

Tired of playing
monopoly shares light
on how to ideally
handle the
differences b...

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When exploring history to see how the world lives today, it is important to study how certain groups of people have treated other masses of people based on their differences. These differences can be physical, psychological or ideological, but most often, conflicts arise due to not accepting contrasting ways of life. The world is more diverse than ever and if society continues to exclude various groups due to differences, humanity will continue to live divided. The relationship between one's self and their "other" can be examined to determine why discrimination across the globe has yet to be eradicated. If the world would consider the ideas expressed in *The Life of Saint Francis*, *Tired of Playing Monopoly* by Donna Langston or *A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki, perhaps every differing group of people would be represented and respected equally. Some varying groups of people must first acknowledge their privilege in order to disperse it. Many are unaware of their "special rights" so, in order to respect diversity in the world, mankind must be more willing to appreciate people who are less privileged and act for change.

From an early age, St. Francis realized how corrupt, rich families act, including his own, so he gave up the lavish lifestyle, completely changed how he thought and he began to view the world from a different perspective. Over the course of St. Francis' life, he was generous to less fortunate people and he treated everyone as if they were all the same. This lifestyle wasn't popular, but his actions inspired others. St. Francis acted in ways that were foreign to most, one example being when he, "...moved to the lepers and stayed with them. For God's sake he served them all with great love" (*Life of St. Francis* 35). Most people would treat lepers with utter disrespect because

if one were to show any compassion, there was a thought that they could get contaminated. In an effort to increase diversity and normalize the good treatment of lepers, St. Francis treated them with respect and dignity during a time when others would not fathom looking at or speaking to a leper. St. Francis acknowledged the poor treatment of this “ other” and decided to act upon this problem. By doing this, he was then able to appreciate the lepers and realize that they, too, are humans and they deserve to be treated fairly with dignity. The actions taken by St. Francis can be used in the world today, where there are many “ lepers”. By looking past social constructions, one is able to see that everyone has a quality that makes them an “ other” and that diversity is a good thing.

There are instances where a person might not realize that they are adhering to a socially constructed idea. Many places in the world lack diversity so until lived in person, one might not be aware of their privilege or their homogeneity. One could say, “ I’m not racist” because they have never been exposed to or associated themselves to major minority groups. Some families raise their children in tight knit communities that lack exposure to the outside world. Langston fell victim to this because nobody from her town ever left to explore and see our world of varying people and cultures. She attended the nearby college like her family and friends did (398). When there is ignorance of what exists behind small town borders, there are usually condescending feelings that are ingrained in the minds of uninformed people. Langston’s analogy of monopoly accurately describes the sentiments of people who who live on “ Park Place”. They are unaware and uninterested

in investing their time to create an accepting and diverse land. Langston supports this idea when writing that people, "...must commit [themselves] to a cultural and ideological transformation of racist attitudes" (399). In order to end a divided society, one must consider the perspective of their "other" and realize that sometimes, materialism is all that separate two people. If people who sit higher on the "monopoly board" were to integrate themselves with lower ranked citizens in society, change could begin and a new world could form.

Some of the most substantial forms of discrimination in the United States are between groups of people that share different nationalities as written in Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror*. Some cultures are neglected because they do not fit the light skinned "American" image. Takaki fits the light skinned category but isn't treated normally because of his Asian attributes. There were instances where he was condemned for how well he spoke English, though he was born and raised in the United States (70). He is 100% American, but people don't see this at first, and even after explanation, because his eyes tell a different story. The United States may be considered to be the "melting pot of the world", but if one's skin tone, eyes, accent, religion or culture don't resemble the typical all-American family, one is considered an "other". The attitudes of many majority groups must change in order to expand the invisible American "quota" of what one must look or sound like. Takaki poses an interesting idea when he writes, "... Americans originated from many shores, and that all of us are entitled to dignity" (73). Every minority group has a place in the United States and a story of how

their presence on this land came to be. However, putting all of these different cultures and groups of people together forms the United States that we believe we all know. Once we start to accept the not as American-looking people as American, our racist attitudes could decrease and the world as a whole will represent everyone equally.

The world continues to change, shift and mold an ever-changing, diverse place to live. However, the same groups of people continue to act as the “normal” group in society while everyone else is subjected to being an “other”. Promoting diversity is important, but breaking free from social constraints and actively adapting to the changes in the world is the only way to make “others” turn into the groups we call “normal”. St. Francis is a strong advocate for supporting people who are ignored or who receive scrutiny because of their differences. His actions model a supporting society where “others” don’t need to exist. Langston and Takaki offer ideas that expose the people who sit highest in rank in our society, but the highest ranked inhabitants of society must be willing to accept and live in a dynamic and diverse world. Change can only happen in a world where everyone is willing to embrace the uniqueness that each person possesses.