

Prevention in Becoming the “Real” You

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Are you looking at people or things without prejudice? Are you positive that you are not making up bad images in your head without knowing them? Today, I would like to explain the two types of prejudice and discrimination that I have felt in my past experiences.

One type of prejudice is the prejudice against natural occurrences. Natural occurrences are things that you are born with, such as nationality, race, gender, and the ways of thinking. People are being discriminated against for being a foreigner or having different thoughts, and they are suffering because they are being discriminated against for something that they were born with and cannot change. This is something that has been happening throughout history, for example, ethnic strife and genocide. However, even though there are people who have prejudice against them, it is also true that a lot of people actually have understandings for that unavoidable occurrence. The people who have understanding for them are increasing, so it is starting to become accepted, but prejudice against them is still remaining.

I, myself, learned an important lesson in the United States, when my friend asked me, “What do you think about gays and lesbians?” To be honest, I did not have a good impression back then, because I thought that loving people of the same gender was not right, or forbidden. So, I smiled at her uncomfortably. Then, the next moment, my friend got angry and said, “Why can’t you respect them and the way they live? You are just having prejudice against them because of what everyone says.” I was overwhelmed by her words. The things she said were true and I got embarrassed at myself for being influenced by the majority too much. It made me realize that I was making bad judgments about things I didn’t even know.

There is another type of prejudice, which is the prejudice against the outcome of personal choices, and this is becoming a more open type of prejudice recently. We have rights to choose jobs, religions, hobbies, etc. So, it is thought that we are responsible for the outcome of our choices, unlike the natural occurrences. People are being discriminated against for doing

something that they want to do or like doing, and it means that they cannot do things freely without thinking about negative views. This is something that is starting to become more common as a result of our increased access to information about specific interests, and freedom to pursue them. Also, the majority don't feel bad to discriminate these personal choices because even if they do, they won't get criticized for doing so, while they would get criticized for discriminating against natural occurrences.

I felt this type of prejudice after coming back to Japan and getting into watching Japanese anime. Anime has been one of Japan's traditional cultures and is loved by people all over the world, but a lot of Japanese do not have a good impression of it. My friends actually show disdain with their facial expressions when I talk about anime. Since this happens to the anime fans very often, a lot of them try to not let their friends know that they like anime. To talk about my own experience, on the day before Halloween back in 9th grade, I was wearing a costume of one of the characters in my favorite anime. However, my brother, who went to the same school, came up to me and said, "Don't wear that tomorrow because I don't want people to think my sister is *otaku*." I was shocked. *Otaku* is a word that is often used to describe people who like anime or other subcultures. They are being looked at as people who cannot interfere with the society and are only looking at the made up world that they want to believe in. I felt so mortified and beaten up by the power of bad images and this experience is still hurting me and I feel pain as I am talking right now.

I explained two types of prejudice and discrimination, but the fact that they are both suffering from negative views is the same. The feeling of being watched with a negative view cannot be compared in the meaning of which is more serious. Now, please ask yourselves again. Are you looking at people or things without prejudice? Prejudice is something that you learn from living in your environment, so it is hard to change your ways of thinking. However, if you try to get to know the people or things that are being watched with prejudice before making judgments, it will definitely allow you to change your point of view. So please don't start off with hate. I want this world to be a better place, so let's take a step forward to reach that goal. Your understandings will allow people to become proud of themselves and their choices.