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Stereotypes and Discrimination

Weekly Theme: Have you ever been discriminated against?

Stereotypes and discrimination have happened throughout history. Events such as the Feminist Movement and Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement have proved it. Africans, Mexicans, Asians, and Native Americans have been targets of racism and stereotypes. Even different groups of European Americans have discriminated against one another. It's the same with the subgroups in minorities. Racism is only one type of discrimination.

Today, police officers still tend to single out and cite women, minorities, and students. Women have to work twice as hard to even be half as recognized as men, and still receive lower salaries. Tools, equipments, and entertainment are often geared towards European males and the younger population. In school, students are bullied, teased, and rejected for their gender, race, grades, social class, hobbies, and fashion.

Many people have not learned to accept harmless differences. Sometimes, I feel that discrimination and stereotypes are getting worse. Almost everywhere I go, I see cliques, proving how narrow-minded people are. Even worse, peer pressure and negative influences often spread in cliques, and the negative influences quickly cause more stereotypes and discrimination. Today, many people know that racism and sexism will lead to trouble, so they find other aspects to discriminate against, such as age, abilities, social class, other physical and mental traits.

People complain about characteristics of certain groups, but when members of those groups do not follow the stereotypes, they are considered "weird," "crazy," or "bad." For example, before and during

the Civil Rights Movement, people labeled “negros” or “niggers” as criminals or stupid people, but “negros” who did not commit crimes were called “bad negros.”

In high school, teachers wished students to behave better and not do the stereotypical adolescent things. However, some of my teachers contradicted themselves by saying, “You should be at the age where you...” because I didn’t fit the teenage stereotype, such as thinking about dates, being excited to grow up, enjoying loud noise and music, belonging to cliques, or liking R-rated movies. They had become so stereotypical that they seemed to think those who didn’t follow the negative stereotypes were weird or crazy.

They even joined the students in overusing the words, “childish” and “immature.” Actually, almost everyone uses those two very stereotypical and discriminative words, which should be made illegal, and better yet, nonexistent. Nobody and nothing says that cute objects and activities are for kids only, or that adults need to be experts at vocabulary, interested in nasty and improper contents and activities, or deceiving and getting away with misbehaviors. I have found that usually the so-called “immature” people are really the mature people while the so-called “mature” people are really immature. Besides, we all have our strengths and weaknesses, so how do we actually define “mature”? We should substitute “immature” with “You need to improve at...”

Though many people look for maturity, they disrespect elderlies, contradicting themselves once again. They see older adults as “weak” and “helpless,” unaware that they will belong in that category in the future. Many people only look at the surface, and do not realize that the elderly are wise and able to teach us many things.

Why can’t people look deeper than the surface, at the interior, which is more important? Who cares about gender, race, creed, abilities, muscles, beauty, age, or social class? These are all harmless. Personality should be the priority. We should be worrying about if someone is good or bad. I think one day we should all wear the same outfits, cut our hair the same lengths, make our hair and skin the same

colors, and have voice changes. For height and width, we could have smaller people use stuffing and blocks. Those with glasses should all wear colorless contacts. The goal would be to make everyone look alike. All the achievements and money should be taken away as well, so personality would be the only way to tell people apart. Then when everyone sees how boring life is without the harmless differences, they would learn to accept them and stop stereotyping and discriminating.

Actually, I think internet communication has taken care of that. We usually do not see or hear who we are communicating with, so we can only identify people by screen names and personalities, and screen names often reflect the users' personalities. However stereotypes, discriminations, and cliques even happen on the internet, mostly messageboards. I learned that after being unfairly treated at *TheOneRing.Com* (TORC).

Quite a few TORC members disrespected my opinions, interests, preferences, and writing style. I even read attacks on members just because of disagreement. As time passed, things got worse. Many members were going to The Gathering of the Fellowship in Toronto held in December, 2003. They became so obsessed with the preparations and event that they seemed to reject those who could not go. Even those who couldn't go were being very cliquey. There were some Europeans and expert roleplayers who ignored and excluded those not like them. Even the mods were biased and cliquey.

I guess there were screen names people didn't like, or portrayed backgrounds and personalities that were unfavorable to them. Maybe as people became more acquainted, they shared their different backgrounds, interests, and opinions that caused discrimination and stereotypes. Writing style could be another cause of discrimination. Once again, they are probably thinking that those who think or write differently than the majority are "crazy" or "weird." Well, everyone is "weird," because we are all different, "weird" in different ways.

Stereotyping and discriminating are just indirect ways to dictate and violate freedom. They should be considered crimes, with punishments issued, especially in democratic countries.