

# IDENTIFYING & RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

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# GROUNDING ASSUMPTIONS

- The work of equity and diversity is about creating community, which involves building trust through careful listening, respectful disagreement, and taking risks
- We respect each other's confidentiality; pay attention to what is yours to share – and what is not
- Growth and learning can be uncomfortable; remember it's ok to make mistakes - we all do
- Individuals and organizations can – and do – grow and change, but it doesn't happen overnight
- It's ok to take care of ourselves; practice forgiveness and letting go, so you can sustain yourself in this work

*Adapted from Jamie Washington, Washington Consulting Group*

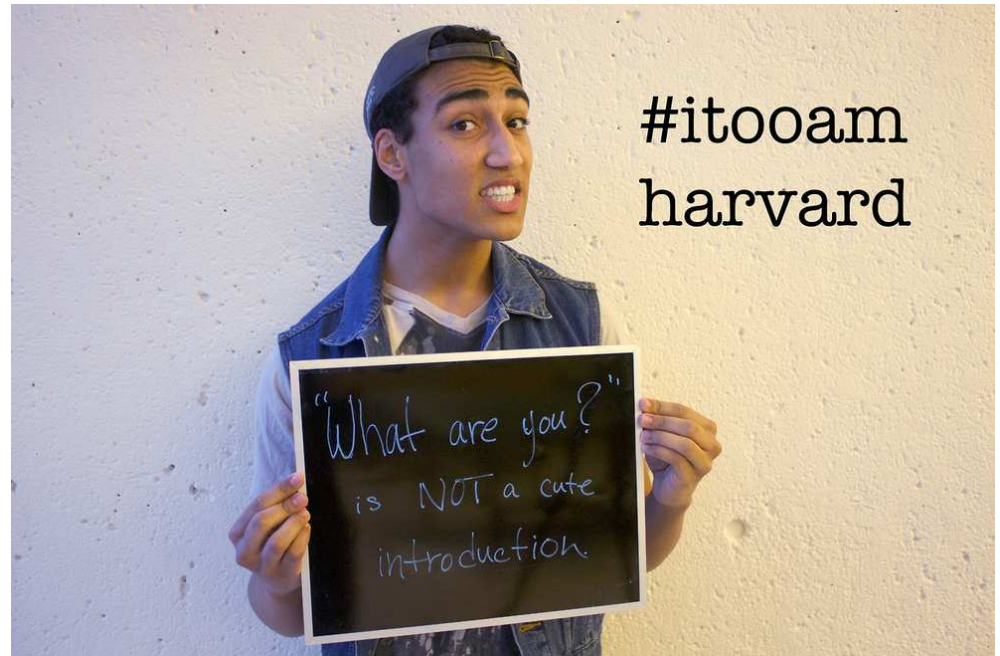
# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

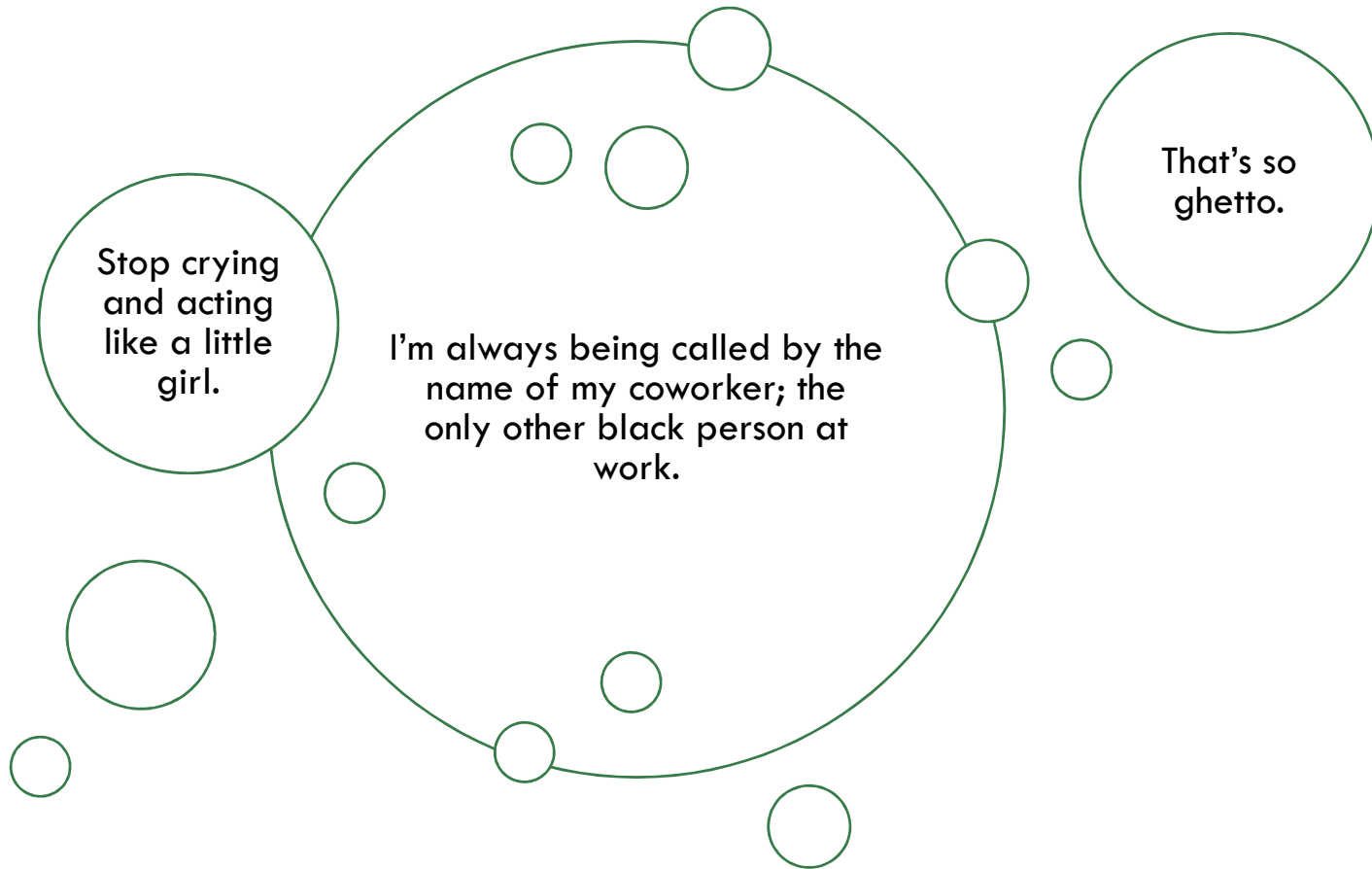
- Introduce the concept of microaggressions
- Discuss how microaggressions can impact the work we do in libraries
- Begin to identify some ways to respond to microaggressions

# MICROAGGRESSIONS

*Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned [people] who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated.*

-Derald Wing Sue, Columbia University

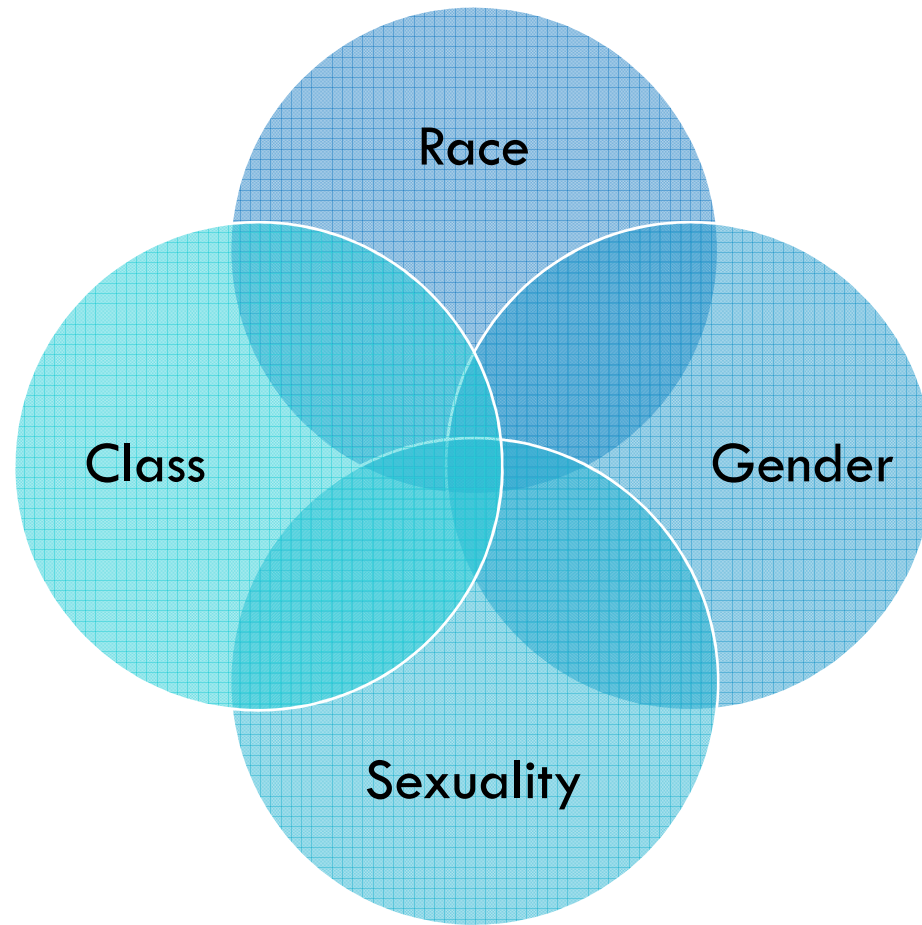




Stop crying  
and acting  
like a little  
girl.

I'm always being called by the  
name of my coworker; the  
only other black person at  
work.

That's so  
ghetto.



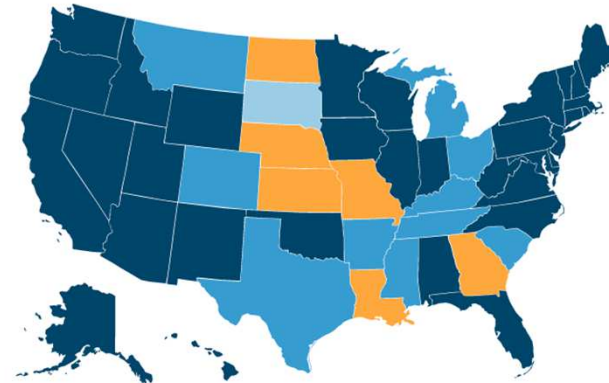
# OVERT AND DELIBERATE ACTS OF BIGOTRY



## Where Is Gay Marriage Legal in the US?

The current status of gay marriage across the US. Latest state to legalize highlighted below. Click any state for details.

Legal Ban struck down, appeal pending Banned, currently challenged in court Banned



# INTENT

Subtle

Unintentional

Ambiguous



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I reach out to diverse sources on deadline. Only the white guys get back to me :(

10:57 AM - 2 Jul 2014

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43 RETWEETS 19 FAVORITES [↩](#) [↻](#) [★](#)

 **Anya Kamenetz** [Follow](#)  
@anya1anya

[@latinorebels](#) [@npr\\_ed](#) hi. I regret it a lot. Was sharing momentary frustration at daily struggle to find diverse sources (1)

6:00 AM - 7 Jul 2014

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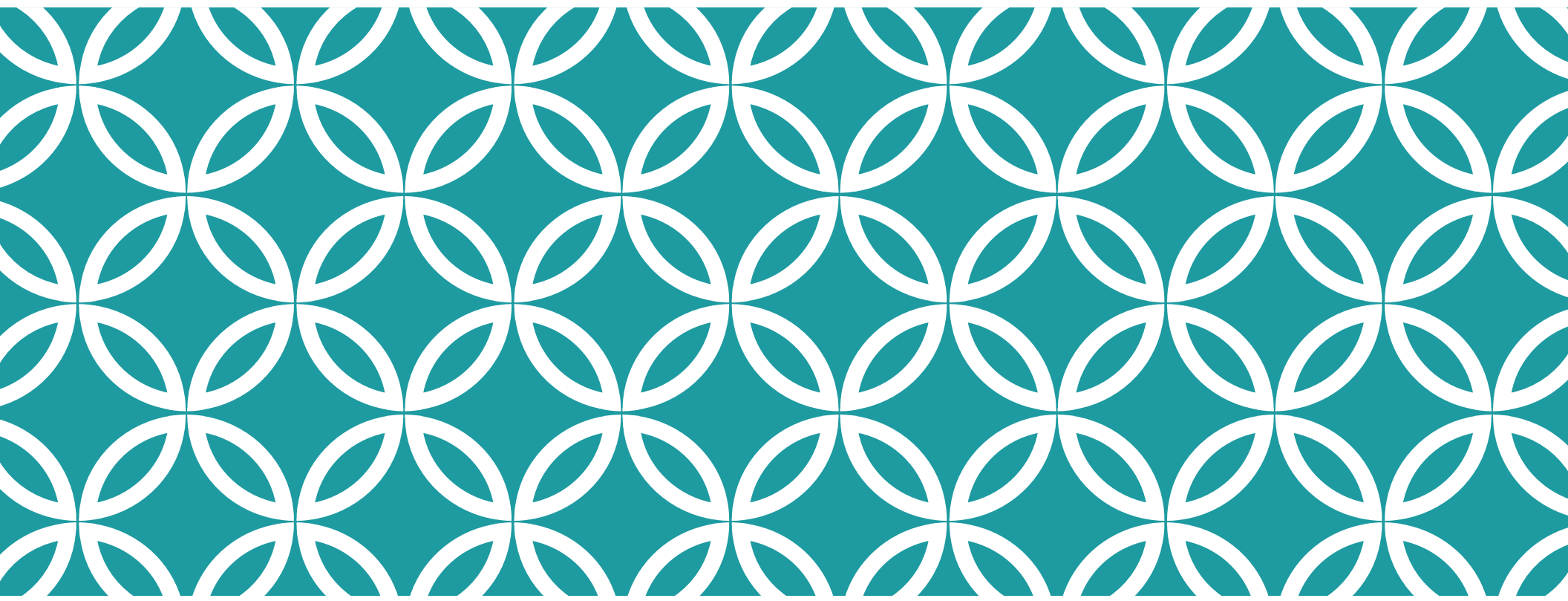
1 FAVORITE [↩](#) [↻](#) [★](#)

# MICROAGGRESSIONS.COM

*“We thought it was important to show that both marginalization and identity consciousness do not come from thin air; they are formed from structures of power and privilege that are both very personal and hard to see. The concept of microaggressions makes them a lot more tangible and less abstract.”*

Vivian Lu, Columbia University





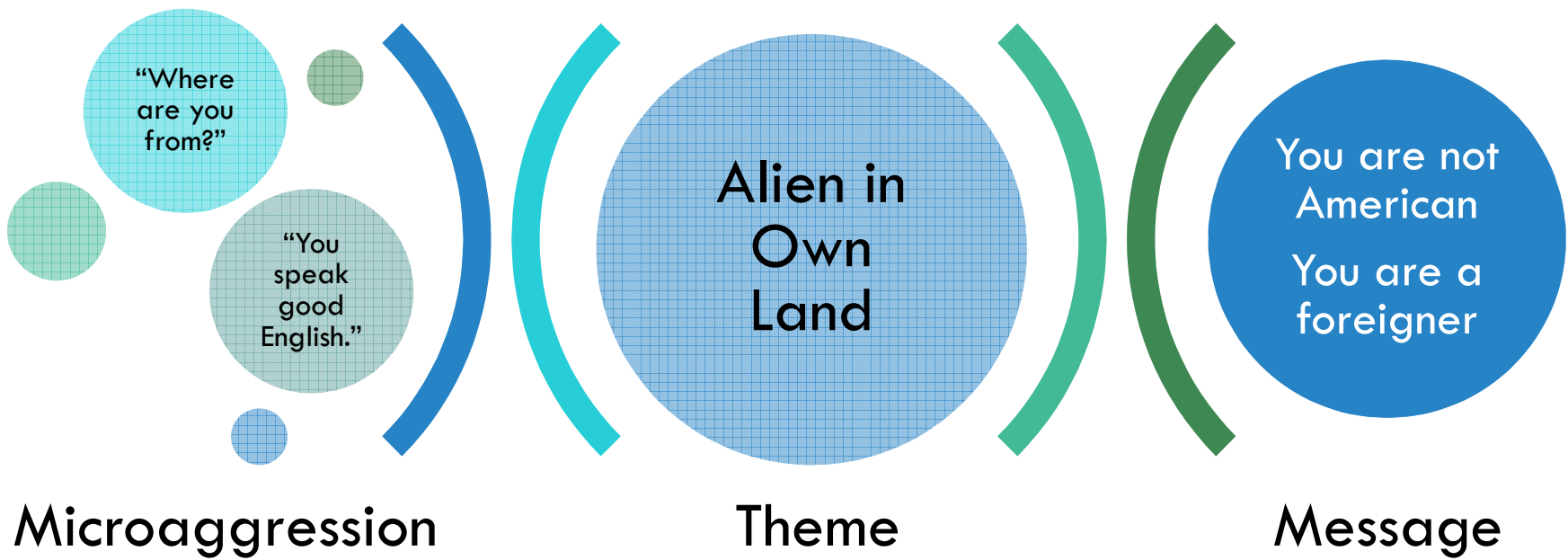
# THEMES AND MESSAGES

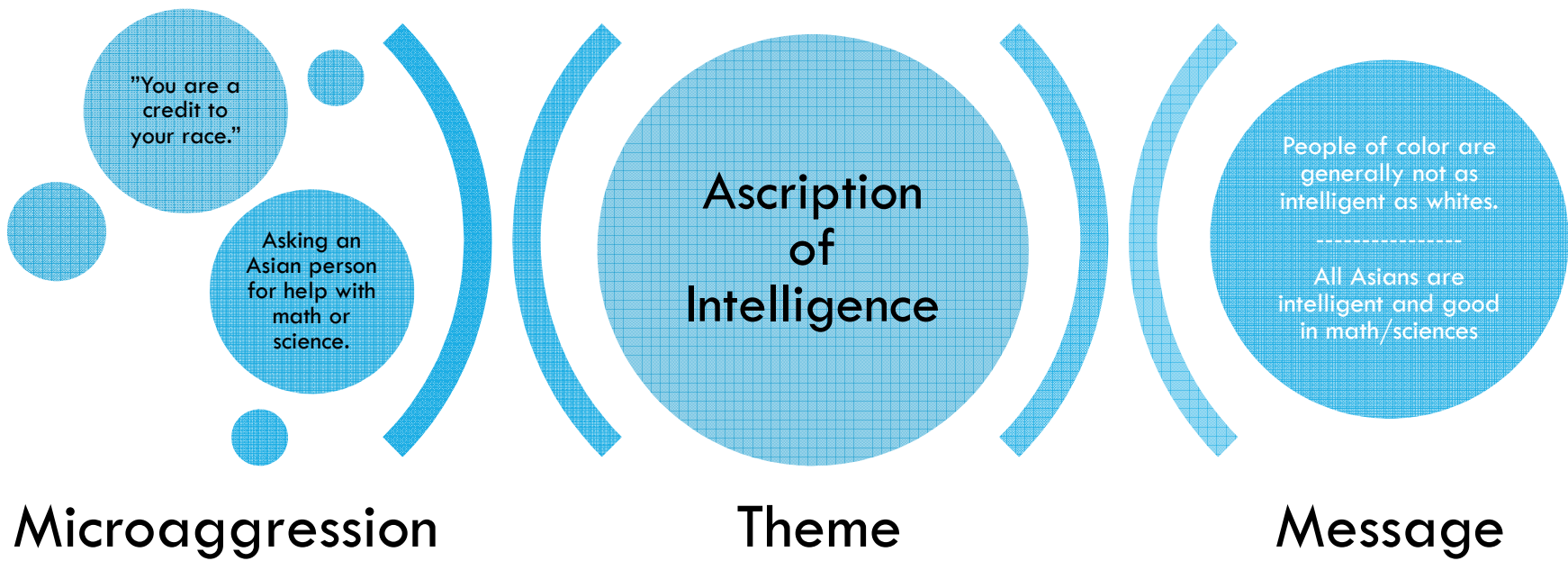
*Microaggressions in Everyday  
Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual  
Orientation* by Derald Wing Sue

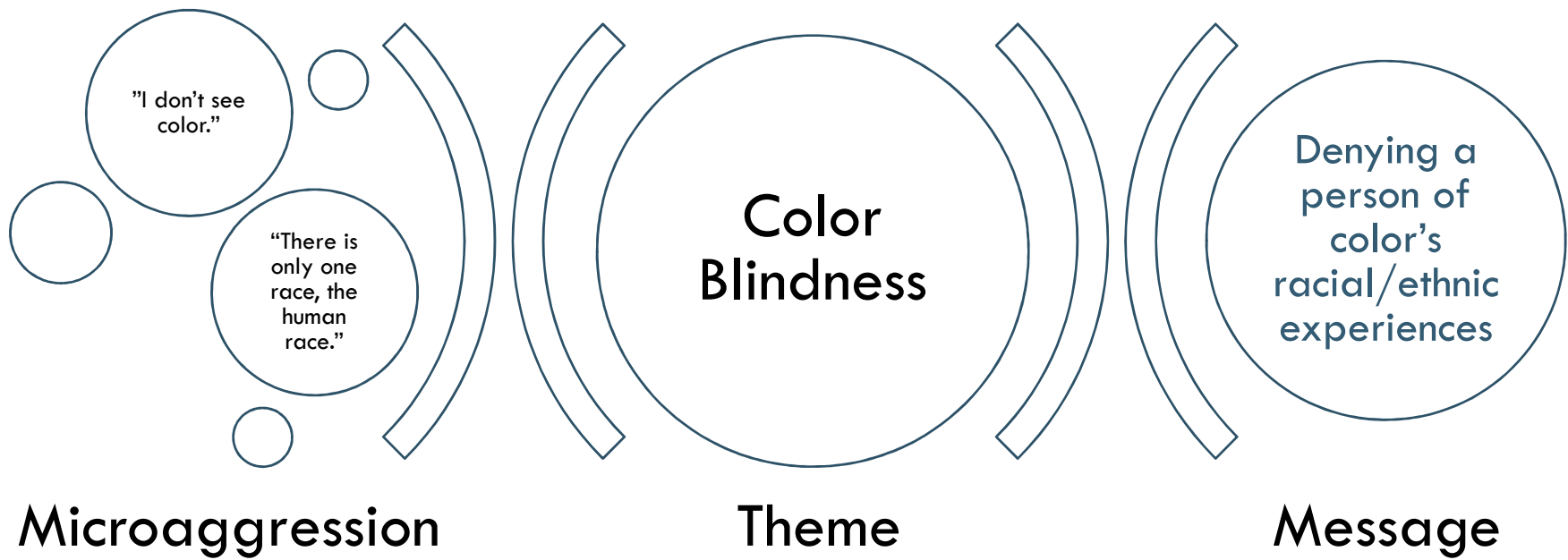
# LOOK DIFFERENT

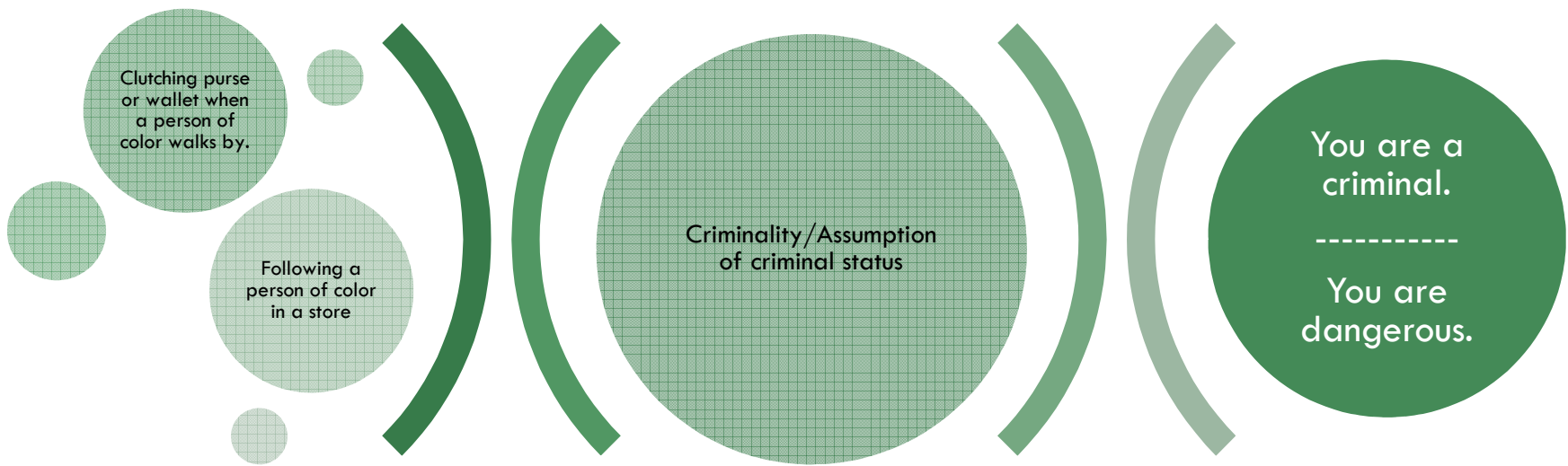
<http://www.lookdifferent.org/videos/6-your-english-is-so-good>









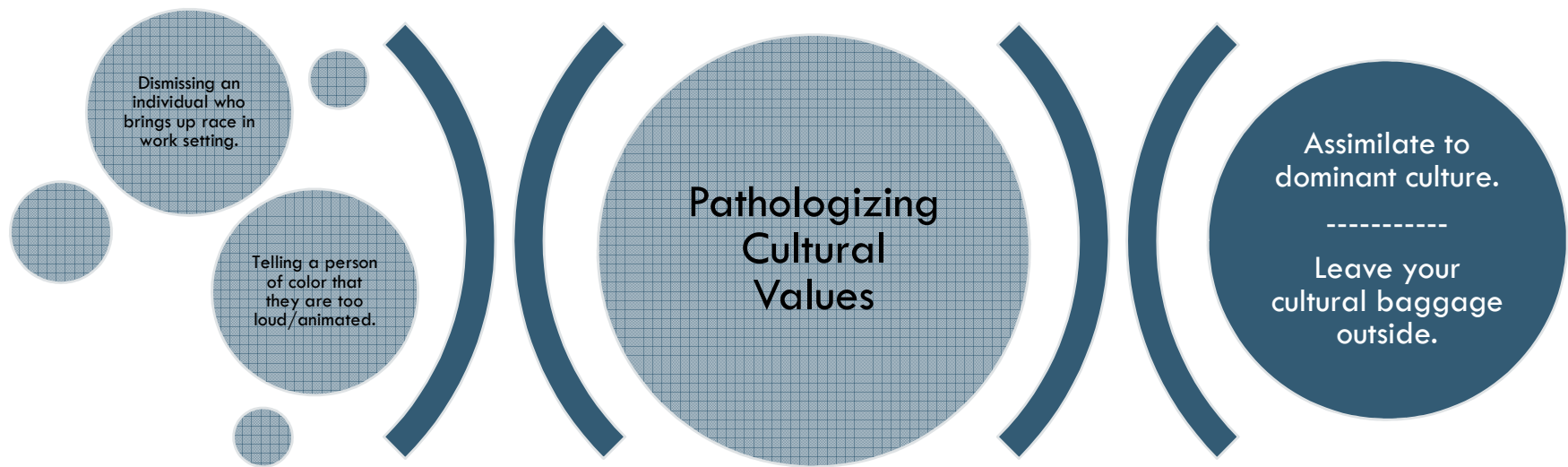


Microaggression

Theme

Message

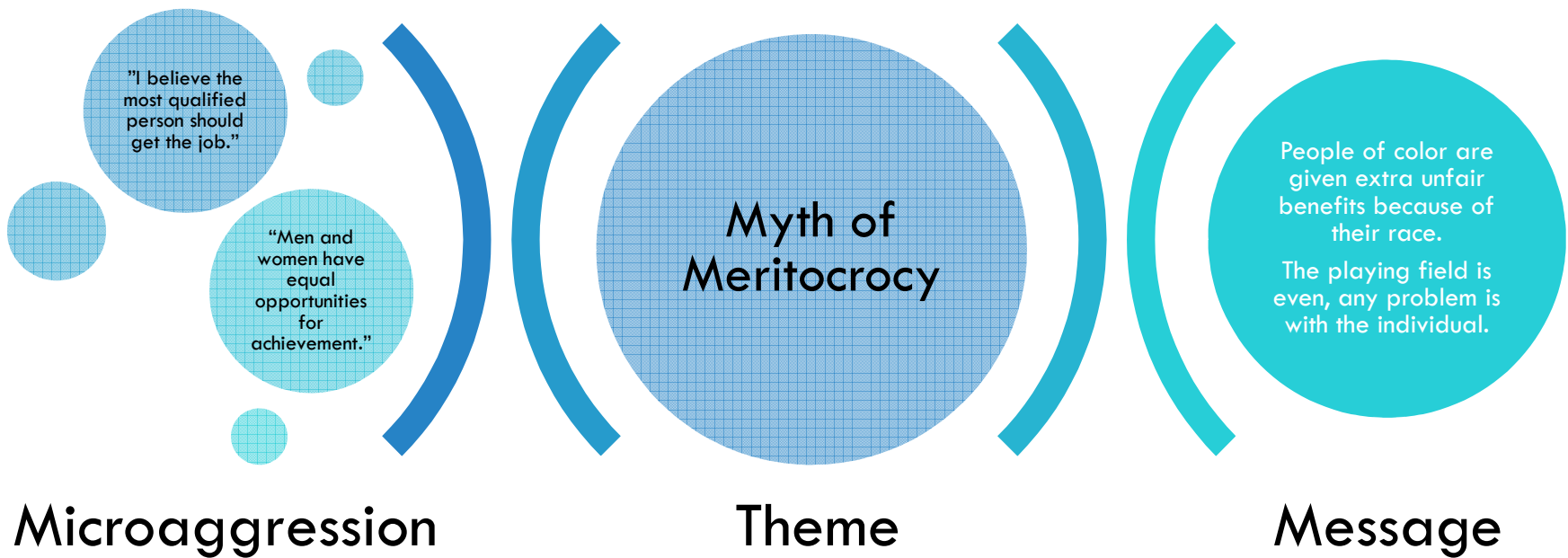




Microaggression

Theme

Message



# ENVIRONMENTAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels

A college or university with buildings that are all named after White heterosexual upper class males

Television show and movies that feature predominantly White people, with no representation of people of color

Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color

Overabundance of liquor stores or fast food restaurants in communities of color

MESSAGE—

You don't belong/You won't succeed here. There is only so far you can go.

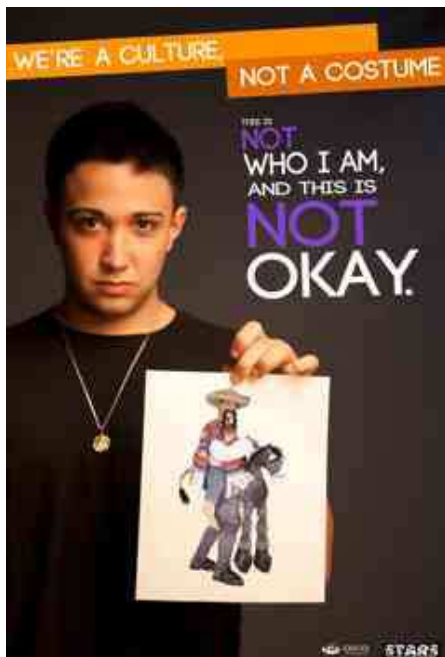
You are an outsider/You don't exist.

People of color don't/shouldn't value education

People of color are lazy and deviant.

# WE'RE A CULTURE, NOT A COSTUME.

Students Teaching About Racism in Society from Ohio University



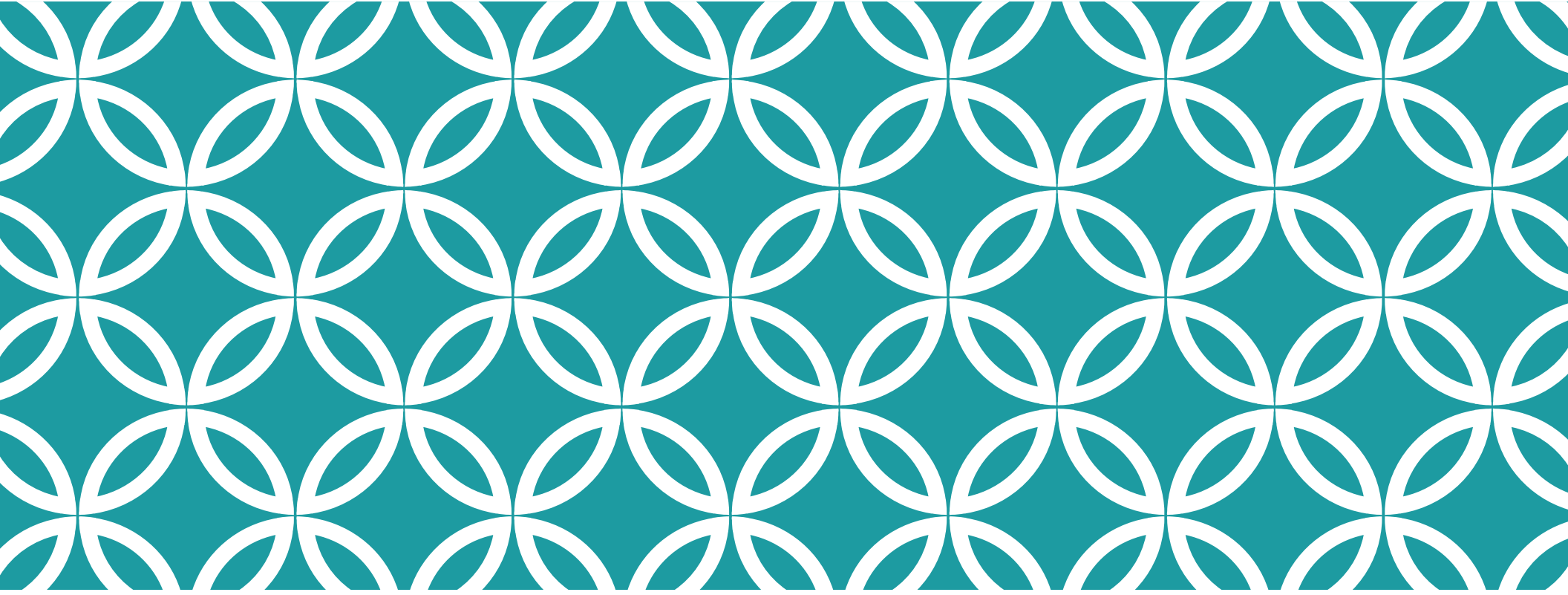
# MASCOTS



# IMPACT

“**Racial** microaggressions create **a hostile** and invalidating climate for **people of color**, saps their spiritual and psychic energies, and their cumulative nature can result in **depression**, frustration, anger, rage, **loss of self esteem**, anxiety, etc.”

-Derald Wing Sue



**DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? ACADEMIC  
LIBRARIANS' EXPERIENCES OF RACISM**

Jaena Alabi, Auburn University  
Poster at Joint Conference for  
Librarians of Color 2

# PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- Investigate the prevalence of racial microaggressions in the academic library environment, and
- Determine whether non-minority librarians are conscious of racial microaggressions their minority colleagues may be experiencing.



# INITIAL FINDINGS

- Non-minority staff were less likely to experience microaggressions in the workplace
- Non-minority staff were less likely to observe microaggressions happening in the libraries

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14.6% Minority – 1-2% Non-Minority

A colleague has told me that he/she was color-blind.

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A colleague said that people of color do not experience racism anymore.

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A colleague has told me that people should not think about race anymore.

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**Microaggressions can also be committed by people in marginalized groups.**

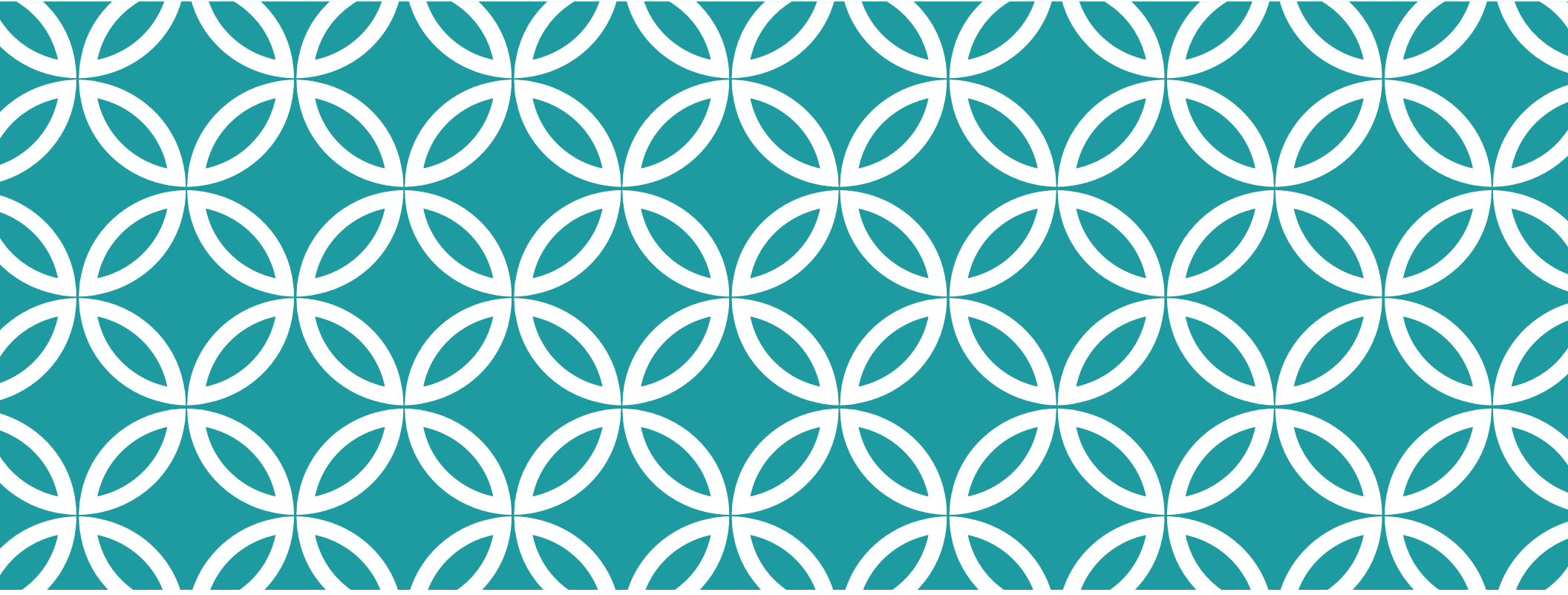
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When the co-chair of your library's diversity committee uses the words "pussy" and "bitch" and thinks it's acceptable because he is gay.

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**MICROAGGRESSIONS IN  
LIBRARIANSHIP**

[Lismicroaggressions.tumblr.com](http://Lismicroaggressions.tumblr.com)



# ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS



# ASSESS THE SITUATION

- Find a way to pause from assuming or reacting right away. If it is the first time and the incident is new, you could ask the person to repeat what he/she said or did.
- Your first concern must be that you are safe from physical, emotional, or psychic abuse of any kind.

# ASK YOURSELF...

- What kind of risk will I be taking if I do this?
- Is this particular action worth my time and effort?
- Do I know what I want to achieve?

# MODEL THE BEHAVIOR

- Always model the behavior you want from the person or people you are confronting.
- It is also a good idea to stay away from being sarcastic, snide, mocking or arrogant (even though this can be very tempting).
- *Again, the goal here is education.* It's not about winning a point or making someone feel bad or wrong. It's about helping them understand something from a different perspective.

## FOCUS ON THE EVENT, NOT THE PERSON

By directing the conversation to the behavior, event, or comment you will decrease the likelihood of defensiveness.





# USE YOURSELF AS A MODEL

**Use yourself as an example.** None of us were born with the knowledge we now have about equity and diversity. ***Use your own stories of how you've "unlearned" certain hurtful, inaccurate, and misleading information.***

# REFRAME...REFRAME...REFRAME

- The best “equity and diversity education” comes when we are able to help someone understand a particular topic or issue using a different frame – with different assumptions and different conclusions.
- Example -- Affirmative action as a social promotion policy is no different than benefits for
  - a student being accepted to a college because their parents previously attended the same college
  - REFRAME - Always been preferential treatment, what’s new is WHO is benefitting

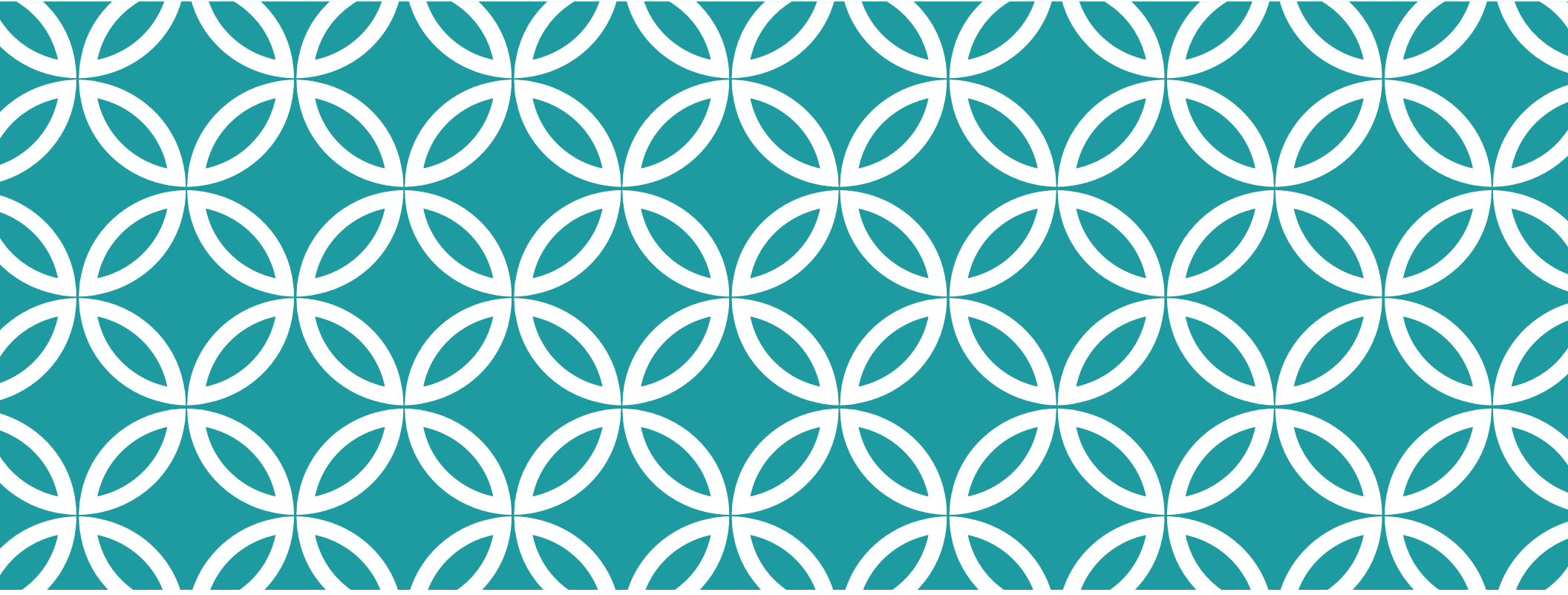
# CASE STUDY: PATRON BEHAVIOR

A non-traditional returning student who identifies as gay and is also Lakota comes to the reference desk to ask how to print something. The staff person, knowing you need to log in with your student id, asks the student for an ID.

The student sends a complaint to the director of the libraries because they feel like they were singled out and possibly profiled as not being a student by the staff person.

How do you respond?

What should you consider?



**THANK YOU**

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