Pre-Lecture Reading & Notes

What is the danger of a single story from Adichie's point of view?

How have you been affected by someone having a single story or narrative about who you are?

What is Xu gesturing to about stereotypes?

How does Xu use humor to address Asian stereotypes?

What problem is Rosen addressing about womens' sports?

What have you seen in media, films, books, literature, etc. that proves or disproves Rosen's points?

How can we make connections between the 3 talks about why we cannot fall into the danger of a single story?

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story

→ early reader: grew up reading American and English books (lived in Nigeria).
  · caused her early writing to be Eurocentric.
→ we are impressionable and vulnerable to stories.
  · limited perspective even if we can't personally identify with it.
→ "people like us can be in stories, too"
→ single stories make people form limiting personal narratives about us based on their own biases.
  · e.g. news/publicity toward Africa generates a single story of poverty, safaris, undeveloped tribes.
→ "show a people as one thing over & over again, and that is how they become [a single story]."
→ Single stories are defined by the power of one people over another.
  · e.g. starting story of Native Americans with the British vs. with their history.
→ to define people by only negative stories flattens them.
  · sum of positives and negatives.
→ Single stories perpetuate stereotypes.
  · stereotypes aren't necessarily untrue, but incomplete.
→ single stories rob people of dignity.
  · emphasizing differences vs. similarities.

→ when we reject the single story, we regain a kind of paradise.

→ how single stories have affected me:
  • mother assuming my academic pursuits were motivated by men.
  • stereotypes by friends' parents about having a single mother.

Canwen Xu: I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype

→ Asian heritage, but grew up nearly entirely in US.
  • struggled to reconcile both parts of her identity when the first thing people noticed about her was her non-whiteness.
→ conforming unintentionally to Asian stereotypes made Xu feel insecure; conforming to whiteness gave a false sense of confidence that came with fitting in.

→ society uses Asian Americans' success as false justification that racism doesn't exist.

→ all of us are part of the problem!

→ Xu essentially concludes that stereotypes are reductionist.
  • uses humor to reference more human and potentially relatable anecdotes demonstrating passive (& active) role of racism in her life.

Haley Rosen: The Problem with Womens' Sports

→ coverage for womens' sports is stuck at 4%, female athletes make a fraction of what male athletes make, womens' sports are still fringe.

→ how do we fix this?
  i) womens' sports need more investment.
  ii) womens' sports need more media coverage.
  iii) better marketing: womens' sports are treated like a charity and not sports.

→ Simone Biles: Daily Mail article discussing how she doesn't support her mother (who abandoned her).

→ Imane Khelif: Accused of being trans — her genetic advantages were disparaged whereas, for example, Michael Phelps' were celebrated.

Each talk discusses how stereotypes (racial, gender-based, etc). perpetuate harmful, limiting, and weakened perceptions of marginalized groups both to members and others passing judgement, and that those stereotypes are often implicit & resistant to change. We need accountability and awareness to make progress, from all of us.