

Examining prejudice and discrimination in singapore



In this essay, we will be explaining and giving the definitions of prejudice and discrimination. Also, we will go in depth and elaborate about the various kinds of discrimination in today's society such as gender, disability, size, looks, monetary, status, education, sexual and racial discrimination. After which, we will give solutions and ways to reduce racial discrimination in Singapore. Finally we will end with a round up of conclusion.

Prejudice and discrimination is a rising issue in today's society. According to Dictionary. com, prejudice is an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason. Discrimination is the treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit: racial and religious intolerance and discrimination.

To be prejudiced is to have a cultural mindset and that is relied on negative or unpleasant stereotypes about individuals or groups because of their ethnic, religious, racial or cultural background. To discriminate is to have an active denial of desired goal from a certain group of people. The group can be based on sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, or even class. More recently, disadvantaged groups now also include those based on gender, age, and physical disabilities.

Prejudice and discrimination are very common at both the individual and societal levels. Any attempt to eradicate or solve the problem of prejudice and discrimination must thus deal with prevailing beliefs or ideologies, and social structure.

Gender-

There are many types of discrimination. Gender discrimination, also known as sexism is very common. In most societies, women have been viewed as the 'weaker sex' who is in constant need of protection from the rough world. Women are more delicate by nature compared to men, and are often victims of physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Gender discrimination does not only apply in communities and sometimes families but also a lot of times in workplaces. In Chinese Culture, boys are more wanted than girls as they can pass down the family name. According to BBC news, around a million girl fetuses are aborted and tens of thousands of girl babies are abandoned in China, every year. A boy will bring status and he will also continue the family line. Families also throw big celebrations for baby boys while neglecting the less-wanted girls. The preference for boys is tied up in the Confucian belief that male heirs are necessary to carry on the family name and take care of the family spirits. A Chinese family worries that if there is no son no one will look after them and keep them company in the afterlife. Confucius once said, "There are three ways of being disloyal to your ancestors. Not carrying on the family name is the worse."

In early Japan, there is large gender discrimination. They have a saying that goes "men as breadwinners and women as homemakers". Even after Japan introduced the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985, which prohibited discrimination against women in employment and urged employers to treat women equally in terms of recruitment, job assignment and promotion. But, they are still the last to be rehired in a full-time job. Japanese women are also expected to quit their job if they have children. Even if companies are

facing a shortage of workers, they had no plan to try to hire more women. Women have to work twice as hard as man to advance their careers because of the prejudices within Japanese companies. Their university education is roughly the same as those without an upper secondary education. In 1997, statistics show that Japanese women hold only 9.3% of professional positions, compared to 44.3% in the United States. Women's income is only 45% of men's even though they make up 64% of Japan industry.

Females appear to be less strongly oriented toward personal terminal values than men, but more strongly oriented toward moral means.

Also in sports, especially soccer, where female officials/referees are slowly introduced to the male side of the game are being discriminated. One such example was Andy Gray, a former footballer, popular football pundit and commentator. He was British television channel Sky Sports main pundit since 1992. However, he was fired after he was found to made sexist comments and made offensive gestures to a female co-presenter. He had commented, "Can you believe that? A female linesman. Women don't know the offside rule." in which his fellow presenter, Richard Keys replied, "Course they don't. Somebody better get down there and explain." during a post-match show when they thought they were off air. In another show, he was caught on camera(in which it was edited out later on) tugging his pants and asking his female co-presenter Charlotte Jackson to tuck the microphone into his pants. (<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3371091/Andy-Gray-sacked-over-sexism-row.html>)

In Singapore today, Gender discrimination while still existent, is less obvious.

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Disability –

Besides the various types of discriminations stated above, there is also a discrimination against the disabled people. Having a 'disability' means that a person has a physical or mental impairment. This in turn has a substantial and long-term negative effect on one's ability to carry out normal everyday activities. Disability discrimination occurs when one is treated less favorably because of their disability as compared to someone without a disability. This is known as direct discrimination. There are cases in which people with some form of disability are treated differently, or are victimized. People who are not disabled laugh at the disabled because of the way they walk or talk. These people gang up and make fun of the disabled. They belittle them, and feel satisfied with themselves. The disabled are not able to do anything about it because there are too many people treating them that way. There is also indirect discrimination where everyone is treated equally, but by treating everyone equally, the disabled is put to a disadvantage. This is more subtle and may also be unintentional. An example would be when there are stairs to enter a building but a person with a disability might not be able to use the stairs and may need a ramp.

Size/looks –

Being of a different size or looking different may also be a form of prejudice and discrimination. Often during first meetings, people are judged on first impressions, and first impressions are all about the visuals. Many a time people are discriminated against just because they are "too fat", "too skinny" or "not good looking enough". Society has set a standard where everyone wants an ideal body and face. This is known as the golden ratio.

The ratio of “(foot to navel): (navel to head)” is the golden ratio of the human body. A person’s face has to be symmetrical and have “ nice proportions” to be considered good looking. There is a reason why plastic surgeries are in demand. While applying for jobs, people are required to attach photos of themselves. More often than not, the people who are better looking tend to get the job as compared to those who are less good looking. Then there is the case of body size. People tend to make remarks about fat people and fat jokes. An example would be “ Yo Mama So Fat” jokes, which is very common. Even though different cultures have a preference for people of different sizes, everyone in general prefer slim to fat.

Monetary/financially-

Financial discrimination is when people look down on others that they are poorer than them. This will affect them if they want to find a job, get a rent or buy an apartment. People tend to look at the appearance to analyze whether you are rich or you are poor. For example, salesman will normally look for people that are trendier from those who wear clothes that seem old and tear. Service staff of well-known brand in some regions might not serve or even come up to you if they think that you have no money to pay if they let you try. So, what is the point to spend so much time to serve you?

In United States, there is a case that they are discriminating against the blind people by refusing to make money readable for them as they think there do not have the need. They don’t go out a lot, there does not have many chance for them to use the notes. Even for the device that is specially made for them to differentiate the money is expensive. At the end, blind people have to folding their bills in different positions to tell them apart.
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(http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/395668/financial_discrimination_against_the.html?cat=15)

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Financial discrimination also involved the low-waged workers. In a way that large number were paid lesser than the minimum wage that they should get and they had worked overtime without pay. When they get injured in the work place, they had to pay the bills themselves instead of having compensation from their company. (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112506238>)

Status/Education –

For status discrimination, most of this happens in the work place. We can see lot of who butter up status that up high and despise those who have low status than them. Everybody wants to get to a higher place. For these people that have status discrimination in mind, they normally think that this is a short cut and time saving way. For lower status in the society, they are always afraid of offending the people of the higher status. This is because they can't afford to spend the money to fight cases with them.

We can also see employer refuse to hire people that have foreign name, speaks with accent, from another country or even locals who does not have a high level certificate. Competition is getting higher and higher in the work place.

Nowadays, it is the certificate of education that decides the fate of status in society. Without a certificate, you will get no jobs.

In Singapore, there are several foreign domestic worker abuse cases. Many do not know how to speak English and many doesn't know where to seek for help.

There are also many cases about children bring their parents to old folks homes and do not care about them anymore, or old folks being abuse because they are a burden to the family.

Sexual discrimination (gay/sexual orientation) –

People often get confused between gender discrimination and sexual discrimination. While gender discrimination is biased opinions about the female/male gender, sexual discrimination is about their sexual orientation.

In society today, talking about homosexuality is still an uncomfortable and touchy topic. While it has progressed from the past where homosexuality was illegal and you could be hanged for admitting that you were a homosexual, it has now been legally acceptable to pronounce yourself one. However this does not stop the community around you to form perceptions and opinions about you.

The 2 main places where Sexual discrimination is most evident are in schools and the workplace. In the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), homosexuals and effeminate men are managed according to the dictates of a manpower directive issued. Probably its most well know classification is Category 302, a medical code given to servicemen who are “ homosexuals, transvestites, paedophiles, etc.” homosexuals are further classified into those “ with effeminate behaviour” and those “ without effeminate behaviour”. This form

of discrimination persists despite the fact that homosexuality was
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depathologised by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973, and homosexuality is not regarded as a psychiatric condition by the local medical profession. More so, the categorization of homosexuality with transvestism and paedophilia by the SAF further backs up the public's wrong impression that it is abnormal.

During the enlistment for Nation Service, any self-declared or discovered servicemen who are homosexual are immediately referred and sent to the Psychological Medicine Branch of the Headquarters of Medical Services for a thorough psychiatric assessment. After which, each of their parents are to come in for an interview. Once they are categorised as a homosexual, they are instantly medically downgraded to a Public Employment Status of C (PES C), regardless of their level of fitness, and put through modified Basic Military Training. After Basic Military Training, they are deployed into a vocation which has no security risks, posted to non-sensitive units and given a security status which restricts their access to classified documents.

(http://knol.google.com/k/discrimination-against-homosexuals-in-singapore#Singapore_Armed_Forces)

In Singapore, while being homosexual is legal, same-sex marriage is not, and any acts of indecency between two people of the same sex, will have you charged. Singapore being a diverse nation, which encourages harmony between different race, religion and background does not have as many Sexual discrimination cases as compared to America. In fact, according to BBC News on 16 May 2009, there was an event held by pinkdot.sg to commemorate love in all forms and between people of every orientation. The

event was for Singaporeans in general – to affirm our respect for diversity and the freedom to love, regardless of sexual orientation.

Figure : 2, 500 pink-attired supporters of gay rights, in a Singapore park.

“ We recognize that many Singaporeans are conservative... so we planned an inclusive event that would reach all Singaporeans, straight and gay,” organizer Mr Soh says.

Racial –

Racial discrimination is the discriminatory or abusive behavior towards members of another race, also known as Racism. Where most countries do not condone Racism, it is still exists and has become a stereotype in society today.

In the US, many laws forbid racial discrimination, and a number of these are directly derived from Title VII in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991. The first of these acts makes manifest that employers cannot refuse to hire qualified employees based on race or skin color, and they can't do other things like harass them for race, refuse promotions, or pay them at lower rates. The 1991 Civil Rights Act defines some ways that people who have experienced racial discrimination can sue.

Till today, racial discriminations still exist, especially in workplaces where largely foreign workers are employed (mostly Chinese nationals, Bangladeshis and Indian nationals). Faced with language barriers and already lowly paid, they still have to follow orders and listen to vulgarities being thrown at them by their local employers and superiors. The same can
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be said for domestic helpers, where there are numerous reports of physical (and sometimes sexual) abuses by their employers and agencies.

Solutions that can be used to reduce prejudice and discrimination in Singapore

Education

It not right to judge someone base on his or her race. They might look different from others but they are still human. In order to make people minimize discrimination, it is better to start from the younger generation because they are the future. First step is to take down “ the Special Assistance Plan(a programme that is catered to students who achieved the top 10% of the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE)) school system” (Aaron, 2006). This school system concentrate on Chinese education as there are so many Chinese students and that most of these schools has rich Chinese traditions and history (eg, Hwa Chong Institution). Therefore, how can the racism be reduced in schools like this. Furthermore, government schools should also include religious subject in their system. In addition, universities should also organize some events that relates to intercultural exchanges. This will give an opportunity for students of any nationality to study different cultures.

Workplace

The company should take “ racially and culturally staff” (Strategies for Reducing Racism, 2001). It is not only for worker and for employee but also apply for management or director. Talk to different people from different cultural and try to figure out what is problem that they have meet. By doing this, the organization will know what they need to do to improve better <https://assignbuster.com/examining-prejudice-and-discrimination-in-singapore-essay-samples/>

working environment for their employees. Moreover, try to put different pictures of multicultural so none will feel isolate. Furthermore, there should be a special team to solve any racial problem in the workplace. This group can also come up with some activities for employees so everybody can get closer to each other.

Race

In Singapore alone, the government has implemented racial harmony. It was in 1964, that Singapore went through 2 five-day periods of racial riots. First in 21st July and second was in 2nd September. The minority of Malays in Singapore had thought that they would benefit from the special rights for Malays that was part of the 1957 Federation of Malaya Constitution when Singapore merged with Malaya. However, it was not part of the agreement of the merger that the special rights were applicable for the Malays in Singapore as well, causing unrest among the Singapore Malays. Reason being that then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had wanted equal rights for all Singapore citizens, regardless of race.

The riots that broke out in the 2 dates resulted in lives lost and many injured.

(http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_45_2005-01-06.html)

And so, on 21st July, which was also the date that the first racial riot broke out in 1964, is celebrated as Racial Harmony Day, in which inter-racial harmony is emphasized and celebrated in schools which students are allowed and also encouraged to dress up in traditional costumes of races other than their own.

As most Singaporeans stays in HDB flats, the government have also implemented certain racial quotas for certain flats so that there is a balance between races in a neighbourhood. For instance, certain flats are only allowed to be bought by a certain race. If so happens that the owner of the flat wishes to sell the flat, the buyer would have to be of the same race as the previous owner so that there is always a balance in the races within the area.

Because of this rule, there are many cases whereby neighbours of different races have inter-cultural exchanges during festive periods. Like how an Indian neighbor share their homemade delicacies with their Chinese neighbour and vice versa.

Locality

Welcome new people no matter where they come from, give them some flower or small gift with nice saying such as “ It is nice to meet you; I hope you will enjoy living here”. In this way, everybody will act equally with each other and there will be no prejudice or racism. Another way is that some family can even put the sign with the writing “ All race are welcome here”. By doing this, the new people will feel just like at home.

Individual

People do not have to make a group in order to reduce racism. People can minimize discrimination by themselves. Just be nice and be polite to everybody. Be brave to stand up again racial discrimination, read book or research about racism on the internet. Talk to those who still a victim of discrimination so people will understand more about this issue.

Media

As Racial Harmony Day is only emphasized in schools, it can also be spread through the media like radio, television, movies, etc, so that both young and old can be more educated about the importance of racial harmony. Having Racial Harmony Day in school is not enough as the younger generations could still be influenced by others around them especially family members and neighbours. Even though the older generations might have grown up with different races in the older kampong days, there still might be possibility that they have prejudices against other races due to conflicts that might have happened in the past.

Conclusion

After looking at prejudice and racial discrimination in Singapore, there is still a lot to be done even though it is a multi-racial society as it is still very much a predicament in Singapore. Through our solutions such as more inter-cultural exchanges outside of schools where the government is only implementing the racial harmony idealism, in my opinion, racial harmony must still be educated to each and everyone regardless of age so that everyone knows the importance of racial harmony.

Bibilogy

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1506469.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8054402.stm>

<http://aaron-ng.info/blog/racism-in-singapore.html>

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