



CULTURE - EXPRESSING ONE'S IDENTITY

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Culture can be a very complex matter but almost always it can be a starting point when we deal with expressing one's identity. Culture in its diversity has many meanings. For the anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, it can mean a full range of learned human behavior patterns. But of course for a biologist, he has a different perspective about it. For him it can be a colony of bacteria or other microorganisms that is growing in his laboratory in a Petri dish. For other people, it refers to the appreciation of music, art, good literature and food.

Culture as it is can be a powerful tool for survival and at the same time it can be a very fragile or salient phenomenon too. We can consider it as constantly changing for it can be easily lost because it exists in our human minds alone. It is not only considered as complexes of learned behavior patterns but also of perceptions too. These patterns specifically are shared by all of humanity collectively. Around the world, people have these cultural universal traits.

Some of these "human cultural traits" include communicating with a verbal language like limited sounds and the grammatical use on forming sentences; using age and gender to classify people; classifying people based on marriage, relationship and kinship; raising kids in certain family setting and having a concept of privacy. It can even deal with the distinction of good and bad behavior, making jokes and playing games, having art and having sort of leadership roles for implementing community decisions. Yes, with all these many possible universal traits, different cultures have developed and adopted their own specific ways of expressing it. Cultures are not a product of lone individuals. Consequently they are the continuous evolving product of people who interact with each other.

It will make no sense if there is no interaction of people with these cultural patterns like language and politics. Culture serves as a bond that connects the ties of the people of a region or a community together. These are the traditions and customs that these people follow. Like for instance having their festivals to celebrate or even the kind of clothes that they wear. It may also involve the food that they eat but most importantly, it refers to the cultural values that they adhere to that bind them together.

Culture is a system of social control, meaning this is where people shape their standards and behavior. It also influences one's way of living which creates an impact in the social life of a being. It is said to be the oil that keeps a society running. It is considered as the main pillars of the development and sustenance of a community. A society can't progress without it.

Therefore, the importance of culture is that, it serves as a link between people and their value systems. Culture, per se, is a collective experience of a society. It is actually the impact of our reaction and our decision-making of our every-day facts and circumstances in life. It is what makes us distinct from each other as a society, community and as individuals. Culture indeed is a way of expressing one's identity, so we must hold on to it.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the importance of culture?
2. How does culture affect our relationship with other communities? How about with other countries?
3. Do you agree in the fact that culture is a very important tool in the development of a community? Why or why not?
4. Will a community or society exist without culture? Justify your answer.
5. Do you believe that culture is a framework for understanding communities and societies? Why or why not?