



HOW DISCRIMINATION PERVADES THE WORLD

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Discrimination has always come in various forms. There has been racial discrimination, discrimination against women, religious discrimination, discrimination against the differently-abled, discrimination against sexual orientation, etc. People tend to classify such things as gender, race and creed as being their own or against them. In our own bigoted ways, we have considered those that are different as not of our own and therefore objectionable, indefinable and definitely unacceptable. It's not easy to be different in this world simply because the world is filled with traditional concepts that do not pay heed easily to diversity. The choice or non-choice of being different can spell ostracism or uncomfortable tolerance, but seldom open acceptance.

In school, our children get exposed to various forms of discrimination. There are children who get bullied because they're perceived as being too smart, too weak, too dumb, or too different. We often hear of cases where applicants are denied application for enrolment to exclusive (and often religious-run) schools because they belong to a single-parent family (read: separated parents), they belong to a different religion, or some other seemingly-profound reason. It's not easy to be different, but why should an incoming student ever suffer the consequences of simply being so?

Of course, we can not totally blame particular school officials for observing their own administrative rules. Having uniformity and sustaining it is always a desirable aspect of maintaining exclusivity. Making the decisions that ensure the enforcement of rules falls squarely on their shoulders. We can only hope and pray that such administrative people are able to practice just and impartial judgment on such matters. It would definitely make anyone's blood boil to know that discrimination is also practiced when it comes to people with influence and power when such are readily accepted despite not following the same "stringent" criteria.

As parents, we must try to imbue our children with awareness of the real picture of the world. We should not bombard them with blind notions that the world is always an equitable place where they'll find justice and equal opportunities for all. As they grow up, children need to see both the ugliness and the beauty of the world they were born into. They need to see just how friendly the world can be if they learn to align their interests with those of many, and how ugly the world can get when they drastically attempt to change what has been accepted.

Let us teach our kids diversity and the acceptance of it. But let us also teach them that the world will not easily embrace their being different just because they have learned to accept their differences. We live in an often discriminatory world, and we can't completely shield our own children from this one painful reality.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Define discrimination. What are its common forms?
2. Have you ever been personally discriminated against? Recount your experience in class.
3. If you've never experienced discrimination, talk about someone else's experience.
4. What would you do if you were the subject of discrimination? How would you handle such a situation?
5. What makes humans discriminate against others? How can we teach about discrimination in schools?