MICROAGGRESSIONS: CAUS DIVERSITY INITIATIVE EXHIBITION

During class, the professor told an Asian student that he could not pronounce his name and proceeded to say, “I will just call you Joe.” This experience has stuck with me since it occurred. I am a white female, but I also have a tricky last name to pronounce. When someone isn’t willing to try to pronounce my name, it hurts, because it’s my identity. I can’t imagine what it’s like to go through life with people not willing to call you by your birth name.

While at an event, we were all provided name tags. I walked over to a group to mingle and introduced myself. This guy got very close to my chest and leaned in and read my name-tag and then leaned in AGAIN, despite the fact that I’d just said my name out loud. He didn’t do this to anyone else. I thought I might be being overly sensitive, but another woman in the group commented on it as we walked away. I can’t help the way my body is shaped and I’m already nervous enough in those kinds of social situations. It makes me not want to go to these kinds of events.

During class, I asked the professor about the cost of a supplemental fee for the course. He joked that “We don’t barter for animals in America. We use the dollar bill.” He looked at my skin, heard my accent and then assumed that I was ignorant and stupid. He laughed and invited laughter from the class. I felt embarrassed even though I’m proud of my heritage and have lived in the U.S. for over a decade.

A lot of students in my department come from wealthy families, which is great for them! I don’t, and they remind me of it all the time. They tell me that I work too much, I have too many issues, and I get upset too much. I’m overwhelmed. I have to pay for everything. I have to save to be able to go out. And because I don’t have the money to go out, I’m getting left out of the group. This has happened throughout my life. I’m really upset to know that I’m never going to be able to relate to kids my own age because I don’t have the money to do so.

My professor dwells way too long on generalizations about millennials. She seems to think it’s funny to ridicule our values and our interests. The professor doesn’t have a category even though it’s clear that it exists. She doesn’t understand how to tackle the problem of a student who could be a problem to her. I wonder how that will impact my grade?

During class, the discussion started to get heated and the instructor said to one of the students “are you off your meds” and then followed with “do you need to take a Xanax?” The instructor was trying to joke that someone who was behaving in an anxious, overly effusive, or otherwise non-normative way should be medicated. This places a stigma on those of us who need medication to help support our mental health so that we can contribute. Ironically, the instructor’s “joke” makes me NOT want to contribute.

While talking with some of my classmates, I brought up the topic of prejudice against Asians but to my surprise (or maybe not) my peers said to me, “Oh I never really thought that Asians experienced racism.” They proceeded to downplay my experience saying that my own issues with race were not as important as their issues with being Black and Latino. I’m marginalized within a marginalized group, which makes me feel like I’m invisible.