Addressing Discrimination

Discrimination and prejudice can come in many forms but can be vastly different in their own ways. Discrimination is the outward expression of negative feelings or insight towards a group while prejudice is the inward negative feelings towards a group. Discrimination can be easily seen and identified while prejudice can be hidden and harder to spot. While discrimination is often easier to identify than prejudice, discrimination can also be a hidden action that is common in societies where a certain group suffers from the negative consequences with no ability to make a change because of social formalities. As humans, everyone has their own set of prejudices adopted by the societies and culture that individuals grew up in. Having prejudice is not an ideal principle or ideology for humans to have, but it does not necessarily make all humans bad. It can be natural to have prejudice, prejudice becomes intolerable when it is turned into outward action like discrimination and hate.

The negative consequences of discrimination can be very harmful to groups of people all over the world. Through social media and the internet, discrimination in one part of the world against a group of people not only effects the people that the discrimination is being acted upon but also people who identify with that group all around the world. This can happen through the acceptance of discrimination and practices due to the examples people see in other countries, states, and areas. In my opinion, the worst consequence of discrimination is the emotional and mental impact that it has on a group of people. When an individual or group is discriminated against, they are left with a feeling of helplessness and seclusion, like they do not belong where they are. This creates separation within societies that harbor diverse groups of people. In the end, discrimination between groups breeds more discrimination and hatred.

The negative consequences of prejudice can be just as severe as discrimination and is possibly the source of it. Prejudice can be formed in individuals in their early years from their society and environment. An example of this can be the prejudice that a family has towards a certain group of people that is passed on to children in every new generation. Just like the problem with a single story learned earlier in the course, a single story that creates prejudice can alter the way individuals think about a group of people and can lead to action upon the prejudice which is discrimination.

An example of prejudice and discrimination towards older individuals that I observed in my environment was concerning my grandfather. My grandfather is a 62-year-old foreigner that still work as a property manager. I often tag along with him when he needs to fix appliances or other various things in these properties because I am able to lift and manage things that his body cannot support any more. This past weekend, I went with him to fix a hot water heater at a property that had Hispanic tenants. My grandfather is oblivious to racial terms or stereotypical jokes, but I was able to understand that the tenants were referring to my grandfather as “chino” which is translated to Chinese man. The racial prejudice and discrimination that individuals playfully or non-playfully refer to each other as is emotionally impactful which causes the victims, like my grandfather, to feel secluded from the community that they support and live with. Changes that society and my environment can make to overcome this type of racial discrimination are to understand that even though our cultures and backgrounds are different, we should embrace the beauty of each culture and live cohesively in a melting pot of them. This can be done by informing each other that racism has no place in today’s world and that each human, regardless of their background or race, is equal and deserving of respect. In the society we currently live in, it seems like racism and discrimination based on skin color plays a bigger role in our lives more than ever. By respecting each other’s backgrounds and race’s, our melting pot of a community can thrive as a mix of cultures.

Another example of discrimination that I have observed in my environment this week was politically driven. In a conversation with a younger friend group with the same political bias towards left leaning politics, the topic of old republican white men was brought up. In this discussion prejudice beliefs towards republicans were expressed and agreed upon by every group member, specifically that older individuals tend to be republican but do not know anything about the needs of younger individuals. This quickly escalated into a hate seminar on republicans and one of the group members mentioned the fact that he cut ties with certain people that we know just because they are “old republican white men”. The fact is that this group member made an outward expression and action of discrimination towards certain individuals in their life because of the group that they associate with and not necessarily their character. The negative consequence of discriminatory actions like this is a fragmented country with no common ground. Younger individuals believe that all republicans are older uneducated people while older individuals believe that all democrats are younger miseducated people. This would make it hard for the vastly different age demographics of Americans to live cohesively together and thrive as a community that can still disagree but love each other. Steps to change the attitudes or behaviors of individuals that harbor this type of prejudice and discrimination is to discourage and deject behavior that creates resentment upon different political groups and ages. Reminding individuals of the ability to disagree while still respecting each other will create a cohesive country that is united under the same foundations where progress will be refocused, and political discrimination between age groups will be reduced.

A final example of prejudice that I recently experienced in my environment due to ageism was the stereotyping of first-year college students. This is an opposite perspective on ageism where ageism is taking place from older individuals onto younger individuals. A friend of mine needed to print papers in our college’s computer lab but was hesitant to do so because of the first-year lab that was taking place in it. He was not hesitant because there was an active lab running, but because of the fact that he did not want to be around first-year students or younger individuals. This made me think about the prejudice that older upper-class students have against younger students in every level of academia or even work. I categorize this experience as an example of prejudice and not discrimination because my friend did end up going to print off his papers in the lab without any action to seclude or enact hatred on the first-year students, but he did have inward feelings towards a group of people. This is a prejudice that I would like to change because of the feeling of being on the other end of it. As a freshman in college, I hated the feeling of knowing that older upper-class students had prejudice towards me just because of my age. Despite this feeling, I somehow would grow to have the same prejudice when I became an upper-class student without any regard to how it made me feel when I was on the short end of the stick. I think the solution to this problem would be to discourage the mindset of superiority in older students and upper-class students when it is vocalized by individuals around us. For example, instead of remaining silent or laughing when my friend expressed his prejudice towards first-year students, I could have discouraged his mindset and steered him away from this type of thinking. The positive impact of making these types of changes in my environment would be a more cohesive group of students with older upper-class students acting as shepherds to facilitate the growth of younger students which would lead to exponential development of the next generation.

With all the examples of discrimination and prejudice that I explained, the hardest thing to do was to produce a solution to the problem. There are not any laws, regulations, or rules that humans can establish in a society to prevent discrimination; the only solution is to not be a by standard to it. When individuals see discrimination or prejudice upon older people and young, it is their responsibility to act by rejecting malicious thought and speaking up to support equality in and around groups.