

A class divided assignment



The first day of the exercise, she split the class into groups of blue-eyed people and brown-eyed people. On this particular day, the blue-eyed people were better than the brown-eyed people. She made the brown-eyed people wear a collar around their necks to help better distinguish between the eye colors. On this day, the blue eyed people were granted extra time at recess, were able to drink directly from the water fountain, have second helpings at lunch, and were allowed to play on the playground equipment.

The brown-eyed children were not allowed the same luxuries. Throughout the day, Elliott points out how much time brown-eyed students take to complete assignments, how unprepared they were, and how they were disruptive and behaved badly. The blue-eyed kids were quick to back her up. They started to bully the brown-eyed children, one even suggesting that the teacher keep a yardstick close by in case one of the brown-eyed kids got out of hand! The second day, Elliot reversed the roles and had the brown-eyed kids be better than the blue-eyed ones.

The exercise ran the same way. On the second day is when the video starts to tell us that the children who were treated better, performed better on tests than the children who were treated badly. At the end of the day, Elliot asks the children how the experience made them feel, and if they thought people should be discriminated against just because of the color of their skin, or eyes, and they replied no. The tools that Jane Elliot used to represent the discrimination of skin color, was the color of the children's eyes.

By using the color of the children's eyes, it helped them make the connection between what was going on in America during that time with the

racism against skin color. The children's reactions were different on each day, the first day the blue-eyed children felt that they were indeed better than the brown-eyed children, even though they were their friends. The brown-eyed children however, felt sad and angry that they were treated differently. On the second day, those feelings were reversed.

Both of the superior eye colors were quick to fall into discriminating against one another just because they were told that the other eye color was bad. This video was made in the 1970s; a short time after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. There was a lot of discrimination going on against African Americans. People would use words like "those people" and "those communities" as if they were not a part of America. Looking at present day America, we are a lot more accepting of other cultures than we were back then.

Not to say that there is not any discrimination or racism today, because there is, but it is not as predominant as it was in the 1950s. It has taken a lot of work in order for us to get to where we are today. The main changes between then and now would be the fact that we are no longer segregated, inter-racial relationships are not frowned upon as much, and children are raised with more cultural sensitivity. In the 1950s people thought that the White race was superior, that anyone of a different color was bad.

Personally, I think that what Jane Elliot did was amazing and ahead of her time. Children are our future, so teaching them to not discriminate based on someone's differences is the best way to prevent discrimination continuing. Even though we have come a long way from then, I firmly believe that we

should still be implementing exercises like this today. There will always be people who are ethnocentric and I think that it could help us to become more accepting of those cultural differences.