforced through most of the images and media we see. This creates pressure to make oneself look as close to this beauty standard as possible, which often denies non-white people an appreciation of their own beauty.

How can this racism be challenged?

The most obvious way to challenge this type of racism would be through seeing a more diverse representation of beauty. You can contact brands to ask for more diversity in their advertising and social media and celebrate brands that do this sincerely - they will listen to you because you are a potential customer.

Microaggressions

A **microaggression** is an intentional or unintentional insult or negative message based on your race. They can occur anywhere anytime, Sometimes microaggressions are spoken like someone saying, "**Where are you from?**" Other times they are behaviours, such as crossing the street to avoid a black man or a shop owner only addressing the white customers.

How can this racism be challenged?

The key to challenging a microaggression is to make sure the person realises they are not under attack for what they have said or how they have acted but to make them realise the impact.

- **Ask for more clarification:** "Could you say more about what you mean by that?" "How have you come to think that?"
- **Separate intent from impact:** "I know you didn't realise this, but when you _____ [comment/behavior], it was hurtful/offensive because _____. Instead you could _____ [different language or behavior.]"
- **Share your own process:** "I noticed that you _____ [comment/behavior]. I used to do/say that too, but then I learned _____."

Internalised racism

When you experience microaggressions repeatedly, the effects accumulate and can lead to low self-esteem or a belief that the stereotypes are true (they are not). Believing that you are inferior or acting on the negative stereotypes associated with your race and ethnicity are examples of internalised racism.

How can this racism be challenged?

The good news is if you have recognised that you need to challenge this type of racism, you have already taken the first step to challenge it. The next steps are to unlearn the racism that you have internalised, which can be done by learning more about your race and ethnicity. Educating ourselves about the history of racism allows us to continuously seek to unlearn a colour-blind approach to history. Sharing what you learn will help others unlearn racism too.

Racist Policing

In 1999 the [MacPherson Report](#) found the Metropolitan Police to be institutionally racist and in the past 21 years the police have done a lot to show they are addressing this. For example, they have hired many more ethnic minorities as police officers and have made it more difficult for the police to stop people based on their stereotypes - the police need a reason to stop and search you and have had anti-racism training. Progress has been made but many people still argue that more work needs to be done to remove racist biases. Black boys are still 7 times more likely than white boys to be stopped and searched by the police and Asian boys are 3 times more likely.

How can this type of racism be challenged?

Knowing your [rights](#) if stopped and searched is really important. You have a right to record interactions between yourself and the police - you need to ask permission before reaching for your phone (so they know what you are reaching for). You can also record interactions between the police and others if you witness something that you think could be mistreatment. You can also keep a record of interactions with the police, either by hand or through this [app](#).

Hate crimes

Hate crime can be any criminal or non-criminal act such as graffiti, vandalism to a property, name calling, assault or online abuse using social media. Hate crimes can be based on race and/or any part of your identity, such as your religion, gender or sexuality. They are very rare but can happen.

How can this type of racism be challenged?

This [website](#) gives good advice on what you can do if you are a victim of a hate crime. Writing down or recording the details of the incident(s) is important if you are the victim or a witness of the crime. Everything should be reported to the police.

Every member of UCL Academy has a responsibility to **educate** about, and **notice**, racist stereotypes, attitudes, behaviours or policies that others, or they themselves, hold. If it is **safe** to do so, we encourage you to **challenge** these racist instances and if you are unsure how to, you can speak to your tutor, a teacher you trust and they will do their best to advise you. We expect this of all members of our community, regardless of race. Leaving it to those who experience racism is unfair and less productive.

Suggested activities:

- Research your racial and ethnic background - how much do you know about your history? Create a report and share with your tutor - it is powerful knowing more about your background.
- Choose one of the extra reading or watching below and write down 5 things it made you think about differently
- Write down what makes you you, what you are proud of and will celebrate and what boundaries you set
- Design an anti-racism poster for us to use around the academy. Email this to Ms Davies c.davies@ucalacademy.co.uk

Extra reading/watching:

- BOOKS - fiction: The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas and/or the film; Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman as a book and/or the [BBC Series](#)
- BOOKS - non-fiction: This Book is Anti-Racist by Tiffany Jewell; Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni Eddo-Lodge and/or the summary [here](#); Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds and Inram Kendi - [watch](#) a news bulletin about the books; Natives by Akala - watch a podcast of him speaking [here](#)
- NY Times [article](#) about how to respond to microaggressions
- [Kids of Colour](#) (@kidsofcolourhq) is a social media platform for young people that explores identity and racism
- [Article](#) about unlearning racism
- [Video](#) about your rights if stopped and searched
- Ted Talk [video](#) about getting comfortable with the discomfort in calling out racism
- [Article](#) about institutional racism in the police force following the MacPherson Report