

Statements and Interpretations

Statement	Possible Interpretation	Possible Intent	Interpretation Impact
"That's so gay."	Being gay is unacceptable.	That is weird.	Being gay is bad, weird, negative. You are acting too feminine and that is weird.
"The only race is the human race."	Your experiences as a minority are no different from anyone else's.	I am trying to treat everyone as equal.	The way you are treated because of your race is not important/irrelevant.
[To an Asian student] "Can you help me with my math homework?"	Your appearance dictates your skills or knowledge.	I need help.	You are just a stereotype, not an individual.
[A White woman to a Black woman] "As a woman, I understand how it feels to be a minority."	I'm not racist, because I'm oppressed like you.	I'm trying to empathize.	All discrimination is the same; your personal experience doesn't matter.
"No, where are you really from?"	You are not American.	I'm interested in you.	People like you are not real Americans/are not my equal.
"That's retarded."	People with disabilities are less important, likeable, or competent.	That is stupid.	All people with different intellectual abilities are stupid.
"I don't see color."	Your experiences as a minority are invalid.	I'm trying to treat everyone the equitably.	Your experiences as a person of color are irrelevant and not different from mine.
"How did your mom react when she found out you were a lesbian?"	Being a lesbian is not normal.	Are you OK?	Being a lesbian is weird, abnormal, and negative.
"You don't even seem Black."	Everyone from your group acts the same.	I don't understand your group!	Everyone of your group acts the same; people like you all think the same.
[To a girl] "Math is hard, isn't it?"	Women have inferior abilities.	I'm trying to be supportive.	Girls are not as smart as boys, so this <i>must</i> be hard for you.

[A professor asks a Latina student during class] "What do Latinas think about this?"	Your experiences are interchangeable with anyone else in your racial/ethnic group.	I'm interested in your perspective.	I see you only as a member of your group and all of you think the same.
"Don't be a sissy."	Feminine traits are undesirable.	This is not a big deal!	You are behaving like a little girl/baby, and that is a bad thing. Your fears are invalid/irrelevant.
"You speak English very well."	You are not American.	You are well spoken.	Because of how you look, you can't possibly have been born here; you aren't American.
[A White person to others] "I have plenty of Black friends."	I am not racist.	I'm trying to treat everyone the same.	What I say cannot be offensive. You are not allowed to feel that way about me.
[Store manager to employees] "Keep an eye on the Black shoppers."	Blacks are all criminals.	I am worried about my safety.	Most criminals are black. Most blacks are criminals.
[To a woman with a headscarf] "What are you hiding in there?"	All Muslims are terrorists.	I'm trying to be funny.	I believe all Muslims are terrorists and have something to hide.
"It's almost like you're not Black."	You don't fit the stereotypes of your group.	I did not expect you to act outside of the stereotypes I have of you.	All Blacks act the same.
"Everyone take out your smartphones. Let's take a poll."	Everyone has enough money for common items.	I'm trying to engage with young people.	All students have enough money to purchase and maintain a smartphone.
(To a female graduate student) "You sure are opinionated."	You should conform to your expected role.	I'm surprised.	Women are supposed to be demure and not say what they really think or know.
[To a larger woman] "Should you be eating that?"	You have no self-control.	I'm trying to help.	I assume you are fat because you lack self-control.