



How To Deal With False Allegations Of Racism

Introduction

Essentialist ideas such as "all white people are inherently racist" have meant that many white people approach complex race-related conversations with extreme caution (if at all) for fear of being labelled "racist." This fear is highly problematic not just because it does little to improve race relations and restore racial harmony, but also because it frequently thwarts the candid, heartfelt dialogue required for racial equity progression.

The purpose of this mini guide is to provide tips on how to deal with false claims of racism. Whilst any member of any racial group can be a victim of racial prejudice, abuse or discrimination, it is more common that members of the white racial group are accused of racism - whether falsely or genuinely. It is also important to note that racial allegations are not just limited to individuals but can also extend to colleges, companies, institutions and even laws and regulations.

This guide is not intended to minimise true incidents of racism, nor is it a denial that racism does negatively impact marginalised groups. Even so, racism cannot and should not be used as a weapon to tarnish the characters of individuals or groups.

FIRST AND FOREMOST....

Do Not Panic And Do Not Hate

False accusations of any kind, including being falsely labelled a racist, can be emotionally draining and overwhelming. However, it's critical that if you find yourself in this unpleasant situation, you don't panic and become overly emotional. Do not allow negative emotions like hate and anger to enter your heart and cause you to react to your accuser or the group to which they belong from a place of hate and fear. It is never a good idea.

People who falsely accuse others are typically very emotional, at least at the time. The danger of being emotional when making statements and claims is that they will lack objectivity. This means that the majority of their accusations will be based on how they feel rather than facts, and this is where you as an accused person have an advantage. Stay objective and stick to the facts.

Dealing with false racist accusations does not have a one-size-fits-all approach, and certainly there can be no simplistic solution to the situation. This guide will suggest two broad approaches: the hard approach and the soft approach.

The hard approach will be necessary if you are certain that the accusation is false and that it was made maliciously to cancel you, to virtue signal at your expense, to race bait, or to take advantage of the situation for personal gain.

The soft approach is recommended if you acted with good intentions but are unsure whether or not your behavior, comment or attitude was racist or could be reasonably interpreted as racist.

So let us first explore tips using the “hard approach”

1. Do Not Apologize Or Try To Defend Yourself

Admit no guilt if you are confident that neither your intentions nor your actions were racist.

Do not apologise or attempt to defend or justify yourself. Do not try to play all your virtuous cards, such as claiming to have a large number of non-white friends.

Even if the accusations have no basis, there is usually a reason you were labelled a racist, such as to elicit a defensive response from you or to make you feel guilty for something you did not do. It might be best to ignore the accusation and walk away.

Remember, we are living in unprecedented times. Times of cancel culture and mob justice. People no longer want an apology, so offering one can prove futile.

2. Challenge Your Accuser

Do not be afraid to engage in racially charged conversations; instead, respond calmly and challenge your accuser to prove their claims. Most false accusers would expect you to cower. Do not take the bait. Be ready and confident with your response.

Furthermore, demonstrating that you are unafraid of their accusation will make them reconsider falsely accusing you or anyone else of racism. If your accuser persists after this step, then proceed to step 3.

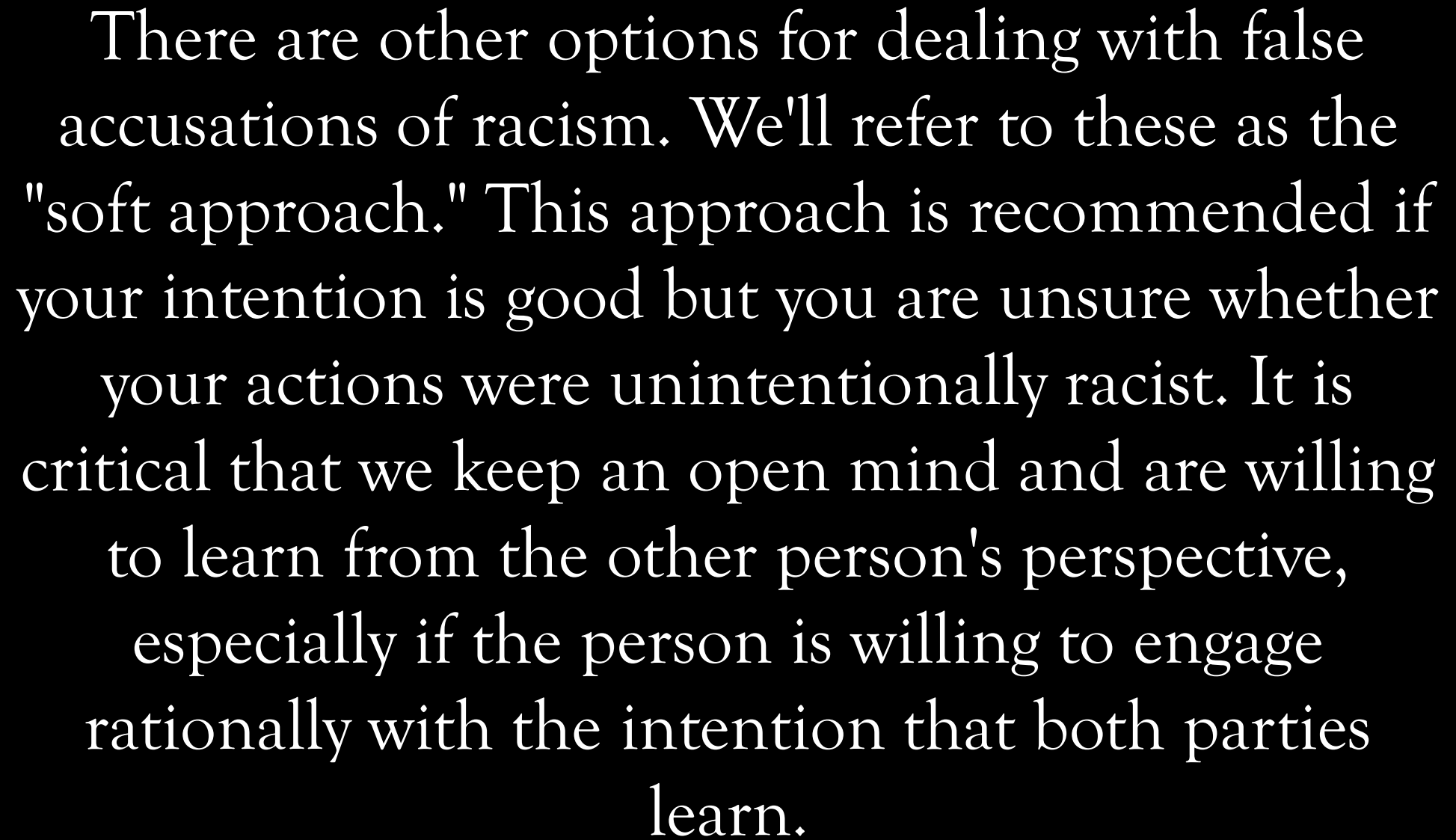
3. Time to talk legalities.

This could be necessary for a reality check and to see if the accuser will apologise and withdraw the accusation. Defamation is a legal action that seeks redress for false statements that cause reputational harm. By reminding your accuser that falsely accusing you of racism is a form of defamation that could harm your reputation, you are also giving the person the opportunity to retract their comment if it was made carelessly.

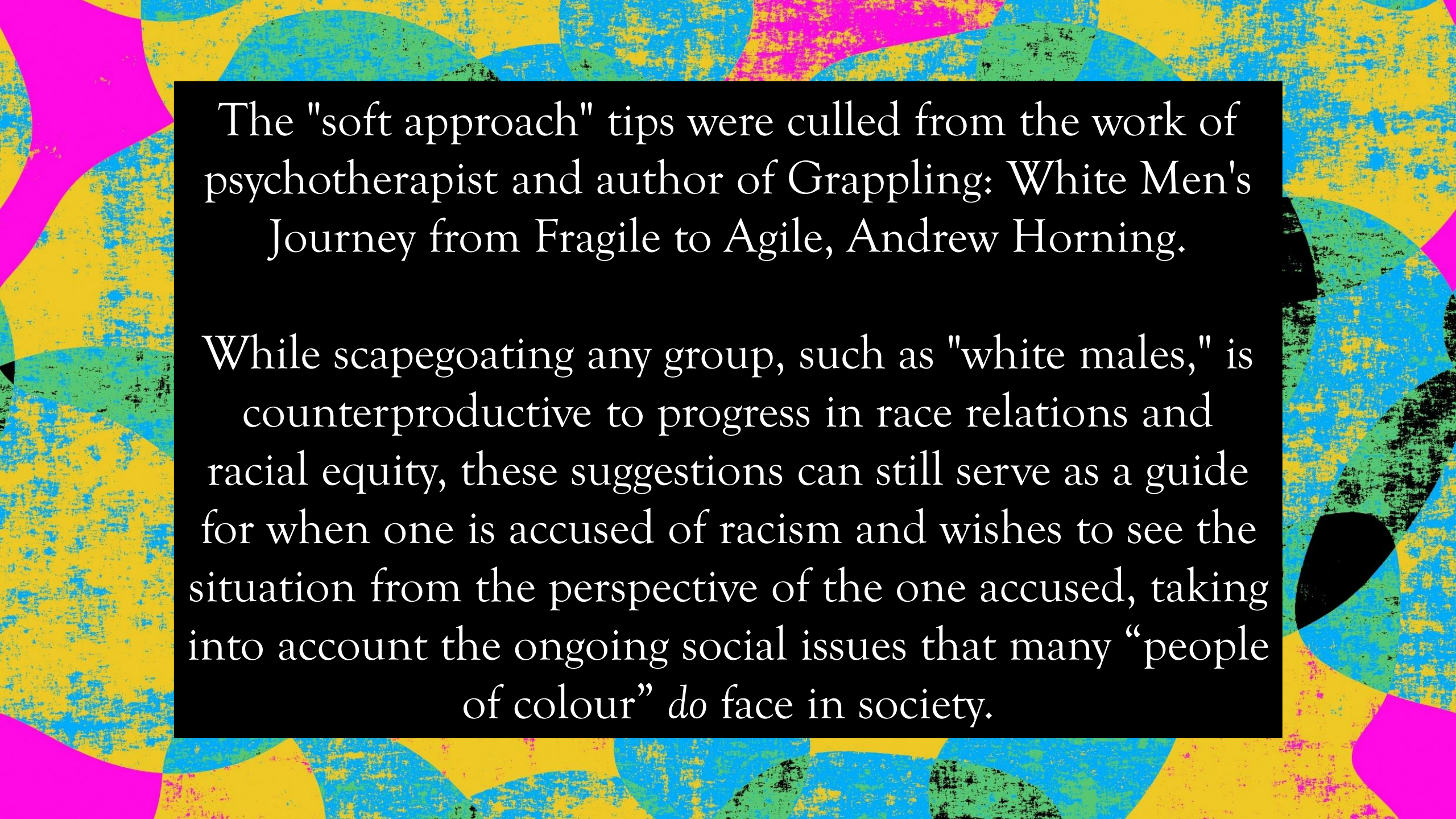
If the accuser refuses to withdraw the accusation, you are within your rights to take legal action.

4. Take Further Action.

A false accusation may be considered slander or libel depending on how it is made. Slander occurs when false information about you is written or published. Libel occurs when someone makes false accusations in public. Libel and slander are both considered defamation if they are made maliciously with the intent to harm your reputation. Defamation is a crime, and anyone wrongfully accused has the right to clear their name. In fact, you may be able to file a lawsuit against the person who has harmed your reputation. It is also critical that you gather evidence at this point in case you decide to seek legal redress. Text messages, audio recordings, video recordings, publications, and other media will be useful in this case.



There are other options for dealing with false accusations of racism. We'll refer to these as the "soft approach." This approach is recommended if your intention is good but you are unsure whether your actions were unintentionally racist. It is critical that we keep an open mind and are willing to learn from the other person's perspective, especially if the person is willing to engage rationally with the intention that both parties learn.



The "soft approach" tips were culled from the work of psychotherapist and author of *Grappling: White Men's Journey from Fragile to Agile*, Andrew Horning.

While scapegoating any group, such as "white males," is counterproductive to progress in race relations and racial equity, these suggestions can still serve as a guide for when one is accused of racism and wishes to see the situation from the perspective of the one accused, taking into account the ongoing social issues that many "people of colour" *do* face in society.

1. Answer The Call

Recognize that you have been called out or called in to respond to a racist comment or action. Instead of ignoring it, don't be afraid to respond. The simple truth is that it can be tempting to simply bury your head in the sand, pretend you didn't hear the comment, or otherwise choose denial over acknowledgment. That call can take many forms, including feedback from a colleague, a social media post, or even a nagging question that won't go away. We are not perfect, and we all make mistakes; therefore, mistakes should be viewed as opportunities to learn.

2. “Engage In The Struggle”

Once you've answered the call, resist the urge to check out or become defensive, and instead lean in and engage with curiosity. "Being engaged means being willing to be uncomfortable, to go deeper into uncertainty, and to let go of what we thought was true," Horning explains. "At this stage, we learn more about ourselves and the world around us, but we can't quite make sense of it." There is a distinct difference between listening and waiting to speak, and for the time being, choose listening. Try to listen to understand rather than to respond. Your response will follow, but for now, concentrate on better understanding the other person.

Thank them not for "educating" you, but for taking the time to explain.

3. Love The Learning

The key to reaching a common understanding is frequently shifting your perspective so that you can better understand the impact from the other person's point of view. Assume that the only black female engineer on the team informs you that she was offended by your remarks following her presentation to the team. Given that your comments were completely complimentary, you'd be surprised and perplexed. However, given her academic credentials, her explanation that hearing you exclaim, "Wow, you're really articulate," in front of the entire team was perplexing and offensive.

Focusing on the impact (how the words were received), you'll be able to see how the comment (and tone) suggested that you hadn't expected her to be articulate, even though that would have been a reasonable expectation for others. If you lean into this discussion, you will undoubtedly learn more about how our words and actions can sometimes unwittingly reflect deeply embedded racial biases.

Summary

Racism is far from over, and it continues to be a thorn in humanity's side. Stop Hate UK, an anti-hate and anti-discrimination organisation, reports that racially motivated hate crimes are the most frequently reported form of hate crime in the United Kingdom, with over 80,000 racially motivated crimes reported in 2020/2021.

Such statistics demonstrate that racism has not been eliminated. Numerous individuals' negative encounters with racism demonstrate that it has not been eliminated.

Nonetheless, just as we demand zero tolerance for actual instances of racism, the same standard **must** be applied to blatantly false allegations made to smear an individual, a group, or an institution.

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