

SURHUL For Equality

This Union Notes

- That people are **discriminated** against based on a number of characteristics
- That **societal change** often **starts at Universities**
- That it is a **legal** requirement for SURHUL to **monitor and promote equality** concerning people with protected characteristics (**Equality Act 2010**)
- That a recent informal effort by students to create a system for formal recognition of Club/Society pro-equality work has failed due to a lack of structural support.
- That **many Clubs and Societies are already making a fantastic effort** at promoting equality in their groups and at their events.

This Union Also Notes

- That there is ample evidence that discrimination is still rife including in its more insidious form known as “**microaggressions**”
 - “many scholars fear that discrimination is not disappearing but rather has become more subtle in nature”⁶
- That microaggressions can be defined as:
 - “**everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward those of us who are part of one or more marginalized groups.** Microaggressions can **invalidate** the [...] reality of those impacted by them, **demean** them [and] communicate that they are **lesser human beings** [.]”¹
- That microaggressions have a negative impact on those affected by them, measurable both **quantitatively**:
 - “racial discrimination was negatively correlated with subjective well-being”²
 - “[There is a statistical] association between hearing “that’s so gay” and [...] the frequency of headaches, and the frequency of stomach problems”⁵
 - “[A] disproportionate number of racial/ethnic minority and immigrant adolescents are less engaged in friendships than their peers”³

- and **qualitatively**:
 - “There was a girl there [...] who was joking around [...] making nicknames for everybody. Just like little subtle things about them[.] And then she named me Tacos... she’s like ha ha cause you’re Mexican. I was like oh yeah...ha ha...like I didn’t want to start any drama [...] so I didn’t say anything.”⁴
 - **“I don’t feel I can be myself on campus because of the attitude of other people.”**⁸
 - “[I]t was clear from the student interviews that there was considerable variation between students in their ability to engage with the social aspects of university life [so] there is a need to pay greater attention to the social [...] aspects of learning in higher education”⁷
 - “I pretend I am straight to people I don’t know very well or people I feel will react badly. I introduce my partner as my ‘friend’ at these times to avoid possible verbal or physical abuse.”⁸
- That **engagement in social life (including clubs and societies) drops** if students experience microaggressions
 - “experiencing and witnessing heterosexist harassment, such as being called homophobic names or overhearing gay jokes, [is] negatively associated with social acceptance and student engagement[.]”⁵
- That places of education are essential and effective in combatting discrimination:
 - “[places of education] play an important role in facilitating social interactions that may not occur within informal friendship networks”³
- That the NUS recommends **Students’ Unions take a direct and front-line approach to tackling discrimination in all its forms**:

“It is vital [to] demonstrate a strong commitment towards equality and diversity and work to celebrate these values through clear and widely publicised codes of conduct, equality and diversity policies, and complaint and reporting procedures. All students should be made aware of their institution’s commitment to challenging and tackling prejudice on campus.”⁸

This Union Believes

- That there is ample evidence for the need to **explicitly promote equality** on campus and in all its activities.
- That **equality is a global concern** that exceeds the boundaries of those full- or part-time officers elected to promote equality and requires the participation of all students involved in SU activities.
- That progress on equality must be **regularly monitored** to ensure adherence to the legal, social, and ethical mandate of promoting equality.
- That work to promote equality by students and student officers must be formally recognised in a way likely to induce increased efforts by all.

This Union Resolves

- To institute a working group made up of sabbatical officers, liberation representatives, and interested students to develop a cohesive plan for involving students and student organisations in pro-equality work and for recognising that involvement.

This Union Mandates

- All sabbatical officers to advertise and organise the working group.
- The working group to commence work in January 2015 and complete it in April 2015.
- The SU to provide staff and facility support to the working group.
- The working group to tackle (list not exhaustive): monitoring of equality, current student experience, and formal recognition of pro-equality work.
- The working group to inform students on progress made at each GM.
- The sabbatical officers to develop a form of recognition for Club / Society equality work for the academic year 14/15 to be highlighted at Colours and Society's Balls.

Proposed: Alexandra Sophia (LGBT+ Officer)

Seconded: Alex Clarke (Postgraduate Students' Officer); Charlotte Cole (SAC Events Rep); Jack Kilker (Orbital Editor & LGBT+ Soc President); Imogen Tyreman (WMG Officer); Harley Ayers (SAC Events Rep); Rachel Ivens (LGBT+ Soc BME Rep); Jamie Ralph (LGBT+ Soc Welfare Rep); Tegan Marlow; Sobaan Shariff (LGBT+ Soc Treasurer) Laura Lewis (LGBT+ Society & FemSoc Committee); Josephine Chick (LGBT+ Officer); Jack Coyler; Cassandra Kosmayer; Julian Farmer

References

- ¹ Levy, LCSW, & Jones (2013). Nothing Small About Microaggression. *Positivelyaware.com*
- ² Villegas-Gold & Yoo (2014). Coping with discrimination among Mexican American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, Vol 61(3)*, 404-413.
- ³ Cherng, Turney, & Kao (2014). Less Socially Engaged? Participation in Friendship and Extracurricular Activities Among Racial/Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Adolescents. *Teachers College Record Volume 116 (3)*.
- ⁴ Harwood, Browne Hunt, & Mendenhall. Racial Microaggressions at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. *Cdms.illinois.edu*
- ⁵ Woodford, Howell, Kulick, & Siverschanz (2013). "That's so Gay": Heterosexual Male Undergraduates and the Perpetuation of Sexual Orientation Microaggressions on Campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 48(416)*.
- ⁶ Basford, Offermann, & Behrend (2014). Do You See What I See? Perceptions of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace. *Psychology of Women Quarterly 2014, 38 (340)*.
- ⁷ Fuller (2008). Disabled students in higher education: Experiences and outcomes. *Teaching and Learning, 46*.
- ⁸ Neave & Holland (2011). NUS Report: No Place for Hate. *nusconnect.org.uk*