



# But I Live Educational Resources

## Handout: Intersectionality Case Study 1

Neustaeter, B. (2020). *In their words: Canadians' experiences of racism*. CTV News. Obtained from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/in-their-words-canadians-experiences-of-racism-1.4974360>.

"I think that she looks just like me and she calls me mom in public, but when the Code Adam (a missing child later identified as a seven-year-old boy wearing blue) was called I was approached by two Walmart employees and they grilled me on whose child I had in my cart," Jackie said in a phone interview on June 4.

Jackie told us that her daughter was wearing a pink dress and had pigtails in her hair saying she was "very obviously not a seven-year-old boy." Jackie said one of the employees even put his hands on her daughter.

"It looked like he was trying to pick her up and take her away from me," Jackie said. "I was infuriated, It was all emotions, but the biggest emotion was anger, because why can't I just go shopping with my own child?"

"Based on [my skin colour] they saw my daughter and automatically assumed that she wasn't mine, that she wasn't supposed to be with me, and that I was doing something wrong," Jackie said. "It was never said but I could feel it implied that because I'm Black and my child looks White, I stole her."

Jackie said this was the first time she had been questioned on who she was in relation to her daughter. Since then, she says it has happened multiple times.

"I have had to show my ID more times than I can count. I keep her birth certificate and her health card and her social insurance card on me at all times because I'm stopped by people of authority, not police, but teachers, principals. Even if she's running towards me screaming my name, they don't believe that I'm her mother," Jackie said.

When her daughter was three, Jackie said a similar incident happened in a park where she was mistaken as a nanny.

"We were having a picnic [and] another mother came up to me and started to chat. She asked the general conversation starters like my daughter's name, how old, et cetera. She then proceeded to let me know she'd been watching me and saw how good I was with children and asked me how much it would take to leave my current employer," Jackie said.

"She offered me a job because I looked like this little girl's nanny."

Jackie said White people in Canada will "never know" what Black people have to go through "in defending [themselves] against ridiculous questions and accusations."

"I've spent the last six years having to explain my background to white people because they can't believe that a black-skinned woman can have a light-skinned child," Jackie added.

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“My mom has a different skin tone than me and has had these exact same experiences as I'm having now,” she said. “It's not like it's going to change but I'm just hoping that more people can listen and open their minds and know that we're just people. We're not here to do bad things we're just trying to live our lives.” (Neustaeter, 2020).



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## Handout: Intersectionality Case Study 2

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Jada and her boyfriend Mark have repeatedly been followed by employees and security guards while shopping in stores. Jada is Haitian and Mark is Filipino.

“Each time without fail, the security guard at Indigo will spot us in the crowd, keep an eye as we browse the first floor. Then when we head upstairs, guess who follows us immediately,” Jada said in an interview on June 3. “I don’t want to have to feel like I can’t go there but being watched constantly is extremely embarrassing for myself and my boyfriend.”

The 26-year-old said these instances have also happened in other stores where she is “watched like a hawk.”

“At Deserres, I will often wander around looking and touching, which seems to be only allotted for white customers. If there is an empty aisle that I am in, it is quickly filled by an employee that needs to ‘shuffle’ items on the shelves,” Jada said. She added that her most recent experience was at the store’s Atwater location where she was looking for beads.

“An employee came into the aisle and made me uncomfortable by commenting on the fact that I said that the beads were expensive. He followed me as I attempted to find something cheaper around the store or even in the kid’s aisle. I was so frustrated that I dropped the beads and walked out.” Jada said.

Mark said in a telephone interview with us that they always feel pressured to purchase something at these stores to prove to the employees following them that they aren’t there to steal.

“Being followed really puts me in an uncomfortable position, because even when I first walk into an environment, I already feel attacked and not welcome to be there. Sometimes a smile can go a long way, but I never get that. I never feel that welcoming,” the 27-year-old said.

“Having to look at reviews, having to make sure that the place we visit is ‘safe’ and ‘racism-free’ has felt like a new normal,” Mark said. “There’s a certain fear, anger and also confusion that in 2020 we still experience it.”

Mark said they also overhear racist comments directed towards them on their daily commutes. Mark said the first time he experienced racism was as a kid shopping for eyeglasses with his family.

“The salesman claimed that we should get these certain types of glasses because we’re Asian and Asian people have specific kinds of noses. I was a child, and this salesperson just threw that comment in without even thinking how it could potentially affect me,” Mark said.

As a Black woman, Jada said that racism is an everyday occurrence for her. She said sometimes racist incidents happen so often to her that they begin to blur together.



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“We often think of racism as very physical and volatile, but honestly, it’s not those that you necessarily remember. Often, it’s the tiny bullets of microaggressions that stick with you. Ignoring your perspective, trying to apply the problems of Black people to all cultures, or not even letting you speak about your issues because ‘everyone goes through these things’,” Jada said.

To get through each day, Jada said she has to put a “bulletproof vest on [her] mind.” She said the microaggressions she experiences are like a “wound that never heals because each day someone adds to that enduring pain and anger.”

“Consistently knowing that someone somewhere is going to stare, maybe a cashier will treat you like garbage for no reason, you soon realize that racism is the small breaking down of your own self-esteem and feelings of safety in the world,” Jada said. “[It] kind of makes you feel like well why would I even bother going out at this point?”

Microaggressions may seem like minor incidents to some, but Mark said they can really add up over time.

“Maybe for some people they’ve never experienced racism so they don’t consider it a big deal, but racism comes in different shapes and forms from someone looking at someone else differently, saying a comments, or judging a person by how they look,” Mark said. (Neustaeter, 2020).



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## Handout: Intersectionality Case Study 3

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As someone who has a light enough complexion to pass for white, Nova Scotian Nicole Jackson said she was often the recipient of some “misguided and ignorant questions” growing up when trying to explain her African heritage to her peers.

“I find because I'm light-skinned, people don't know I'm Black unless I say it,” Jackson said in a telephone interview with CTVNews.ca on June 3.

Jackson said her peers would ask if she is from Africa or if her parents were from Africa and inquire at how Black she was.

“Having conversations about—OK so if your dad is full Black and your mom's like this much Black, does that mean you're three-quarters Black?—Just trying to break all that down when really it's just you're Black. But I'm 13, 14-years-old and not really recognizing that as being questionable at the time, just kind of going along with the question,” Jackson said.

She added that she does not feel any ill will towards those who asked her such questions. Jackson said they were just kids at the time and didn't know any better.

“They were my friends so I don't feel any poor way to them, but that is why this conversation is important because there's varying degrees of racism and some are overt and some are a little bit more subliminal. Reflecting back on it, you always wish you could have said something different, but I can't be that hard on myself being a child at the time,” Jackson said.

However, Jackson says there have been more recent incidents of racism she has encountered. She said in university, some of her white friends would brag about using the N-word or the term ‘monkey,’ not knowing that Jackson herself is Black.

“Another effect of ‘passing’ is that you often catch offhanded remarks or hear people using words they shouldn't be using because they don't realize who they're in the presence of,” Jackson said. “I don't know if that makes them feel more comfortable saying this stuff not knowing that, but it's those little things that kind of add up and affect me.”

As a Nova Scotian, Jackson says these derogatory remarks cut even deeper for her.

“Nova Scotia is home to the very first Blacks in Canada. Many of us do not have the luxury of being able to trace our roots so easily back to our homeland and many of us are mixed, often with Indigenous roots,” Jackson said.

“We come in many different shades, but we are Black.”

Canadian political leaders who do not believe systemic racism exists in Canada like how it does in the U.S. is the “definition of white privilege,” Jackson said. (Neustaeter, 2020).

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