

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST
RACISM AT RHEINMAIN UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES:

How to Respond to Racist Incidents



Hello!

It's great that you've found this brochure.

Racism at universities is a reality that is often overlooked – but one that affects us **ALL** in different ways and that **WE** cannot and do not want to ignore.

This brochure therefore addresses **ALL members of RheinMain University of Applied Sciences**. It aims to make this reality visible and present ways of responding to and fighting against racism.

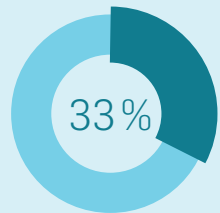
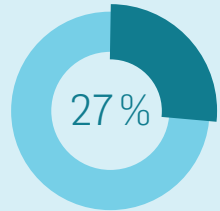
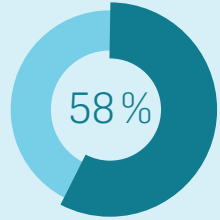
We, students at the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, take a stand against all forms of racism and hope to bring about a change for the better with this brochure. Our goal is a university community characterized by respect and solidarity.

Aleyna B., Gina-Katja K., Jasika E., Julia B., Lucia P., Natalie M., Pakthian S. Y., Sarah S., Saskia S., and five other students.

You are welcome to send feedback on the brochure to diversityofficer@hs-rm.de.

Did you know that...

- **more than half** of the people in Germany who potentially experience racism has already been a victim of racial discrimination? ¹
- **27%** of requests for information made by university employees to the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency were due to discrimination on racial grounds? ²
- that in a study conducted by Bielefeld University, **one third** of the participating students stated that they had experienced racism in the university environment? ³



Racism affects everyone, but in different ways.

The brochure addresses different forms of and experiences with racism, as well as the role of white people in perpetuating and overcoming racism.

1 Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung [German Center for Integration and Migration Research] 2022: 31.

2 Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes [Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency] 2017: 150.

3 Stern et al. 2018: 20.

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1 Racism at universities

Find out more
about how racism
works

Racism can be found in various situations at universities. Anyone there, i.e., teaching staff, students or employees, can potentially be subjected to racism or be responsible for racist discrimination.⁴

In incidents of racial discrimination, differences in status, e.g., between professors and students or employees, or between teaching staff and students, are often a factor that makes it difficult to address the discriminating situation.

“Reflect on *white* structures and what you take for granted. Diversity policy is not about websites and guidelines, but aims to create opportunities for voices and perspectives to be heard [...] that you would otherwise miss out on [...] that will make your own lives richer.”

(Ahmed et al. 2022: 160)

⁴ Gerhards et. al. 2019.

Racism manifests itself in the university environment in, for example:⁵

- discriminatory **terms, insults, comments**
- **microaggression**, for example by emphasizing differences
- **racist content** in classes, meetings or informal conversations
These can be stereotyped images or descriptions, false allegations, the portrayal of white perspectives (in science) as universal, the failure to acknowledge diverse life realities or non-*white* scientific achievements, or racist statements.
- the form of **exclusion** from group assignments or within the faculty
- **unfair evaluation of graded course components**

“I have to do all I can to avoid fulfilling their stereotypes. I mustn't make any mistakes [...] If I make a mistake, they immediately say: ,Of course, she's a migrant'.”

(Āmiri 2020: 72, transl.)

5 Ahmed 2012.

- the **assumption of a lack of competence**
- discrimination when **applying for jobs or promotion**

“I mainly see **Black life in German universities very early in the morning or very late in the evening**, when the cleaning staff start their work. During the day, these are still **white institutions**, largely self-reproducing homogeneous milieus.”

(Piorkowski/Auma 2020, transl.)

- **the unequal appointment of management and leadership** positions in relation to the overall percentage of society
- **defensive behavior** in response to indications that racist language or behavior is being used (e.g., by implying excessive sensitivity or a lack of objectivity)

- **the assumption of bias** when people who have experienced racism talk about racism, which makes statements less likely to be taken seriously.

Statements made by white people, on the other hand, are often wrongly perceived as being neutral.

“**Even just** being present at the university with this **Black body** is an issue, as stupid and basic as that sounds.”

(Ahmed et al. 2022: 135f., transl.)



Racism can also manifest itself in other ways.

If you are uncertain, talk to one of the contact persons. Take your gut feeling seriously.



2 What can you do if you experience racial discrimination?⁶

How people react when confronted with racism can vary depending on the person and the situation.

In the situation itself:

■ Take your own feelings and needs seriously

Trust your perception, even if others don't seem to have noticed anything or appear to assess the situation differently.

■ Find allies

Look for people who are on your side and will support you in the situation.

■ Remove yourself from the situation

Decide whether it is possible to remove yourself from the situation. You do not have to endure it. You are also not responsible for explaining yourself or educating others about racism if you don't want to.

⁶ More detailed information can be found on websites and flyers from counseling centers, for example from the [Amadeu Antonio Foundation](#), the [Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-Wing, Racist and Anti-Semitic Violence](#) or the [Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency](#)

What can you do if you experience racial discrimination?

■ **Defend yourself**

Make it clear that you are not happy with the situation, the content or the way you are being treated or referred to. If necessary, refer to the university's anti-discrimination policy which prohibits racism, as does the German General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG).

■ **Be kind to yourself**

Experiencing racial discrimination can leave you speechless and you may not have the energy to intervene in the situation. Sometimes, you will understand the situation only after it happened. Do not blame yourself. You do not have to deal with discrimination alone.

After the situation:

■ **Documentation**

It is important to write down what you have experienced (as soon as possible) or to save or photograph texts, e.g., in emails or presentations, as evidence of discrimination. Witnesses to the incident should also record their observations in writing.

■ **Information and counseling centers**

You can (anonymously) contact any center, whether on or off campus. They will document the incident, provide you with psychological and emotional support and advise you on the next steps.

What can you do if you experience racial discrimination?

■ **Talk to a person in authority**

Sometimes it might be a good idea to talk to someone in a management or leadership role, such as a superior, a team leader, teaching staff or the head of the degree program, although power structures and hierarchies sometimes make this a difficult step to take. It is often possible to take someone with you to a meeting as support or to make contact in writing first.

■ **Self-care and empowerment**

Talking to friends and family or engaging in activities that do you good can help you deal with incidents in which you have experienced racism. Political networking and involvement in empowerment groups or anti-racist initiatives are another possibility (but currently – March 2024 – only available outside RheinMain University of Applied Sciences).



Empowerment is an approach that aims to empower individuals as well as to bring about structural political change.⁷

⁷ Can 2013: 15 and Dib et al. 2020.


3 Information and counseling centers


If required, all support centers will work on the basis of anonymity.

Within the university:

Diversity- und Antidiskriminierungsbeauftragte


Diversity and anti-discrimination officer
Anti-discrimination counseling
(for students and all members of the university)


 diversityofficer@hs-rm.de


 0151/70 69 12 74

AStA-Antidiskriminierungsreferat

Students' union anti-discrimination office
Anti-discrimination counseling (by and for students)

 www.asta-hsrm.de/beratung-and-services/antidiskriminierung/antidiskriminierungskampagne/

 Wiesbaden@asta-hsrm.de
antidiskriminierung@asta-hsrm.de


 0611/94 95-11 92


As at June 2024


Changes and current information on the contact persons at the HSRM and the complaints procedure can be found on the university's website.

Feedback-Plus

For feedback, ideas and questions (for students)

 www.hs-rm.de/de/service/feedbackplus


 feedback@hs-rm.de


 0611/94 95-11 47 oder 0611/94 95-11 39


Outside the university:

Antidiskriminierungsberatung Hessen

Anti-discrimination counseling in Hesse


 www.adibe-hessen.de/de


 kontakt@adibe-hessen.de


 069/71 37 56-16

Spiegelbild-Politische Bildung aus Wiesbaden e.V.

Anti-discrimination counseling in Wiesbaden

 www.spiegelbild.de

 Beratung@spiegelbild.de

 0179/51 28 79 97

4 What can you do if you witness racial discrimination?⁸

Always stay in contact with the person being discriminated against to make sure the person's wishes and needs are respected.

This can be mean doing various things, e.g., talking, intervening loudly, staying quiet or offering to call someone.

Listen to what happened to them and do not judge their story.

■ Intervene

Show your solidarity through action. Make it clear that you disapprove of the situation and why, as long as this does not endanger the person being discriminated against or yourself. Reach out to the person being discriminated against to make sure their needs are prioritized. Avoid patronizing them.

■ Medium and long-term support

If the person concerned would like you to do so, you can support them in taking further steps, e.g., documenting the incident, accompanying them to a counseling center or sitting down together for another talk.

8 University of Hildesheim 2023.

Ways to intervene in meetings, presentations, classes, the cafeteria or on campus:

- Ask what was meant by what was said
- Ask for evidence for the statement
- If appropriate, point out that the statement or action is not based on fact and offer to research a reliable source
- Call out a statement or action as racist
- Make it clear that you do not wish to hear such statements or experience such behavior
- Postpone the conversation or change the subject in order to put an end to the situation
- Draw attention to the situation so that racist incident does not go unaddressed and appears legitimate.

5 Things you should know and do about racism as a *white* person with *white* privilege

Effects of racism

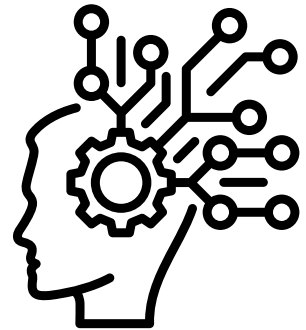


Racism is a restriction of equal participation for all.

People who experience racial discrimination suffer negative consequences that can affect their mental and physical health, as well as their self esteem.⁹

Racism can also decrease the chances of discriminated people succeeding in their studies and careers and leads to a higher dropout rate among students.¹⁰

Since racism is primarily perpetuated by patterns of thought and behavior of *white* people, **overcoming racism is also significantly linked to “a collective change in the behavior of *white* people”.**¹¹



9 Yeboah 2017.

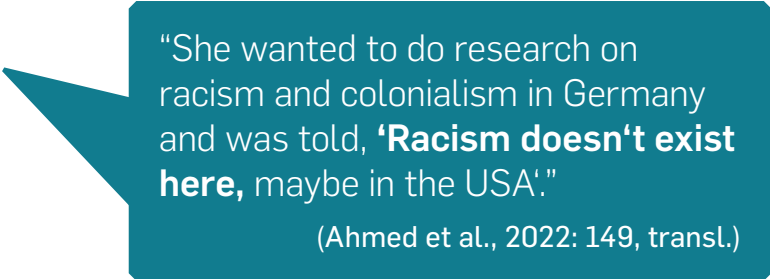
10 Stern et al. 2018.

11 Bönkost 2024: 36.

Allyship

Allyship is a concept that describes how white people can act in a (more) anti-racist way¹². As a white person, you can contribute to combating racism by:

- **acknowledging** the existence of **racism (in the university environment)**



"She wanted to do research on racism and colonialism in Germany and was told, '**Racism doesn't exist here, maybe in the USA.**'"

(Ahmed et al., 2022: 149, transl.)

- **calling racism by its name** (avoiding terms such as "xenophobia")
- **examining the role of racism in your life** and your **socialization**
- **reflecting** on your **own position and privileges in the context of racism** and taking **responsibility** for your own actions
- training your **own awareness** of racism
- continuously and autonomously **educating yourself** on racism

¹² Nassir-Shahnian 2020.

- **using your own privileges and resources (powersharing)**, e.g., space, time, money or knowledge for the benefit of people who experienced racial discrimination without expecting anything in return
- **engaging in (emotional) learning processes**
Enduring feelings such as guilt and shame when dealing with racism and not striving for exoneration by those negatively affected by it

The following misconceptions are common among white people. Please keep in mind that people who experienced racial discrimination...¹³

- are more than their experiences of racism.
- are not generally helpless and do not need to be “saved” by *white* people. (On the contrary, many anti-racist achievements can be traced back to the struggles of migrant people or BIPoC.)
- do not per se want to serve as experts on racism or be used as such.
- do not need to and should not be lectured on racism by *white* people.

6 Recommended media



Books:

- Amjahid (2021): Der weiße Fleck (Critical Whiteness)
- Aydemir / Yaghoobifarah (2019): Your homeland is our nightmare (Racism in Germany)
- Bazyar (2022): Sisters in Arms (2022) (Novel, Racism in Germany, Friendship)
- Hasters (2021): Was weiße Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen, aber wissen sollten (Critical Whiteness)
- Ogette (2017): Exit RACISM: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen (Racism in Germany; Critical Whiteness)
- Rink / Usifo (2023): People of Color in Deutschland. 45 Menschen, 45 Geschichten. Über Rassismus im Alltag und wie wir unser Land verändern wollen (Racism in Germany)
- Sow (2018): Deutschland Schwarz-Weiß (Racism in Germany)
- Wilkerson (2023): Caste. The Origins of our Discontents. (Global systems of oppression)



Podcasts:

- „Alice Hasters, was sollten weiße Menschen über Rassismus wissen?“ (2020) Podcast interview with Alice Hasters in the *Alles gesagt?* podcast by the newspaper *Die Zeit*
- „Anti-Rassismus und Empowerment“ (2022) Episode of the podcast *GlobalLokal*
- DaMigraTalks podcast by the umbrella association of migrant women organizations DaMigra e.V.
- Tupodcast podcast by the author, activist and anti-racism coach Tupoka Ogette
- „Mit Kindern über Rassismus sprechen – Empowerment als Erziehungsaufgabe“ (2020) Episode of the podcast *klassenheld*, a podcast for parents on how to get their kids through school
- „Kritisches Weißsein“ (2020) Episode of the podcast *Kanakische Welle*
- POWER ME podcast of an empowerment-project for kids that experiences racism



Documentaries – films and series:

- Die Farbe meiner Haut. Alltagsrassismus in Deutschland. (2024) (Documentary on everyday racism in Germany)
- Hidden Figures – Unerkannte Heldinnen (2016) (Film)
- La Haine (1995) (Film)
- Moonlight (2016) (Film)
- NSU und kein Ende – Staatsversagen, Opferleid und Rassismus (2023) (Documentary about the NSU murders and trial)
- Selma (2014) (Film)
- Dear White People (2014) (Series)
- The 13. (2016) (Series)
- When They See Us (2019) (Series)



Youtube:

- Explaining racism – Interview and analysis with Professor Paul Mecheril (2017)
- Datteltäter (Satirical group and their videos)
- How microaggressions are like mosquito bites – Same Difference (2016)



Instagram:

- @alice_haruko
- @alltagsrassismus_
- @stiftunggegenrassismus
- @aufstehen_gegen_rassismus
- @tupoka.o
- @amadeuantoniostiftung

7 Definition and forms of racism

Racism

Racism is a global ideology of inequality and a practice of exclusion that divides people into hierarchical groups and discriminates on the basis of these groups.

Historically, racism is an invention of white people, which has existed from the 18th century until the present day, in order to justify exploitation and slavery by the colonial ruling powers.¹⁴

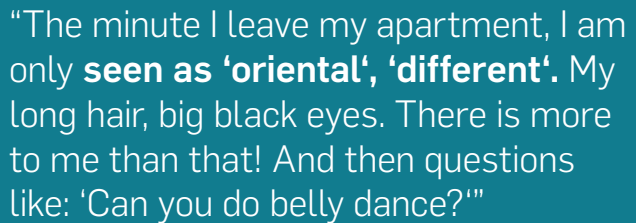
"I was born and raised in Germany. My parents come from Vietnam. [...] Racism is part of my life, just like the air I breathe. I have internalized it. [...] [I grew up] believing that I deserved all of it. [...] A teacher once told me that [...] I should get used to it. I'm so tired of getting used to it. When did you get used to it? It is time to embrace non-*white* perspectives, listen to them and work together against the hate."

(Tran 2020, transl.)

¹⁴ Hall 2000.

Othering

The term “othering” is used to describe the fundamental principle of racism, according to which people are “othered” on the basis of ascribed or actual characteristics such as a certain appearance, a supposed origin, name, language or presumed religion.¹⁵



“The minute I leave my apartment, I am only **seen as ‘oriental’, ‘different’**. My long hair, big black eyes. There is more to me than that! And then questions like: ‘Can you do belly dance?’”

(Āmiri 2020: 67)

It is assumed that everyone with these characteristics has the same invariable traits, which are imagined to be in contrast to the traits of the *white* majority society. Racialized, othered people are marginalized on the basis of this construction. There is no scientific basis for the racist categorization of people into groups.

This process, in which people are construed as “others”, i.e., turned into them, can be described using the term racialization.

¹⁵ Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung [German Center for Integration and Migration Research], 2022: 16f.

Everyday racism and microaggression¹⁶

Racism not only manifests itself in the form of physical violence or right-wing extremist acts, but also in everyday life as so-called **microaggression**.¹⁷ Examples include:

- the **question “but where do you really come from?”**
- **touching** someone's hair or **commenting** on their body **without being asked**
- fearful **looks**
- **jokes**
- racist **images and deformed depictions** of racialized people
- **compliments** that are meant to be positive , but are based on racial stereotypes
- being **overlooked** and **ignored** in everyday life

Everyday racism is subtle, indirect and usually unintentional, but can **cause a great deal of distress**. The lack of reflection on everyday racism leads to the **persistence of racist ways of thinking and behaving**.



Video everyday racism:

How microaggressions are like mosquito bites

¹⁶ Schramkowski/Ihring 2018.

¹⁷ Eissa 2023.

Forms and manifestations of racism

Racism manifests itself in different ways depending on whom it is directed against. The following **persons (groups of people)** and those labeled as such potentially **experience various forms of racism**.¹⁸ For example:

- Black people, Indigenous people, people of color and those labeled as such (BIPoC)
- Muslim people and those labeled as such
- Roma and Sinti and people labeled as such
- Asians and people labeled as such
- Eastern Europeans and people labeled as such
- There is a wide range of academic and activist opinion and positions on the question of whether anti-Semitism is a form of racism.¹⁹

Racism manifests itself in **different ways**:

- **Biologizing racism** argues on the basis of alleged physical differences
- **Cultural racism** is based on alleged differences between cultures

¹⁸ Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung [German Center for Integration and Migration Research], 2022: 5.

¹⁹ Brumlik 2023.

Levels on which racism manifests itself

Racism manifests itself on various levels:

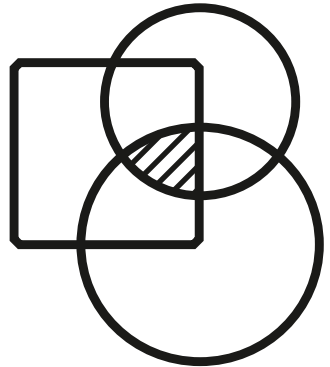
- on an **individual level** between people
- on an **institutional** level in institutions such as the police, schools and universities or administrative offices²⁰
- on a **structural** level, i.e., in social **structures**, e.g., in the housing or labor market).

Institutional and structural racism in the form of rules and routines persists **regardless of the individual**. Nevertheless, it is possible for individuals to recognize and change them.

²⁰ Gomolla 2011.

Intersectionality

This concept of Black feminism is based on the assumption of an **interrelation of different forms of discrimination**. For example, a Black woman may experience racism differently to a Black man because gender has an effect on the form of discrimination experienced. Experiences of discrimination may be influenced by characteristics of identity such as sexual orientation, social background (class), health, body, disability and age.²¹



²¹ Walgenbach 2012.

8 Glossary of terms²²

Ally, Allies (Pl.) are people who support a group or cause and identify with its concerns, even if they themselves are not negatively affected or if they benefit from the status quo.

BIPoC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) is a self-designation of people potentially subjected to racial discrimination. It describes a common horizon of experience shared by people who are not *white*. The term “BIPoC” does not describe a skin color or biological characteristic.

Not everyone who experiences racism identifies with the term BIPoC. We therefore use wording such as „people who experience racial discrimination“ or „racialized people“.

Powersharing addresses everyone who is structurally privileged and has a political interest in shifting these structures towards a fairer distribution of power, access, social and participatory opportunities.“²³

22 The Neue Deutschen Medienmacher*innen (New German Media Makers) glossary provides explanations of many terms in the context of racism and discrimination.

23 Nassir-Shahnian 2020: 29.

Racialization (Rassifizierung) describes the process of categorization, stereotyping and the implicit hierarchization of people based on certain (ascribed) characteristics such as skin color, language or religion.²⁴

Black (Schwarz) is a political self-designation of Black people and is written with a capital B. The term reflects a common position in the racist power structure and shared experiences of racism.

Whiteness/white (Weißsein/weiß) does not refer to a biological characteristic or skin color. *Whiteness* refers to the privileged position in a racist society. *White* people are therefore just as much a part of racism as people who are racialized through racism. *White* people experience advantages through racism. You can find more information on privilege [here](#). As white is not a self-designation, the term is written in lower case and italics.

²⁴ This definition was taken from the [glossary of the Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassismusbearbeitung \(Information and Documentation Center for Anti-Racism Work\) in North Rhine-Westphalia](#).

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(DeZIM) [German Center for Integration and Migration Research]

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