

## A Moment of Learning

Over the course of quarantine, I've spent an unhealthy amount of time on TikTok. For those of you familiar with the social media platform, you know it can be very weird sometimes; my for you page is often filled with frogs, beans, and other weird things. For a while, it also included videos about the brand of syrup I happen to use.

Two days before the brand name change was announced, on my personal twitter account, I tweeted about this weird occurrence. However, in my ignorance I used the brand name of the syrup, unaware it was a term with racist and sexist connotations.

After tweeting about it, I went to google the syrup, and that's when I found out the words I used were horribly demeaning.

Fourteen minutes after my first tweet, I deleted it saying:

*in my ignorance, I was unaware that the brand name of syrup I use had racial connotations to it, and will be deleting my tweets  
just another reminder of the constant need to educate myself*

It was an unintentional mistake, but I had to own up to my actions.

Again, I want to apologize for the hurt that I caused by my unintended use of a racist and sexist term. It was never my intent, and I am deeply sorry.

As I said in a longer response I posted to my account, I was truly unaware of the meaning of the derogatory term, but my own ignorance is not a valid excuse. There is never a valid excuse for racist and sexist language. To be honest, I've spent the past few days struggling with this. How blindly I was able to use this language that is hurtful to so many people.

Acknowledging the impact of my action, I've also recognized this moment as an opportunity to educate myself, to grow as a person, and become a better ally to the Black community.

As someone who is not Black, I can never know what lived experiences they have. I cannot fully understand the struggles they face. I benefit from being a light-skinned person. It is because of this privilege that I have the ability to remain unaware and uninformed on issues. This is not okay.



Instances like these are a wake-up call. It is a reminder of the need of commitment to doing better, and I hope that others can learn from my mistake what I am learning as well: we all have to educate ourselves. We have to call out injustice when we see it. We have to do better.

It means being open to listening, to reflecting on our own implicit biases, and it means learning how to call out ourselves, so that others aren't burdened with it.

This instance in particular has reminded me of the need to take criticism with grace. This has been an experience that, although embarrassing, has reminded me that it is incumbent on me to continually educate myself. Only then can I channel that energy into becoming a better person.

Being a good ally means partaking in difficult conversations, listening to and amplifying the voices of those who have historically been silenced, and actively working towards a world of justice and peace. Reflecting on our own implicit biases, we have to consider how we ourselves have benefited from unjust structures.

I'd like to think that I've spent my time working on policy at our school to better the student experience at Notre Dame for every person. I know that at times, I have failed. This time is certainly one of them.

In these times, it is easy to focus on the brokenness in our world. But, I've been inspired by how millions of people have come together to stand up for human dignity. If we all do our part, then we will meet better days ahead. But the first steps begin with ourselves. I am taking those first steps now, and I hope to continue to be active in the fight for justice.

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