

Safe Zone 201: Race, Gender, Sexuality Case Studies

Case Study 1: You are a white lesbian staff member talking with another white lesbian staff member at your company. Both of you are open with your colleagues and supervisor about your sexual orientation. You both know that one of your colleagues, who is black, is also a lesbian, but has not come out to anyone in your department. She is one of only two black staff members in the department. The white lesbian staff member you are talking with criticizes the black lesbian colleague for not being more open because the department and company need more LGBTQ representation. She also says the fact that the two of you are out should show her that it is OK to be out in the department. What do you say to her? (Adapted from a case study in the [NCAA Division III LGBTQ One Team Program](#)).

Case Study 2: You and your friends are white cisgender women who are members of a women's leadership group on campus. During the first meeting of the semester you all are finalizing the logistics for a women's rally you're having on campus. You all start to reflect back to the Women's March on Washington in 2017. During your first year of college, you and your friends took a last-minute flight to D.C. to participate. A new member of the group, Mariah, an Afro-Latinx transwoman, remarks, "Yeah that march was trash." Your friend is shocked and says, "wow that's pretty harsh, how could you say it was trash, didn't you say you didn't go." Mariah replies, "No, I didn't go because I didn't see myself as a trans woman of color represented in a meaningful way." Your other friend replies, but Janet Mock was there and so was Laverne Cox, they're both trans women of color. Besides aren't we all women anyway?" Mariah, now frustrated remarks sarcastically, "forget it, I'm sure it was a lovely event." The room gets quiet. How might you respond?

Case Study 3: You overhear a group of colleagues talk about dating apps. You hear one of your colleagues, who is a black gay male say, "y'all know my bio says 'no fats, no femmes, no rice, no chocolate.'" Your other colleague says, "bro, that's messed up. Really, no chocolate?" To which your black gay male colleague laughs and says, "What?! That's just my preference, bruh." Your colleagues shrug and carry on with their conversation. What would you do?

Case Study 4: You and your two best friends Ahmad and Tina return home for Ahmad's cousin's wedding. Ahmad is a masculine presenting South Asian non-binary person and uses they/them pronouns; however, you notice that one of their aunts keeps using "she/her" pronouns when referring to Ahmad. You notice that your friend has not corrected their aunt or even flinched to signal their discomfort. After dinner, Tina pulls you to the side and whispers, "I can't believe they just let their aunt use the wrong pronouns. Like it's been 5 years, hasn't she gotten it yet that Ahmad uses they/them pronouns." Tina even mentions that Ahmad said, "hey, that's just auntie." Tina says bitterly, "I would totally cancel my aunt if she refused to respect my name and pronouns." How do you respond to Tina?

Case Study 5: You are on the search committee for the Associate Director position in the LGBTQ Center on campus. While interviewing Amara, she mentions that she a proud queer Dominican femme (feminine presenting person) and she wants to carve out a space for queer women and femmes of color like herself through the advocacy work that she would do with the Center. As soon as the interview ends, two of the committee members look at each other and Case studies 2-5, 7 were composed by Dr. Donnesha Blake, please ask for permission when using in other trainings or contexts. She can be contacted at blakeda@alma.edu or donnesha90@gmail.com.

suff. “Ugh, I don’t really believe her, ya know. I feel like her disclosure of being a queer femme just felt unnatural,” says one of the committee members. Another member, who also identifies as a queer femme, chimes in and says, “yeah I feel like she just forced that whole part about being femme, and for me, femme is more of an exaggerated femininity, ya know. She just looks like any feminine straight girl. Like I wasn’t really convinced that she was queer. Like how is she going to be visible to our queer students.” To which the other member says, “Yeah I agree, I think she’s kind of queer baiting.” What might you do or say in this situation?

Case Study 6: In February 2020, former basketball player Dwyane Wade and actor Gabrielle Union, both who are black, announced that their daughter, Zaya, came out as transgender. After the announcement, [rapper Boosie Badazz, who is black, posted a video response on social media](#) shunning Wade’s support of his daughter and repeatedly imploring Wade not to let Zaya “cut his d**k off.” How might you respond?

Case Study 7: You go with your friend, Xavier, a Latinx male, to his parents’ home to support him as he comes out to his father as bisexual. After coming out, Xavier’s father lets out a sigh of relief and says, “Oh man you scared me for a bit. I thought you were gonna tell me your were gay. So, there is a chance you’ll end up with a woman.” How might you respond?