

SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION

Ebony is a newer employee to your team. During meetings, sometimes she has her camera on and sometimes she has it off (which is a team norm). When it is on, Ebony usually wear her hair “natural” (very tight curls). About two months after her start date, Ebony appears on a zoom meeting with a different hairstyle – she now has it “blown out” (straight). Several people, while waiting for the meeting to begin, say out loud or write in the chat box “wow! I like your hair!” One team member writes in the chat “it looks better like that – you should keep it straight.” Ebony does not respond to that particular comment. After this meeting, you notice that Ebony has been keeping her camera off more often than before.

You are on an interview panel for the second round between the top two candidates. This position will be part of your agency’s executive leadership team. Your agency director/leader has been vocal about the desire to see more employees of color in leadership, as currently there are very few on the team (none of them are Black). One of the top two candidates is a Black man named Nigel. You learn during the interview that he was raised in Africa, where he received his college degree and started his career. He has been in Washington for over ten years and has both public and private sector experience doing similar work to this position. During the post-interview debrief session, a fellow panelist calls into question his educational background. “Their systems are so different over there, it’s hard to know whether his qualifications match what we are looking for,” someone says. They recommend the other candidate be the #1 choice when it is time for references to be checked.

You work on a team where feedback is very much encouraged, as the culture of continuous improvement norms is expected in the work. Your team has only one person of color – a Black woman named Aeisha. Aeisha gives feedback less often than the rest of the team, yet her suggestions seem to never result in a change in behavior, as though she never said anything at all. Several months pass, and Aeisha asks during a team meeting why none of her feedback seem applicable for change management decisions. Later in the day, a coworker messages you, wanting to talk about Aeisha’s comments during the meeting. “That was a little intense, wasn’t it?” they say. “Who knew she could be so militant?”

You work in a unit of ten people – seven women and three men. One of them, Austin, is the only person of color in the unit. Austin is generally a quiet person, but he will socialize at unit functions like birthday lunches and holiday events. One day, a newer member of your unit, Jennifer, starts talking to you about Austin. She asks about your experiences with him since you've been there. During your brief conversation, Jennifer tells you that Austin intimidates her. "I don't know, he seems kinda scary to me," Jennifer says.
