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Colloquy 1

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Outrunning Race

Race has been a divider in our society for more than centuries already. Racial prejudices, even though sometimes nearly seeming positive, are something that stems in the belief that humans are categorized or differentiated through race, a concept that must be eradicated. Though consciously I aim for high sensitivity and awareness on this subject, I still am largely under a subconscious influence that causes me to have biases present against certain races. In this essay, I will particularly focus on two of my largest biases against African Americans, and what I need to recognize and put into action to negate them.

The first prejudice I have against African American people is that I assume because of the existence of Affirmative Action, they don't have to work hard academically in order to get into a good school. Affirmative Action establishes the rule that if an institution desires racial diversity among its students, it may use race as an admissions criterion along with other factors such as grades and test scores (Social Problems: Continuity and Change). Though this has undoubtedly brought benefits to ensuring racial equity, it has unfortunately also reinforced my prejudice against African Americans and their relation to academic pursuit. When I'm on the Internet and see videos of people giving advice on college applications, I actively avoid clicking into covers that show an uploader of darker colored skin, because I have a subconscious assumption that all black people have a lower academic bar in applications. Therefore, their advice is seen as less valuable to me when considering the standards I have to meet compared to

theirs. This is not only unfairly biased, but also hurtful to the black students who have worked hard their whole life only to have me accuse them of getting into a college they deserve only due to racial benefits.

Another prejudice I identify within myself is I often fail to acknowledge the scales of blackness and see only black or white. This stems in a traditional “one drop” way of thinking that was used to ensure the population of slaves, in which as long as a person has a single drop of blood containing black heritage, they’re defined as black (Staples 18). For example, I once went to a summer school that had a teacher with both black and white heritage. However, when asked of her race by my friend, by default I associated her with only blackness instead of both of her racial identities. It was only reflecting on this afterwards did I realize that this way of thinking was stemmed in a prejudice that white is the default race, and anything that diverges from it is considered its own category. This prejudice is incredibly influenced by a white-dominant mindset and is something I have to work to challenge for myself.

To challenge the first prejudice I have on how I tend to think African Americans don’t work hard academically because they don’t have the need to, I should do more research on Affirmative Action and the way it actually functions, instead of assuming a person can get admitted simply because of the racial diversity they would offer. One thing that I need to learn to register for myself is that though African Americans with an objectively less impressive academic transcript could get accepted nonetheless, Affirmative Action has its validity in doing so. It’s noted by Reskin that whites are generally more likely to receive education and job opportunities compared to any other race (The Realities of Affirmative Action in Employment). Therefore, Affirmative Action actively works on solving the imbalance present in our world and I shouldn’t hold any resentment or biases towards the policy itself nor the people of color under its

influence. Though it may be hard to do so immediately, I can start by clicking into the videos of darked skinned creators sharing their academic experiences I previously purposely avoided and remind myself the importance of hearing from those voices.

For the second prejudice I have on being accustomed to a “one drop” way of thinking, I need to first understand the significance of escaping this mindset. Research done by Min and Kim among 15 Asian Americans indicate that people of mixed race, particularly those with white heritage, tend to develop a hurtful self-image and deny themselves of the non-white part of their identity (750). This default white-dominated negativity must be put to an end. To take my first step on this issue, I have to learn to actively remind myself the nuance in identities instead of seeing it as a binary choice. When coming into contact with people of mixed-race backgrounds, I can take initiative and ask them their thoughts and experiences from growing up within this complexity to understand more about their perspective, and when asked again by someone what their racial identity is, I need to remind myself to acknowledge all aspects of who they are instead of grouping them into categories essentially seen as “white” or “non-white”. Though this process may take time, I have faith that eventually I’ll be able to both believe and show with my manners that race and ethnic identity is more complex than it meets the eye.

While trying to remain as mindful as possible when dealing with sensitive issues such as race, due to its deeply etched intertwinement in our society, by default I still fall under certain set ways of thinking. To ensure both my personal growth and the social responsibility I carry, I need to work on actively seeking out more voices to hear from and reinforce the belief in my head that there are infinite sets of valid perspectives and intricacies present in our world, ultimately becoming the more sophisticated and compassionate person I long to be.

Works Cited

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