

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2024-1232

**TITLE: Behavioral Awareness & Legislative Advocacy for Necessary Clinical Education
(BALANCE) VOLUME IX: MICROAGGRESSIONS**

AUTHOR(S): Senator Hunter Monson

SPONSORS: Senator Elizabeth Insuasti, Senator Raj Mia

WHEREAS, microaggressions have been defined by Harvard psychiatrists as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” [1]; and,

WHEREAS, while they commonly target race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, microaggressions consist of various underlyingly offensive remarks that can also include socioeconomic status, language proficiency, personal trauma, appearance, immigration status, disabilities, & they can be categorized as microinsults, microassaults, &/or microinvalidations [1][2][14]; and,

WHEREAS, other common microaggressions include “treating someone as a second-class citizen because of their gender, race, or sexual orientation, complimenting a person raised in the United States on their English simply because they are not white, making assumptions about someone based on their religion, age, or class, deliberately not using a trans/gender non-conforming individual’s preferred pronouns, underrepresenting different races, sexualities, & disabilities in the media, being unwilling to find stereotypical or derogatory sports team names offensive, using offensive terminology considering certain people to be of more value than others based on their ethnicity, class, or sexuality” [7]; and,

WHEREAS, “the term ‘microaggression’ was coined in 1970 to describe subtle dismissals and insults towards Black Americans,” which were intended to “negate or nullify the feelings or experiences of a person” [3]; and,

WHEREAS, a recent study found that women in the workplace are twice as likely to get comments on their emotional state and 1.5 times more likely to have a colleague take credit for their work [4]; and,

WHEREAS, Asian & Black women are seven times more likely than women overall to be confused with someone of the same race and ethnicity [4]; and,

WHEREAS, around 50% of LGBTQ+ women toned down what they say to avoid being unlikeable & nearly 50% of women with disabilities chose to not disclose their opinion in order to make sure that they did not appear as difficult to their peers [4]; and,

WHEREAS, individuals who are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community cite that one of the most common forms of microaggressions in healthcare is the assumption that people are heterosexual &/or cisgender [14]; and,

WHEREAS, as the rise of antisemitic & Islamophobic rhetoric permeates the media & individuals' daily lives, it is consequential to recognize the phrases &/or symbols used to demean, attack, degrade, or subvert these individuals solely due to the fact that they belong to a particular group or identity [16][17]; and,

WHEREAS, more than a third of Black women, three times the number of white women, said they had “adjust their language behavior, and appearance to fit into the dominant culture ,“ so they could better blend in with others [4]; and,

WHEREAS, a Fortune survey found that 26% of Americans have experienced a microaggression at work, another 22% are unsure, & 36% have witnessed a microaggression occur in the workplace [5][6]; and,

WHEREAS, A 2015 study about the healthcare of American Indian patients with diabetes found that “more than one in three of the study’s 218 participants had experienced racial microaggressions from their healthcare professionals” [15]; and,

WHEREAS, some of the most common microaggressions in the workplace include unprofessionalism (45%), being told they’re well-spoken (29%), & being spoken over (28%) [5]; and,

WHEREAS, in a study about gendered microaggressions in STEM, it was found that found that 73% of women working in STEM had experienced at least one form of sexual objectification [7]; and,

WHEREAS, microaggressions are so important because they influence how people see racial groups, determine the value that society places, demonstrate how systems of inequality continue to exist & marginalize underrepresented groups [8]; and,

WHEREAS, Allison Skinner-Dorkenoo, of the University of Georgia stated “microaggressions also play an important role in maintaining systems of racial oppression beyond the interpersonal context” [8]; and,

WHEREAS, a Harvard experimental study found that many microaggressions resulted in “low morale, lower productivity, lower problem solving, higher rates of depression, anxiety, anger, & depressed psychological well-being” [9]; and,

WHEREAS, analyzing the historical narratives that have produced these microaggressions are important in understanding the courageous efforts of marginalized groups to combat racism & discrimination; and,

WHEREAS, microaggressions reinforce white privilege, undermine a culture of inclusion, & are ways that privileged individuals promote self-serving biases [10][11][12]; and,

WHEREAS, the lasting effects of microaggressions can impact productivity when working as a team, chemical imbalances, elevated blood pressure, increased heart rate, sleep disruptions, increasing the chance of hypertension & cardiovascular disease, & secretion of hormones due to increased stress levels, such as cortisol [13][14]; and,

WHEREAS, microaggressions contribute to numerous injuries & include depression, fatigue, & catalyze physical ailments such as chronic infections, thyroid problems, and high blood pressure [1][13]; and,

WHEREAS, as mentioned previously microinsults, microassaults, &/or microinvalidations are three different forms of microaggressions that are very fundamentally different, yet they all are extremely detrimental towards an individual’s mental wellbeing when used [18]; and,

WHEREAS, specifically, microassaults are “conscious, deliberate, & explicit racist attacks— both verbal and nonverbal— meant to denigrate or hurt the victim” & include “name-calling, using racial slurs, avoiding &/or discouraging interracial interactions” [18]; and,

WHEREAS, specifically, microinsults are often unconsciously done & much more subtle, but a microinsult still “demeans & belittles the victim through racial slights or comments that seem innocuous but are insulting to a person of color” [18]; and,

WHEREAS, specifically, microinvalidations are comments & behaviors that “exclude & invalidate people’s thoughts, feelings, or experiences in life” [18]; and,

WHEREAS, the effect of microaggressions that prompts individuals to question themselves, their identity, or their beliefs impact one’s mental health in a severely negative way & “can often leave people feeling invisible, silenced, angry, & resentful” [18]; and,

WHEREAS, racial microaggressions are unfortunate commonalities for students of color on college campuses, & a study found that 98.8% of students of color reported experiencing

microaggressions, which prompt sudden increases in blood pressure, stress levels, anxiety, & depressive states [19][20][21]; and,

WHEREAS, studied ways to prevent individuals from committing microaggressions themselves include being more mindful of the specific language they use not assuming that they know what is appropriate for every person, culture or group, remembering that they may not know that at times their actions may inadvertently cause people pain, & acknowledging others' pain & taking the opportunity to understand & better learn from their experiences [11][18][20][22]; and,

WHEREAS, microaggressions are a likely occurrence for any individual coming from a marginalized group, whether that be their race, ethnicity, religion, social status, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration, education, employment, &/or relationship status, & thus, it is vital that the University of Florida advocate for greater mindfulness of the words people use as well as better understanding the experiences of others; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate understands that marginalized groups experience microaggressions at a severely alarming frequency; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate supports any student experiencing disturbances that stem from all forms of microaggressions; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate understands that microaggressions may occur at any time or place, and thus, it is of the utmost importance to draw further awareness on ways to mitigate discriminatory behavior; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate acknowledges the physiological effects that microaggressions pose on the human psyche & body, which can result in temporary melancholy, identity dissociation, chemical imbalances, & heightened anxiety & stress levels; and,

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate strongly advocates for greater measures to be implemented to further prevent microaggressions from occurring towards any student at the University of Florida.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to the University of Florida President Ben Sasse, University of Florida Provost J. Scott Angle, Vice President for Student Life Heather White,

University of Florida Student Body President Olivia Green, University of Florida Student Body Vice President Clara Calavia, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Executive Director Ernesto Escoto, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Interim Director Rosa West, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Directors Jennifer Stuart, Natasha Maynard-Pemba, & Alvin Lawrence, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Director (Administrative Services) Marie Southern, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Associate Director of Crisis & Emergency Services & Consultation & Referral Team Coordinator Olivia K. Pitkethly, University of Florida Counseling & Wellness Center Faculty Council Chair Ginamarie Russo, Interim Director of the Center for Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement Elle Collins, Program Director of Asian Pacific Islander Desi Student Engagement Flora Wang, Program Director of Black Student Engagement Satcha Sanon, Program Director of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Student Engagement Jamir Wright, Program Director of Hispanic-Latinx Student Engagement Nathalie Turenne, University of Florida Students for Justice in Palestine, Lubavitch Chabad Jewish Student & Community Center at the University of Florida, University of Florida Hillel, University of Florida Islam on Campus, Board of Trustees Chair Mori Hosseini, & Director of Campus Engagement & Interim Assistant Vice President for Student Life James Tyger.

[1] <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/11/microaggressions-and-their-role-in-mental-illness/>

[2] <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/microaggressions#classifications>

[3] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2611929/>

[4] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2023/10/05/microaggressions-women-at-work-new-study/71005816007/>

[5] <https://fortune.com/2019/05/01/are-you-a-microaggressor/>

[6] <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/microaggressions-research/>

[7] <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/microaggressions#examples>

[8] <https://psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/2021-sept-microaggressions.html>

[9] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/001312457701000105>

[10] <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>

- [11] <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2016/07/27/understanding-and-combatting-microaggressions-in-postsecondary-education/>
- [12] <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions#:~:text=Microaggressions%20reinforce%20white%20privilege%20and,calling%20out%20those%20who%20do.>
- [13] <https://hbr.org/2022/05/research-the-real-time-impact-of-microaggressions>
- [14] <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/microaggressions-how-and-why-do-they-impact-health>
- [15] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4386281/>
- [16] <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jmmh/10381607.0006.203/--subtle-and-overt-forms-of-islamophobia-microaggressions?rgn=main;view=fulltext>
- [17] <https://www.bjpa.org/content/upload/bjpa/micr/microaggressions.pdf>
- [18] https://www.pfizer.com/news/articles/understanding_racial_microaggression_and_its_effect_on_mental_health
- [19] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8061293/>
- [20] <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csj/2018/00000052/00000001/art00009>
- [21] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7722011/>
- [22] https://www.med.uvm.edu/docs/microaggressions/medical-education-documents/student-affairs/microaggressions.pdf?sfvrsn=2bd03d40_2#:~:text=In%20order%20to%20avoid%20inadvertently,%2C%20and%20For%20sexual%20orientation%3F