



More Than Words Campaign FAQs:

1. What is the mission statement of the campaign?

The More Than Words: Inclusive Language Campaign was created to raise awareness about the importance of using inclusive language by empowering individuals to take ownership of the words they choose to use and encourage people to examine their use of words that they know are problematic and words they feel may be just fine.

The MTW Campaign serves the Macalester mission by helping prepare its community members for productive engagement with an increasingly connected and diverse global society where cross-cultural expertise is more crucial than ever before. Each MTW poster helps to highlight such things as (a) common cross-cultural communication issues, (b) non-violent communication methods and skills, and (c) the importance and use of reflexive practices and dialogue.

2. What does the More Than Words Campaign hope to accomplish?

This campaign strives not to box people into false binaries where use of oppressive language = you're a bad person, but rather reveal how all of our interactions, both conscious and unconscious, have meaning and impact. MTW was formed to educate and create conversations around language and inclusion on campus that can be difficult to broach.

These materials were not created to be an absolute authority on what is permissible and what is oppressive language, but rather as a tool to begin and sustain conversations about what creating inclusive environments through language could look like. The MTW motto is "Whether or not we understand the power of our words, we still use them.... so what kind of impact do you want to make?"

3. Why is this campaign important?

The words we use possess meaning and symbols, invoking and reinforcing messages. This campaign was started to help people to think about how their seemingly meaningless daily interactions, behavioral patterns, and language are tied into pervasive sociocultural beliefs, histories, and systems.

Since we are socialized to perpetuate current cultural practices, challenging them and constructing new ones require challenging our perspectives on how our language impacts others as well as our own sense of self (i.e. our sense of what is or is not inclusive, moral, socially acceptable/desirable). If we want Macalester to be an inclusive and vibrant



multicultural environment, we must examine how we interact with each other through our daily language.

4. When did the campaign start?

The original concept of the MTW Campaign was conceived by Demetrius Colvin and Jacqueline Mac when they were both graduate students at the University of Maryland in 2010. Demetrius and Jacqueline chose to tackle the problem of oppressive language and how our daily interpersonal interactions can be a force for social change for a class project. The project idea was inspired by Sheryl Kleinman's 2002 article *Why Sexist Language Matters* which made them reflect upon how the words we use possess meaning and symbols, invoking and reinforcing messages.

Like Kleiman, they also felt that language did not exist in a vacuum; instead, language is spoken, written, and heard in a social context that adds additional meaning to the language. Take, for example, when using the word "girl" or "girls" to refer to women. Viewed within the context of heteropatriarchy and sexism, the problem with using "girls" to refer to women becomes visible as an implicit suggestion that women are not yet adults and are incapable of making their own decisions.

After Demetrius and Jacqueline graduated, the Office of Multicultural Involvement and Community Advocacy, STAMP Student Union, and the Department of Residential Life collaborated to adapt some of the concepts of the program proposal into a campaign they call the Inclusive Language Campaign which is active today. In the Fall of 2012, Demetrius Colvin adapted the MTW Campaign to the Macalester community by creating the MTW Committee which oversees the direction of the campaign. Faculty and staff serve on the committee and discuss what are diversity education priorities for the Macalester campus each year that the MTW Campaign could possibly take on.

5. What is inclusive language?

In order to live out our personal ideals for inclusivity and multiculturalism, we must be mindful of the social realities that we would like to create and not just what is familiar or comfortable. When assessing whether or not to continue in a cultural practice (e.g. saying a particular word or phrase, watching a certain TV show, listening to a musical artist, etc.), it is important to keep in mind that there is a difference between intent and impact and multiple conflicting "truths" can exist at the same time.

Our personal intent (or the intent of a piece of art, music, or TV show) may not be to disenfranchise or demean anyone, but the surrounding social environment and the power



relations, history, and politics that undergird them can cause our actions to reinforce a stereotypical and derogatory impact upon marginalized populations.

In order to make the Macalester community inclusive, both in word as well as in deed, we must explore the various impacts of our behaviors and the cultural practices that we engage in rather than try to solely defend ourselves or others by focusing only upon intentions.

Transforming how we relate to and understand each other through inclusive language necessitates that we are vulnerable with our feelings of uncertainty and failure when it comes to how we have been socialized in an oppressive society. Challenging oppressive language (either our own or other's) is often times hard because it can be difficult to acknowledge and admit what we have unwittingly learned from our surrounding social environment. Critical self-awareness allows us to know when we have been wronged or have negatively impacted others. If progress is to occur with creating a more inclusive Macalester community, we must become comfortable with having these conversations about how we impact each other with our language, how our collective histories have impacted us, and the cultural assumptions we consciously want to extol and unlearn.

6. Can you explain the concepts of the posters?

Each year or series of the MTW posters focuses on a different diversity education priority that the MTW Committee identifies. Here is an explanation of the priorities behind each series:

- 1st Series (That's so... Ghetto / Gay / Lame / Retarded / Crazy, Don't be a Girl, Gyped, Indian-Giver, Hebe-Jebes, Illegal Alien)
 - The first series focused on establishing the concept that a lot of everyday language and colloquialisms have oppressive roots and continue to have negative impacts on people today. Each poster explained the oppressive social context of a phrase and gave alternate words to use that may more accurately convey someone's meaning.

- 2nd Series (Hurt People Can Hurt People, If You Step on Someone's Foot, See No Harm / Hear No Harm, What's Your Impact, What Are PGPs)
 - This series of posters was created after the MTW Committee conducted a campus wide survey about the effectiveness of the campaign. While most respondents understood and appreciated the goals of the campaign, a large number of students had a strong reaction to the idea of being censored or told what to say.
 - To clarify the intention and change the impact of the campaign, the MTW Committee decided to focus upon explaining the undergirding assumptions



and values of the campaign such as cross-cultural and non-violent communication skills. All of the posters have a black and white motif to allude to how people often think of this topic in binary and absolutist terms. These posters were made to encourage people to deal within grey and ambiguous areas. Instead of focusing on ideologies, these posters encourage people to think about relationships and experiences.

- 3rd Series (All Gender Restrooms, Stereotypes, Reduction / Essentialization / Naturalization, Inclusive Language vs. Political Correctness vs. Censorship)
 - This series continues off of the work of the series before it by delving deeper into cross-cultural communication and intergroup dialogue concepts. This set of posters also solidifies the trend the MTW Committee started with the last series of identifying specific topics or issues that have been brought up in the Macalester community (such as trans inclusion or political correctness) and addressing them publicly within the campaign.

- 4th Series (Dialogue is a Conversation, Microaggressions, Racist Microaggressions, Community Guidelines, Dialogue Facts)
 - This series focuses on the importance, use, and practice of dialogue. With national and local political tensions continuing to rise because of violent social tensions within America and abroad, the MTW Committee identified the need for students to focus on building dialogue skills to have much needed conversations about the social issues that are impacting them.

7. How does one get involved in it?

Even though it may seem like the MTW Campaign is just a static poster campaign, the intention behind the campaign has always been to help spark and support conversations across difference on campus. So the concepts and learning objectives of each series of posters in woven into conversations that take place during Orientation, diversity workshops all year long, special community conversations hosted each semester by members of the MTW Committee, as well as many programs that come out of the Division of Student Affairs.

So if you want to get involved, start a conversation based on one of the posters. Use a link to one of the MTW posters to comment on a conversation on Facebook. Refer to one of the concepts on a MTW poster during an interpersonal conflict. Have a courageous conversation. That's how you become a part of the campaign.