

Stereotype lives closer than we think

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My father uttering out loud while watching CNN and feeling frustrated, “Women shouldn’t be in politics, all they do is stir the pot”. Initially, I did not react to this, but I was left internally feeling conflicted and offended that my own father would say such a thing about women and their capabilities. My father, the man who immigrated to America and overcame many hardships to provide my brother and I the best opportunities in life and encouraged me to pursue all my dreams would say such a thing nonchalant and out loud. I was left contemplating how a man who emphasized the importance of being a strong independent woman so I won’t have to rely on anyone could say something so contradictory and sexist.

I then realized that discrimination, whether sexist, homophobic or in any shape present, is more a reflection of the expressive individual rather than their personal opinion about specific people who fit that category.

We are so quick to judge discrimination and sexism as a personal attack on our self-existence, but the truth seems to be that prejudice is an issue that is much larger than individual people.

It was then that I realized that the only way to fight against stereotypes and discrimination, is to create a ripple effect. By sitting down to discuss the person’s point of view and understanding why the inclination to develop that stereotypical point of view, you can challenge it and enable them to understand that everyone is different, and a mere assumption or previous experience cannot be held against the next person encountered who is from the same identifiable group. That one person whom you

spent time trying to have a meaningful conversation about and challenging their opinion, could possibly carry out a similar discussion with the next person that they encounter, and perhaps we can create a ripple effect however small, but still meaningful for the people whose lives it will touch (whether on the receiving end of the stereotype or at the presenting end of it).

Rather than have fight against discrimination and attack it on-sight, perhaps we should understand that the person may need to be enlightened about a different way of being, different ways to look at things, and walk them through the experience of how minorities or diversity in and of itself can provide an enormous array of value and strength to the table that may not have been there before. Discriminatory comments should be viewed with sorrow than anger because the person who directs those comments (whether strategically or unintentionally) has a deficit in their visual field of life. Bearing in mind that, to acknowledge this with a more understanding view is not to mean this is something that should be tolerated, especially in a professional setting.

This is when I had an epiphany that there are two types of discriminatory people; the ones who have a skewed vision of the world unintentionally or ones who are intentionally prejudice. It goes without saying that the latter is worse and harder to address, however if a prejudiced comment is expressed by someone who is unintentionally not aware of their limited viewpoint, perhaps spending some effort in providing them with a different

outlook and possibly educating them further on the topic has shown to be very effective. If my dad has such a view of women in politics, it is because no one has stood up to confront him about it.