**How Do You Handle Racist Jokes?**

<https://cete.osu.edu/having-effective-race-conversations/>

Racist jokes. They can have it anywhere, school, work, Thanksgiving dinner. So, if someone tells a racist joke, how do you handle it?

So, you're at a party and someone tells a racist joke, and that guy in the ghetto is a cop, [laughter] you know it's true. Do you A. give a sarcastic laugh? That's a good one. B. Get mad and throw a chair? That was hilarious. Or C. Google “How do you respond to a racist joke?” I'm gonna guess you went with C. Jokes come in all shapes, sizes, in this case, colors.

When it comes to racist humor, we're not just talking about being offended, we're talking about jokes being oppressive. So, what's the difference? Offensive jokes hurt feelings or make people uncomfortable. Jokes that are oppressive don't just make people uncomfortable, they actually reinforce negative ideas about marginalized groups of people.

A study out of Western Carolina University analyzed how people's attitudes changed about particular groups based on the types of jokes they were presented with. What they found is that when people feel discrimination against a certain group is justified, disparaging remarks about that group don't really change your thinking on them. You're pretty much set in stone. But for groups where prejudice attitudes are shifting and being challenged, like women, LGBT folks and people of color, negative jokes about those groups can release inhibitions, making some people believe that discrimination is justified.

This also goes for ironic racism, like when Sarah Silverman did blackface, it's still blackface. “No, but I'm like saying something racist to comment on how bad racism is.” It's meta. TLDR words mean things, and they can influence people in negative ways, even if it's just a joke.

So, what do you do if you hear a racist joke? Here's what's worked for me. First, I ask myself, can I talk about this now? Basically, you gotta pick your battles. Not every situation is suited for Don't Be a Racist 101. “No, grandma, this ends now.” But if I can talk about it in that moment, I usually try one of these: the sarcastic approach. “No, it's really funny, ironic racism.” Still racism. Go completely silent. Played dumb. Huh? I just, I don't get it. I mean, this country was stolen from the Native Americans, built by slave labor and founded by immigrants, so technically, wouldn't that make you illegal ?” Reply with a judgmental GIF or GIF if you're one of those. Or you can just unfriend them. I mean, you don't have to put up with that online or off. It's not your job to educate everyone. And when all else fails, just be honest and direct. “Hey, that's not funny. I'm really not cool with jokes about people who already have it bad enough, so please don't say stuff like that around me.”

So, does that mean everything is off limits? Not at all. I mean, technically, you can make jokes about whatever you want, but there will always be consequences. So, using “it's just a joke” doesn't make it exempt from criticism, nor does complaining about political correctness. “So, there's an Asian guy, a black guy and a Mexican. It's the “PC” police.” Calling others the PC police basically says I should be allowed to say whatever I want, but you aren't allowed to say whatever you want about whatever I just said. Free speech doesn't work that way. Good jokes should stand the test of time, but as our society progresses, our perception of what's funny evolves. So, jokes that were funny 20 years ago might not fly today. Political correctness isn't keeping anyone from making jokes. It's saying we want a better world, so jokes have to be better too.

So, if you ever had to shut down a racist joke, what strategy worked or didn't work? Tell me about it in the comments, and I will see you next week.

In our last vlog, we asked, does race affect your dating life? Here are some of your comments. “I think that's a pretty good strategy, Matthew, personality is a great way to pick your dates.” “Denver Broncos 1818181818. MTV News is my favorite channel too.” “Twinsies, sorry.” “Shibati Dibbity, you are wrongiti, dongiti. Beyonce is not halfway.”

In our last sketch, we talked about things white people take for granted. Here's what you had to say. “Oh, Fern, this comment makes my heart sing.” “Sorry, I had to ruin bandaids for you, Valentina. Now you know how we feel.” “Yes, for this one woman.” “Thanks kid fury for bringing Coco L here and all the fury fans, you are strong in numbers.” “Even I think you're using attack the wrong way. There have been no white people harmed on the set of decoded, I promise you.”

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>