

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Prejudice

Bruce Wieland, Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Durham, NC October 8, 2022

Chalice Lighting, Chimes, Silence

Opening Words

The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice. – Mark Twain

Check In

Topic Thoughts on Prejudice (for more detail see also specific Definitions after Closing Words)

Prejudice means preconceived (usually negative) feeling or opinion that is not based on conscious reason or actual experience. The word comes from the Latin "pre" (before) and "judge". People may prejudge any question, but the word is often used for an opinion about a person or group of people, often about a person or group different than the person with the bias. Prejudice can also be conscious when someone is aware, intentional and responsive about their prejudice.

Prejudice can be based on perceived group membership. It can also be applied directly to an individual as a preconceived evaluation of that person based on political affiliation, sex, gender, gender identity, beliefs, values, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, culture, complexion, beauty, height, body weight, occupation, wealth, education, criminality, sport-team affiliation, music tastes, or other personal characteristics.

Prejudice is based on attitude, and is the very dangerous precursor to discrimination (defined as an action such as verbal slurs, failure to provide reasonable accommodation or access, political divide, acceptance of social and wealth inequalities, media portrayal, preferential pay, hiring or admissions policies, hate crimes, etc).

Questions for Discussion of Topic

Have you identified some of your prejudices? How did you learn them?

Have you experienced discrimination? Have you discriminated against others?

Are all of us here today in this covenant group exactly the same? In what ways are we different or alike?

Are most differences in and out of this covenant group good or bad?

Do you actively learn about people or groups that are not like you? Meet directly with these people or groups?

Do you stand up for people who are being treated with prejudice?

Do you treat people the way you want them to treat you?

Response to Others

Likes & Wishes

Closing Words

Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible. – Maya Angelou

DEFINITIONS

Gender Identity

Transgender and non-binary people can be discriminated against because they identify with a gender that does not align with their assigned sex at birth.

Sexism

Sexism, also called gender discrimination, is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sex is based on an assessment of biological factors, while gender relates to one's identity.

Misandry (prejudice or discrimination towards men) and misogyny (prejudice or discrimination towards women) are two separate forms of sexism based on the gender of the victim.

Nationalism

Nationalism is a sentiment based on common cultural characteristics that binds a population and often produces a policy of national independence or separatism. It suggests a "shared identity" amongst a nation's people that minimizes differences within the group and emphasizes perceived boundaries between the group and non-members. This leads to the assumption that members of the nation have more in common than they actually do, that they are "culturally unified", even if injustices within the nation based on differences like status and race exist. Hostility may result if all do not share the nationalism allegiance.

Classism

A biased or discriminatory attitude on distinctions made between social or economic classes".^[31] The idea of separating people based on class is controversial in itself. Overall, society has neither come to a consensus over the necessity of the class system, nor been able to deal with the hostility and prejudice that occurs because of the class system.

Sexual discrimination

One's sexual orientation is the "direction of one's sexual interest toward members of the same, opposite, or both sexes". Like most minority groups, homosexuals and bisexuals are not immune to prejudice or stereotypes from the majority group. The idea of heterosexual privilege is known to flourish in society. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a powerful feature of many labor markets. For example, studies show that gay men earn 10–32% less than heterosexual men in the United States, and that there is significant discrimination in hiring on the basis of sexual orientation in many labor markets.

Racism

Racism is defined as the belief that physical characteristics determine cultural traits, and that racial characteristics make some groups superior. Racism can occur amongst any group that can be identified based upon physical features or even characteristics of their culture.

Scientific Racism

Scientific racism began to flourish in the eighteenth century and was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin's evolutionary studies, as well as ideas taken from the writings of philosophers like Aristotle for example. This concept focuses on the necessity of hierarchies and how some people are bound to be on the bottom of the pyramid. There is still debate over whether race actually exists, making the discussion of race a controversial topic. Racism can affect a person's behavior, thoughts, and feelings, and social psychologists strive to study these effects.

Religious discrimination

While various religions teach their members to be tolerant of those who are different and to have compassion, throughout history there have been wars, pogroms, and other forms of violence motivated by hatred of religious groups. Those who reported religion to be very influential in their lives seem to have a higher rate of prejudice than those who reported not being religious.

Linguistic discrimination

Individuals or groups may be treated unfairly based solely on their use of language. This use of language may include the individual's native language or other characteristics of the person's speech, such as an accent or dialect, the size of vocabulary (whether the person uses complex and varied words), and syntax. It may also involve a person's ability or inability to use one language instead of another.

High-Functioning

Broadly speaking, attribution of low social status to those who do not conform to neurotypical expectations of personality and behavior. This can manifest through assumption of 'disability' status to those who are high functioning enough to exist outside of diagnostic criteria, yet do not desire to (or are unable to) conform their behavior to conventional patterns.

Discrimination may also extend to other high functioning individuals carrying pathological phenotypes, such as those with ADHD and bipolar disorders. In these cases, there are indications that perceived (or actual) socially disadvantageous cognitive traits are directly correlated with advantageous cognitive traits in other domains, notably creativity and divergent thinking,

Low-Functioning

Assumptions may be made about the intelligence or value of individuals who have or exhibit behaviors of mental disorders or conditions. Individuals who have a difficult time assimilating or fitting into neurotypical standards and society may be labeled "Low Functioning".

People with neurological disorders or conditions observed to have low intelligence, lack of self-control, suicidal behavior, or any number of factors may be discriminated on this basis. Institutions such as mental asylums, Nazi Concentration Camps, unethical pediatric research/care facilities, and eugenics labs have been used to carry out dangerous experiments or to torture the individuals involved.

Most discrimination today is characterized by individuals making comments towards low-functioning individuals or by harming them physically by themselves, but some institutions practice unsafe activities on these individuals.

Multiculturalism

Humans have an evolved propensity to think categorically about social groups, manifested in cognitive processes with broad implications for public and political endorsement of multicultural policy, according to psychologists Richard J. Crisp and Rose Meleady. They postulated a cognitive-evolutionary account of human adaptation to social diversity that explains general resistance to multiculturalism and offer a reorienting call for scholars and policy-makers who seek intervention-based solutions to the problem of prejudice.