

So You Want to Talk About Race

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Chapter 12—What are microaggressions?

"You know the hypercritical parent in the movies? The mom or dad who finds a way to cut you to the quick right when you're feeling happy or proud or comfortable?...That is what racial microaggressions are like, except in all aspects of your life, and very rarely is it said with any misguided love."

"Microaggressions are small daily insults and indignities perpetuated against marginalized or oppressed people because of their affiliation with that marginalized or oppressed group...Microaggressions are more than just annoyances. The cumulative effect of these constant reminders that you are "less than" does real psychological damage."

Have you ever personally been the target of microaggressions from a parent, teacher, student in school because of your glasses, weight, hair, etc.? How did it make you feel? Share your story.

Now imagine being the recipient of this on a daily basis. How do you think this would make you feel?

Chapter 13—Why are our students so angry?

I hope you'll really listen to the story in this chapter without rushing to judge it. Oluo's son's experience in school is not unique to him. Young black men have tough conversations with their parents that we wouldn't dream of having with young white men.

After listening to this story, what things do you notice that are different between growing up black and growing up white? I know it's hard for us to look at this but the authors experience is hardly unique.

Chapter 14—What is the model minority myth?

I didn't realize until I was an adult that most of my poor childhood friends were Asian American or Pacific Islanders. My idea of Asian Americans very much fit in with the popular stereotype of hard-working, financially and academically successful, quiet, serious people of predominantly East Asian (China, Korean, or Japanese) descent. But most of my friends' parents were from Guam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos and India. Most of my friends' parents had fled war, conflict, and economic disaster. They were all poor, they were all struggling, and they were all discriminated against for their brown skin and their strong accents."

The "model minority myth" fetishizes Asian Americans—reducing a broad swath of the world's population to a simple stereotype. It places undue burdens and expectations on Asian American youth and erases any who struggle to live up to them.

Do you understand the meaning of the term "model minority myth"? Can you think of some examples of what this looks like in real life?