**From GSA Principles of Conduct for Members:**

“Members will undertake reasonable efforts to **ensure inclusiveness and will not discriminate against others**, in the course of their work on the basis of race, sex, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, and disability. **Members will not practice or condone harassment in any form in any professional context.”**

**Adapted from “Responding to everyday bigotry” – Southern Poverty Law Center**

<https://www.splcenter.org/20150125/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry#worplace-humor>

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." Your colleague makes a sexist joke, interrupts or talks over women, and comments on their appearance.

**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."**

* "She's just that way," they say. "She'll never change." That becomes an excuse for not speaking up. Do you allow such attitudes to keep you from speaking up?
* Do you allow bigotry to go unfettered within “in-groups”—people of the same race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or religion? What message does that send? How does it relate to your values?

**Tacit acceptance of bigoted remarks from a person in power can create an atmosphere where bias thrives** — just as one powerfully placed comment from that person can curb everyday bigotry in significant ways. Who sets the tone in a given social or professional situation? Is it you? If not, what leverage do you have with that person? If you lack leverage, who has it? And might that person be an ally?

This is not about being “politically correct.” This is about empathy and doing good science.

**What are some options?**

**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.

**Mention** **policies**. You need not file a formal complaint with GSA or AGU to have such a policy be effective; when you invoke such policies when speaking up, the mere mention carries weight.

**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. As the man in the grocery store said, "Your problem is my problem. We're in this together."

**Don't laugh.** Meet a bigoted "joke" with silence, and maybe a raised eyebrow. Use body language to communicate your distaste for bigoted "humor."

**Interrupt the laughter.** "Why does everyone think that's funny?" Tell your co-workers why the "joke" offends you, that it feels demeaning and prejudicial. And don't hesitate to interrupt a "joke" with as many additional "no" messages as needed.

**Speak for yourself.** If you're the target of the behavior, let the person know if you feel comfortable doing so.

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

**Seize the moment.**  In the meeting, an observer might say, "What do you mean by that? What are you saying about Mexicans?"

**Address the issue privately.** Take the coworker aside and gently explain what you find offensive: "You know, you're giving Democrats a bad name when you make sweeping generalizations about Republicans."

**Check in with the a leader.** If you are uncomfortable dealing with someone directly, consider speaking with the person in charge.

**Address the speaker.** A simple comment — "I'm sorry; what's so funny?" — can jar someone from their rudeness. Or be more exact: "I'm sorry. I'm not sure I know what you mean by 'white trash.' Could you explain that term?" When faced with crafting an answer, the speaker may begin to understand the inappropriateness of the remark.

**Appeal to the “host” in the group.** Hosts (session conveners, senior person in a dinner group, etc.) have brought people together and often are the closest to each of the people in a group. Ask the host to rein in offensive "jokes" and culturally biased statements. You can bring it up to the host later in private, and the host could talk to others in the group.

**Go up the ladder.** If behavior persists, take your complaints up the management ladder. E.g., ask GSA leadership for guidance.

**Band together.** Like-minded colleagues also may form an alliance and then ask the colleague to change his or her tone or behavior.

**Tie tolerance to the bottom line.** Remind your colleagues that when people feel valued and respected, a healthy and productive work environment emerges. "Is 'faggot' really a word we should be throwing around? We don't know who's gay and who's straight, who has gay relatives and who doesn't. I think that comment could really upset some people — and distract them from their work."

**What can I do about my own bias?**

**Take responsibility.** If you do stumble, don't let someone else's graciousness take you off the hook. Make amends as quickly and sincerely as possible: "What an insensitive thing for me to say. I'm sorry."

**Apologize immediately.** Save yourself the guilt by apologizing in the moment: "I don't know what I was thinking. I could make some excuses, but none would make up for telling such a sexist, tasteless 'joke.' I apologize and hope I haven't ruined this wonderful dinner."

**Write a letter.** Candor can be difficult to muster in such moments. If words don't come at the gathering, try handwritten notes to the host and other guests afterward: "I went home from the dinner party feeling ashamed and embarrassed, too embarrassed even to say anything to anyone. I'm sorry for the sexist, tasteless and totally inappropriate 'joke' I told. Please accept my humble, and belated, apologies."

**Offer to make amends.** "Is there is anything I can or should do to make this up to you? Our relationship is important to me."

**Learn the lesson.** Don't do it again, even if you're back with a crowd that finds such "jokes" humorous. Choose jokes that are funny without being sexist, racist or otherwise offensive.

**Be open to feedback.** Ask clarifying questions, if need be. "Please help me understand. How have I offended you?" Be gracious, and consider the moment a learning opportunity. Thank the person for pointing it out, and ask for continued feedback.

**Focus on the work relationship.** Strive to reconnect and ensure that the moment doesn't sidetrack your ongoing ability to work together. "I know this has been awkward for both of us. Is there anything I should do, or that we should do, as a next step? I really want us to keep working well together."

**Change your behavior.** Don't wait for someone to be offended by what you say. Listen closely to the phrases and terms you use; are some of them "acceptable" only because the targeted group is not present? Bigotry is bigotry no matter who hears it; strive to model respect and tolerance wherever you are.