

Embrace Our Differences

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I look around me and see the same styles, same music tastes, same hobbies. This sounds familiar to many high school students, yet it's not who we really are. Everyone is different. Everyone is unique. We all have different perspectives, shaped by different personality traits, experiences, cultures and beliefs. We all have different body types, skin colors and fashion choices. There isn't a wrong way to think. There isn't a wrong way to look. Yet often times, people try to blend in and suppress their real thoughts and interests, all for the sake of being accepted. But if we are too afraid to express our differences, and remain unwilling to embrace others' differences, we will never grow as a society. Without individuality life is predictable, non-innovative and meaningless.

In high school and many other social environments, there is a pressure to conform. Depending on the person they are talking to, many people alter their tone of voice and speech patterns, some even change their personality. I also fall victim to this, altering how I act at school compared to at home. For example, at school I'm much calmer and quieter, whereas at home I feel more myself, unrestrained by prying eyes. This shouldn't be necessary to be accepted. I'm not saying we all need to be completely different; similar interests allow us to bond. But the reality is that many people have different interests that are washed away by the overpowering wave of what is popular. Take Doshisha for example. Even though our school has no uniform, the perfect chance to show our individuality through clothing styles, I notice most people wearing similar, predictable types of clothes. By forcing ourselves into a standard mold, we are depriving society of potential diversity. If we bring new ideas into the school environment, it will be richer, more diverse, and more interesting.

Look at society at large and all the people who have made a big impact on this world. These people didn't make change by copying what everyone

else was doing. All the wonderful inventions that make our world so convenient today like cars, trains, and phones are due to individualists. If Steve Jobs, whose slogan for Apple was “Think Different,” had decided that computers and cell phones were fine the way they were, smartphones might not even exist! If more people are willing to stand out, then others will soon follow, enriching society.

So how can we get people to be more open about their real thoughts and personalities? What if we start at school by talking about how we feel about major issues? I think if we take some time to get into groups in the classroom and speak truthfully about what we genuinely think, we will all be able to connect on a deeper level with one another. Especially when people who have very different views have a conversation, we can learn so much from each other and see the world from a much broader perspective. It’s important to express our own perspectives, because that makes each and every one of us a more valuable contributor to society.

We shouldn’t be afraid to be ourselves. Whether that means pursuing our passions or looking at art or science in a new way that revolutionizes the world, we shouldn’t let fear of being rejected hold us back. It’s ok to blend into the background from time to time, but life is far more interesting if we step onto the stage and dare to stand out. By embracing our differences and accepting who we truly are, we can achieve a more meaningful, diverse society.