





INTRODUCTION	2
A NOTE TO THE READER	5
RESPONDING TO EVERYDAY BIGOTRY: 10 SCENARIOS	
What Can I Do About Family?	6
What Can I Do About Impressionable Children?	7
What Can I Do About Friends and Colleagues?	8
What Can I Do About Online Communications?	11
What Can I Do At Work?	12
What Can I Do At School?	13
What Can I Do About In-Group Bigotry?	14
What Can I Do In Public?	16
What can I Do About Retail Racism?	17
What Can I Do About A Stranger's Remarks?	19
ACTION STEPS AND RESOURCES	
Six Steps to Speaking Up	21
The <i>Speak Up!</i> Pledge	23
Acknowledgments	24
Resources	25





Cody Downs, 30,

Your brother routinely makes anti-Semitic comments. Your neighbor uses the N-word in casual conversation. Your co-worker ribs you about your Italian surname, asking if you're in the mafia. Your classmate insults something by saying, "That's so gay."

And you stand there, in silence, thinking, "What can I say in response to that?" Or you laugh along, uncomfortably. Or, frustrated or angry, you walk away without saying anything, thinking later, "I should have said something."

No agency or organization counts or tracks these moments. They don't qualify as hate crimes, and they rarely make news. That's part of their insidious nature; they happen so often we simply accept them as part of life. Left unchecked, like litter or weeds, they blight the landscape.

In this abridged version of Teaching Tolerance's award-winning guidebook, we present 10 scenarios designed to help you plan how to respond in these situations. While none may be the exact situation you encounter — whether at home, at work, at school, or in public — each includes tips on how to frame a response in a similar situation.

Once you're prepared to speak up — when you have a plan and have pledged to yourself that you *will* speak up — you become one of the voices seeking to replace bigotry with tolerance and understanding. Together, that is how we can change the world.

Speak up! calls on everyone to take a stand against everyday bigotry.

In the making of this book, the Southern Poverty Law Center gathered hundreds of stories of everyday bigotry from people across the United States. They told their stories through e-mail, personal interviews, and at roundtable discussions in four cities: Baltimore, Maryland; Columbia, South Carolina; Phoenix, Arizona; and Vancouver, Washington.

Due to personal preference and privacy concerns, we present them anonymously. Racial, ethnic, and other descriptors are those used by the people telling their own stories.



What if I don't react?

μ A young Arizona woman says her father and uncle know how much she opposes racist or homophobic “jokes.” “I’ve told them that all the time, and they just keep telling ‘jokes’ to make me mad, to push my buttons and get a reaction. They know I hate it. It used to make me so angry I’d cry and leave the house. Now I just try not to react.”

μ A Maryland man shares a similar story: “My cousin used to come visit me whenever he was doing business in town. One time he was over and used the N-word, and I said, ‘I don’t use that word,’ but he still used it a few more times. I finally said, ‘Don’t use that word. If you’re going to use that word, I’m going to ask you to find somewhere else to stay.’ It was like a game to him, to use the word to see how I’d react.”

Sometimes people can be persistently manipulative when it comes to bigoted behavior, continuing “jokes” and comments simply to spark a reaction from others. Try the following:

Children soak up stereotypes and bigotry from media, from family members, at school, and on the playground. As a parent concerned about your child's cultural sensitivities, consider the following:

Focus on empathy. When a child says or does something that reflects biases or embracultural ethy

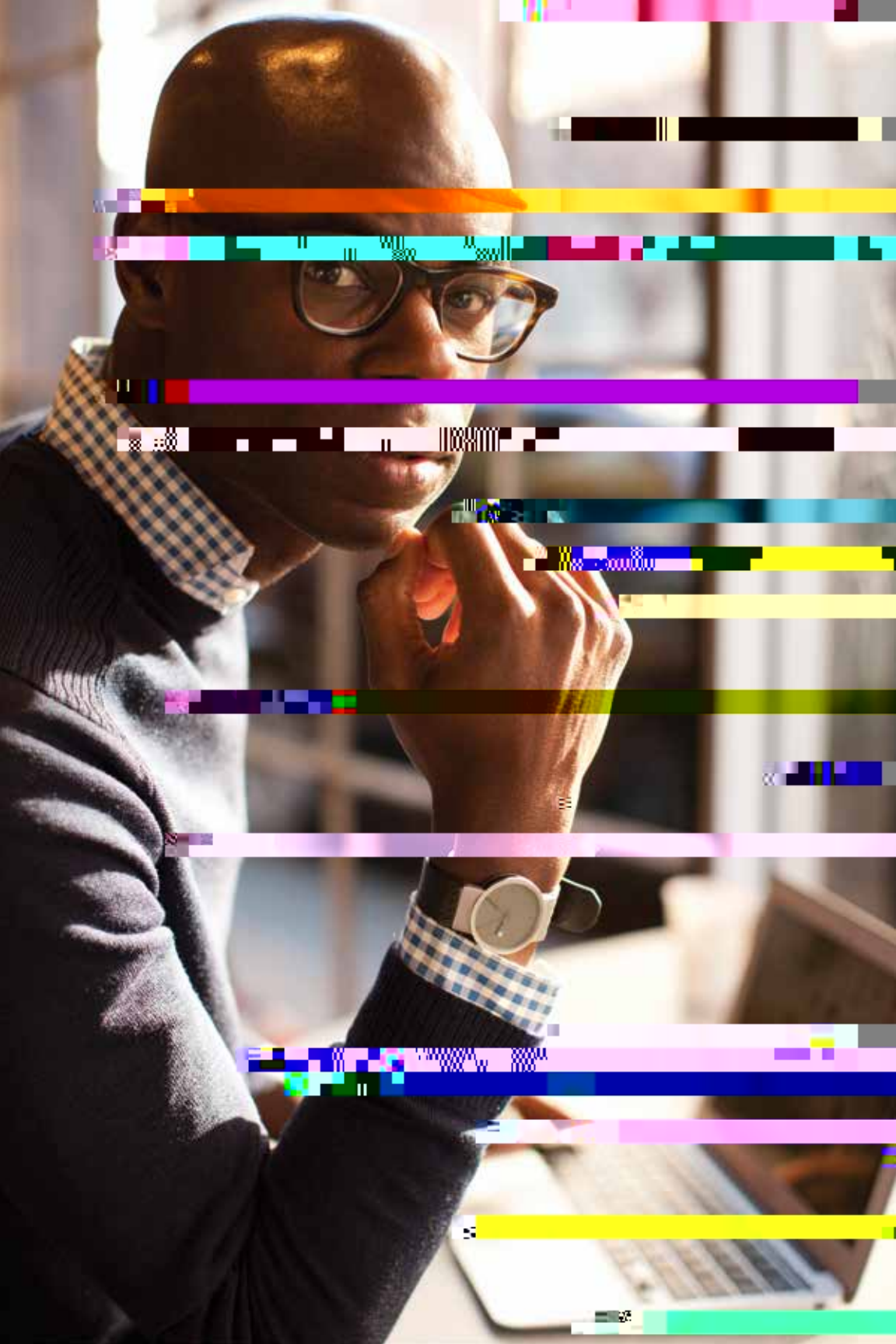


Friends are our comfort zones, where we let down our guards and can simply be ourselves. Casual conversation is the mainstay of these relationships. But when bias is interjected into everyday moments with friends, relationships can feel markedly uncomfortable. How then can you reconnect?

Approach friends as allies. When a friend makes a hurtful comment or poses an offensive question, it's easy to shut down, put up walls, or disengage. Remember that you're friends with this person for a reason; something special brought you together. Drawing on that bond, explain how the comment offended you.

Respond with silence. When a friend poses a question that feels hurtful, let protracted silence do the work for you. Say nothing and wait for the speaker to respond with an open-ended question: "What's up?" Then describe the comment from your point of view.

Talk about differences. When we have friendships across culture groups, it's natural to focus on what we have in common, rather than our differences. Yet our differences matter. Strive to open up the conversation: "We've been friends for years, and I value our friendship very much. One thing we've never really talked about is my experiences with racism. I'd like to do that now."





μ A manager writes: “One of my employees constantly makes ‘jokes’ about people being ‘bipolar’ or ‘going postal’ or being ‘off their meds.’ I happen to know that one of our other employees — within earshot of these comments — is on medication for depression. How cau3

μ An Italian American woman's co-worker makes daily comments about her heritage. "Are you in the mafia?" "Are you related to the Godfather?" There are only six colleagues in the office, and the Italian American woman doesn't know how — or if — to respond.

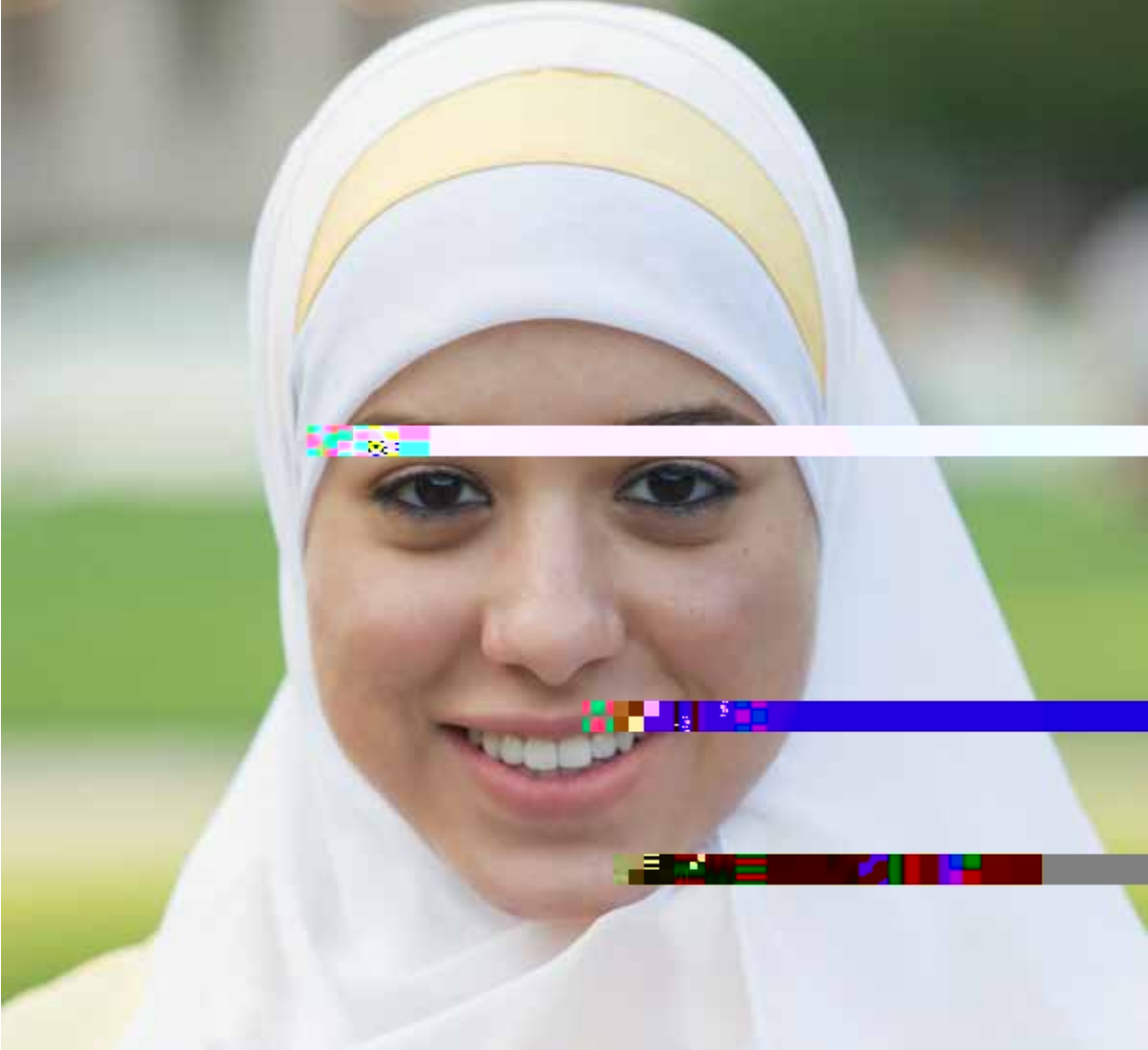
Core value statements and other policies sitting on dusty shelves don't establish an office's culture; casual interactions do. Whether you're a staffer, a manager, or an executive, there's a role for you to play in setting a respectful and unbiased tone in the office. Consider these actions:

Interrupt early. Workplace culture largely is determined by what is or isn't allowed to occur. If people are lax in responding to bigotry, then bigotry prevails. Speak up early and often in order to build a more inclusive environment.

Use — or establish — policies. Call upon existing — too often forgotten upon o

Determine the extent of the problem. As a social science or club activity, survey students about biased language at school: what they hear most often, who they hear it from, how it makes them feel, and what they're willing to do about it.

Implement a "Words Hurt" campaign. Get students, teachers, and staff involved in a campaign to reduce biased language on campus.



or “too gay” support and promote misogyny and homophobia. Anything that hurts or marginalizes one member of a group hurts or marginalizes *all* members of that group.

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μ An Asian-American man in the grocery store notices a cashier treating a non-English-speaking woman badly. After checking to see if the woman wants help, the man confronts the manager: “This person spends money in your store, and your store has a responsibility to respect all people living in this community.”


μ A Colorado woman uses a wheelchair. She is boarding a plane with her husband when the flight attendant says, to the husband, “Will she need help being seated?” The husband told the flight attendant to ask his wife.

It’s all too common: frontline employees who are ill-trained to deal with diverse clientele. Most of us don’t relish the thought of causing a scene, but interrupting biased customer service can send a clear message to the employees — and to other customers. When bias affects customer service, consider the following:

Speak for yourself. If you’re the target of rude customer service, let the person know: “I deserve to be treated with respect in an establishment where I spend money.” ”

Make eye contact. Look at other people witnessing this exchange. Use body language to appeal for their assistance and support.

Step up. Don't allow someone to be mistreated when you have the power to help. Don't stick solely to "your" issues. Speak up against bigotry wherever it happens, whoever is involved.



μ An 18-year-old Hispanic woman goes to a Florida craft store to spend her birthday money. A manager follows her and asks repeatedly what she is looking for. Other customers, all white, are browsing without being asked such questions. When she protests, she is asked to leave. "I thought those decades were gone, when they could throw you out of a store just because you're Hispanic."

μ A woman in Indiana notices store clerks shadowing two teen shoppers, taking items out of the shoppers' hands and replacing them on the racks, then standing by the dressing room door when one of the young men tries on a garment. ri(of a

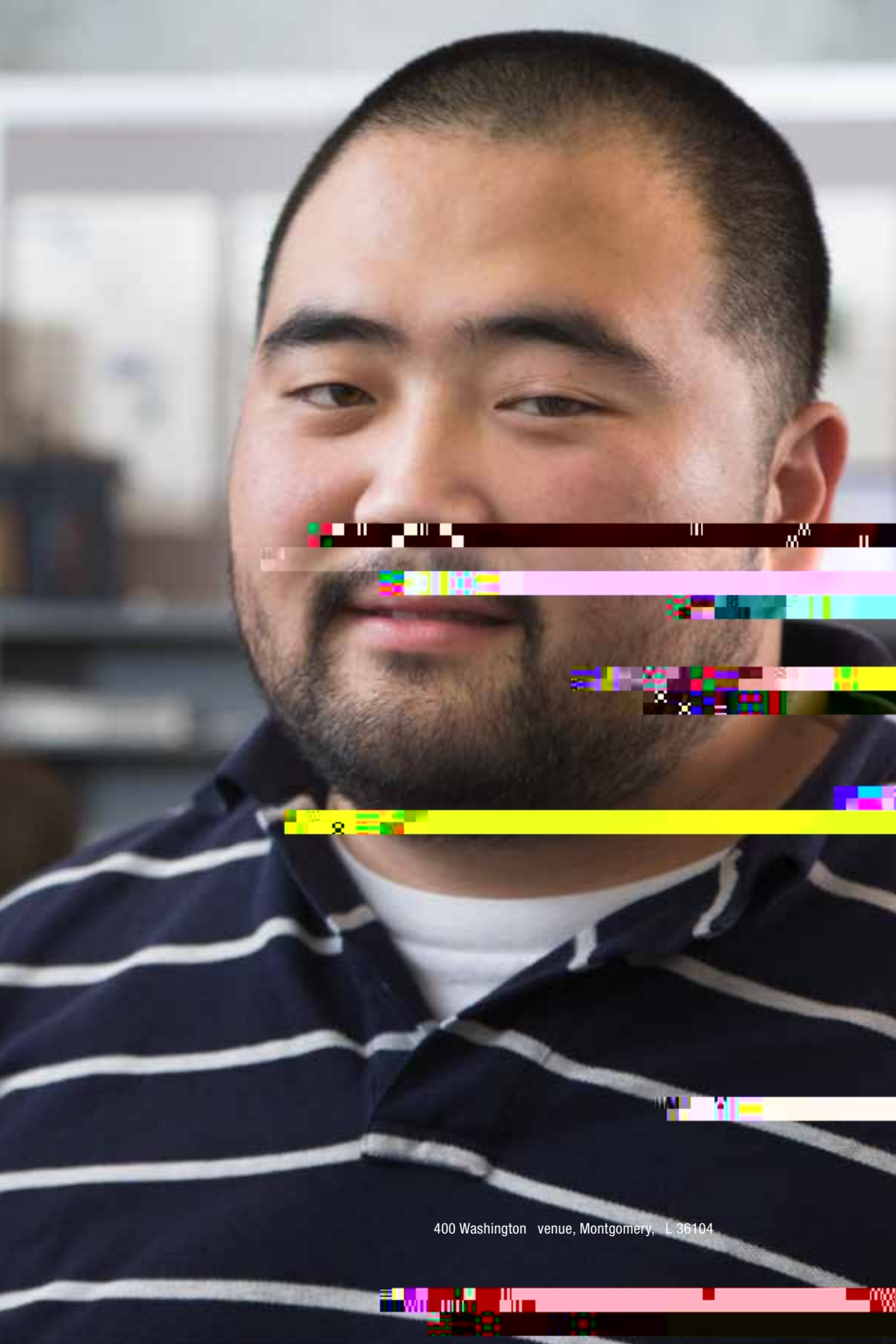


“Appeal to their better instincts,” Houston said. “Remember that people are complex. What they say in one moment is not necessarily an indication of everything they think.”

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You cannot control another person, but you can say, “Don’t tell racist jokes in my presence anymore. If you do, I will leave.” Or, “My workspace is not a place I allow bigoted remarks to be made. I can’t control what you say outside of this space, but here I ask that you respect my wishes.” Then follow through.

“The point is to draw a line, to say, ‘I don’t want you to use that language when I’m around,’” Bob Carolla, spokesman for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. “Even if attitudes don’t change, by shutting off bad behavior, you are limiting its contagion. Fewer people hear it or experience it.”



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