

Expository essay on tattoos essay



“ The word tattoo reportedly is derived from the Tahitian word “ tatu.” (Walker 1999 -2010 p. 1). The main idea of this paper is to identify where tattoos have gone wrong through culture over the years of mankind. By justifying the background and history of tattoos with their meaning and their original culture to help identify where society has disassociated the true meaning of cultural acceptance and gave way to fear. The earliest suggestions of tattoos on bodies of Iceman in random places were for therapeutic reasons.

From Iceman to modern man and all through the years in between somewhere down the road mankind has disassociated the true meaning and definition of tattoos to what they want to believe. Mankind has evolved tenfold over the years to overcome perils such as slavery, equal rights for woman, and the equal rights movement of the 1960s; but when concerning tattoos it is a whole new world. While society has associated tattoos with gangs and does not see them for what they symbolize, modern day society has an evolved dislike for tattoos.

Archeological digs have discovered small bronze implements identified as tattooing tools discovered at the town site of Gurob in Northern Egypt in c. 1450 B. C. The earliest evidence of tattoos was always thought to be with the Egyptians according to scholars and historians. However, in 1991 along the Italian-Austrian border an Iceman found with tattoos on his body that pushed the original thought of tattoos back beyond original belief. The carbon date on the body is believed to be around 5, 200 years old (Lineberry, 2007).

This iceman with others found makes the early Egyptians the second earliest group of individuals found with tattoos on their bodies. Found in the Similaun Glacier of the Alps in 1991 an Iceman named " Oetzi" was found with 57 tattoos. Oetzi is suggested to be around 5, 300 years old and a Tyrolean Iceman mummy. His tattoos, however, is what makes Oetzi interesting, they are made from fireplace soot that contained colorful precious stone crystals (Viegas, 2009). Even though there is still no direct answer as to how the earliest tattoos were completed the discovery of Oetzi sheds light on how they might have been done.

There are two suggestions that there might have been thorns dipped into soot and pierced into the skin or even scars forced into the skin and the soot pushed under the scar before the healing process began so that the soot and colored material would be there permanently. This would be very a very painful way to receive a tattoo compared to the commercial inks and electric tattooing guns used today, not to mention a slower process and a slower healing process.

Researchers believe two of the tattoos one on his knee and on his left ankle lay over acupuncture points. These tattoos would strengthen the argument that Oetzi's tattoos were not for ornamental display but for aesthetic function, because prior research on Oetzi showed that he did suffer from a variety of ailments that would have made acupuncture beneficial. Some of the more popular tattoos that have become more accepted are the barcode tattoo. The barcode tattoo is typically placed on the back of the neck in the same place no matter who wears it.

The symbolism of it represents a subtle protest against modern culture and how American culture has come to the point where we all wear the same type of clothes; go to the same places, how we all listen to same manufactured music or how we are all lured into buying the same products by marketing companies (Admin, 2010). The idea of this tattoo is irony; it is meant to represent an anti-culture stance and against cultural acceptance a group of people willing to do the same thing over again. So in essence they are doing the same thing that they are protesting against.

This is just one of the many examples of modern day society not knowing what their body art means. Another popular tattoo in the military is the Spider Web tattoo. Seen on the elbows of men and woman alike and never understanding the meaning of it and when I asked the wearer what it meant or what it meant to him or her I never received a straight answer. The true origin of the spider web tattoo was originally seen on either the neck or outside of the elbow of men, and very rarely seen on woman (Admin, 2010).

Today with women having a more dominant place in society this tattoo and others are seen adorned by them. The spider web tattoo was originally one of the prison tattoo's that had very little definition outside of jails other than to define that one was in prison, now worn for no other reason other than it "looks cool." The meaning of this tattoo according to the Anti-Defamation League is that it appears on the elbows of prison convicts to symbolize racism. A racism that is so extreme that this tattoo has also been associated with killing a minority in order to earn the right to wear it (Green, 2002-2011).

These are just some of the examples of the tattoos that people tend to go with without really knowing their meaning. Egyptian women have had tattoos on their bodies and limbs from 4000 B. C. through 1200 B. C. This in reference to modern society is a significant point because of how much it is frowned upon for any woman to have a tattoo. Whether it is women in the workplace or women walking down the street society sees ink on their bodies and sees the negative.

There is the famous “tramp stamp” the tattoo in the small of the back of a woman. While this tattoo is commonly misconstrued by both sexes once again knowing the history of it may help a little bit to understand why the perceptions of this tattoo exist today. Some believe that you can trace it back to Native American tribes when a male would place his “branding mark” aka “tattoo on his partners back to discourage other males (Maji, 2007). It would always be placed in an area that would be seen during sexual acts.

Some “smaller minded people” think that the larger the tattoo on womans back means that she is a looser or more promiscuous (Maji, 2007). The stigma this tattoo holds today is still true, however it does not mean the wearer knows the meaning, the significance behind putting the artwork in that specific place. Is she trying to start a back piece and that was the place she started? Another possibility is could that be the one place on her that the specific piece of artwork looks the best on her?

Human beings today have the tendency to be closed minded and make assumptions about the infamous “tramp stamp” just like tattoos in general

is not the appropriate way to approach something you do not know. Between the end of World War II and 1961 would be known as the timeframe as when tattoos would not only lose their appeal in American culture but also when the same culture would grow the fear and disdain that he or she would still have for tattoos today. Once tattooing became associated with the Marlon Brando type bikers and Juvenile delinquents, and the outbreak of hepatitis in 1961 the art of tattooing in America was sent reeling.

After the hepatitis outbreak the New York City government (where tattooing was primarily dominant at the time) gave the tattooing shops the opportunity to correct their errors and when they could not do it they were forced to shut down because of health code violations implemented on the account of the tattoo shops. Receiving a tattoo in New York after this for a time was illegal and this was the start of the terrible reputation for tattoos. Prison gang's and the tattoos that they wear have become the downfall for the art of the tattooing. In prisons wearing of an unauthorized gang tattoo can definitely be hazardous to the wearer's health.

“ Prison gang inmates have been known to remove unauthorized tattoos on non-gang members by cutting the tattoo from person's flesh. ” (Walker, 1999-2010). Without knowing the meaning of tattoos that men and women are putting on his/her body there are sometimes other things he or she must face. For example, a lion's head in a certain design on the forearm can and has been looked at as a gang tattoo in the wrong part of the country. Not only do gangs mark their bodies with tattoos but also use the same tattoos when they mark “ their area” with spray paint to ward off rival gangs. (Walker, 1999-2010).

Using these markings for intimidation purposes to keep their reputations in check with their rivals has done the same thing that tattoos were meant to do throughout time. Whether good or bad, the looks and admiration of attention that tattoos receive amongst the public continue to put them on the front burner of everyone's mind. They will not go away, they will only continue to strive and push forward off the want to "go with the flow" mentality that the world population has. Once they can get past the needles and the perception of pain the artwork and the symbolism of what that specific piece of work means will never be forgotten.

Are the negative perceptions about decorative artwork tattoos stemmed from people that have not experienced them for themselves? Has the fear of modern day society's belief into what they do not understand overcome a rich and cultured history? Today gang's and ex-convicts represent more of an acknowledgment of prison time with their tattoos, while the rest of the world population is trying to have them represent something completely different. This fight is and will continue to be an uphill battle for the foreseeable future.