

THE LANGUAGE OF MEMES

Identifiable aspects defined and used through memes: "Karen"

"Can I Speak to the Manager?"

ME: *spells the name with a Y instead of an E*

KAREN:



The 'Can I speak to the manager' meme originates from multiple videos of women in shops and restaurants who complain and rudely ask for the manager. The meme has since evolved into more than just a joke. When these women don't get their way, they want to speak to someone at a higher level, in a demanding tone, to get what they want.

The Haircut

The original Karen cut is an inverted bob with side-swept bangs cut at an angle. It's also typically blonde or has chunky highlights with a spiky cut at the back along with the haircut.



Recurring Traits

A Karen's defining characteristics are...

- a self-centered approach to interacting with others
- a willingness/desire to complain
- a sense of entitlement
- demanding behavior
- judgemental
- the "haircut"
- middle-aged
- white women

The "can I speak to the manager" starter pack



"Karen"

According to many popular memes, Karen is a middle-aged white woman with an asymmetrical bob asking to speak to the manager, who happens to be as entitled as she is ignorant.



Definitions

Karen

- Middle-aged woman, typically blonde, makes solutions to others' problems an inconvenience to her although she isn't even remotely affected.
- a pejorative term used as slang for a white woman perceived as entitled or demanding beyond the scope of what is normal. The term is often portrayed in memes depicting white women who use their white privilege to demand their own way.

**Karen: Bring your manager!
The worker: NO!**



Instances of "adaptability"

- In 2020, the term was broadly applied to a swath of white women who had been filmed harassing people of color, including dialing the emergency services on them for no criminal reason.
 - Central Park Karen is the white cop-caller nickname of Amy Cooper, who was recorded calling the police on an African American birder in Central Park in New York City after being asked by him to leash her dog in the park.

The Big Picture

"Karen" is a perfect example of the complete ignorance some women have regarding their privilege. Through the years "Karen" has evolved into a figure known for her hypocrisy, rudeness toward working-class staff, and anti-science beliefs.

Its popular use within memes has ultimately defined "Karen" through visual components (white women, haircut) and verbal/text components (entitlement, rude behavior). Showing the power memes have in defining and creating ideas and personas, that are largely communicated to and understood by society, especially as they have been adapted to real-life events and occurrences.



References

Greenspan, R. E. (n.d.). How the name "Karen" became a stand-in for problematic white women and a hugely popular meme. Insider. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.insider.com/karen-meme-origin-the-history-of-calling-women-karen-white-2020-5>

Romano, A. (2020, February 5). Karen: The anti-vaxxer soccer mom with speak-to-the-manager hair, explained. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/2020/2/5/21079162/karen-name-insult-meme-manager>

Your name is karen	
Your not a karen	
Someone edits "I want to speak with the manager" haircut on you	