

IDEAS 65

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
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THE 65th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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The Nature of Discrimination

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Today, all forms of discrimination are found in the society. This prejudicial treatment is practiced not only by one person but by groups of people who have the same reaction towards other individuals. They often perceive the same negative and stereotypical conclusions which then results to their discriminatory actions. One group might be influenced through looking at a group member's behavior or through looking at the privileges which are offered to another individual. This then leads to various conclusions leading to irrational and illogical perspectives.

The word discrimination has been applied in various contexts and in various settings. It has been used to describe derogatory prejudice during 1830 and it has been used to describe prejudicial treatment between ethnic groups. Discrimination is derived from *discrimire*, a Latin word which means to distinguish or separate. That is why most of the people who were discriminated upon were the ones who created their own groups.

Discriminatory acts are common everywhere. We can see people who are discriminated because of their traditions, practices, rituals, ideologies, policies, culture and race. In some cases, radical discriminatory acts are applied by fanatics. A good example for this scenario is the story of the KKK or Ku Klux Klan, a separatist group of southerners which started in the 19th century. Their main objective was to accept slavery through the practice of terrorism of the African American people. In reality, the practices of the KKK were not only centered in African Americans but also in other religious and social groups such as the Jews and the Homosexual community.

The most common type of discrimination practiced today is racial discrimination. This form of discrimination is centered on racial differences and about the policies provided by the government in order to protect the rights of other cultures. Most individuals are not comfortable when dealing with other races. They often look at the color, gender and national origin of the person. Once they are exposed to another cultural group, they tend to act passive and they feel threatened. They then practice discriminatory acts by saying racial slurs and by becoming judgmental. They even feel that people from other countries should not have the same rights as with citizens.

In order to defeat discrimination, people should be educated and they should be informed about the concept of respect and acceptance. According to A.E Housman, great literature should be provided for readers in order to quicken their perception, sharpen his understanding about discrimination and soften the rawness of personal opinions. This means that through literature, people will be able to learn more about others and they will be able to accept personal opinions given by others.

Questions:

- 1) Who mentioned that great literature is the key to combat discrimination?
- 2) What is the KKK?
- 3) What is the most common type of discrimination practiced today?
- 4) How can we combat discrimination?
- 5) What Latin word means to distinguish?



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?



WHY THE WORLD THRIVES ON DISCRIMINATION

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We have attached certain tags to specific regional differences that we have. For instance, people from my particular native region have been known for being stingy. Those hailing from a particular region are said to be boastful and have an inclination for bragging. Those from another region have been known to be hotheads. There have been many other tags that are not even worth paying attention to, much less devoting time for. But one thing's certain: we attach certain tags to others just because they come from a different part of the world (not our region), and the challenge of acceptance is harder to take than the challenge of name-calling and classifying. It's easier to degrade others than to find ways to embrace them.

We find justifications for discrimination quite readily. We are threatened by others when they are patently different from us, thus the only convenient escape hatch is to make fun of what makes them different from us. It can be easier to hurt than to soothe, to drive away than to find out what's worth embracing. We choose to keep our distance because it's quite safer that way, and we often feel uncomfortable in establishing too close ties with other people. So, we do the next best thing: we discriminate.

Many of us have fought against discrimination in its various forms. These individuals choose the less-beaten path and instigate measures to get acceptance. We have numerous movements, countless advocacies, and many organizations that aim to throw light on the befuddled minds of many. Those of us that support these different movements join runs for a cause, fundraising efforts, outreach missions, etc. just to drive home the message that such advocacies espouse. It's not easy to be different, but gathering support from large numbers always creates an impact, a hard-not-to-notice one at that.

Time will also come when such movements can not be so easily pooh-poohed. Plucky movers and advocates will somehow obtain the objectives they want for equality and recognition. It is a sincere hope that the discrimination against all that is different will someday disappear. But the road will not be easy and light. There will always be challenges along the way. We may get accepted for being who we are and what we are, but seldom for what we stand for. That's a more difficult phase.

The world does not thrive on differences quite as easily as it does on uniformity and exclusivity. It's easier to tear down others because of their differences than to search for means to like them. That mostly depends on the strength of our individual principles and our purpose in life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read about Rosa Parks and her struggle for civil rights for African Americans. Be able to talk about her achievements in class.
2. What makes discrimination of whatever form hurtful and divisive?
3. Why is it easier to discriminate than to accept others as they are?
4. How can discrimination in whatever form be eradicated?
5. How have people fought against discrimination? Be as specific and detailed as needed.



ON BEING BROWN AND PROUD OF IT

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Discrimination should be considered a sociological blight, an unacceptable crime against society, in my humble opinion. It has come in many forms. There's: racial or ethnicity discrimination (the most dominant); age discrimination (She's a TEENAGER, so she doesn't know any better!); sex and gender discrimination (She's all that, but she's FEMALE!); sexual orientation discrimination (What?! You, join the army?? Oh come on, sister!); language discrimination (Anybody here speak Aramaic?); disability discrimination (This building is not equipped with ramps, sorry). Most of these are downright cruel, if not unbelievably evil. Imagine being redlined (read: charged more than the usual) just because you're a foreigner. Or getting pushed behind in line because a foreigner is deemed to deserve preferential treatment. Often too, the same scenario happens when somebody rich, famous or powerful is present, but that's for another story and essay.

Who's to start throwing stones? We all have, one way or the other, been guilty of playing "favorites" amongst ourselves. Who doesn't have a favorite teacher, a favorite student, a favorite child? And on the opposite side of the coin, who doesn't have a "most hated school subject", a "dreaded colleague" or a "teacher's pet"? Yep, one way or the other alright. Could be more, if we only cared to count and account.

Most of us (and that's a great many of us) have also experienced painful discrimination. Time was when people from my side of the world were perceived to be maids or domestic servants. Why, being a foreign maid in a far-off land is an honorable way to make a decent living! It's definitely nobler than peddling your physical wares online to a lecherous customer from somewhere else on the planet! Remember that racial slur on the country's medical graduates back when a particular show was really popular? Yes, people from my country have been discriminated against many times. But thanks to many hardworking achievers from all over the 7,107 islands of the nation, we have received vindication and been granted a worthy place under the sun.

Perhaps what we need to focus on instead as a people is to eradicate the negative perceptions that others have on us. Let us strive to do our best to motivate one another and work harder at reaching our goals. We might be doing work that no one else will take, but let us be proud of what we do. Dignity in labor, that's the key. We may not get rich quick, but we might as well die trying. Not literally, of course. But let us be driven to rise up against whatever challenges face us as a race.

You never know what boundaries you can work across unless you try hard. Discrimination or no discrimination, just be proud of what you are and what you stand for. In the end, that is all that matters.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Have people from your country been discriminated against? Cite specific instances.
2. Why is it typical for people to discriminate against those of other races?
3. How can the different forms of discrimination mentioned in the essay be minimized or eradicated (if possible)?
4. In what foreign country would you like to spend the rest of your life? Do you think you'll enjoy living in a foreign country a lot better? Why?
5. How does discrimination of whatever form affect people involved?



DISCRIMINATION - A DENIAL OF OPPORTUNITY

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When people start to become biased and prejudiced, then discrimination takes place and there is clearly a denial of opportunity for other persons to be able to prove themselves. We begin treating others unequally and there is no fair treatment given to people. There is that tendency to stick with people who are similar to us and we avoid those who are different. At times it seems understandable when you are comfortable with people like you. But when you avoid others who are different, those whom you don't really know what people are like, and we make generalizations about them based on very little knowledge, we actually have pre-judgments called prejudices.

Every adult can actually experience discrimination at work. Most of the time discrimination can prevent a person from getting a well-paid job and from having or developing professional skills. Almost always it creates a negative effect causing negative consequences on a person's self-esteem, motivation, health and social status. It is obvious that discrimination at work shows a denial of opportunity. Therefore, it should not be tolerated so as to allow an individual to make use of its own rights and freedom and not by restricting them.

Being biased and prejudiced will clearly result in denial of opportunity, meaning it will result to unfair treatment regarding selection, promotion or transfer. Actually, we can equate discrimination with inequality. It is more likely an unequal treatment towards one or more parties on the basis of some other logical or illogical reasons. As a matter of fact, discriminated people are being called derogatory names aside from the fact that they have been treated in unfairly ways. They have been treated unfairly in all the aspects of life itself and sometimes even to the point of being brutalized physically.

Apparently, there is a truth to the fact that discrimination is an action that treats people in an unfair manner especially if they are a member of a particular social group. There are even the so-called "different" or ethnic groups which are prevented from earning the same wages. These lower earnings prevent these people from living in a decent manner. It is a fallacy that all these discriminatory behaviors don't show impartiality and yet it can take its many forms. Even if you try to see it in different aspects, they all involve some form of exclusion or rejection.

In general, we can assess that discrimination is caused by unreasonable feelings, opinions or attitudes, especially of a hostile nature. But the real truth lies in the fact that in reality, discrimination occurs in the heart. Sometimes you wonder why people do not like certain people for no reason at all. At times you don't like the way they act, the way they live, the way they walk and many more that we can think of. People do not like people for different things simply because it's all in the mind and in the heart. So let us not allow discrimination to rule over us for it maybe a denial of opportunity for the people around us.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you approve of discriminating people just because they don't come up with your expectations? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that discrimination is an act of denial? In what way is it or is not an act of denial?
3. Have you been prejudiced in any kind of situation? Cite that instance/those instances.
4. Have you experienced discrimination? When and how?
5. Are you always hostile to the people whom you dislike to the point of discriminating them? Explain your answer.



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