

# Preventing Racial Harassment

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## 1. What is Racial Harassment?

Racial harassment, as defined in the Hokkaido University Guidelines for Preventing Harassment, refers to “discriminatory speech or behavior that targets racial/ethnic attributes, including skin color, nationality, language, and customs.” It is a form of racism that includes belittling, disdain, hostility, slander, insult, and denigration of people of a particular ethnic group or nationality, such as indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, and encompasses any speech or behavior that disregards historical context/background. (Source: Reference (15) *Taminzoku Kyōsei Jinken Kyōiku Sentā* [Multi-ethnic Human Rights' Center for Pro-existence]). Microaggressions (Note 1) are also a form of racial harassment. Discrimination against the Ainu people is also prohibited under Article 4: Prohibition of Discrimination against the Ainu People of the Act on Promoting Measures to Achieve a Society in which the Pride of Ainu People is Respected (Ainu Policy Promotion Law).

Racial harassment targets not only individual persons but also entire groups. It can occur regardless of whether the perpetrator’s status is high or low and whether they are old or young. Racial harassment can lead to substantial harm, including physical health issues resulting from severe stress, and social harm through the degradation of educational and workplace environments.

Anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of racial harassment, and it can occur anywhere at anytime around us. By understanding the fundamentals, you can help prevent racial harassment and protect yourself. This document is designed to raise awareness about racial harassment within our university community.

Note 1: Microaggressions refer to the daily verbal actions and nonverbal behaviors, whether deliberate or unintentional, that convey hostile, derogatory, or negative

messages specifically targeting minorities.

## 2. Such speech acts and behaviors that may constitute Racial Harassment

Below are examples of behaviors that could be considered racial harassment, including some incidents that have actually taken place within our university. Racial harassment occurs intentionally or unintentionally due to the "6 Mu's" (muchī (ignorance), mukanshin (indifference), murikai (incomprehension), muka (disregard for others, Note 2), muhansei (lack of reflection), and muhairyo (inconsideration), (Source: Ibid. (7) Kitahara).

Depending on the context and background, these words and actions may not always be classified as racial harassment. However, given the significant risk that they could be construed as racial harassment, such words and actions should be avoided whenever possible. If it is necessary to engage in such behaviors, they must be undertaken with extreme caution. While a single occurrence of such behaviors might not qualify as racial harassment, repeated instances or continuation of the behavior after it has been identified and cautioned against are likely to be perceived as racial harassment.

Note 2: This refers to the denial of the existence of minority groups or experiences of discrimination and domination faced by minority groups.

(1) Insulting, negative, exclusionary, or offensive speech and actions concerning having ancestral roots in specific countries, regions, or ethnicities, as well as direct violence.

- "You are exceptional for an Ainu ."  
→ An assumption has been made that Ainu are inferior.
- "Ainu can't do XX."
- "It's surprising that there's culture/grammar/literature when Ainu don't have a written language." [This is an example of (5)]  
→ These speech acts and behaviors uniformly degrade a group of people.
- Defending discriminatory actions or speech by linking them to "freedom of speech" or "academic freedom."  
→ Respect for human rights and ethical standards are fundamental prerequisites for the establishment of academic inquiry. Prioritizing academia

above these principles is unacceptable.

- (2) Denying the identity and history of people with a particular ethnicity or nationality, including periods of colonial rule.
- "Ainu no longer exist."
  - "Ainu are not an ethnic group."
  - "Ainu are not an indigenous people."
    - These claims deny the identity and existence of Ainu without understanding the realities of Ainu, as they do not conform to arbitrary definitions such as "One is not Ainu if they cannot speak the Ainu language"
  - "Ainu have never faced, nor do they currently experience, discrimination"
    - Broadly dismissing the presence of discrimination by relying on subjective or personal experiences obscures and hinders the acknowledgment of existing societal or institutional discrimination. For Ainu, such denial can compound their sense of being discriminated against.
- (3) Publicizing, disseminating, or inquiring about someone's ethnic or national attributes without their explicit consent.
- Informing a third party that "Mr./Ms. A apparently has Ainu roots" without Mr./Ms. A's consent. [Also applies to (1)]
  - "Are you Ainu (or a foreigner)?" [Also applies to (4) and (5)]
    - In Japanese society, the dominant perception is that "Japan is a country of Japanese people alone (Wajin, see Note 3)," implying that minoritized peoples do not exist. Disclosing minority status under such circumstances increases the risk of being discriminated against. Furthermore, inquiring about someone's non-Japanese identity effectively marginalizes them, fostering a sense of exclusion.
  - Asking people to speak Ainu or do an Ainu cultural demonstration without building trust first.
    - Individual interest in language and culture differs widely. In Japanese society, the Ainu language and cultural practices have historically been treated negatively, leading to considerable loss. These experiences can lead to trauma and a sense of loss. Asking these individuals to "show me something" out of mere curiosity reflects Mukanshin (indifference) and Muhansei (lack of reflection), making them feel humiliated.

- (4) Operating under the assumption that only Japanese citizens with Japanese ethnicity (Wajin) are students and faculty, in conversations, lectures, university operations, and environmental arrangements on campus.
- "The history of Hokkaido began with its Kaitaku (development/colonization)."  
→ Denies the existence of the Ainu before the modern era and there is a prevailing assumption among university members that the settlement by the Wajin should be praised uncritically, disregarding the resultant destruction of the Ainu people's way of life.
  - "I don't think there are Ainu here, so I'll say..."  
→ Minorities may not disclose their attributes due to fear of discrimination or trauma. Ignoring such statements can contribute to the perception that "the university is a world of the majority," causing a dilemma for those considering telling people their identity.
  - "There are few Ainu at the university." [Also applies to (1) ]
  - "The reason there are few Ainu at the university is poverty."  
→ Does not take into account that the exclusion of minorities from educational and employment opportunities is a result of structures created by the majority society, Another problem is that these statements do not assume there are people who do not wish to pursue higher education even if they have the economic means to do so specifically because of the discrimination they face. Also, they do not recognize there are people who are not disclosing their identity disclose their identity. Such oversimplifications ultimately contribute to the perpetuation of discriminatory attitudes.
- (5) Discussing people of a particular ethnic group or nationality based on stereotypes.
- "The Ainu people cherish a spiritual culture of coexistence with nature even now. We should learn from this." [Also applies to (4)]  
→ Despite being well-intentioned, this statement unilaterally essentializes and restricts the Ainu to a specific stereotype, effectively othering them and fails to acknowledge the diversity of Ainu contributions and presence within the university.
  - "The Ainu culture lacks writing/ironworking/rice cultivation."  
→ Talking about the traits of an ethnicity or culture without considering the historical context or geographical specificity overlooks the cultural evolution of

the Ainu people. Additionally, because literacy and rice cultivation are seen as markers of an "advanced culture" in Japanese society, mentioning their absence suggests a presumption of Ainu inferiority. [This also applies to item (1)]

- "Ainu have such chiseled facial features they look like foreigners."  
→ Even when meant as a mere observation or compliment, the physical characteristics and physique of the Ainu have been historically viewed negatively. Emphasizing physical differences from Wajin may inadvertently suggest a belief in Ainu inferiority.

Note 3: It refers to individuals whose native language is a dialect from the Japanese mainland and who consider Japanese-style culture as their traditional heritage, who are referred to as *sisam* in the Ainu language.

### 3. What to do if you encounter Racial Harassment

If you have experienced racial harassment or witnessed it, you might consider the following responses based on the situation. It's important to note that these actions may carry risks, so prioritizing your safety is crucial.

#### (1) What to do if you are a victim

- ① Record the harassment
  - Date, time, and place where you felt harassed
  - What was said/done to you
  - Who said it/ did it to you
  - Who was there or who witnessed the harassment
- ② Consult the following about your concerns
  - If seeking advice or strategies
    - [On-campus] Harassment Consultation Room  
<https://www.hokudai.ac.jp/jimuk/soumubu/jinjika/sekuhara/index.htm>
    - [Off-campus] Everyone's Human Rights 110 (Emergency telephone number) 0570-003-110 (connects to the nearest Legal Affairs Bureau)
  - Consulting about mental care
    - Student Counseling Center <https://www.sacc.hokudai.ac.jp/>
  - Consulting about medical issues

→ Health Center

[https://www.hokudai.ac.jp/hoken/about/facility\\_about.html](https://www.hokudai.ac.jp/hoken/about/facility_about.html)

## (2) When you witness harassment

As a witness to an incident of harassment, you have several options for intervening that can help mitigate the effect on the victim. These individuals who take positive supportive actions are known as "Active Bystanders" (Source: Reference 12, Saga Prefecture).

- ① Divert attention (start a conversation on a different topic, disrupt the harasser's behavior)
- ② Seek help from others (ask for intervention from those nearby)
- ③ Preserve evidence (take photos to record the situation. Note: handle such evidence with care)
- ④ Respond later (offer follow-up support to the victim after the incident)
- ⑤ Intervene directly (say "That is harassment" and caution directly)
- ⑥ Support people with "What to do when you are a victim" (1)Guidelines"

## 4. Example cases of Racial Harassment

To provide a clearer understanding of the examples of racial harassment and their countermeasures we've explored, we offer the following hypothetical scenarios.

- (a) I am a first-year university student with Ainu roots. My name is a typical Wajin name, and it might not be apparent that I have Ainu roots. However, just because my name isn't typically Ainu doesn't mean I don't have Ainu roots—it is a precious name given to me by my parents.
- (b) In a recent class, a teacher said, "I don't think there are any Ainu here, so I'll say..." and went on to lecture that "The history of Hokkaido began with its Kaitaku (development/colonization)." Another teacher stated, "The Ainu are a people who cherish nature, and we have much to learn from their spiritual culture..."
- (c) Furthermore, not all my classmates know about my roots, which may be why some of them say things like, "There are no Ainu at the university" or "Ainu are not

discriminated against." Even when challenged, they justify their position by asserting "Such discussions fall within the realm of academic freedom at the university." When that happens, I feel like I'm being rejected, and it really hurts. Sometimes, classmates who aren't very close to me, upon learning I have Ainu roots, have said say, "So you're Ainu. Speak some Ainu for us." I understand that the person doesn't mean any harm, but the fact is, I'm not a spectacle on display, and I can't just speak on command. So, every time someone says something like that, it makes me feel uncomfortable.

(d) In another class, while analyzing the reasons for discrimination against the Ainu, it was mentioned that because Ainu have features like foreigners, even if they didn't reveal their Ainu identity, people could often recognize them as Ainu at a glance. Additionally, it was explained that "the reason fewer Ainu can advance to university includes poverty as a factor." Along with this, an analysis was conducted on why the Ainu are prone to falling into poverty. In this class, explanations were given with consideration for students with Ainu roots, and there was nothing that inadvertently hurt me.

(e) After that, the teacher who talked as if there were no Ainu present, kept repeating similar statements in class, almost every time. During one of the lessons, a friend who knew about my Ainu roots raised their hand and spoke up for me saying, "Teacher, I think that's incorrect." Afterwards, they also told me, "The teacher really doesn't understand, do they?" And after listening to how I felt, they suggested going to the university's harassment consultation office and accompanied me there. When I went to the office, I brought a record of what was said in each class.

[Explanation]

- (a) There are students and faculty with Ainu roots enrolled in our university. At first glance, you cannot judge by appearance or name, and even if you feel like you can make a judgment, you should avoid doing so arbitrarily.
- (b) This behavior is considered to fall under "2. Behaviors that may constitute racial harassment" sections (4) and (5).
- (c) Similarly, it is considered to fall under 2(1), (3), (4).
- (d) At first glance, it may be considered to fall under 2(4), (5). However, the reason why 2(4) and (5) are problematic is because they reflect unconscious discriminatory feelings about the Ainu in everyday conversations. (not to mention that intentional

discrimination is problematic). That is, as long as an academic analysis or explanation based on objective indicators is factual, it does not constitute discrimination, but careful expression is required.

- (e) This is a concrete example of how to respond to racial harassment. Victims of harassment can consult with specialist organizations. It is useful to have a record of the harassment in such cases. Additionally, if you witness harassment, it is expected that you will take measures to reduce the harm to the victim. Not only commenting to the harasser at the scene (see "3. What to do if you encounter racial harassment" (2)5), but also offering to speak to the victim (3(2)4) and supporting the victim's response (3(2)6) is important.

## 5. References regarding discrimination against /harassment of the Ainu people

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