

Discussion Exercise

In the handout, read each statement in Column A. Think critically about how a person could interpret the statements as a “put down.” Then, draw a line connecting the statement to what you believe is the best possible interpretation from Column B. Be ready to explain your choice.

After you have finished matching the statements with the interpretations, choose four statements and rewrite them so that they do not contain a hidden or negative message. For example, the statement “How long have you been in this country?” implies that the speaker believes the person was born in another country. This assumption could be right or wrong; a neutral wording of the statement might be “Where did you grow up?” or “How long have you lived in this town?”

Column A Statements	Column B Possible Interpretations
[To a woman with a headscarf] “What are you hiding in there?”	Feminine traits are undesirable
“It’s almost like you’re not Black.”	You should conform to your expected role.
“Everyone take out your smartphones. Let’s take a poll.”	You are not American.
[To a female student] “You sure are opinionated.”	Everyone has enough money for common items.
[To a larger woman] “Should you be eating that?”	Blacks are all criminals.
[Teacher to a Latina student during class] “What do Latinas think about this situation?”	All Muslims are terrorists.
“Don’t be a sissy.”	Your experiences are interchangeable with anyone else in your racial group.
“You speak English very well.”	You have no self-control.
[A White person to others] “I have a lot of Black friends.”	You don’t fit the stereotypes of your group.
[Store manager to employees] “Keep an eye on the Black shoppers.”	I am not racist.