

MICROAGGRESSIONS

SMALL ACTIONS THAT ARE A BIG DEAL

by Molly Higgins and Charlotte Roh

While academic libraries demonstrate a greater degree of diversity than in libraries across the board, there is no question that racism is still an issue that needs to be addressed both in our country and in our libraries.

If you are interested in learning more about race, privilege, and the library, you can check the reading list at <http://bit.ly/1ok0snN>. A book club or discussion group around these issues might be a good way to foster conversation on how microaggressions are present in the library.

From the poster, some ideas to promote awareness and diversity in the library include:

- Post job listings in places like the ALA ethnic affiliates to attract a strong field of diverse candidates
- Hire people that reflect the makeup of the user population
- Encourage library staff to pursue a master's degree in librarianship
- Host potlucks to share cultural foods like hotdogs, quinoa, lo mein, jerk chicken, lobster rolls, bagels, pastrami, and Jello salad
- Listen in order to learn about someone
- Take the time to read more about cultural bias, microaggressions, and institutional racism
- Partner with minority student groups for programming at the library
- Talk with human resources to engage in staff development activities such as the Privilege Walk Activity: http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf or <http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/curriculum.html>

The Authors

Molly Higgins, MLIS, is a Library Fellow at the Lamar Soutter Library. She specializes in mobile medical applications, information literacy, and issues of diversity and representation. She holds an MLIS from the University of Washington and a BA in Asian American Studies from the University of California, Berkeley.

Charlotte Roh is the Scholarly Communication Resident Librarian at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Her background includes seven years of academic publishing with Oxford University Press and Taylor & Francis and an MLIS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

RACE AND LIBRARY PRIVILEGE

MODIFIED FROM "WHITE PRIVILEGE: UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK" BY PEGGY MCINTOSH

- In the library, I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- In the library, I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me (this includes patrons).
- If I should need to move for my career, I can be pretty sure of moving to an area where I will find people of my race.
- I can look in the library catalog or in the stacks/archives and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about library history and tradition, it includes people of my color.
- I am not the only member of my race in a group or committee in the library.
- I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group or committee in which I am the only member of my race.
- I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can criticize the library and talk about its policies without being seen as a cultural outsider.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
- I can go home from most meetings of library organizations feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
- I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
- If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
- I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
- I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
- I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
- If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
- I do not have to be aware of systemic racism in the library and its impact on me.

You can also look at this recent checklist: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/regaiha/how-privileged-are-you>